

Creating a Common Space in a Sectarian Landscape

Social Work and Cohesive Action in Post-War Lebanon



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Introduction

As the title of this thesis indicates, my main aim is to discuss common action across social boundaries marked by civil war. My point of departure for this investigation is a Lebanese voluntary organisation, Mouvement Social Libanais, which conducted its projects irrespective of the sectarian divisions of society.

This work began as an idea to study common action in a post civil war society. The basic focus of my inquiry was how people living in such a setting could act together despite social divisions marked by violent conflict. Choosing Lebanon as the field for my study was, however, not primarily due to its violent history and sectarian tensions. Rather, the decision came out of a general knowledge of the region due to previous visits, and a fascination for Lebanon in particular. Having enjoyed the company of Lebanese I had met on different occasions, in Norway and other places, the thought of living in Lebanon appealed to me. I also knew the country in itself to be a pleasant and scenic part of the eastern Mediterranean. I was, thus, eager to conduct my fieldwork in Beirut and get to know the place and the Lebanese more intimately.

I was, however, not familiar enough with the country to have an exact idea of how to carry out my six months fieldwork before leaving Norway in December of 2001. My first task when arriving in Beirut was, therefore, to get familiar with the city and locate a field for my inquiry. But the Lebanese capital makes for a complex context, and finding a field that could stand out as an entity within the seething scene of the city turned out to be a challenging task. As I learned my way around the city and got to know people, I became acquainted with Mouvement Social Libanais (MSL); a Lebanese organisation that had been conducting its work across the country since the early 1960s. One of its main functions, in addition to the projects it undertook, was to be a non-sectarian alternative in a sectarian society.

So, it seemed to me like Mouvement Social would make an interesting field for my study. But that, of course, depended upon whether the organisation would allow me to partake as a social anthropologist. When I contacted the administration of MSL I was met with openness and interest for my project, and upon my request to conduct my fieldwork with the organisation I was given an opportunity to get to know both MSL and Lebanon through participating as a volunteer.

Adapting Ideas to Empirical Realities

Beirut, as the frame for my daily life in Lebanon, appeared to be something of a condensed projection of the social division of the country. The compact capital embraced all the Lebanese political communities. From the central position of the parliament, the city stretched into a sectarian landscape. The eastern part was occupied by Christians, with large communities of Maronites, Greek Orthodox and Armenians, while the southern parts of the city were almost exclusively Shi'a Muslim. The western part was largely Sunni Muslim, but also embraced Shi'a, Druze and Greek Orthodox communities. Beirut was, in other words, a city where all of Lebanon's sects were co-residing.¹

My initial ideas for the fieldwork were directed towards a study of how people living in post-civil war settings related to each other and to a common state. More specifically, I wanted to focus on common action across social boundaries marked by violent conflict. Such a loose frame for a fieldwork could have opened for a number of approaches. However, I found that people in Beirut, despite the proximity to the sectarian other, tended to live largely within the confines of their respective sects. In this setting, MSL stood out as an effort to address sectarian tensions in a society where peoples' confessional identities constituted major divisions in society.

Through its work, Mouvement Social involved people in projects all over Lebanon, irrespective of sectarian labels. It focused its actions within the confines of the Lebanese state, and in the process it had to deal with sectarian tensions, as well as the social, economical and political consequences of a history of conflicts. To my focus on common action in post-conflict settings, this made an interesting field. Through participating in the daily work of the organisation I hoped to gain insight into how the participants of MSL constituted a common space amongst the country's deep social divisions.

The Scope and Structure of the Thesis

Introduction

Through the course of this thesis I will portray and debate the make up, projects and members of a small organisation acting within a large context. Aiming to give a thorough presentation of Mouvement Social, and to illuminate the organisation against the larger frame of Lebanese society, I have divided the thesis into three main parts. In chapter two, which is

¹ See appendix three for an overview of the confessional composition of the Lebanese population.

the first part, I will give an introduction to Lebanon. In this account I will particularly be focusing upon the country's history of sectarian conflicts, but also consensus, as well as the social, political and economical conditions of post-war Lebanon. In the second part, which includes chapter three, four and five, I will introduce my empirical elaboration on Mouvement Social. In the third part I intend to present two main discussions. In chapter six I debate how MSL dealt with sectarianism, while in chapter seven I address the organisation as an actor within the state and civil society of Lebanon.

The Empirical Material

In chapter three, I begin by depicting Mouvement Social's history and constitution, as well as its aims and strategies. I have focused on portraying the ideas that were central to the initiation of the organisation, and also how it has adapted itself to different periods of Lebanon's history. In addition, I give an overview of the organisational structure of MSL, and introduce its members and projects.

Through chapter four, which is the second empirical elaboration, I address the projects of the organisation. In order to describe the scope of its work, I have given examples of its everyday projects, its volunteer camps, and its internal activities. Its everyday work will be portrayed through my own experiences as an English teacher at one of its centres in the southern suburbs of Beirut. I also participated on a volunteer camp, which I elaborate on next. The camp, which was an environmental project in village centrally situated in the Lebanon Range, involved around twenty volunteers. Furthermore, in order to depict the difficult social and political atmosphere in which MSL was working, I describe an assault on one of its founding members.

In the subsequent empiric part, chapter five, I focus on the participants of the organisation: its employees and volunteers. Through this chapter I aspire to give a more detailed introduction to some of my informants. Since people's social identities are a central concern to this dissertation, I aim to present my informants as embracing different social backgrounds, both in terms of sect, locality, family and gender. A central topic in this chapter will be their involvement with Mouvement Social, both in terms of its work and concept. I will portray their kind of involvement, as either employees or volunteers, and how they experienced this participation. I will also depict how they became members. Furthermore, I am going to look at how they related to Lebanon as a country, as well as to the Lebanese as a people.

Discussions, Analytical Approaches and Arguments

As I say above, one of my main aims with the fieldwork was to look at common action across social boundaries marked by civil war. In the case of Lebanon, these boundaries have by and large been sectarian. In the following chapter, and throughout the thesis, I will portray the Lebanese's sectarian ties as constituting fundamental political identities. To the individual, the sectarian identity is highly relevant when it comes to participation in the public sphere of Lebanon. People are officially registered as belonging to a sect, and the sect in turn provides individuals with rights and obligations towards the Lebanese state. To MSL, sectarianism was a basic concern. Since the organisation strived to be a common effort across sectarian boundaries, it had to deal with these identities and the potential conflicts they held.

Thus, in chapter six, I intend to discuss how MSL dealt with sectarianism. In doing so, I will propose a theoretic model of approaching identities. Building on Richard Jenkins (1997), I hold that identity is about groups and categories: it is about ascription and self-ascription, and essentially about systemising social life. Furthermore, based in Fredrik Barth (1996), I will argue that identities have contextual relevance; that people embrace a set of identities which gain relevance according to the context in which a person act. I am also going to suggest that identities embrace varying degrees of formality or informality, as well as differing according to their attending basis of identification. (Jenkins 1997) Following this, a base of identification, such as ethnicity, can have attending ideologies of identification such as ethnicism, nationalism and racism.

After proposing a theoretic model for understanding social identities, I turn to debate my empiric material. As I mentioned above, the manner in which my informants dealt with their sectarian surroundings is a central topic. However, in terms of identities, my informants had ties not only to sectarian groups. Two other important identities were those of family and locality, which also will be addressed. My discussion of these social identities serves two purposes in particular. Firstly, it portrays my informants as belonging to a number of social institutions, and, secondly, it says something about the significance of these institutions by themselves and how they relate to each other. Having addressed the significance of my informant's sectarian identities, I will discuss how sectarianism was dealt with among the participants of MSL. During this debate I will focus upon how the members of MSL had their different sectarian ties outside of the organisation, which consequently made sectarianism a generally difficult issue to deal with. One of my main points will be that

sectarianism was not dealt with directly, but rather, through the interaction between the participants, disregarded as a basis for relating to people. MSL, thus, prioritised avoiding sectarianism as much as developing a common stand. Furthermore, I will debate commonality among the participants of MSL. I will hold the expressing a common identity, such as the Lebanese, was also a difficult task.

Still, my informants managed to create a common space, and I will suggest that this had to do with the situational relevance of identity. If MSL managed to create a space where sectarian identities did not matter, it was easier for the employees and volunteers to express a commonality. Following Anja Peleikis (2001), I will, thus, propose that identities should be seen as 'pluritactical constructs.' Furthermore, I am going to debate the significance of the self. Holding that identity theory by itself might not be a sufficient model for explaining the dynamics of social life, I suggest that considering people's selves can be a useful additional focus for understanding how people can chose to act out certain identities in given situations.

I will also make a conceptual clarification regarding the meaning of confessionalism, sectarianism and religiosity. Since my informants did not differ between confessionalism and sectarianism, I have through this text applied them as equal terms. However, I still view a discussion of the use and meaning of these concepts as necessary.

In chapter seven I focus upon Movement Social as an organisation, as well as the context it acted within. Thus, my main inquires will be to discuss MSL as an actor within Lebanese civil society, as well as to address Lebanon as an arena for the organisation's actions. As a theoretic frame for this debate I have chosen to use theories of state and civil society. Largely basing this analytic approach on the thoughts of Neera Chandhooke (1995), I argue that the state should not be viewed as separate from civil society. That is, while civil society is the politicised sphere of society, occupied by groups mobilising in different bases, for example ethnicity, language or gender, the state constitutes the frame of this contestation. Wanting to avoid reifying the state, I apply Philip Abrams's (1988) view of the state as referring to an idea and a bureaucracy. Thus, discussing the context MSL acted within, I will apply this theoretic model to Lebanon and argue that sectarian factions dominate both civil society and the state.

An important concern in this chapter will be how MSL related to the state. Through this debate I will focus on how the state constituted a geographical frame for the actions of MSL,

how the organisation cooperated with state institutions, and, finally, the significance of citizenship to the actions of the employees and volunteers. Furthermore, I also address gender identity as an example of another base of action for the employees and volunteers of Mouvement Social. A second focus here will be to place MSL within Lebanese civil society, so as to discuss it in relation to this sphere of action.

Following my discussion of the Lebanese state and civil society, and how this constitutes a frame for MSL's actions, I turn to look more closely at the organisation in itself. Having debated informants' participation largely in relation to identity, I view it as important to investigate some other approaches to Mouvement Social. Thus, in the last part of the discussion, I will look at some central characteristics of MSL as a social organisation through applying culture and work as theoretic frames. These frames will primarily be based in the work of Martin Sökefeld (1999) and Henrietta Moore (1988), respectively.

Another side of the debate of culture and work in relation to MSL is to highlight some central aspects of the organisation in order to identify it among other factions of civil society. The term NGO² has frequently been used to describe such groups. However, the expression refers to great variety of organisations with quite different constitutions and agendas.³ I have therefore been hesitant to use the concept, and, subsequently, focused on presenting Mouvement Social through its main principals and functions. A second reason for this choice is to avoid reducing civil society to the actions of NGOs. As I will portray in this thesis, civil society opens for a large number of groups and bases for mobilisation, and, in the case of Lebanon, sectarian forces constitute the key forces of this sphere.

Furthermore, another concern in my final debate is to stress that there might be a number of reasons for peoples' participation with Mouvement Social, which also can be more or less overlapping. That is, identity is in itself an important part of people's involvement, but it still only accounts for certain aspects of such social action. Other aspects, I will suggest, such as shared understanding of social reality, which I will address through looking at culture, and the projects of the organisation, which I will look at through a debate of work, were also central to my informants' involvement. Thus, I view the debate of work and culture as useful in order to address what people do; to provide further perspectives on the practices and

² Non-Governmental Organisation.

³ See table labelled "Manifestations of Global Civil Society," chapter seven.

principals of MSL. In the final part of the chapter, I will briefly address how the organisation reproduced itself.

Methodological Considerations

MSL: the Field in the Field

During my fieldwork I was sharing a flat with two other foreigners in an area of Ras Beirut, and did, thereby, not live in a Lebanese household. However, I did not experience my living arrangements to constitute a problem for my fieldwork. Family was of little concern to my informants as long as they were acting as members of MSL. A couple of them were also living in shared flats while studying in Beirut. I, thus, never encountered any difficulties in relating to people due to the manner I lived while residing in Beirut.

However, I should emphasise that there were two dimensions in my fieldwork. While I was with MSL I was considered as an anthropologist and a volunteer, and it is these experiences that I have presented in this thesis. But, I also had friends outside of MSL, with whom I did not relate to as an anthropologist. That is, they knew they were not a part of ‘my field,’ and that neither they nor their actions would be included in my project. Thus, I had one social sphere where I was considered an anthropologist, which was my work with Mouvement Social, and another sphere which can be referred to as general urban life where I was not primarily considered an anthropologist. Although my friends and experiences from the latter sphere are left out of this dissertation, they were still essential to my general understanding of Lebanese society.

Being an Anthropologist in Mouvement Social

Before introducing my field further, I would like to address the manner in which I gathered the material presented in this thesis. The two main approaches to collecting data were through participant observation as a volunteer in the organisation, and through open ended interviews with my informants. The participant observation was done through daily work at one of the organisation’s centres in the southern suburbs of Beirut, through visiting the main office, through attending seminars and workshops, and through participating at a volunteer camp. I also met with some of my informants regularly outside an MSL context. But as I have made most of them anonymous, this is not something I have dealt explicitly with. Most of the interviews were conducted outside an MSL setting, usually at a café or restaurant suggested by the person I was going to interview. The interviews were normally taped, and would evolve based in topics agreed upon in advance. Usually these sessions lasted for a

couple of hours, and would end up covering a range of topics developing as our conversation progressed.

Language was a concern during my fieldwork. My command of Arabic was extremely limited. Even though I studied the language while conducting my fieldwork, I did not manage more than the most basic communication. As I did not speak French, another common language in Lebanon, I largely depended upon English speaking informants. However, since most of my informants were studying at English-speaking universities in Lebanon, I mostly experienced language difference and the problem of translation as manageable. Still, I had several informants, for instance among the staff, that spoke French and Arabic, but little or no English. Among these were my colleagues that I worked with on a daily basis at the centre. Our daily interaction had to involve much consideration on their part since I needed extra attention if I was to be involved in the daily activities. So, during the interviews with them, I got friends to partake and help with the translation. When I interviewed the founder of the movement, which I will quote in chapter three, it was done in writing. Even though he spoke well English, he felt that he would express himself better in Arabic. Thus, upon my request for an interview, he asked to have the questions in writing, and then answered me extensively in Arabic. The interview was later translated into English by a friend of mine that had previous experiences with translations from Arabic to English.

To most Lebanese, I was *ajnabiye*, a foreigner. And even though being accepted as a volunteer in MSL, I still remained *ajnabiye*. Many of the volunteers found it odd that I, as a Norwegian, volunteered in a Lebanese enterprise. Consequently, I often had to explain my academic project to the other participants in order to make sense of my presence. To my friends outside of MSL, I was merely a student, both of anthropology and Arabic. I was well received as a foreigner, but found that it took time to get to know people. I seemed to be of little personal interest to many of the MSL participants, at least in the beginning of my stay, but was taken well care of in line with the hospitality commonly shown to guests in Lebanon. The advantage of being a foreigner was that I would have access to the different communities of Beirut, and would thus be known with parts of the city that were unfamiliar to Lebanese outsiders. Some of my Christian informants, for instance, would ask me questions of what the conditions were like in Shi'a dominated areas where I was working as a volunteer. But regardless of this, my general approach to the field was one of patience and gradually getting to know people through my participation with MSL.

Gender was another aspect that had to be considered during my fieldwork. I had many female informants, as the staff and many of the active volunteers almost exclusively consisted of women. All of my volunteer informants were unmarried and I, therefore, rarely spent time at my informants' homes. When we met, we would meet at cafes or restaurants because it was more suitable. If I was to frequently visit one of my female unmarried informants it would likely cause rumours in her neighbourhood, and it would be more convenient if this did not happen. But, generally speaking, gender difference was not much of an issue while interacting with my informants.

Finally, I would like to stress that during my fieldwork I tried to be as open as possible about my project. I wanted my informants to be aware of what they were becoming part of. In terms of reproducing my experiences in this text, I have wanted to shield my informants by keeping them anonymous, and especially those whose lives I have exposed. All of my informants, except those I interviewed by virtue of their public positions, such as the Executive Director of MSL, the founder of the organisation, and former Prime Minister Salim el-Hoss, are presented through pseudonyms.

Lebanon: a History of Sectarian Conflict and Consensus

'In a society having a heterogeneous structure, historical fictions that flatter one group may turn out to be unflattering and sometimes highly objectionable to others, and only a fiction which is equally complementary to all the parties concerned can stand a chance of gaining common acceptance. Even then, the political success of fiction remains conditional, varying with the unpredictable fluctuations of the society balanced precariously between stability and instability.'

(Salibi 1988: 216 - 217)

The comment above was made by Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi's in his account of Lebanon's history. (Ibid.) In his account, which was published during the civil war that ravaged the country from 1975 to 1990, he does not aim to portray one national historical narrative. Rather, it is a critical look at several approaches to Lebanese history. In the course of violence inflicted upon Lebanese by Lebanese the idea of Lebanon as *one* nation seemed to have no social foundation. The civil war, thus, did not only sharpen the sectarian divisions existing in Lebanese society, it also challenged any principal of common nationhood among the country's inhabitants. Still, Lebanon survived the war, but, following Salibi, I will hold that any historical account needs to recognise the social divisions its borders have come to encapsulate. With this in mind, my aim in the following account is to point to processes and events which have come to be of considerable importance in constituting Lebanon as a country.

The 19th Century Rise of Sectarianism

The sectarian organisation of society is a prominent feature of Lebanon. Sectarianism was a central issue both prior to and after the independence of the Lebanese republic. Comparing sectarianism to nationalism, Ussama Makdisi (2000: 166) argues that sectarianism has been '... depicted as a monolithic force, unchanging in the face of history, while the nation-state has been viewed as the culmination of history.' Further, Makdisi (Ibid.) makes an important observation in noting that sectarianism is not a historic preliminary stage to nationalism; the two are both ideologies belonging to the modern world. To Makdisi (Ibid.) sectarianism is a modern phenomenon produced within a nationalist paradigm.

Makdisi (Ibid.) finds that sectarianism emerged during a mid nineteenth century transitional phase in the region. The area that later was to become the Lebanese republic was the scene of a struggle for control and influence between a weakening Ottoman Empire, Egypt, France

and Britain.⁴ These were powers with regional interests, and the area of Mount Lebanon and Beirut became one of the locations for their encounters. At the same time as the larger powers were struggling for influence in the region, there was a local struggle going on in Mount Lebanon between the landlords and peasants. The peasants, following social reorganisation by the Ottoman Empire, were challenging local power structures that favoured leading families. The elite, in turn, fought to maintain its privileges, and managed to do so by adapting to a new sectarian logic. Local antagonistic class relations in a climate of regional violence and political change, thus, resulted in an emerging culture of sectarianism. It was a transformation whereby society was reorganised into political communities following religious lines.

These processes led up to severe sectarian violence amongst the Druze and Maronite population in Mount Lebanon from 1858 till 1860. Salibi (1965) sees this conflict as caused to by a multiplicity of factors. To him, revolutionary tendencies among peasants, power struggles between clergy men, feudal chiefs and local Ottoman rulers, in addition to the intervention and presence of foreign powers, were all significant elements in the development of the conflict. Following the turmoil the area was reorganised as the autonomous governorate (*Mutasarrifiye*) of Mount Lebanon.⁵ The Mutasarrifiye remained a part of the Ottoman Empire, and lasted from 1860 to 1915.

The Mandate Period

The Mutasarrifiye lasted until 1915, and was then substituted with Ottoman military rule. This regime ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire after World War One. In 1918 Arab and British armies took Damascus, which eventually led to the former Ottoman provinces (*vilayets*) of Syria being divided between the British and the French. French forces had initially occupied Beirut and the neighbouring costal areas after agreement with the allies, but was later handed a mandate for this region and its Syrian provinces by the League of Nations. France named its mandated area the Levant.

When it came to the organisation of their mandatory area, France did not have any overriding preferences. Rather, as Salibi (1988: 25) points out, ‘... they were willing to attend to

⁴ The Ottoman rule lasted from 1453 till 1918, only interrupted by Egyptian rule from 1831 till 1840. (Johnson 2001)

⁵ The northern and southern parts of contemporary Lebanon was organised in separate provinces ruled from the cities of Tripoli and Saida, respectively. In addition, neither Beirut nor the Bekaa valley was part of the Mutasarrifiye of Mount Lebanon.

reasoned and concrete demands by parties who knew what they wanted, but had no patience for the claims and clamours of those who did not.’ In Mount Lebanon, the Maronites experienced a nationalist uprising during this period. Having, over the years, enjoyed good relations with France, the Maronites made claims for an independent Lebanese republic.

The Maronites had since the beginning of the century pressed for an expansion of their territory to include what they saw as its natural and historical boundaries. This included both the coastal areas from Tripoli to Sour, as well as the inland areas in and around the Bekaa valley. Thus, in 1920, the French annexed, following the claims of the Maronites, annexed different parts of the former vilayets of Beirut and Damascus to the territory of the old Lebanese Mutasarrifiye, and so created the State of Greater Lebanon within the present frontiers. (Salibi 1988)

The State of Greater Lebanon received a Constitution on the 23rd of May 1926, and was thus transformed into the Lebanese Republic. Around the same time, the Syrian Republic came into being after nationalist demands from groups in Aleppo and Damascus. Thus, both Lebanon and Syria emerged around the same time as a result of French reorganisation of the region and nationalist demands by groups in both countries. It should be stressed, though, that these demands could far from be said to apply to the entire populations of these states, only smaller groups within the states. However, both countries were still under French Mandate, ‘... sharing the same currency and custom services, but flying different flags, and run by separate native administration under one French High Commissioner residing in Beirut.’ (Salibi 1988: 27)

The Lebanese Republic came to be dominated by Maronites, although they no longer constituted a majority within the new boundaries of Lebanon. Another notable group was the Sunni Muslims, who had traditionally been living in Beirut and other coastal towns such as Saida and Tripoli. However, Sunni leaders made the mistake of boycotting the establishment of the new republic, whereupon the Maronites became dominant within the state system. Salibi (1988: 34) writes that ‘... originally, the Maronites had wanted Lebanon, politically, for themselves. When the country received its Constitution and became a parliamentary republic, the French saw to it that a Greek Orthodox Christian, rather than a Maronite became its first president, with a Sunnite Muslim as a speaker of its parliament; but the

Maronites nevertheless managed to secure for themselves all other key positions in the government and the administration, and ultimately the presidency of the republic as well.⁶

In the early years of the Lebanese Republic, Salibi (Ibid.) identifies two main forces confronting each other. One being Lebanism, the main promoters of which were Maronites, and the other was Arabism, which found much support among the Muslim populations. The latter ideology, which essentially was Arab nationalism calling for a pan-Arabic State, was irreconcilable with Lebanism as it would not accept Lebanon as a country independent from the rest of the Arab world.

Independent Lebanon

On June 8th 1941 British and Free French forces, and also a unit of Lebanese Druze, invaded in order to remove the Vichy administrations from Lebanon and Syria.⁷ With the invasion France's sole control of Lebanese and Syrian affairs also came to an end. Kais Firro (2003: 187) notes that '... both Syria and Lebanon were now subordinated to the "colonial" politics of the French and the British and their rather different agendas for the Levant.'

The British, in particular, were pushing for Lebanese independence, and on November 26th 1941 French officials proclaimed the formal independence of the new state. However, the independence did not stir national feelings among the Lebanese. Firro (2003: 191) writes that '... if French and British officials had expected the declaration of Lebanon's formal independence to be greeted with jubilation, they were disappointed. Rather, there was a general show of indifference, if not apathy [...].' Still, independence led to increasing political mobilisation among the confessional elites, especially among Sunni Muslims and Maronites, and thus paved way for the first national elections during the summer of 1943.

The run-up to the elections was marked by conflict, and one of the main concerns was the distribution of seats in the parliament. Christians and Muslim organised against each other in the discussion of how to divide the seats between the representatives of the two religions. The Christians had initially wanted a larger part of the seats, proposing a parliament where they would occupy 32 seats while leaving 22 seats would be left to the Muslims. This demand was not in accordance with a 1932 census, indicating that the population of Lebanon was made up of 50 % Christians and 48.8 % Muslims, and it was consequently not

⁶ See appendix three for 1932 and 1984 overviews of Lebanon's confessional groups.

⁷ The French regime from July 1940 to September 1944, following the German defeat of France during World War II.

acceptable to Muslim leaders.⁸ After a period of tense negotiations a compromise was reached, following a proposal by the British, handing 30 seats to the Christians and 25 to the Muslims.⁹ It has been noted (Johnson 2001) that a major component in completing the negotiations was the favourable outcome it had on the financial endeavours of the social and political elite; for Muslims and Christians alike.¹⁰

Another important factor in Lebanon's independence was the National Pact of 1943; an unwritten agreement between Maronites and Sunni Muslims which formed the basis for the multi-confessional nation state. (Johnson 2001) This pact was, at least until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, accepted, or tolerated, by a majority of Lebanese. (el-Khazen 1991) The pact brought together Arab and Lebanese nationalists in that it both recognised Lebanon's particularism and its ties to the Arab nation. It thus facilitated the conciliation between the two main factions enabling the parliamentary elections to take place. At another level it was also an agreement which was satisfactory for Britain and France, whose colonial regimes, after all, held the power in the region. (Firro 2003)

The Shehabist Era

Lebanon's first president, Bishara el-Khoury, was in office from 1943 to 1952. He was succeeded by the pro-Western and anti-Nasserite President Chamille Chamoun, whose reign ended with the civil war of 1958. The war, which lasted for six months, was fought between a pro-Nasserite Sunni, Shi'a and Druze alliance and a Maronite led Christian opposition. The fighting was brought to an end after American and Egyptian intervention, and followed by the election of Presidency of General Fouad Shehab the same year.

The Shehabist era marked a change in Lebanese politics. Inspired by Father Lebret, the founder of the Research and Training Institute for Development and the architect behind a general development plan for Lebanon, President Shehab initiated a large scale modernisation process in the country. (Corm 1988) Through reforms, he installed a social

⁸ See table in appendix three.

⁹ The Muslims accepted the compromise on the condition that a new census should be conducted within two years. (Firro 2003) This condition, however, was never fulfilled. (Johnson 2001)

¹⁰ Johnson (2001: 5-6) argues that '... Lebanese independence in 1943 came about largely as a result of an informal compact between leading merchants and financiers who belonged to the Christian and Sunni Muslim communities or confessions. They agreed they should co-operate in building a liberal political system that would encourage a free economy based in Beirut and its hinterland lying within the borders of 'Greater Lebanon' [...]. In alliance with rural landlords, political representatives of the commercial and financial bourgeoisie took control of the state and implemented policies to promote the trading, banking and insurance sectors of the economy (Johnson 1986: 119 ff).'

security system, and initiated development projects in the underprivileged, and predominantly Shi'a Muslim, rural areas. He also strengthened general infrastructure, such as roads, the port of Beirut and telecommunication.

Another of President Shehab reforms was the strengthening of the army and security apparatus. This important policy change benefited a national government at the expense of the traditional elite. The policies of the Shehabist regime enjoyed widespread popular support from all the communities. However, as Khashan (1992) and Corm (1988) notes, the policy changes were unpopular with the traditional notables, whose influence was declining during this period. The Shehabist policies were continued when Charles Hellou became President in 1964, and lasted until the opposition came into power in 1970.¹¹

The Civil War

The civil war, lasting from 1975 to 1990, led the country into unprecedented turmoil. Involving a number of actors, local militias as well as foreign armies, the war took more than 100 000 lives. The prelude to the war, in the early 70s, was marked by inflation and rising unemployment, sporadic fighting between the Lebanese army and the PLO, and clashes between the PLO and Phalangists.¹² In 1976 Syria invaded to support overpowered Maronite militias, and in 1978 Israel attacked Palestinian forces in the south of Lebanon and established a buffer zone under the control of a Maronite proxy-army.¹³ Both Syria and Israel became major actors in the escalating civil war, both through their own forces and the various local militias which they supported.¹⁴

Gradually, as the war evolved, the Lebanese Government's control submerged to that of militias groups and foreign forces. Among the major local actors were the Maronite Phalangists and the Lebanese Forces, the Druze Progressive Socialist Party, and the Shi'a militias of Harakat Amal and Hezb'allah. The country became divided between different militia groups, and ethnic cleansing enforced the sectarian boundaries that constituted the

¹¹ The regime of president Charles Hellou was also considered to be Shehabist. (Johnson 2001) However, Corm (1988: 263) notes that the weakening of the army and security apparatus started after Shehab's departure from office in 1964, '...which allowed the country's destabilization under the sway of broader regional influences.' These influences were to a large extent tied the social and political processes steaming from the Arab - Israeli conflict.

¹² A Maronite militia.

¹³ In 1982 Israel invaded again and occupied Beirut. Following this, the Palestinian armed forces were forced to evacuate in an operation orchestrated by a US, French and Italian multinational force. Israel retreated from Beirut, but continued to occupy the south of Lebanon until 2000.

¹⁴ Syria and Israel were, however, not the only foreign powers involved. American forces were directly engaged in the fighting, and other countries, like Iran and Iraq, were supporting local militias.

basic divisions of the war. The fighting, however, did not only take place between sectarian groups. There were also extensive clashes among Maronite as well as Shi'a militia groups.

In 1984 a peace conference in Switzerland failed to produce reconciliation between the warring factions, and in 1988 the Lebanese parliament showed itself unable to elect a new president. Consequently, two rivalling prime ministers, Salim el-Hoss and General Michel Aoun, set up their governments in West and East Beirut, respectively. The following year a peace agreement was reached during negotiations in the Saudi Arabian city of Taif. The Taif Agreement, as it came to be called, stipulated an equal share of seats in parliament between Christians and Muslims, and, thus, the old 6:5 ration was abolished. Following this, the war came to an official end in 1990, with the disarmament of the Lebanese militias the following year.¹⁵

Post-War Lebanon: the Second Republic

Introduction

The Taif agreement and the following disarmament of the Lebanese militias laid the foundations for what has been called the Second Republic.¹⁶ At the end of the fifteen year war, Lebanon was a shattered country. Its economy and infrastructure lay in ruins, a large number of people had fled the country and those who had remained faced a difficult future. There were no tribunal for war crimes, and most of the Lebanese war lords, many of whom rose to power during the years of fighting, managed to keep their influential positions through the transition from war to peace.

The Post-War Economy

In the post war period the national debt increased steadily, reaching USD 30 billion at the time of my fieldwork in 2002. At the same time, the unemployment was high and the wage level low. Andrew Rigby (2000) notes that the economic gap between the elite and the commoners has continued to widen throughout this period.¹⁷ However, Boutros Labaki (2003) finds that the economic prospects were bright in the first half of the 1990s, but that a

¹⁵ Hezb'allah, however, was allowed to retain its arsenal in order to continue the resistance against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

¹⁶ Discussing the consequences of the Taif agreement, Nawaf Salam (2003: 49) writes that '... while Taif's fine-tuning of the sectarian balance helped contain sectarian violence, it could not at the same time temper sectarian jealousies because what was at stake was but a new division of the sectarian pie.' Furthermore, he (2003: 51) suggests that '... the Taif model, which was meant to neutralise "the centrifugal forces of society," might instead have put Lebanon on "a one-way slope that leads to a self-enforcing system" of sectarian appetites.'

¹⁷ Statistics over living conditions are added in appendix four.

number of factors of national and international character contributed to a downturn in the country's financial development. Among the positive factors following the peace agreement was the government's plans to reconstruct the national infrastructure and capital coming in from abroad. This led to an economic growth that lasted until the mid 1990s, but which then turned negative toward the end of the decade.¹⁸ Labaki (2003: 196) locates official Lebanese policies, and local political factors, as the main cause, but also recognises other important factors such as '... one-sided globalisation, the change in regional political environment, Lebanon's loss of competitiveness, the inconsistent economic policies of successive governments, and the fall in oil prices.'

The Political Context

Although the fighting stopped in the aftermath of the Taif Accord, the Lebanese political scene did not change much during the transition from war to peace. The Syrian government, which had played a significant role in ending the fighting, remained as an influential actor in the post-war political scene. People in general felt little concern for national political matters, as was apparent during the parliamentary elections of 1992, the first since 1972, which were boycotted by major Christian parties.¹⁹ Although the political participation was larger in the subsequent elections of 1996 and 2000, gerrymandering of constituencies to ensure the election of pro-Syrian candidates produces discontent especially among Christian factions.²⁰

Among the notable political characters in the post-war period are the Maronite President, the Sunni Prime Minister and the Shi'a Speaker of Parliament. Commonly referred to as 'the troika,' these positions signify both the distinct sectarian divisions of Lebanese politics, and the division between the political elite and the ordinary Lebanese. The Presidency of the republic has been held by Elias Hrawi (1992 – 1998) followed by Emil Lahoud (1998 -); the post of the Prime Minister by Rafiq al-Hariri (1992 – 1998; 2000 – 2005) and Salim el-Hoss (1998 – 2000); while the leader of the Shi'a Amal faction, Nabih Berri (1992 -), has occupied the position of Speaker of Parliament. In the post-war context, Rafiq al-Hariri, a businessman and billionaire with a joint Saudi Arabian and Lebanese citizenship, has been a

¹⁸ The GDP rose from 2, 5% in 1991 to 8% in 1994, and then reached 0% in 2000. (Labaki 2003: 188)

¹⁹ Augustus Richard Norton (1999: 43) notes that '... as a result [of the boycott], in several electoral areas fewer than five percent of eligible Christians voted, and no area had an overall participation higher than 37 percent. In one district [Jbail], only one Christian vote was cast for every 200 eligible Christian voters.'

²⁰ Debating people's political participation and the state of the political system in Lebanon, Farid el-Khazen (2003: 72) writes that '... real power in present-day Lebanon is not generated by the outcome of the electoral process. In fact, elections have performed functions that are largely similar to those performed by authoritarian regimes to support the system and to make people comply and adjust to the anomalies of the political process.'

very influential character. Investing heavily in the rebuilding of the country, he has played a major role in both its political and industrial arena.

During my fieldwork in the spring of 2002, Lebanon was governed by Emil Lahoud, Rafiq al-Hariri and Nabih Berri. Under Syrian control, the cooperation between these three varied from unison action to serious personal conflict. They were all highly involved in both the political development and financial affairs of the country. In a discussion of the Lebanese political situation, Farid el-Khazen (2003: 73) notes that ‘... the decline of political liberalisation has paved the way for the institutionalisation of non-democratic practices in the political process.’ Further, he (Ibid.) writes that ‘... authoritarian practices have been integrated in the system [...]. While Lebanon has no police state similar to that of other countries in the region, it is not capable of shielding itself from non-democratic practices despite the political activism of its civil society.’ The sectarian divisions encapsulating this system have, as Georges Corm (2005) notes, gained more importance in post-war Lebanon than before 1975.

Residential Patterns

In his pre-war study of the urbanisation of Beirut’s southern suburbs, Fuad Khuri (1975) notes the basic sectarian organisation of these areas. Through the 1950s and -60s, Lebanon experienced a large scale migration from rural to urban areas. In this process, the communal organisation of rural Lebanon came to be reflected in the residential patterns of the urban communities.²¹ Still, Salim Nasr (2003: 149) holds that the pre-war period was marked by a ‘... multi-secular trend toward pluralism and greater communal territorial admixture.’ Through the civil war, however, the sectarian divisions became intensified, and Nasr (Ibid.) observes that contemporary Lebanon has experienced a reversal of these pre-war trends.

During my fieldwork in Beirut, the sectarian divisions of the city were apparent. My Sunni Muslim informants were living among their sectarian equals in the north western area of Ras Beirut, my Maronite informants in the Christian area of Achrafiye to the east, and my Shi’a informants were, with one exception, living in the southern parts of the city. Their residential patterns, thus, followed that of their sects. Two of my Greek Orthodox informants were still living in a Greek Orthodox area in the western part of the city, but had seen many from their sect leave the area during the war and resettled in the Christian East Beirut. As I mention

²¹ According to Salim Nasr (2003) the urban population of Lebanon rose from 25% in 1950 to 65% in 1975.

above, this was an example of how the years of fighting had led to less territorial mixture among the Lebanese sects.

Final Remarks

In the above elaboration I have focused on two topics that are central to this dissertation; the development of a modern state based in a sectarian division of society, and the conflicts, and adhering social, political and economical problems, that have come to mark the Lebanese history. In a study of how the Lebanese relate to their state and fellow citizens, Theodor Hanf (2003) finds that the sectarian tensions in post-war Lebanon are very high.²² Looking ahead, he (2003: 199) argues that ‘... the psychological sensitivities of the Lebanese in 2002 do not give much ground for optimism.’ However, he observes that the main source of problems in contemporary Lebanon is not primarily people’s sectarian identities, but, rather, the difficult national economy and the country’s politicians. That is, he (Ibid.) finds that people’s main concern is not first and foremost relate to identity, but rather how to manage life under difficult conditions. I find Hanf’s arguments useful. As I now turn to present my empirical material, I find my informants’ focus on addressing the problems of post-war Lebanon, rather than their sectarian identities, to reflect Hanf’s findings.

²² He bases his conclusions on data collected from questioners gathered from a large group of respondents over a period of 21 years (1981 – 2002).

Images of Beirut



The picture to the left is taken at Manara. The popular *corniche* runs alongside the coastline of Ras Beirut in the western part of the city.



The picture shows the new commercial area embracing the Lebanese Parliament in central Beirut. In the background are the ruins of the well-known Holiday In. The once grand hotel never managed to open its doors to the public. Positioned on the former frontline between East and West Beirut, the hotel became an early victim of the fighting.



The cityscape towards Hamra and Ras Beirut as viewed from the southern area of Qasqas.

Beirut at street level. The picture to the left is taken in a residential area of Achrafiye, while the one to the right shows a street in Ras Beirut.



Sectarian and Political Markings in Beirut



Left: Posters on a wall in Achrafiye. The posters of the late Bashir Gemayel, former Lebanese vice president and leader of the Phalange Party, are shaped into a cross. The number is the total amount of square kilometres in Lebanon.

Below: The emblem of Harakat Amal decorates a parking lot in the vicinity of Ras Beirut. A poster of Imam Musa Sadr, commonly referred to as 'the thirteenth Imam,' is placed next to the logo reading 'Amal.'





Lebanese flags, posters of the Phalange Party logo and pictures of Bashir Gemayel cover a wall in Achrafiye.



The logo of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), and a picture of its leader Walid Jumblat (top left corner), on a wall in a Druze neighbourhood in Beirut.



Commemorating the war. A public remembrance of the breakout of the war at the Martyr Square in the centre of Beirut. Although sectarian divisions of society are prominent, commonality is also expressed.

Mouvement Social Libanais: History, Formative Ideas and Structure

Introduction

Mouvement Social Libanais has since its beginning in 1961 focused its work on social issues in Lebanon. Its main priority has been to improve the situation of the weakest in society. This work has taken on a variety of forms and has been conducted all over the country. During my field work, the work was conducted by a core of sixty employees and thirty contracted instructors, while volunteers assisted them when suitable. Since the end of the civil war, the organisation had been focusing on rural women, youth in difficulty, imprisoned women and minors and dropouts from school. In addition, it also set up projects to help craft workers and small entrepreneurs develop and conduct their work. Some of the products produced by these groups were sold in the movement's shops; l'Artisan du Liban.

Grégoire Haddad and the Initial Idea

Born in 1924, Grégoire Haddad lived his youth in three different villages in the mountains adjacent to Beirut. Receiving his primary education in Jesuit elementary, middle and high school, he completed his education by studying philosophy and theology at the Oriental Clerical Institute. After ending his studies in 1949 he became a priest, and, in addition to acting as the secretary of the diocese, he was appointed General Vice President for the Beirut parish in 1952. His next important appointment in the parish came in 1968, when he was appointed Arch Bishop for the Greek Catholic Church.

The idea of Mouvement Social dates back to 1957 when Haddad was Secretary General for the Greek Catholic diocese in Beirut. At the time he was a mentor for a movement called Catholic Work, and a branch called JIC.²³ The branch consisted of young men and women who were neither students nor having regular employment. They wanted to initiate a social programme in addition to the religious activities, and Haddad recommended that they should deal with all parts of society on this project. Social programs were imported from France and Belgium, and a conference was arranged to discuss how these programs could be adopted to the local setting.²⁴ One of the results of this conference was the beginning of a volunteer organisation without political affiliations and whose members and participants came from all religious groups. The essential criteria should be a commitment to humanistic issues without

²³ Independent Christian Youth.

²⁴ The initial programs were inspired by a Christian NGO called Catholic Work.

sectarian segregation. This early version was called “the Movement of the Social Volunteers,” and it initiated activities like summer camps for deprived children and resources centres for high school students. These early events helped crystallise the objectives, and in 1960 the organisation got its current name: Mouvement Social.²⁵ As Haddad explained to me, the initiation of MSL was motivated by the wish to create common ground:

‘I chose six volunteers from my acquaintances to be the initiators of the movement. They represented the six major “religions” Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Sunni, Shi’a and Druze. Three of them were young men, three of them were young women, three of them were francophone, and three of them were Anglophone.²⁶ This “cocktail” was a symbol of everybody’s participation in the initiation of this movement, so that eventually anyone could be part of the movement without taking into consideration religious affiliation. I declined to be one of the initiating members so that it would not be labelled as Greek Catholic.’

1961 – 1975: the Beginning

With its official registration in 1961, the Mouvement Social began to establish itself in Lebanon. One of the first projects it managed was the distribution of medicines to infirmaries. The task was assigned by President Chehab, who had become impressed by the organisation. According to Haddad the organisation soon gained public responsibility:

‘The founding committee had been set with its six members, so I took an appointment with President Chehab in his summer residence in Ajaltoun. I went up there with the members and we explained to him the dimensions of the movement and presented him with a copy of its new magazine. The second day I was contacted by one of his aides, Colonel Ley, [...], and he told me: ‘the president has never read a magazine from beginning to end before, and he was very impressed and also surprised that such a movement has been founded in Lebanon.’ And he therefore decided to give me two missions. 1) To buy and distribute medicines to local Lebanese infirmaries (there were 60 of them). There was a budget for this but the distribution was not fair; he hoped that it would become so through the work of the MSL. 2) To raise the number of public hospitals and hospitals working together with the state. The MSL had to supervise how things were going, and they had to report to the President and the Ministry of Health. Volunteers of the MSL who were doctors, nurses and social workers did the supervisory work requested by the president. Doing this they realised that there were great miseries in the practices of the public hospitals and hospitals affiliated to the state. The medical committee of the MSL started calling for bids for medicines needed by the infirmaries, and they selected the best and cheapest. These medicines were distributed to the infirmaries in accordance to the number of monthly check ups and number of patients.’

²⁵ Ar.: *Harakat Ijtemayie*,

²⁶ In Lebanon, due to historical affiliations with foreign powers, there has been a sectarian difference between Anglophone and Francophone groups. An example of this is how 19th century French and English missionaries in the Lebanese mountains targeted respectively Maronites and Druze. (Makdisi 2000)

While the organisation was in its early stages, an organisational philosophy was defined so that the participants had a common base for their actions. During an interview with Haddad I asked him about the initial ideology, to which he replied by presenting me with eight basic principals.

'A movement of thought' (harakat fikker). Since social work that comes without any basis in reason is fragile and shallow, it does not change society.

'A movement of work' (harakat amal). A movement of work, because a movement of thought without work becomes, what is called in political circles, "theorizing" and bourgeois entertainment.

'A movement of voluntarism' (harakat tatawaa). It depends on non-remunerated work, and spreading this in youth contexts. Because without this the human is not fully realised, especially in a country that has been mercantile since the days of the Phoenicians.

'A movement of commitment' (harakat l'tisaam). Voluntarism should be serious. It should not be a passing hobby to fill time, but concrete representation of thought, principals, and training in responsibility.

'A movement without political affiliations' (harakat la hezbiya). Neither the movement nor its members should be affiliated with any local, regional or international party. The MSL first used the phrase "non-political", but its members soon discovered that through involvement and commitment there are political stands, either implicit or explicit. To accept this is important. A non-political individual conforms to a political reality, and eventually he or she develops a negative attitude towards politics.

'A non-welfare movement' (harakat la kha'yria). This phrase used to shock some of those that did not understand its meaning. It was a stand against the activities of welfare organisations that were spread in Lebanon at the time (and still are) so as to substitute them with development plans.

'A non-violence movement' (harakat la aanfiye). In the sense of creating a changing power through means that do not accept violence, because a noble aim does not allow any bad means. A good example of this is Ghandi and the liberation of India from colonization and British abuses.

'A non-sectarian movement' (harakat la taifiye). In a country which political system is confessional and sectarian, it remains backward as long as its youth do not surmount sectarian struggles of all kinds. Today, all encompassing secularism is the principal followed instead of non-confessionalism.²⁷

I found these principals to be an important part of the Mouvement Social; they constituted the foundation of the organisation's work and activities. They were a guideline for two aspects of the organisation in the sense that they indicated both how the work should be managed as well as defining the basis for social interaction among the members.

²⁷ Today the movement takes an official non-confessional stand. It does not, however, demand that its members are secular. Confession, being both personal religious believes and the basis for political organisation, is a tense issue, and should therefore be regarded as a private matter.

A number of projects were started in the first fifteen years of operation. They were mainly focusing on medical and educational matters, but not exclusively. Aiming to understand and adapt to society, as portrayed above, the organisation concluded statistical studies and social analysis. Volunteer branches were organised in twenty towns and villages around the country, and ninety-five infirmaries were established. The distribution of medicines was done in collaboration with other NGOs and the Lebanese government, and medical and nursing students working as volunteers ran weekly vaccination campaigns. Amongst other projects was giving additional education for underprivileged students, teaching illiterate and organising summer camps for children. Cultural events like theatre clubs, where people could watch plays and then discuss them with writers, directors and actors, were also facilitated. These projects proved successful, and in 1974 a large housing project was started in Kfar Shima in south Beirut. A separate organisation was set up by Mouvement Social, and it was supposed to build 140 apartments in this area. But with the start of the civil war, the work came to a halt as the emerging front line went through Kfar Shima. By then forty-eight apartments had been finished and the project had been operational for a year.²⁸

1975 – 1990: the Civil War

During the civil war it became difficult for Mouvement Social to conduct its projects. As Lebanon submerged to the acts of militia groups and foreign armies, doing social work was both complicated and dangerous. Ongoing ethnic cleansing combined with sectarian delineated frontlines did not favour inter-confessional action. Hence the efforts of the administration were focused on local development centres and run by a few people from the chosen areas. Most of the volunteer work was stopped as it was feared that the overwhelming sectarian conflict might spread to the organisation itself. It was feared that this could lead to a fragmentation of Mouvement Social along sectarian lines.

The development centres were started in Tripoli and the Akkar region in the north, in Ras Baalbek and Zahle in the east, and Nabathiye and Saida in the south. In addition to these, such centres were also initiated in the northern and southern suburbs of Beirut. The projects at these centres were led by trained social workers that Mouvement Social employed. Common for the war-time work was that it was trying to attend to people's basic needs. In a situation of uncertainty and danger helping people to make ends meet was viewed as a useful way of supporting people. The activities were divided into two different areas; the first

²⁸ The Project was restarted in 1992 and was still ongoing during my fieldwork.

embracing economic and social issues, and the second relief work. The relief work was particularly aimed at internal refugees, and improving health and nutrition among children was prioritised. The work was coordinated with other NGOs and UN institutions when this was possible and beneficial. Examples of projects within the first area are the initiation of workshops in five different locations for production of local handicrafts. It also started its own shop, l'Artisan du Liban, for retail of the handicraft products. Because of the collapse of the Lebanese state apparatus MSL tried to compensate for the lack of public services, which became a general guideline for their activities.

During this period the number of employees rose to over eighty. Because of the desperate situation new sources of funding had to be established. Since the state contribution and local funding was almost impossible to get, Mouvement Social had to seek foreign donors. European NGOs and the UN hence became important financial supporters. Before the war they had laid it upon themselves not to request any assistance from abroad, but the new Lebanese situation forced a shift in internal politics.

These were difficult times and not all of the projects proved successful. One of those was the establishment of a warehouse that sold cheap medical supplies to local infirmaries. This was done in cooperation between MSL and the Middle East Church Council, and it was supposed to be a self sustaining venture. However, lacking reimbursements from infirmaries they were dealing with lead to an exhaustion of the starting capital and to the collapse of the project after one year. Doing ideological work in the pre-war manner became close to impossible in the 1980s. MSL, however, still aimed to '... continue to prove that amongst the fury of war, Lebanese existence was still possible [through development work].' (Mouvement Social Libanais 1994: 6)

1990 – 2002: the Post-War Era

With the end of the civil war in 1990 Mouvement Social had to readapt itself again. The end of violence opened up for a wider scope of social action, while at the same time it revealed an altered society. The national economy, the housing and the infrastructure was in a dire condition. The country had experienced extensive population displacement, and the political system was both chaotic and fragile. In short, the country faced massive problems after the end of the war, and for Mouvement Social this had to be taken into consideration.

Re-establishing itself at the start of the post war area Mouvement Social ended some activities which were covered by other NGOs. Among these were doing statistics, operating

infirmaries and conducting vaccination programs. During a strategy evaluation in 1993 the post war situation was considered, and the organisations focus and priorities were amended. The humanitarian and socially inclusive philosophy that had been the backbone of the organisation since the beginning was still essential, but the work became more result orientated. Due to the critical state of society, and the amount of social work needed, adopting a more professional approach became a priority. This motivated by an aim to better utilize the organisations resources. The board and administration wanted to concentrate their resources on a few projects rather than spreading their efforts over a wide range of social action.

The general opinion was that the focus should be on providing, as far as possible, work and services to the population groups that had the least of resources. There were an abundance of issues to attend to, but trying to deal with them all would lead to Mouvement Social doing a broad span of work, but of little effect. Hence the activities were limited to fewer programs managed by the local centres. The change in tactics in the '93 evaluation did, however, not diminish the awareness of the organisation's ideological framework. Aspects such as being non-confessional and non-partisan were still an integral part of daily work. A renewed effort in investigation of social needs and accumulation of knowledge turned out to be central elements for work in post-war Lebanon. Basing thought on facts, in addition to project participation of the involved population remained fundamental aspects of its work and philosophy.

Adapting to New Social Realities

Entering into the post-war area, Mouvement Social organised in 1993 an evaluation meeting of their work and organisation. The principals of Haddad were still essential values, but the board and administration felt a need to prepare the organisation for the new situation in Lebanon. The Director since the beginning of the 1990s, Mayla Bakhache, summarised the outcome as being centred on four basic conditions for their efforts. These were social justice, non-sectarianism, focus on development and coordination. Social justice was seen as imperative to their work; focusing on a fair distribution of resources and equal opportunities was a basic motivation for their social action. As in the early days of Mouvement Social, non-sectarianism was viewed as a basic requirement for their collective efforts, as well as for a better society. Social development was viewed as the wanted outcome of their projects. Mayla Bakhache explained it as the need to create a fundament for those assisted by the

organisation, enabling them to act independently and to manage life in modern Lebanon. By coordination MSL wished to maximise the results of their efforts. In Lebanon there is a wide range of NGOs operating, many of who target the same groups and do similar projects, in addition to the efforts done by public institutions. The basic idea behind the coordination program was to try to synchronise the work done by the different social agents, and thus achieve better results.

In order to focus the values of the organisation additional importance was given to the concept of citizenship. The expression was viewed as embracing existing values in the organisation, parallel to being a concrete social platform for all Lebanese. Citizenship, both embracing non-confessionalism and emphasising the relationship between the individual and the state, was thus particularly useful for internal use among staff and volunteers. But, as I will discuss in chapter five, it was not an uncomplicated concept and especially so in terms of presenting it outside of Mouvement Social. In general terms, the organisation aimed to ‘... rebuild in every one a sense of the other who is different, and a sense of community.’ (Mouvement Social Libanais 1994: 5)

But it was not citizenship in particular that was hard to deal with; many ideological issues seemed to be a source of concern for the organisation. Aiming to push for social change, even if nothing more than to work for an autonomous space in a sectarian reality, required carefulness so that it did not become a political challenge. A matter such as promoting citizenship did encourage individual reorientation from a community based identity. And this could lead to problems. As former Prime Minister Salim el-Hoss told me during an interview: ‘... political practice is mostly done in terms of sectarian interests.’ This view of politics was shared by the Lebanese I knew. With the ‘the political’ and ‘the sectarian’ being closely linked in peoples minds, it would be difficult to partake in political debates and still manage to remain non-sectarian. At least to be perceived as non-sectarian. MSL’ integrity, based in its non-confessional and non-political orientations, was important for its acceptance in the different communities where it did social work. The organisation did not ideologically represent anyone but itself, and being more publicly engaged in the socio-political debate could jeopardise its integrity. If by nothing more than making it an incidental partner of one community, which could happen if they by coincidence publicly shared the arguments of one sectarian leader.



A banner expressing some of Mouvement Social's concerns. The picture is taken in Beirut at a fare arranged by the organisation.

The Projects

Mouvement Social divided their work into seven different programs. The programs were located across the country, however, as MSL (Ibid.) held, they made ‘... a difference for only a few.’ The work had been adapted to the post war philosophy, as described above. The focus was on doing quality work that gave the beneficiaries the tools needed to manage in post war Lebanon. Below I have given an introduction to the various programs.

‘Rural production’

The rural production counted around a hundred women as beneficiaries. The women were given training in production of handicrafts and farm products. The work was intended to give the participants additional income to the family budget. Production was organised according to the individuals need and situation. The participants collected the raw materials they needed at the local MSL centre, and made the crafts at home. The goods were then sold to the MSL owned store l’Artisan du Liban for distribution to a larger market. Besides earning a bit of money, the program aimed to provide the women with additional education, technical skills and management skills.

‘Pre-vocational clubs’

The pre-vocational clubs targeted dropouts from the official school system, between the age of ten and fourteen. MSL operated four such centres in three cities: Beirut, Tripoli and Zahle. Each centre had a staff that facilitated the education of around thirty attendants. These were given training in literacy, and the teaching was adapted to the individual needs of the student. They were also given vocational training, mainly as introduction to various

industries. Socio-cultural activities and sports were also arranged, in addition to information about topics such as health, children's rights and environment. These centres often acted as stepping stones to further vocational training.

'Vocational training'

The vocational training project was designed for school drop outs between 15 and 19 years old from poor or difficult situations. On a yearly basis five hundred students were given a chance to get an education at one of MSL vocational training centres. During my fieldwork the attendants were being educated as nurses, mechanics and salespersons in the hotel industry. The program was coordinated with the government, and the final year graduates received official certification from either the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Training, or from the National Employment Office. During my fieldwork I worked as a volunteer English teacher at of the vocational training centre, which I will address in the next chapter.

'Rehabilitation of prisoners'

This program was set up for women and children in prison, and it also encompassed children in conflict with the law. The inmates, whom were serving under very difficult conditions, were given vocational training in hairdressing, computer assembly, inlaid work and leatherwork. Legal aid was also provided to those who needed it.

'Micro-credit'

The Micro credit program was restarted in 1996 as a way to help poor entrepreneurs establish themselves. Those selected were given an interest free loan of 2500 USD, which they were expected to pay back when they began making revenues of their business. Their loans were distributed within MSL's vocational training sectors: agriculture, mechanics and handicraft.

'Coordination and networking'

Coordination was a focus that has been with the organisation since its beginning. In Lebanon, with its large number of NGOs, coordination of efforts whenever possible benefits the target groups. Doing a double amount of work is only a waste of resources. Since 1992 most of this work had been organised through an umbrella organisation called 'the Collective of Lebanese NGOs.' It was started by fourteen organisations.

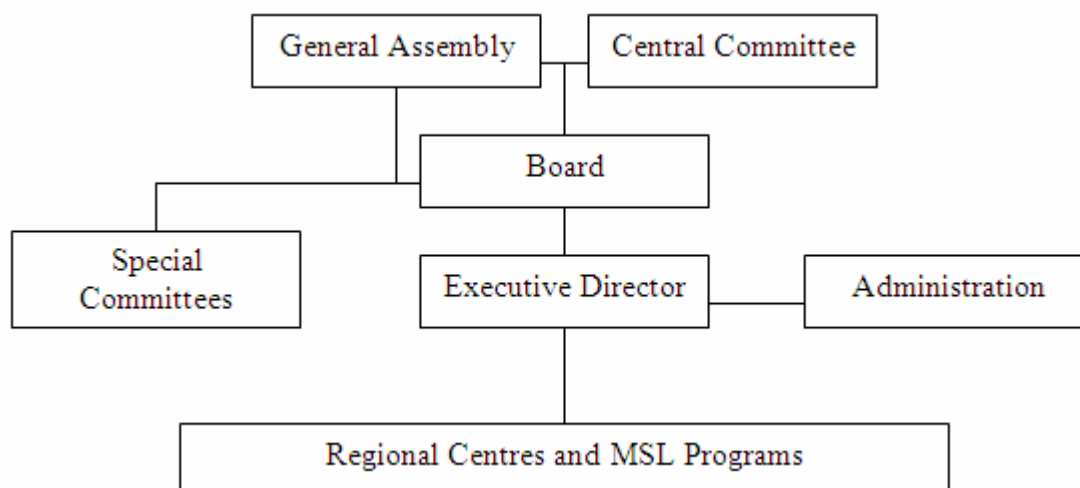
'Volunteers'

The volunteer project dated back to the organisations beginning. This sector was divided into two groups: specialised workers and youth. The former was experienced and capable volunteers who contributed to the other programs, by teaching for example, while the latter

group was mainly youth participating on camps and seminars arranged by MSL. Due to changing times and the organisation becoming more professional, the activities of the volunteers played a secondary role to those of the staff. Still, the two hundred volunteers made important contributions to the work of the organisation. As I was a volunteer myself, I became well acquainted to this part of MSL. This project will be elaborated further in chapter four and five.

Structure

Mouvement Social was chaired by a Board of ten persons who gathered monthly to oversee the development of the organisation, its projects and its finances.²⁹ The Board was elected annually by a General Assembly of members from the various special committees of the organisation. The General Assembly had to be approved of by the Central Committee before it could be gathered to appoint a new Board. Every project area, for instance health, education, volunteers and development, had its own special committee and was thus ensured a say in the development of Mouvement Social. The Central Committee consisted of members who had backgrounds as long serving volunteers. The Board, and the institutions supervising it, played an important role in developing the organisation, as well as ensuring continuity of its identity and priorities.



(MSL 2002)

The work and projects were organised and headed by the Executive Director and her senior team of employees. They were assisted by sixty social workers and thirty contracted trainers, and an additional group of around two hundred volunteers whom could participate on the

²⁹ A breakdown of the 2001 budget, of around one million US dollars, is added in the appendix two.

various projects.³⁰ The feedback from the employees at the centres was important for the choices made by the administration, and the organisation had in praxis a fairly flat structure.

Participants and Recruitment

Having been active for more than four decades, it is difficult to isolate one particular strategy for recruitment. The focus had generally been on having ‘... a large human base around Mouvement Social,’ as the Director put it, in order to ‘... build people who can be open to the others, and who can involve themselves in the public concerns.’ The volunteers played an important role with regards to this. Independent of how much they participated, they were still a part of this human base. Many of those partaking, whether they were employees or volunteers, had joined because they knew someone that was involved. Among the employees it was common to have a volunteer background, or at least an affiliation to the organisation, for instance by being a former student at one of the centres. Only one of the employees I knew did not have any such affiliation. Employing volunteers did also serve a particular purpose. According to the Director volunteers were often preferred for vacant positions since ‘they share the same values.’

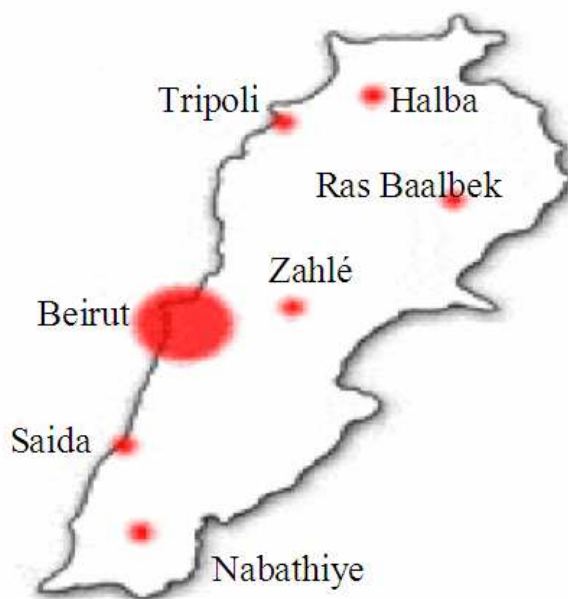
The recruitment strategy was agreed upon by the Administration and the Volunteer Responsible. During my field work the Volunteer Responsible, who had occupied the position for two years, was focusing on active recruitment among university students. Recruitment among university students were prioritized by MSL, as the students were viewed as being resourceful as well as being able to afford spending time on social work.³¹ However, volunteers were also recruited at the various centres around the country.

³⁰ Although in reality only a group of fifty volunteers were considered active and asked to participate. The remaining group was rarely mobilised, and consisted of inexperienced volunteers or people that, for personal reasons, had decreased their involvement with the organisation.

³¹ Another important concern in this respect is that the organisation did not expect poor people to volunteer for them, as they were considered to have more than enough with managing daily life already.

Locations

The map shows the centres of Mouvement Social. The projects varied from place to place, depending on the local situation, the need and the possibilities. As the map indicates there were more projects in the capital, accommodating the largest population in Lebanon, than the other towns. In the area of Beirut there were four centres (Nabaa, Jnah, Ghobeiri and Bourj Hammoud), in addition to the main office in Badaro. Two prisons in the city also benefited from the organisations projects.



(MSL 2002³²)

Mouvement Social Libanais as an Anthropological Field

During my field work I mostly participated in the organisation's projects in Beirut. Apart from attending a summer camp in the village of Qartaba in the mountains to the north of the capital, I spent my time at the centre in Ghobeiri and the main office in Badaro. I also visited the centre in Jnah, as well as attending seminars and workshops arranged by Mouvement Social. I will elaborate further on this in chapter four.

My regular informants were all living in Beirut, although most of them were from other places in the country. Apart from Grégoire Haddad, who did not play an active part in the movement, they were either employees or volunteers. Since the Director had given me the possibility to volunteer as a language teacher at centre in Ghobeiri, I spent most of my time with the staff there and in Badaro. I got well acquainted with Ilham and Noor, who were running the centre, as well as with the staff at the main office, Huda in particular. I also got to know a group of eight volunteers, who, like me, were university students. I would usually meet with them outside of Mouvement Social arrangements since the everyday work was mostly done by the staff. I got introduced to the volunteers either through people in the organisation, or by meeting them at Mouvement Social seminars.

³² The names of the locations are added by the author.

Thus, my field was divided into specific locations in terms of the centres and projects, as well as being more fluid in terms of the relations to my informants. Particularly so were my relations to the volunteers, whom I would meet both in and out of Mouvement Social contexts. It could be at a workshop in Badaro one day and for a coffee somewhere in Beirut the following day. My informants' residential situation complied with the sectarian division of the city, thus my Maronite informants' were living in the eastern district of Achrafiye, the Greek Orthodox and Sunni in Ras Beirut to the west, and the Shi'a in the southern parts. However, they were not restricted to their area of residence and would use the city according to needs and interests.

Introducing the Employees and Volunteers

Since the end of the war the number of staff and volunteers had been stable. The staff consisted almost exclusively of women, while the volunteers largely were university students of both genders. The Board, Central Committee and General Assembly consisted of both men and women.

Generally about Life and Background

Contrary to what was common in Lebanon, sect was not an issue in Mouvement Social. Many of my informants were even unsure of other members' sectarian background, even if they had met several times. But this was not always the case, and some of the participants would clearly state their religious affiliation by the way they dressed or spoke. Still, most of my informants dressed in a secular manner, and thus did not display such affiliations. Since I did not speak Arabic, it was difficult to directly observe whether people were using particular religious expressions when they were speaking. It was, however, my informants' opinion that people often were hard to place just by the manner of speaking. So people could consequently be difficult to tell apart by their clothing and appearance.

In terms of finances my informants were managing reasonably well. There were, however, notable differences between my colleagues at the centre in Ghobeiri and some of my volunteer friends. My colleague Noor would lead a low cost life; not dining in restaurants and buying clothes and groceries in the cheap shops in the suburbs. In comparison to this would many of the volunteers be studying at high cost universities and use more money on clothes and entertainment. While the staff would be low paid workers, the volunteers would usually come from well off families that could afford to support their children's higher

education and life style. However, I did not meet anyone among the staff who had to support themselves. They were either married, and had working husbands, or were living in their parents' households.

All of my informants had university education, but without any coherence in the choice of subjects. Their preferred academic disciplines would range from biology and physics to political and social sciences. I found, however, that more had a background from the latter category.

Gender

Most of my informants were women, which was a general trend in the organisation. I did not encounter any men that were employed in the organisation, and in the volunteer group there were more women than men involved. Men were, however, active in the volunteer group, and both in the workshops and a camp that I attended several men were participating. On a camp I attended in the village of Qartaba, which I will return to in the following chapter, nearly half of the participants were men.

In the daily work, however, volunteers as well as staff were almost exclusively women. During one of my discussions with the Director she explained that this was not something that just applied to the Mouvement Social. Rather, the entire field of social work was '... womanised.' Women have traditionally been the main actors within social work, nursing and education, and hence she viewed it more as a feature of society, than just a matter of MSL. She also viewed finances as a reason for men not to get involved in such work. The employees did not receive high salaries, and men were therefore not interested. Furthermore, she viewed the latter element as having two sides to it; one being that men wanted a high salary, the other that they want more than women.

Working in Post-War Lebanon: Mouvement Social's Role and Efforts

Introduction

Having outlined history and shape of Mouvement Social Libanais, I now turn to look at the way it operated in post-war Lebanon. The central topic of this chapter will be the way it, as a part of civil society, related to its social and political surroundings. I will look at concrete efforts, and describe how it mobilised according to its strategy and ideology. The examples portray different types of work and incidents so as to describe the meeting between Mouvement Social and the rest of society.

The empirical material in this chapter describes three different aspects of the organisation. I will begin by looking at the centre in Ghobeiri where I was working as a teacher. This material is intended to give an example of what the organisation's everyday work is like. It's a description of the work conducted and strategies used by the employees at one of MSL's centres. By looking at this I hope to shed some light on what doing social work in Lebanon is like; the people and institutions the organisation has to deal with, how MSL present itself on the ground, and, finally, how they approach those benefiting from the programmes.

I will then turn to look at a volunteer camp which was held in the village of Qartaba. Contrary to the centre in Ghobeiri this was a short project, only four days, where most of the work was done by volunteers. The focus will be on how a sole project is conducted and the outcome of it, both in terms of the concrete efforts and the interrelation between the locals and the volunteers. The latter part of the focus will particularly deal with MSL's reception in the village and the how the volunteers perceive and relates to these circumstance. I will then look at other aspects of the organisations activities, like its workshops and the *Marathon*.

Next, I will elaborate on an incident that happened during my fieldwork; a physical assault on Grégoire Haddad following one of his television programs. In the spring of 2002 Haddad conducted a series of debate programs dealing with religious issues. The attack, which took place outside the studio of a Christian television station, received quite a lot of public attention. I will describe the incident and how it was interpreted among my informants and in the media.

The last part of the chapter will be dealing more explicitly with the organisation itself. There were issues in which people did not agree, for instance of matters like secularism and non-confessionalism. MSL might appear to be a uniform organisation from the previous examples, and I will therefore turn to look at issues the members were in disagreement over. Following this I will point to some of the strategies used to create a common space in the organisation.

Ghobeiri

Projects in the Suburbs

It was at the MSL centre in Gobeiri I had my main involvement with the organisation. For a period of four months, and three times a week, I gave English lessons to nursing students at the centre. The MSL centre in Ghobeiri is one of three centres in the suburbs of Beirut, with the other two located in the deprived beach settlement of Jnah, and in the mainly Christian area of Bourj Hammoud in the North Eastern part of the city.

At all three centres the priorities were with youth and young adults. The centre in Jnah was focusing on providing education to children who had fallen outside of the normal schooling system, in addition to giving vocational training to adolescents. The vocational training was aimed at giving the students skills to acquire jobs locally, and hairdressing was one of the subjects taught. At the two other centres most of the organisation's efforts were directed at providing vocational training in addition to running a micro credit programme for selected attendants. At the centre in Ghobeiri, as at the others, there was a focus on local networking, which I shall elaborate on further down. The vocational training at Bourj Hammoud was offering technical training to sixty students yearly. Courses were given in car mechanics, car electric systems, and electronics, each amounting to seven hundred hours of education. The micro credit program was an initiative to give interest free loans to viable local business initiative, such as handicraft, farm products or other local production.

Ghobeiri: Introducing the Area

In his pre-war study Fouad I. Khuri (1975: 212) remarks that one of the most striking features of Ghobeiri and the neighbouring Chiyah '... as suburbs is the generality and independence of their socioeconomic organisation.' Even though the areas have changed since then, among other things amalgamated further with the city of Beirut, as well as experienced a substantial population growth, they still remain as relatively autonomous areas. During the last civil war heavy fighting, ethnic cleansing and large scale internal migration

from the south of Lebanon were among the factors contributing to the current appearance of the suburbs.³³ The socio-economic transformation brought about by the war radically altered the area. Over two decades, from the 1970s to the 90s, it changed from a village into a ‘... city size community without any civil planning or proper infrastructure.’ (El-Ghoul 2002) During my field work evidence of civil war and contemporary poverty was widespread in the local scenery.

Still, Ghobeiri was the richest and most populous municipality in the southern suburbs.³⁴ It was almost exclusively a Shi'a Muslim area, and politically dominated by Hezb'Allah and Harakat Amal.³⁵ In terms of living conditions there were few data available for Ghobeiry alone. Looking at the entire *mohafazat* (governorate), official figures indicate living conditions slightly below those of Beirut, but better than the rest of Lebanon.³⁶ However, another study (Khalidi-Beyhum 1999) indicates that within the Mohafazat of Mount Lebanon the suburbs constitute the poorer areas with almost half of the families manage on income on less than eight hundred US dollars a month, and an additional tenth surviving on less than three hundred and thirty US dollars a month.³⁷ So, the statistics suggests a generally difficult financial situation where large parts of the population live on meagre resources.

MSL's (1994) post-war statistical investigations showed that the population in the area had a low level of education.³⁸ Around fifty five percent of the adult population had completed primary education, and below ten percent secondary education.³⁹ The students at the centre were, as was common in the area, from families with more than three children, and with low income. MSL experienced that their parents had low paid jobs and often insecure employment situations. The women were almost exclusively occupied as housewives or as domestic workers, while the men tended to be in the service sector, many doing repair or maintenance work.

³³ Ghobeiri and Chiay are tied to the *mohafazat* (governorate) of Mount Lebanon, which counts 1,145 458 residents. (UNDP 2004) Along with the mohafazat of Beirut, and its 407 403 inhabitants, the two governorates account for almost half of the population in Lebanon (49.9 %). (Ibid.)

³⁴ Although it is an important area of Beirut, it receives little of the public resources. ‘Ghobeiri's share of state funding is proportionate with its official, registered population of 15 000, although the town probably has a quarter of a million inhabitants.’ (El-Ghoul 2002)

³⁵ Both Hezb'Allah and Harakat Amal are armed political fractions that gained power and influence during the civil war. Hezb'Allah, resisting the Israeli occupation of the Shebaa Farms in the south eastern part of Lebanon, is the only active militia in the country.

³⁶ See appendix four, figures publishes by the Lebanese authorities and the UN.

³⁷ See appendix four for a complete overview.

³⁸ Based on 150 questionnaires.

³⁹ Around 60 % of the men and 50 % of the women. However, these are statistics from the early 1990s, and, 17 years of civil war considered, in addition to massive internal migration from the south of Lebanon, these figure were likely to be higher during my fieldwork.

There were around two hundred thousand residents in the municipality, many of whom were from other parts of the country; mainly the south of Lebanon. I did not come across any official figures on the percentage of newcomers, but locals claimed that between half and three thirds of the inhabitants were not originally from Ghobeiri. It was mainly the latter group that was officially registered as belonging to the municipality; the others were commonly still registered in their parents' towns or villages. The relations between the two groups were perceived as being strained, particularly because people were negative to newcomers buying up land in the area at the same time as keeping close family and financial ties to other places. It was also common that those officially registered as Ghobeiri residents benefited more from the municipal services.

Mouvement Social's Centre in Ghobeiri

Located in the northern part of Ghobeiri, the MSL vocational training centre I was teaching at accommodated an annual number of forty students. It consisted of two offices, a classroom and a kitchen, and was situated in a relatively modest combined residential and commercial building complex. At the street level car repair shops and hardware retailers operated, both being common forms of businesses in the suburbs. The centre was accessed through the atrium of the complex, without any signs indicating its location. The premises were sufficiently equipped for teaching and daily activities. MSL's annual budget for vocational training was just over two hundred thousand US dollars during my fieldwork. This amount was divided between all its centres, so resources had to be carefully utilised.

Mouvement Social had since 1978 been running several projects in the area. In the beginning they were working with women and children, but after the war the focus shifted to education of youth. The latter singled itself out as a particularly vulnerable group after missing long periods of schooling due to hostilities. Thus, in the difficult post war realities it was not uncommon that youth in this area were having problems following the normal education system. In many cases they were also dropping out of it altogether. At the MSL centre, some of these were given a chance to become nurses. Prior to and during my fieldwork nurses were in short supply in Lebanon, and the program had hence been initiated in response to a general need in society.

At the centre there were two classes; one only male and one mixed. The students were between the age of fifteen and twenty, and both classes were attending the same program. I

was giving lessons to the mixed class as a voluntary supplement to their compulsory education, and seventeen students regularly attended my lessons.

The Staff

The centre was run by two employees, as well as two others working part time: a woman taking care of the kitchen and cleaning, and a young man working as a janitor. The employees, Ilham and Noor, were both living in the suburbs and had each been working with the organisation for two decades. Having husbands and children, as well as occupying fulltime positions with MSL, they were both resourceful and hectic women. Originally they were both from the South of Lebanon, but had moved to Beirut in the 1970s in order to begin their higher education. It was in Beirut that they got acquainted with Mouvement Social Libanais.

As the responsible for the daily running of the centre, Noor was the one I was working and coordinating my lessons with. Ilham was working more on an administrative level, and would be spending time at the other two suburban centres as well. During my time at the centre I got well acquainted with both of them, and in particular Noor whom I worked closely with, and who took the time to introduce me to the area. I will elaborate further on their backgrounds and involvement in the succeeding chapter.

The Students

The students at the centre were mainly Shi'a, apart from three Sunni Palestinians, and from Ghobeiri. Coming from poor families and not succeeding in the regular school system, they were all given a "last" chance at the centre. As the teacher, I found the class to be quite lively, and maintaining a proper teaching environment could at times be challenging. This was, however, mainly an issue at the beginning of the course. As I got better acquainted with the students, the lessons progressed in a smoother manner.

In the group that attended my lessons there was little uniformity besides the socio-geographical background. Dress code and lifestyles varied between the students, from those conservative both in behaviour and clothing to those following the global fashion industry. Another factor of division was gender. As prospective heads and breadwinners for their families the boys were expected by their parents to get an education. However, they were generally much more focused on improving their social status in the community than tending to their schooling. Their lives were generally focused out of the domestic and into communal

sphere. In the class they would require comparatively more attention than the girls, and also contribute more to the debates, whether it was relevant to the lesson or not.

With the girls it was quite different. One of the main problems was getting their parents' consent to begin at the centre. As girls, they were not expected to get an education and the parents often required quite some convincing by the staff. This could be quite a lengthy process of negotiation. A sign of the success, however, was that once the girls had started at the centre they stayed there. This was viewed by the staff as an indication that the work being done there was recognised and well received in the local community. It was also common for the parents of the students to visit the centre every now and then for a chat and a coffee.

Local Network

So since beginning its involvement in 1978, MSL had developed an extensive network in the municipality. They collaborated with different local actors, which again helped the NGO conduct its own work, as well as, and perhaps more importantly, benefited the community.

The Ministry of Social Affairs

Zainab from a local Ministry of Social Affairs health clinic often came by the centre. She was head of the clinic and had been cooperating with Ilham and Noor for a long time. They all regarded the cooperation as very useful in the difficult circumstances they were working in. For Zainab, working on insufficient budgets, the Mouvement Social initiative was very helpful. It was a constructive and important addition to the work of her institution. Similarly, to the Mouvement Social it was beneficial to cooperate with the ministry. Both within the local civil society and the public sphere Harakat Amal and Hezb'Allah were dominant. The last municipal elections had given both additional influence, and the Mayor of Ghobeiri was representing Hezb'Allah. Thus, the alliance between MSL and the ministry brought together two actors that did not have much influence in the local political sphere. But the cooperation was not merely a strategic alliance; it was also related to the organisation's belief in cooperation between actors within the social field. And, it also was in coherence with their focus on citizenship; on the relation between the individual and the state.

The Municipality and Public Institutions

The centre had good relations to the municipality, with which they collaborated on parts of the education programs. For example, after finishing the theoretical part of their education the students would do a year of praxis at a municipal hospital. Ilham and Noor also assisted

youth from the area in getting into the local high school. Many of the youth were neither reached by the municipal services nor aware of the possibilities they held for the individual. Hence, they would, when it was possible, help local youth get into the high school. They had contact with several public schools in Ghobeiri, and the teachers at these schools helped to keep MSL updated on youth that did not do well and who could benefit from attending MSLs program. Due to limited resources and a high work load it was often difficult for the schools themselves to deal with such pupils.

Representatives from the municipality would every now and then come by the centre in order to discuss local issues with Noor and Ilham, as well as to learn about recent development in their work. They took a sincere interest in the work and knowledge provided by the two women. These meetings helped keep both parties updated on the local development. Noor once took me to meet with the Mayor at the city hall. It was a short meeting where we mainly discussed the relationship between the municipality and Mouvement Social, whose efforts were valued. One of the functions of his office was to act as a link between the state and the residents of Ghobeiri, and, through its work, Mouvement Social was helping the municipality do that. With the reinstatement of the municipal administration after the war it did not have a prominent role or function in the daily life of the residents of Ghobeiri.⁴⁰ Mouvement Social used its position to inform people about the municipality and its work, and thus, it encouraged relations of trust towards the local authorities.

Families and Residents

As I mention above, the staff had good relations to the students' families. The reason for particularly focusing on this is that it was beneficial to the youth that their families knew what they were doing. Another aspect was the value of being known in the local community. Since Mouvement Social did not keep a significant public profile, it was focusing more on being known among the neighbours, and on local connections at the grass root level. This was a good way to inform about the work of the organisation. Close relations to people of Ghobeiri also gave an additional dept to their understanding of the needs of the area, which in turn made it easier to adapt to the local situation and provide quality work.

The Daily Management of the Centre

Running the centre required a lot of effort. Not only did Ilham and Noor conduct the teaching, they also had to follow up on students doing practical training at a local hospital. In addition they had to maintain the local network. This meant visiting the institutions they were

⁴⁰ The first post-war municipal elections, held in 1998, were the first in 35 years.

in contact with, as well as receiving people at the centre. Finally, they had to attend to the administrative work of the centre, everything from providing teaching material to maintenance work, as well as coordinating their efforts with the other MSL centres in Beirut and the Main Office in Badaro.

Thus, Ilham and Noor spent a lot of time and energy doing their work. Noor, who was the main responsible for the daily running of the centre, spent far more time working than she was paid for. For Ilham, whose main responsibility was to supervise the work and budgets of the centres in Beirut, the situation was the same.

The Volunteer Camp in Qartaba

Introduction

In the summer of 2002, the organisation arranged a volunteer camp in Qartaba, a village in the mountains east of Jbail. The village was to host a three day environmental project arranged by MSL. The organisation sent a group of volunteers, headed by the Volunteer Leader, in order to talk to the villagers about the benefits of recycling of biodegradable waste.

The project was based on cooperation between the village authorities, the Ministry of Environment and Mouvement Social Libanais. All the details about the planned project camp were known to the local *Mukhtar*,⁴¹ and the practical matters regarding the stay there had been arranged in advance. The Ministry of Environment acted as sponsor and patron for the camp, which also was to include participants from the village. The project was organised as a four day camp, with a Thursday midday arrival and a return to Beirut the following Saturday evening.

The Village and the Arrival of the Volunteers

The village was situated in a fertile valley adjacent to Jabal el Laqlouq⁴² in the Lebanon range. It mainly consisted of two storey houses made of stone and concrete, with narrow roads and steps meandering in between. Many of the inhabitants of the mainly Maronite village lived in the costal towns of Jbail, Jounieh and Beirut for work purposes during the winter season, but in the summer they returned to stay in the village. So, upon our arrival in July the lush village was enjoying the presence of most of its population.

⁴¹ Headman.

⁴² The Laklouk Mountain.

When we reached the village, the group which consisted of twenty-one volunteers, including myself, and the Volunteer Leader, took up residence in the local church. The building, functioning both as a church and a community centre, had been converted into a sleeping hall for our stay. On the first afternoon, after unpacking and getting organised, the group was getting set for a look around the village. However, May, being the responsible for the group, was concerned about the meeting between the villagers and the MSL group, and wanted people to stay around the church initially. A meeting between our group and the villagers who were supposed to participate on the project was scheduled for later that afternoon, and this was viewed to be a better opportunity for introducing our group rather than random meetings in the village.

The meeting, however, did not turn out as expected. The plan of dividing the volunteers and villagers into mixed work groups for the weekend became difficult when only five teenagers from the village turned up for the meeting. The group that was supposed to help out, mainly young adults, did not show up. Nor was any proper explanation of their absence given. The small and young group was not quite what had been expected from MLS's side, but the project still had to continue. Hence, the initial meeting did not involve more than these representatives from the village, but it nonetheless went well. The meeting took shape of an official introduction of the two groups, which gradually evolved into informal socialisation. The local representatives, being a clear minority, were taken good care of by the MSL members, and mingled freely as the day progressed.

Later in the afternoon, many of the newcomers went into the village to take a better look at it. Walking through the streets and alleys, the impression of a well kept village was apparent. Most of the houses had backyards where plants, fruits and vegetables would be cultivated. The roads were in good condition, with elaborate systems of steps connecting the houses and main road of the hillside community. In the central square were a few large Phalange Party symbols, indicating a principal position of the Lebanese Christian party.⁴³

Being aware of the political sympathies in the village, the volunteers followed May's appeal for peace and quiet when moving around. The request felt strange for some of the participants, who clearly restrained themselves in order to comply. Heading back to the church for an evening supper it became a bit too much for some of the young men, and,

⁴³ The Phalange Party, led by the late Bashir Gemayel in the beginning of the conflict, who, after his death, succeeded by his brother Amin Gemayel, was one of the central actors of the civil war.

accompanied by much laughter, they began singing traditional Shi'a songs from the south of Lebanon. The incident progressed in a joyful fashion, and did not get any noticeable consequences.

The Project

The project began on around noon the following day. Together with the local participants we were divided into smaller groups, each with one local representative, and given an area of the village to visit. The idea was to call at the households in the area, and discuss the possibilities for recycling of organic waste and production of fertilizers.

The strategy worked fairly well, but the experiences of the groups varied. While some had been invited into nearly all the households they had visited, others had only been invited in by a few. I found an incident at a grocery store quite telling for many of the volunteers' experiences. My group, consisting of five persons including the local representative, visited the store for some refreshment. While getting our water bottles a couple of the girls started a conversation about the project with the proprietor. He, on the other hand, appeared to be less interested in the project, and more in the backgrounds of the people visiting. Being the only foreigner in the village I assumed he would be particularly interested in what I was doing there. It turned out, however, that my presence was of little or no consequence to him, and he contently accepted me as a Norwegian and *ajnabiye*.⁴⁴ The place of residence of my fellow volunteers was, on the contrary, investigated in detail. He was not satisfied just learning that they were from Beirut, rather, he wanted to know the specific part of the city they were from. Having gotten the information he wanted, he lost interest in the group and returned to his work. His approach was by the rest of the group experienced as an attempt to figure out their sectarian background, something which they reacted negatively to. They viewed it as a display of sectarianism and an obvious disinterest in the project, and found the incident quite annoying.

I should stress that none of the MSL members knew for certain the religious affiliation of the villagers, or at least made any public notice of it. Their Christians identity was quite obvious, but many in the group were not sure whether they were Maronites, Greek Catholic or Greek Orthodox. Neither did anyone, to my awareness, make any further investigations into their sectarian belonging. Although other groups also experienced similar episodes, or at least people being curious about where they were from and which sect they belonged to,

⁴⁴ Foreigner.

there were also many positive episodes. One of the families my group visited was that of the local priest. His residence was one of the nicer ones in the village, a beautifully crafted old house surrounded by a large and well kept garden. Both him and his wife took a keen interest in the project, and also invited us in for coffee and biscuits. The Priest and other people that invited us in talked a lot about Qartaba, and thus gave us an impression of what life was like. Visiting the house of a young married woman, we were again very well received. Having refreshments in her living room we learned that she viewed the village as being quite conservative and not the easiest location for such a project. Her comment coincided well with the experience of the group I was in. But, even though we found talking to people in the part of the village we were in fairly hard other groups experienced more success. On one of the five groups visited sixteen households on the first day, while my group only managed six.

Volunteer Life at the Camp

Although many of the volunteers experienced the work as difficult due to the reservedness of the locals, this did not affect the atmosphere in the group. Compromised by an equal number of men and women, aged from seventeen to thirty five, the interaction among the volunteers was very good.

In the evenings, after the end of the daily tasks, people would gather at the church and spend time together. The camp participants would commonly have a few beers and engage in different activities, such as playing music, cards and conversing. Although people were combining work and social life throughout the days, the evenings were particularly relaxed and suitable of interaction among the group members. For me, as an anthropologist, partaking in such events gave me valuable insights into the lives and opinions of my fellow volunteers. It also gave them an opportunity to get to know me, and to discuss my project. Most of my informants were university students, a couple had also been studying social sciences, and their queries about my work were insightful. Overall, they were positive to my research, but there were one or two remarks about avoiding misrepresentation.⁴⁵ Academic discussions were, however, a minor element during these evenings. Mostly the interaction progressed in a more relaxed manner.

In terms of sectarian background, the largest group among the participants were Shi'a Muslim. Other sects represented were Greek Orthodox and Sunni Muslim. The sectarian

⁴⁵ Considering the overall negative image of Arabs that is presented in Western media, I fully understand such reservations.

representation was, however, quite random. The volunteer leader, who was responsible for mobilising volunteers for the project, had prior to the camp asked many people about attending, and the group hence consisted of those that were free to join. Sectarianism was never an issue among the volunteers, rather, consisting of old volunteers they were very relaxed in relation to others social backgrounds. The Greek Orthodox and the Sunni Muslims would join in when the rest of the group were singing typical Shi'a songs. But although things were harmonious in Qartaba, I was told that this had not always been the case on such camps. Many of the volunteers could tell stories about incidents of sectarian tensions at previous camps. This had taken shape as heated discussions about sects and politics among older volunteers, while among the younger it had tended to be joking about and ridiculing other sects.

Focusing on Being Lebanese

In fact, there was a focus on being Lebanese. In the bus, when driving to and from Qartaba, the Lebanese national anthem was sung several times. Everybody participated, and it was accompanied by laughter and clapping, but despite the humour involved the song was properly performed. Whether sung in serious or entertaining manner, the noticeable in the situation is the focus on a common and national symbol. A similar incident happened just before we were leaving the village. After tidying up the church where we had been staying, a group photo was to be taken. Everybody gathered on a small stage at the choir, and prepared to be photographed. When two of the girls noticed a large portrait of the Lebanese President Emil Lahoud standing against the wall, the session was paused until the painting had been placed in the middle of group. The deed was accompanied by some humorous remarks and laughter before the picture was taken.

Evaluation of the Camp

On the last day in the village, the Saturday, an evaluation meeting for the MSL members was arranged. The purpose was to discuss the project, the development of the camp, and to get feedback from the participants. This was an open forum where everyone participated; both the volunteers and the Volunteer Leader. People were in general agreement on viewing the camp as successful, despite the lack of engagement from the villagers. However, there were some critical remarks about conducting a camp in a fairly wealthy village such as Qartaba. Many of the volunteers would rather have been doing a project in a poorer society.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In a poorer village, however, focusing upon issues such as environment and recycling would probably not have been justifiable since the residents would necessarily have more basic necessities to tend to. During the debate the issue was mentioned, but there was no subsequent discussion of alternatives.

However, doing a project with an environmental profile was unanimously viewed as a positive measure. Many also commented positively on the good relations within the MSL group, and viewed this aspect of the camp to be particularly successful.

Gender and Participants

Contrary to the daily work in the organisation, being mainly done by women, half of the camp volunteers were men. All of them were long time volunteers and had participated in several previous camps. As with the women they were all students or workers from different places in Lebanon. Among the participants there were people from Tripoli in the north to villages in the far south, as well as participants from the Bekaa Valley in the east, and Beirut and Saida on the coast. The main reason for the men to be attending this camp was mainly that it took place during the summer vacation and, thus, they had the time to join. So, with people having more time to spare during summer, the group was diverse both in terms gender and place of residence.

At the camp, the men and women engaged in the same activities. But the men tended more often to initiate the activities, at least those that included everybody in the group, whether it was singing or playing games. However, the main responsible was a woman, and I did not experience one gender to be particularly dominant.

The Importance of Volunteer Camps

A couple of weeks after the camp, I met with the Volunteer Leader to discuss the project in Qartaba. Sharing a pot of tea at one of Beirut's many seaside cafés, she elaborated on the experiences of the project and its importance for MSL. She was satisfied with the camp, especially in terms of the atmosphere among the volunteers, but regarding the project itself she thought that things could have worked out better. The success, however, was of minor importance. When preparing for the trip she had assembled volunteers without considering any special individual skills, and, thus, she had not expected the project progress without difficulties. She humorously remarked that in general she viewed the contributions of the volunteers to do as much harm as good. Not because they were not able, but because doing a professional job requires a level knowledge and understanding which is hard to gain during a short time span. So, May stressed that when they arrange such camps they do not expect efficient and high quality work.

For the Mouvement Social such camps were more a matter of involving the volunteers in social work. Through setting up such projects, they wanted to give the participants

experiences with the kind of work Mouvement Social was doing, and also perhaps make them realise the importance of these projects. Involving the volunteers in this manner was also a way to maintain and create the human base that they wanted to have as a part of the organisation. For the organisation, such camps also gave valuable experience of how they could utilize their human resources and the knowledge of the participants. And, by arranging camps on an annual basis, the administration also learned more about how to conduct them properly. Among the aspects that were particularly important in this regard was to create awareness of the locals among the volunteers. Although it did not become an issue in Qaratba, there had been incidents of antagonism between volunteers and locals on previous occasions. This was also important in relations to village authorities and project partners, such as the Ministry of Environment. To May's awareness such factors were vital in order to organise successful camps, which again served a very important propose, namely a positive introduction of the volunteers to social work.

Workshops and the 'Marathon'

The first workshop I attended was on fair trade. At the main office in Beirut workshops were set up two or three times a year, and would cover a range of themes. The workshops that had been set up since the re-initiation of volunteer activities in the 1990s had dealt with a wide spectre of topics, among those were computer science, environmental issues and preparations for the annual public fair.

The workshop on fair trade, led by the Volunteer Leader, gathered around thirty volunteers at the movement's conference centre in Badaro. The house was located just a three minute walk form the main office. Lasting for one day, the workshop was divided into two parts. The first was an introduction of the main topic, and relevant subtopics, and the latter was a group discussion between the volunteers. Assisted by older volunteers, well educated on the matter, the Volunteer Leader elaborated on local and global aspects of fair trade, before the participants convened into a discussion of how fair trade could be realised in Lebanon.

The next workshop was to prepare for the organisation's annual public fare, the *marathon*. This was a yearly tradition, where the volunteers and the staff made a public arrangement in Beirut in order to introduce people to the work and concept of the organisation. The concept was supposed to be 'fair trade,' and continue the work from the first workshop. The volunteers were largely the same in both workshop, and at the second one we were divided into five groups where each one was given responsibility for a stand at the fair. The idea was

that each group should work independently until the fair was due in the beginning of May. However, after the first meeting the fair was cancelled in sympathy with the *intifada* (uprising) in Palestine, which, during the spring of 2002, was particularly violent.⁴⁷

The Attack on Haddad

During my field work the founder of the movement, Gregoire Haddad, remained an active public figure despite being seventy eight years old. One of his projects during the spring of 2002 was to lead a ten episode television show titled *Bidoun Inwan*,⁴⁸ where he debated Christian religious issues. In contrast to MSL, Haddad was more confrontational when debating society and religion. He regarded himself as belonging to a progressive movement within Christianity, and used his position to promote his own ideas. Due to his leftist political viewpoints he was publicly known as ‘the Red Bishop.’ Being such a public figure was an important factor in his decision to separate himself from MSL. As he viewed the ideological independence of MSL as vital to its integrity, he did not want the movement to be strongly affiliated with him as a person.

Stating a political position on public matters would jeopardise MSL’s reputation as an open and inclusive organisation, and possibly affect the outcome of the projects it managed. Haddad was particularly concerned about this as he tended to promote unorthodox socio-cultural thoughts. The difficulties inherent in challenging religious and sectarian ideas were clearly depicted in an episode that took place towards the end of my field work, in June 2002. Arriving at Tele Lumiere's studio for the broadcasting of the last episode of his religious program, Haddad was attacked by a man waiting outside the studio.⁴⁹ The man had, together with several accomplices, waited outside the studio for the Bishop to arrive. The assailants were motivated by Haddad's liberal views on religious issues, particularly his openness to other religions and interpretations of the Bible. Being beaten to the ground, the old man escaped serious injuries.

Haddad himself refused to press any charges in the aftermath of the attack. However, a camera team from Lebanese Broadcasting filmed the incident, which contributed to it being

⁴⁷ Another factor that led to the cancelling of the public arrangement was the tense regional situation. Parallel to the *intifada* in the Palestinian occupied territories, there were border clashes between IDF and Hezb’Allah. Both Israel and USA warned Lebanon over the clashes, and the Israel also threatened with direct action in Lebanon if the situation did not calm. Thus, with the Lebanese being nervous of Israeli attacks, the atmosphere was not good for arranging a public fare. According to the Director, previous similar experiences had shown that people preferred to stay away from public gathering in such tense situations.

⁴⁸ Without Title.

⁴⁹ Tele Lumiere is a Christian Lebanese television channel.

given much attention in the national media. The attack was subsequently criticised by leading politicians from all the large sects, and the Lebanese authorities arrested the assailant and four others, as well as prosecuting nine members of the Internal Security Forces on charges of negligence and disregarding orders.⁵⁰ (Assaf 2002) Haddad, on the other hand, tried to calm this situation down, and particularly to avoid a confessional spin on the incident. That was, to avoid criticizing the Maronite community for the hostile acts of a few. In an interview with a national newspaper, he stated that his assailants were ‘... departing from religions tolerant foundations.’ (Ibid.) He furthermore stressed his neutral and unprovocative intentions. Talking about his own agenda, he described it as responding to all the people in Lebanon who wanted social change. Thus, he was not only concerned with Christians but rather groups like the younger generations, intellectuals and partisans. He admitted, however, that none of these groups occupied any influential position in society, but expressed belief in their potential if only ‘... someone or something [could] trigger and unite them.’ (Ibid.)

The motives of the assailants remained unclear, but they were unanimously interpreted as being founded in Haddad’s progressive interpretation of Christianity, his openness to other confessions, and his long time advocacy for social change. The attack, which followed an incident of verbal abuse at the same place the previous week, was strongly criticized by my informants. All the MSL members were in agreement on condemning the attack. However, few seemed to be particularly stirred up about it. In general, they calmly uttered their disgust but no one spoke about punishing the assailants. They were sad, but not surprised, at what had happened.

They knew that Haddad was a controversial figure for some, particularly, as one of my Maronite informants put it, ‘... because of his thinking; his way of explaining the gospel.’ I discussed the incident with four of my informants; two Shi’a Muslims, one Greek Orthodox and one Maronite. The three former reacted calmly to the news, and expressed their concern for the Bishop as well as condemning the attack. The latter, who had close relations to the Greek Catholic Church, felt more ambivalent about the incident. She was very upset that Haddad had been exposed to this, but at the same time she also reacted to the way prominent members of other sects made a public issue of it. She saw the Shi’a leaders, in particular, as using the incident to their own advantage. To her, some the public remarks were not only

⁵⁰ The incident followed a previous attempted assault a week earlier. This did, however, not succeed.

expressions of concern for Haddad, but also a criticism of the Maronite community. As assailants were Maronite she felt personally offended by, as she saw it, the attempts to create a public image of her community as being especially violent and vengeful. However, she also told me that rumours of the clergy plotting against Haddad, true or not, were circulating in the Maronite community. Thus, to her the attack could very well have been initiated by a central institution in her community, but she still reacted to the critique from other communities.

The case received media attention over a two week period, before fading out of people's attention. The incident illustrates well the difficult socio-political surroundings Mouvement Social had to adapt to. Although the organisation issued a press statement condemning the attack, it was not made into a big issue. It also shows that even though the organisation was made up of dedicated participants, they still had their different sectarian ties. And these ties were important to them. For the organisation, it was a balancing act between creating something different, as well as recognising people's communal affiliations.

Relating to Lebanon: Approaches and Concerns

In the final part of this chapter, I will try to contextualize the examples above. The issues raised here will be discussed further in chapter five. As I have attempted to portray here, the organisation had many considerations to make. I have, through the presented material, aimed to introduce the extent of the organisation's projects, both in terms of location and kind. The situation it worked in, compromising people's daily hardships, and the general sectarian antagonism, created a challenging context for its actions which required a careful and considerate approach. In order for the participants to succeed they needed good relations to other parts of civil society and the state, as well as having support in the people they were working with. In addition, they also needed to create an internal atmosphere that facilitated the different backgrounds of the members.

The Complexity of Confession

With regards to the internal affairs, the staff and volunteers were proud of the history, the values and the work of the organisation. However, being exposed to radical changes in society, it had, as I elaborate on in chapter three, to adapt to new circumstances. Although the participants were generally in agreement on how the organisation should be understood, there were matters of disagreement. One of the issues discussed during my fieldwork was related to the official image of the organisation; on whether it should be secular or non-

confessional. Some regarded 'secular' as entailing an opposition to religion while 'non-confessional' (or 'non-sectarian') was normally perceived as being against the political use of religion. And it was the political use of religion the staff and volunteers opposed, not religion as faith. A few of the employees aired the thought of labelling Mouvement Social 'secular.' However, being a word imported from French, 'secular' was not clearly defined in Arabic, and, thus, problematic to use. Since this also was about how the organisation should present itself in public, it was important to avoid misinterpretations of its identity. While some understood the term as being non-religious, in other words as being void of religion, others viewed it as a synonym to non-confessionalism. The matter remained a mere discussion during my field work, and officially the organisation was 'non-confessional.'

Integrity, Focus and Ideology

Still, such debates never became a serious problem for the organisation. The staff acted professionally and the main focus was on cooperation in order to solve the challenges they faced through their work. The administration acted carefully on issues that could create internal conflicts, for instance whether or not to promote a secular organisation. Another such issue was that of educating the beneficiaries on the concept of citizenship. The problem was again related to definition. The workers were afraid that the concept would be perceived differently among the social group it was presented to, and therefore not encourage a common identity. A coinciding factor was that many among the staff regarded their jobs as being merely to help people improve their material situation and to better their life conditions, not to influence them ideologically.

Among the participants, on the other hand, the citizenship idea was widely accepted, and commonly used when contextualizing their social actions. When my informants were talking about their involvement they frequently argued that it was founded in their responsibilities as citizens. Still, spreading the idea outside of the organisation proved hard. In the yearly report from 1993, Mouvement Social states that it aims to be more of a public voice. Considering the increase in sectarian feelings since the end of the war, this proved to be challenging. Especially so, since taking a public stance on social or political issues meant that it had to be prepared for a political role. As an organisation striving to be an open arena for the country's sects, this could be a difficult role to manage as it could not afford to alienate anyone among its staff or volunteers. Running the risk of bringing a sectarian aspect to its existence through public participation in politics could damage its reputation, and therefore be counter-productive.

But, although there were different viewpoints on values and ideology among the staff and volunteers, the organisation handled this well. Their main focus was on doing professional projects and trying to improve some aspects of Lebanese society. That people disagreed on some issues was accepted, but divergent views were not allowed to become obstacles for their efforts. So, in the organisation the focus was on coordinating people in social action, regardless of personal viewpoints. They also cooperate with sectarian institutions for the benefit of the projects. The integrity of MSL was thus maintained by keeping a professional focus on the projects and the beneficiaries, rather than getting into debates on socio-cultural issues. Through conducting their work in this manner, it became apparent that their main interest was not to create an organisation focusing on those attending it, but for the benefit of society. Therefore, although they had interesting perspectives on society, their focus was not on being a public forum for discussions of values and ideology. Keeping this focus, and making people understand this element, was an important fundament for Mouvement Social's good reputation.

The Individual and the Organisation: Involvement and the Significance of Social Work

Introduction

In the two preceding chapters I have elaborated on the organisation; its history, ideology, shape and projects. I have described how Mouvement Social Libanais constituted itself, and how it positioned itself within the larger socio-political context. In this chapter I will talk about the employees and volunteers who were part of the organisation. A central theme will be to look at how those involved related to the basic ideas and values of the organisation. Non-confessionalism, social work, and their incentives for involvement, are aspects I will address in particular.

In the first part of the chapter I will focus upon the employees; on how they were taking part on a daily basis and bearing the main responsibility for the organisation. In contrast to other social organisations, like family or sect, people are not born with an automatic membership in Mouvement Social. The organisation recruited people from different sectarian backgrounds, hence the social divisions of Lebanon was very much a part in the daily lives of the members. Thus, being able to function as a non-confessional alternative was important to those involved.

Any social system depends on having actors maintaining it and ensuring its existence. In the second part of the chapter I will focus on what motivates people to partake in such an organisation, as well as look at how they are tied to the system. I will mainly focus upon the volunteers, particularly since they did not receive any material compensation for their involvement. Their involvement in volunteer camps, being arenas joining a range of Lebanese social groups, will be dealt with extensively. The participants were from different confessional backgrounds, and they were working together in communities they were not familiar with. So, their experience of common action in such settings will be a central part of the chapter.

The third part of the chapter will be a query into the meaning of social work. I will elaborate on what the culture and work of MSL meant to the staff and volunteers. That is, what it represented, and how it made sense to them. I will also look at how they related to society in general.

Doing Fieldwork in Beirut

Beirut constitutes a complex arena for anthropological fieldwork. The Lebanese capital houses a large diversity of both people as well as ways of life. Extremes, such as the rundown beach settlement of Jnah⁵¹ and the trendy dining and shopping district of Solidere, signify a vast difference in lifestyle and opportunities among Lebanese.⁵² Solidere, also housing the parliament, was referred to as an ‘... exclusive public space’ by a friend of mine. She pointed to the difference between those the area should be accessible to: all Lebanese, and the social elite that actually uses the area. The fashion and manner of consumption effectively excluded those who could not afford it.

Most of my informants, especially those who were volunteers, would spend much time outside of their homes. Although none of them belonged to the social elite, most of them came from fairly wealthy families, and spending time in public places such as cafés and restaurants was thus common. They did generally not visit the most fashionable places, like those in Solidere, both because they were expensive and since clientele frequenting these establishments was largely not a part my informants’ social networks. Rather, they would often convene at local places adjacent to their work, university or place of residence.

Thus, cafés and restaurants became a natural part of my fieldwork, and would frequently be used as meeting places for interviews and talks with my informants. Through my involvement with Movement Social I regularly met with a group of fifteen employees and volunteers. Since they were all workers or full time students they had quite packed days, so I would usually meet them for a coffee or a meal in the afternoon. In addition to this regular group of informants, I also met with many other staff and volunteers through my engagement in Ghobeiri and participation on other arrangements by Mouvement Social.

Apart from Noor, whom I worked with in Ghobeiri, I would usually not spend time at my informants’ residences. Since most of them were students, they did not spend much time at home. Those who were from Beirut lived with their parents, while those who were from other parts of the country either lived with friends or family. Since many of them were women, it was usually better to meet in a public place. Although I did get invited to their

⁵¹ The area, which was located in the south western part of Beirut, is also referred to in chapter four. It was an extremely poor society with many squatters. It was also one of the areas benefiting from Mouvement Social’s projects.

⁵² Solidere was a prestigious project chiefly orchestrated by businessman and Prime Minister during my field work: Rafik al Hariri. It was the recreation of Beirut’s shattered central business district, an area which through the civil war had been the front line between the eastern and western part of the city.

homes, I knew they were wary of what their neighbours might say if they got frequent visits from a male anthropologist. This was, however, not a problem with Noor who was married and had her own household.

Everyday Life in the Organisation

Most of the employees had backgrounds as MSL volunteers, and their dedication to the organisation was noticeable. It was normal that the staff put in far more effort and hours than they actually got paid for. One of my colleagues at the centre in Ghobeiri described the staff as being more like volunteers than wage workers. Their social backgrounds varied, both in terms of sectarian affiliation and regional belonging. To illustrate this, I will in the beginning of this chapter introduce two of the employees; one was a Shi'a Muslim from the south of Lebanon, the other a Maronite from Mount Lebanon.

Noor

Through my engagement at the centre in Ghobeiri I got well acquainted with Noor. She was a very resourceful woman, and acting both as an administrator and a tutor. Both the centre and the students profited greatly from her dedication, experience and knowledge.

Born in a village in the south of Lebanon, she had moved to Beirut in the mid seventies for her studies. During her upbringing her parents had been encouraging her, along with her two sisters and two brothers, to get a good education. In her village, which she described as being left wing and liberal, this was not uncommon. However, moving to Beirut was not unproblematic. Her elder brother opposed her going away; insisting on her staying to help the family. But with her father's support she was able to leave. All together they were six girls leaving in order to continue their education in Beirut, and Noor and one of them shared a flat while studying. It was in this period that she got introduced to Movement Social. Before doing a year of psychology studies at the Lebanese University, she studied social work for two years in a program initiated by the organisation.

After finishing her education she continued to live in Beirut. Due to fighting between Palestinian and Israeli forces in the southern parts of the country, she decided not to return to her village. The situation in and around her village was quite dangerous, and the best option was to prolong her stay in the capital. So, she began working as a part time teacher at a public school. In the early eighties, after occupying this position for a few years, she was offered a fulltime position with MSL. Since then she have been working for the

organisation. She was also a part of the group of employees that kept on working through the difficult years of civil war.

When I got to know her she was living with her husband and two daughters in an apartment not far from the centre. Noor did not wear a *hijab*⁵³ or dress in a typical Shi'a fashion. But, although she did not reveal her confessional ties from the way she dressed, she still had a personal religious conviction. When I was visiting her home, she would retreat to another room for praying after the *Muezzin*⁵⁴ had performed the prayer calls.

Through her two decades of social work in the southern suburbs, she had grown increasingly attached to the area as well as the way of working. Her ties to area were particularly strengthened by marrying a local man, with whom she had two children. But, she also had a very deep-felt attachment to her parents' home. When having a break from work, she would take her husband and children to visit her family in the village. She had also instructed her husband to arrange for her to be buried there.

Huda

Huda was one of the first people I got to know in MSL. She was Maronite, and originally from the area of Metn, just east of Beirut. Most of her life, however, she had lived in the traditional Maronite heartlands of Kesrwan, where her family had moved when she was a child. The fairly wealthy family of four decided to move to Kesrwan due to the nice nature in the area. The hilly area stretched, lush with vegetation, from the coast up towards the high mountains in the Lebanon range.

Although growing up in a pleasant environment, she described moving to Kesrwan as being a difficult experience. Even though her family was Maronite, they found it hard to get accepted in their new area of residence. For her part, the situation was quite fine; she attended school and girls scout movement, and had a social network through these organisations. Her parents, however, experienced the situation as being more complicated. She especially remembered the rather conservative and closed local community as being a difficult setting for her mother. Although they shared sectarian affiliation with their neighbours, they were still coming from another area and, consequently, found it hard to establish close social relations. The situation, however, was not marked by direct confrontations; the family was not threatened or bullied. It rather took shape as a situation of

⁵³ Headscarf worn by Muslim women.

⁵⁴ The person performing prayer calls.

seclusion; of having difficulties establishing social networks. This was particularly apparent during common gatherings in the community, such as weddings and funerals. While her family, as was common in the village, placed much emphasis on attending neighbours social events, they did not experience the same in return. Her parents would for instance visit their neighbours whenever someone had died, but would rarely themselves receive visits from people in the community if they experienced the loss of a family member. This was especially hard when her grandmother died. So, it was difficult not to have many close friends and a proper social network in the village. They were, however, fairly protected from the civil war while staying in Kesrwan. But the feeling of isolation was hard to endure, and after the war ended the family moved to Beirut.

But moving to Beirut was not what they preferred. Compared to the appealing scenery of Kesrwan, the grey and polluted city seemed less attractive. However, since both Huda and her father worked in the capital they considered moving there an advantage. Living there would save them both time and money on transportation. She viewed in the city as being isolated, but not in the same manner as in Kesrwan. To her, Beirut was marked by a more typical urban seclusion; people living separate lives and minding their own business.

During the war Lebanon experienced a massive inflation as well as the ruining of local industry.⁵⁵ After Huda's father lost his job at the beginning of the war, the family opened a grocery store in Beirut. In difficult post-war circumstance they had to work quite hard to make a decent living, which meant spending long hours in the store. The store provided the main income, but Huda, who was living at home during my fieldwork, also contributes to the family budget.

Confessional Belonging in a Non-Confessional Space

Although Mouvement Social was a non-confessional organisation, the staff, like all other Lebanese, had their confessional belonging. They normally shared their confession with both their families and neighbours, and many had a personal religious conviction. In other words, these ties were an important part of their lives. And, although the staff mainly dressed in a secular manner, it was not uncommon to see signs of peoples' confessional background. This could be someone wearing a hijab or a necklace with cross.

⁵⁵ The inflation continued after the war with an annual 12% in the period 1990 – 2003, according to UNICEF (2004) figures.

Still, at the main office in Badaro it was rare to see obvious displays of religious identity. This did not, however, imply that people completely disregarded their confessional ties. Occasionally, for instance during religious celebrations, confessional belonging would be evident. An example of this is Ash Monday; the Maronite observation of the beginning of lent, six and half weeks before Easter. When I visited the office on this event, two of the employees had, according to tradition, painted a cross of ash on their foreheads. Work, however, went on as usual, and performing such religious acts was regarded as a completely normal among the staff.

But dealing with confession could also be a delicate matter, and particularly so in relation to social and political issues. So, although the employees usually never cared about the religious identity of others, they still, in this respect, took care not to say anything that might be regarded as offensive. To Huda, one of the important factors in creating a good atmosphere was that no one had, or at least uttered, extreme points of view. Thus, to avoid marginalising or provoking others were important guidelines, and inherent in the values of Mouvement Social.

I never met anyone among the staff who did not subscribe to the values of the organisation. Both Huda and Noor, despite their different backgrounds and employment time, would still adhere to same the philosophy of non-confessionalism and social work.

However, in terms of multi-confessionalism, Noor was working predominantly with Shi'a Muslims and living in a Shi'a area. Huda, on the other hand, was sharing her workplace with members from different Lebanese sects, both Christian and Muslim. Without having any prior experience with the Mouvement Social before starting in her position, it was quite a change for her. Growing up she did not have much contact with other sects; Muslim and Druze in particular. So, she had consequently never had close relations to people with Shi'a or Sunni Muslim backgrounds, which accounted for many of her colleagues.

Thus, for Huda, beginning to work alongside members from different sects was a new experience. Initially, her main concerns were to understand how sensitive the issue of confessionalism was in the organisation. So during her first few weeks, she took, for instance, great care not to use typical Christian expressions when talking.⁵⁶ She did not want to sound provocative or offending. Similarly, she was careful not to make what could be

⁵⁶ Like 'Ya Adra,' referring to Virgin Mary. It is a Christian expression, and using it will thus be an indication of ones sectarian belonging.

perceived as offending comments or questions when talking to her colleagues. This could be for instance criticising Muslim politicians or commenting about Muslim traditions.

However, she soon discovered that confessional belonging was not a concern among her colleagues. She had not been asked about her background when she got employed, and no one inquired about it afterwards. She described the first period at the MSL main office as being unproblematic; virtually void of the sectarian issues.

Interaction in the Main Office

Although the employees showed great consideration with regarding each others confessional ties there were no rules against discussing such matters. And there were many opportunities to engage in such conversations, for instance while having lunch. This was a convenient time for the staff to discuss other than professional issues. Every now and then, when I had to go the main office in order to prepare for my English lessons, I would join the staff for lunch. If their schedules permitted, they would all have lunch together. All the food was shared, and everyone brought a dish to the buffet. The discussions could be quite lively, and they would all engage in debates about social and political affairs. Huda described lunch as being the main opportunity to talk to her colleagues. She particularly pointed out that this was a good occasion for learning more about the people she worked with. It was a chance to express ones private viewpoints and talk confidentially to people. So, during the lunch break she could for instance talk about religious matters, and she often discussed the Koran and the Bible with a couple of her Muslim colleagues. Having a strong Christian faith, she took a keen interest in religion. However, she had never learned much about Islam, and gladly used the opportunity to discuss it with her Muslim colleagues.

Huda understood the social relations in the office as abiding by a ‘...silent agreement.’ There were no particular guidelines for communication among the employees; it was more a common understanding of how “things should be.” No one pointed fingers or criticised others for acting in a confessional manner. She perceived people as not behaving like this because there was no basis for doing otherwise: ‘... When you are working in a non-confessional organisation, you cannot be confessional at the same time. No one is saying that it is forbidden. No, you feel it. You are [non-confessional] since there is no reason to be otherwise.’ Huda was very pleased with the way things worked out in the office. It was her ‘... first experience [with non-confessionalism], and, [she] learned a lot from it, at a very personal level.’

The Volunteers

The group of volunteers I got to know were resourceful people. They were all university students, and had been MSL members for several years. All of them had begun after learning about the organisation from friends or family. Volunteering was important to all of them, and even though they normally did not work much for the organisation they participated on the events that were arranged. They were all quite young when they joined the movement, usually fifteen or sixteen years of age, and had been most active before becoming university students. And, apart from two, they had all joined student organisations or political parties, often with left wing ideologies, at their respective universities. They had thus continued the civil society involvement, albeit for other organisations.⁵⁷ Their affiliation to Mouvement Social, however, remained, although being dormant for some of them.

So, they had been involved with the organisation for several years, and were well accustomed to it. As doing professional projects was prioritised, contributions outside of the camps and internal events varied from person to person. Bringing on untrained personnel on existing projects was usually not done unless a volunteer had special skills that made contribution desirable. The administration did not want a random assignment of volunteers to the centres, since this would be an extra burden for the responsible staff. Hence, their contributions to the regular work varied, while they had all attended several camps, workshops and “Marathons.”

Nabihah

One of those who often participated in everyday work was Nabihah; a Greek Orthodox girl who joined the organisation at the age of fifteen. It was her parents that introduced her and also supported her further participation. When I got to know her she had been a member for seven years, and attended several camps as well as working on MSL projects in the poorest parts of Beirut and the city’s youth prison. She was not married, and was living with her parents and brother in the family’s apartment in the western part of the capital. The area she lived in was confessionally mixed, something she was proud of. Ethnic cleansing during the war had led to many Christian families from the area settling down in the eastern part of the

⁵⁷ The student movement has had much influence in the Lebanon through the last few decades. Particularly so in the 1970s, when it emerged as ‘... far more radical and influential than its European and American analogues of the 1960s.’ (Faour 1998: 1 - 2) ‘From the ranks of the student movement rose radical chiefs for the emerging warring militias that plunged the country into a bloodbath for over fifteen years.’ (Faour 1998: 2) During my fieldwork I experienced student movements as being very active. The dedication and seriousness of such involvement was underlined by occasional clashes at university campuses between different political fractions. The abduction and murder of Lebanese Forces student leader Ramzi Irani in May 2002 received much attention and caused concern all over Lebanon. ((Assaf 2002); (Hourani 2002))

city. Nevertheless, when returning to Beirut after spending the last two years of the war abroad, the family had moved back to their old neighbourhood.

Nabihah was a fulltime student at one of the best universities in Lebanon. As her parents supported her financially, so she did not have to work besides her studies. Since starting university she had involved herself more in student activities such as left wing political parties as well as arranging photo exhibitions and other cultural events. Through such involvement, she had gained a large social network within civil society in Lebanon.

Hisham

Hisham, a Shia Muslim from Nabathiye in the south of Lebanon, was also well acquainted with civil society. He had become involved with MSL in Nabathiye, after getting introduced by a friend. At that point he had been active in other organisations, such as the scout movement as well as left wing political fractions. His early political involvement was a concern to his parents, who were anxious about their son getting into the field of politics. With the intense fighting between political and ethnic fractions during the civil war fresh in memory, they were not pleased about Hisham entering into such a contested arena. In Nabathiye, Harakat Amal and Hezb'Allah were two actors dominating in both civil society and the political system. Thus, social and political involvement in alternative organisations would be noticed by representatives of these organisations. Although this would usually not be a problem, it was still an uncomfortable situation for his family.⁵⁸

Hisham was, however, allowed to continue his social engagement, provided that it did not come at the expense of his education. His parents wanted him to get a good education, and had therefore sent him to Beirut for his university studies. When I got to know him he was living in his uncle's house centrally in Beirut, and was doing the penultimate year of his engineering degree. He had continued to volunteer for MSL when moving to Beirut, and had through his six years of participation gained much experience with the organisation and its work. As with Nabihah, he had also gradually shifted into student organisations, and he was particularly concerned with anti globalisation work. He was a very sociable and dedicated man, and had, in addition to his friends and family from Nabathiye, gained a large social network through his civil society involvement in Beirut. In the MSL he had helped organise

⁵⁸ Other informants also told me that their parents wanted them to avoid strong affiliation to ethnic and political groups. One of my informants told me that her parents even had chosen names for her and her siblings that could not be tied to one confessional group in particular. The choice of names had been mostly motivated by her parents' support of non-confessionalism, but also because they wanted their children not to be openly linked to a sect in case of new civil hostilities.

several volunteer camps and workshops, and his administrative involvement had continued in other organisations.

Nisrin

Nisrin had joined the movement at the same time as Hisham. Although coming from an influential Shia Muslim family from the southern part of the Bekaa valley, she had lived most of her life in Beirut. Her parents moved there due to the difficult living conditions caused by the former Israeli occupation of the area. Nisrin often visited her village, and enjoyed staying there. However, she did not want to live there, among other things because of what she experienced as a conservative view of women held by many of the villagers. Being used to living in the capital and choosing her own way of life, she saw that by moving to the village she could break with the expected behaviour of a woman. Hence, she wanted to continue staying in Beirut.

She had been introduced to Mouvement Social through a friend, and had found the organisation interesting. At the time of my fieldwork, she had been a member for four years. She had participated on several camps and workshops, as well as working with the movement's social program in Jnah. Although being a Shia Muslim, she adhered to secularism, and began volunteering much because of what she experienced as her values coinciding with those of the organisation. However, when I met her she was about to finish her university degree in medicine and had little time for volunteer work. But, she still took a keen interest in the organisation and its projects. Nisrin was particularly reflected in her viewpoints, and through our discussions she gave me many interesting perspectives on Mouvement Social.

Rabeea

Rabeea, also a Greek Orthodox, had been a member since 1996. Her mother had also been partaking in the organisation, so Rabeea was familiar with the organisation and its values. Similarly to the others, she had reduced her involvement during the last year since she was busy with her studies as well as attending her job. Her family was working hard to make the ends meet, so she had to do part time work in addition to studying. However, she was a very resourceful woman, and managed her full days very well.

Her family was living in Achrafiye, and both she and her siblings were living at home with their parents. Rabeea had a Muslim boyfriend, and spent much time with his family in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Aman

Aman was Sunni Muslim, and had grown up in Hamra in the western part of the capital. She was living with her family while following a masters program in economics at the American University of Beirut. She had joined Movement Social in 1996, and had since then attended eight camps and a number of projects. As was common among the older volunteers, she had lately become increasingly occupied with her education, but she still participated on the camp in Qartaba. She did not work outside of her studies, and was supported by her parents.

Participating in Mouvement Social

Camp Experiences: a Brief Background

The volunteers introduced above had all participated on several MSL camps. They had been most active during the second half of the 1990s, although Rabeea participated in a camp as early as 1993. The main motivation for organising these camps was to gather youth from different confessional backgrounds in joint action. The purpose of the camps varied. In 1998 it was to make an irrigation system at a farm area in the Bekaa valley, and the following year it was to assist people of a north Lebanese village in building stairs between their village and a local mountain cave system.⁵⁹ The camps were arranged in different locations around the country, and hence the participants got to know a new area each time. During this period, MSL put a lot of effort into making these camps and they were usually of a longer duration than the one I attended in Qartaba, with many lasting over two weeks.⁶⁰

Potential Conflict at the Camps

The camps had a dual function; both to introduce young Lebanese to each other and to do social work. My informants had positive experiences from attending these camps, although gathering youth from different social backgrounds was not always free of complications. During the camps quite a lot of efforts were put into making people work together and get to know each other. Usually they would yield positive results, however, there were situations leading to sectarian tensions.⁶¹ They could for instance surface during heated debates, especially if the participants were discussing politics. Thus, as well as giving lectures on the values of Mouvement Social, the responsible staff also organised different games and exercises in order to create a good atmosphere.

⁵⁹ The intent was to make the caves surrounding the village of Sir ed-Danniye easily accessible, in order for the villagers to utilise them as a tourist attraction.

⁶⁰ The camp in Qartaba is described in chapter four.

⁶¹ This did not happen on the camp that I attended in Qartaba. Those that had participated in previous camps commented that this was the first they had attended where there had not been any sectarian outburst from anyone.

Games and Exercises

The purpose of many of these activities was to focus on conflict resolution, and thus to teach the participants how to deal with difficult situations without provoking or agitating others. Such exercises could take place as acting, where a volunteer would be put in a staged conflict and asked to resolve it. Different kinds of situations were dealt with in this manner; it could be for instance resolving a fight among family members, or an argument between different groups at a sport field. This would be done in front of a group, so that afterwards the handling of the situation, as well as alternative solutions, could be discussed in plenum. However, creating a good atmosphere among camps participants did not necessarily have to come by doing group work on conflict resolution. The organisers were well aware of the positive effects of a game of football or basketball, and such activities were also frequent.

So, making people come together needed not include much lecturing, it could be achieved simply by focusing on everyday behaviour. Language, *logha* in Arabic, was also used in such a manner. Nisrin told me that ‘...one of the exercises we did was called “*Loghat is’Seerafi.*” “*zarafi*” means giraffe, and to be “*zarif*” is to be cute with people. [The camp leaders] were playing on these words. So we learned this language to talk to each other. For example, instead of telling you “remove your hand;” I say “please, can you remove your hand.” We used this excessively polite language, and we compared it to the way we talk in Arabic, and we saw that in our language we have a kind of violence. [The thing is] that we interact with each other as if we are family members; we do not have much distance between our selves and others. [For example], even if I barely knew you, I could talk to you as if you were my brother; I could shout at you. It was interesting to compare these two ways of speaking, and it took us a long time to learn and adapt to the new language.’

Voluntarism

As with the project I attended in Qartaba, voluntarism was also a central concept at the preceding camps. Since these camps lasted for two weeks periods, the projects were also more extensive. Above I mentioned examples from the Bekaa valley and a village in northern Lebanon. Each camp was a separate project, and each year in a new location. So MSL did not only arrange projects and camps for the benefit of the attending youth, after all the main purpose of the organisation was to encourage voluntarism and to do social work in Lebanon. Hence, the volunteers who wanted to get more involved were often used on other projects as well. Hisham had been assisting on an education project for illiterate children in Nabathiye, as well as helping to arrange summer activities such as sports and games for

children in the same area. Similarly, Nisrin and Nabihah had been working at MSL's school in Jnah, both during the normal schooling and the additional summer activities arranged there. Through volunteering they gained knowledge of the organisation and social work, as well as of Lebanon.

Local Hostilities

Doing such projects was not always easy, and many of the volunteers had experienced incidents of local antagonism towards MSL projects. But this was not common, since MSL staff would usually be visiting a village several times in advance in order to prepare the residents for a camp. However, such preparations were not always successful in creating lasting good relations between locals and outsiders. On one of the first camps Aman attended she recalled that they '...were nearing the last day of the camp, and wanted to have a celebration. We had invited the people in the village, but wanted to keep the school [where we were staying] closed one day in order to prepare for the party. The villagers felt that we were rejecting them, and started throwing stones at the school.' At another camp she experienced underlying hostilities. 'We were told that in the mosque the Sheik had spoken of the camp as a bad thing happening to the village. But, we did not feel this when we were in direct contact or communication with people.' So, as with the project in Qartaba, the volunteers could not be sure of the cooperation of the people they were working amongst. Although the camps usually yielded good responses from the participants, these were not the only incidents of negative reactions from the local community.⁶²

Preparing the Volunteers

So, the volunteers could risk unpleasant episodes while participating; it could either be from fellow participants or from the community they were working in. Hence, the organisation put much effort into education and preparation of participants. Telling me about a camp she attended in 1998, Nisrin recalled: '...we had lectures about the values and ideas of Movement Social. They would often give such lectures and afterward we would have a discussion of the topics. This was really interesting since there were people there from all over Lebanon, from the south to the north. [There were] many people with different mentalities. So the discussions were really enriching.' Hisham had similar experiences. Talking about the camp in Bekaa valley, he remembered: '...The experience was in the skill

⁶² The organisation had, through its long experience with social work, become aware of the difficulties of social work. Hence, on their professional projects they focused on having a good network in local community as well as cooperating with other institutions, whether state run or civil society based. Establishing such a position requires much effort, and when arranging two weeks or shorter volunteer camps this could be difficult to achieve.

they gave us. We worked on this [irrigation system] each day from eight till noon, and then we moved on to developing our skills; through lectures, through exercises, through activities that made people come [closer] together. We had very good exercises; about self confidence, as well as expression of one self and dealing with conflicts. We had such exercises every day, [and] the group that was in the camp on the first day was different from the group on the last day. We had learned a lot together, and it has given many good results.'

Aspects of Social Work

I will now turn to look at some central aspects of the volunteers' involvement with Mouvement Social. When the volunteers were talking about the importance of the organisation they usually focused on four issues. These, which I will elaborate on in this section, were its non-confessionalism, its choice of projects, its influence on the participants and its role in Lebanese society.

A Non-Confessional Space

Mouvement Social's non-confessional stand was very important to all my informants, both employees and volunteers. In a society marked by confessional tension MSL represented an alternative space. To Nisrin, this stand was symbolised by the location of the main office. 'Mouvement Social does not have a particular trend; either Muslim or Christian. You have a lot of confessional institutions. But Mouvement Social is located in the middle; it is between *gharbiye* and *sharkiye*.⁶³ Because Beirut was divided; *gharbiye* was for the Muslims and *sharkiye* was for the Christians. The location in the middle helps; it is open to both sides.' So the physical presence of the organisation, between the Christian eastern part and the Muslim western part, could be seen to reflect its non-confessional positioning. This impartiality was highly important for people's involvement, particularly for the volunteers.

Lebanon has a very extensive civil society, with a wide range of actors. Thus, for anyone wanting to participate in social work there were many organisations among which to choose. A prominent feature of '...civil society in today's Lebanon [is the] the large and central role played by the different sectarian authorities and leaderships in organizing civil society life.' (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies 1999: 3) So, in these surroundings MSL's effort differed from most other actors, and to its participants this was an important reason for their attachment. Talking about her involvement, Aman said that '...this organisation is one of the best. Because, most others are not interested in erasing [social] obstacles since they are confessional organisations. This is one of the best things about the Movement Social.'

⁶³ Gharbiye and sharkiye are referring to West and East Beirut, respectively.

Hisham held the same view as Aman. To him ‘...the [initiative] of bringing people from all over Lebanon, from different sects, different backgrounds and different cultures, and make them join in work together for any idea, for any activity, is a success for us as Lebanese.’

The Social Work: ‘...Addressing the Real Problems’

Hisham’s quote above expressed a common way for the staff and volunteers to view the organisations efforts. They had a strong belief in the worth and importance of the work they did. To the volunteers, and also to the staff, it represented more than just improving the lives of their beneficiaries. The choice of projects reflected the non-confessional approach to society; they worked with target groups defined by lack of resources and public recognition rather than confessional background. Neither poor women nor deprived youth had much influence in the patriarchal system, and both within the state and the sectarian system they were particularly weak groups. Thus, the necessity of improving the conditions for these people was beyond question for my informants. However, during my fieldwork these were certainly not the only deprived parts of society. In the difficult social and economical situation of the post-war period, a majority of the Lebanese were facing the harsh realities with little resources. Still, as my informants saw it, MSL had a sensible approach to this situation. Nabihah’s involvement with the organisation was largely motivated by its ‘...understanding of what the conflict really is about; [the problems of Lebanon are] economical, or traditional, but not religious.’ It was a common recognition among the participants that they belonged to the same country, and that the difficult and insecure post war situation was worsened by rising sectarianism. They viewed people’s hardships as being largely caused by a stagnant sectarian system, and particularly by confessional leaders working for the interest of themselves and the sect rather than those of the Lebanese. These confessional leaders were seen as largely working to maximise their revenues and political power, and, as Nabihah pointed out, religion was not really the problem in this respect. Thus, MSL’s approach represented an alternative base for action; a way to avoid sectarian views and work to solve common Lebanese problems.

Religion can be a very personal and emotional issue, and it also played an important role in the lives of people in MSL. As I described above, for both Huda and Noor religion was a central part of their lives, although not of their social work. And all of my informants, regardless of religious conviction, had a confessionally based main social identity. MSL was focusing on not letting such emotions or affiliations play a role in their engagement in society, but rather, as I have mentioned above, base their action in other criteria.

However, as I mention in chapter three, the social work was not merely motivated by con-confessionalism. It was also, in Grégoire Haddad's terms, supposed to be '...social work without being charity.' My informants emphasised that they were not working out of pity. As Nabihah said it, they were '...not doing *good* things. [...] It is not in the name of good that we are doing it; we are obliged to do that because we are citizens, and it is about loyalty to other citizens.'

Influencing the Participants

Viewing the outcome of the organisations volunteer projects was quite difficult. Since they restarted the volunteer programs after the war, a large number of volunteers had participated on the projects.

The volunteers were introduced to the organisation through camp participation and engagement in social work. As I learned from my informants, these experiences had inspired some to further social work, and influenced everyone's way of related to society. Mayla, the director, portrayed the organisations attitude to the volunteers as being based on a need '...to build people who can be open to others, and who can involve themselves in public concerns.' She also viewed it as important in terms of '...continuing to build a human base around Movement Social' as well as '...the need to share our values with other people.' However, she stressed that these were not at all easy tasks, but still, sharing their values was important. Similarly, the Volunteer Leader viewed main priority as being to create '...awareness, [and particularly] awareness around social concepts. That is, '...not to work, but to understand the social programmes.' Thus, the focus was not on how the volunteers could contribute to the professional work, but rather on giving them tools to comprehend the importance of the projects and give them an understanding of how social problems can be managed.

Hisham had extensive experience from volunteer work. Not only had he been attending the camps, but he had also helped to arrange them. He believed that among the participants the camps had created a greater awareness of the structure of their social surroundings. He had noticed how many became more aware of alternative ways of relating to sectarianism. He argued that this openness largely was due to people's life situation and age; they were too young to really care about sectarianism. 'A seventeen year old boy; what does he know about sectarianism in Lebanon? It is not even a deal for him.' In Hisham's view '...the issue of sectarianism was minimal at the camps.' Introducing youth to the values and social

projects of the organisation was not difficult, as sectarianism did not become important until people had to related society as adults. To him, getting a job was a typical situation where people addressed the sectarian system. This was also an arena where Mouvement Social was not present. Thus, the organisation's focus needed to be on introducing people to alternative approaches to society beforehand, so that they might integrate the values of Mouvement Social in their lives. So, to Hisham the educational aspects of MSL was central; to '...show the concept of rights and duties, [as opposed to] granting a sectarian leader your rights.' However, he was aware that it was hard to know if camp participation really had an impact on the youth; if it did inspire to change in lifestyle or perception of society. One thing was certain, that influencing people is not '...done in a month or two. It needs years; one, two, three years. [...] You cannot change the political background of a person; but you can prepare him to fight for his rights [as a citizen]. This is, I think, one of the main functions of Mouvement Social.'

Mouvement Social and Society

Commenting upon its values and viewpoints, Mouvement Social (1994: 4) states; '...a small minority share them, still and always.' Judging by the tense socio-political conditions in post-war Lebanon this was an honest claim, and there were few indications of an improving situation. In fact, many of informants claimed that sectarianism was rising, and that the opportunities for common action were narrowing.

The assault on Gregoire Haddad was a clear indication of this, as well as of the negative reactions questioning of sectarian thinking could yield. My informants viewed the incident as awful, but still took a calm approach to it. When I discussed the case with Hisham, he was very pragmatic about it. He interpreted it as an expression of the sectarian realities in Lebanon. It was symptomatic of what they are up against when working with Mouvement Social, it was a proof that they were '...a minority working against the current.' However, while discussing the issue, he stressed that '...a lot of people would refuse sectarianism, but because the [current] atmosphere they do not do it. We are having a silent majority in Lebanon. Many people refuse the situation, they don't like it, but they are silent. You can discuss with other people, and you convince them of your opinion. But, if you told them "work with me," they would answer "no." They are afraid of their interests.'

So despite the sectarian influences on society Hisham saw a silent support for social work and non-confessionalism. The issue was, however, how to mobilise people. Nabihah viewed the organisation as not being radical enough. She viewed the youth as being attracted to well

know organisations that were partaking in public debates. Thus, working without any attention required too much dedication for most young people. Compared to the more publicly visible political and confessional fractions, Mouvement Social could not compete. Talking about the issue she concluded that ‘...you cannot change the viewpoint of a person if he cannot hear you.’

However, trying to reach a larger group of people would necessarily expose the organisation to extra pressure, in addition to taking attention away from its other projects. And, as I discuss above in the elaboration on citizenship, it was difficult to agree on common profile on such issues. So, even though many in the organisation would have liked it to be more active in the public debate, for instance by stating its viewpoints in the media, this was difficult to accomplish.

Social Relations, Identity and Common Action

Social Networks in Civil Society

The social relations among the volunteers and the staff were friendly. But, while the staff related to each others as colleagues, with some also becoming good friends, the volunteers had more loose ties. The volunteers would only meet occasionally as MSL participants, and, thus, spent little time together as a group. Among the group I worked with it was common to know one or two of the volunteers well, and then occasionally meet with others. Those who had attended several camps had become well acquainted with fellow participants from other parts of the country, and would pay them a visit every now and then. But, since the movement was more focused on doing successful projects rather than facilitating the social life of the participants, the social interaction was largely up to the individual. One of my informants viewed the participants as ‘... [not having] to be real friends. Because, it’s a working movement, it is not a movement for friendship. But the relationships are cordial.’

Nabihah claimed that the social network was better in the 1990s, and that it had loosened as a consequence of changes in the organisations volunteer policy. In the years following the end of the civil war, Mouvement Social spent a lot of resources on arranging camps where youth from the Lebanese sects could spend time together. However, in the two years prior to my fieldwork they had relocated some of the resources from the volunteer program into other projects, and thus, limiting their efforts in this area. It was a general opinion among the staff that there was a bigger need for the resource in their everyday work, and, it did not want the organisation to become a social club for the younger participants. Still, although the

organisation limited its efforts of youth, there were still good relations between the volunteers. Many of the volunteers would also meet on other occasions. Some of them studied together, lived in the same neighbourhoods, worked together in other organisations, or frequented the same cafés. So they would all meet with other MSL members, either in or outside of the organisation.

Most of my informants, especially the volunteers, had social relations across sectarian borders. Thus, in terms of non-confessional individual relations, Mouvement Social did not offer a unique arena. Nisrin saw herself as being ‘...a bit blind to confessionalism. Because, I am not a part of the system: I am living in Hamra, and my friends are from all the different sects.’ However, it is important to note that Nisrin, as many of the volunteers, studied at a confessionally mixed university and lived in an area of the city that was both wealthier and more socially diverse than others. This was not the case for most other Lebanese, who tended to live in conditions more similar to what I describe in the section about Ghobeiri.⁶⁴ So, my young, fairly affluent and urban informants tended to have friends from different sectarian backgrounds. Many of their friends, though not all, were quite similar to themselves, both in terms of social status and socio-political views. So, apart from gaining new acquaintances, participation in Mouvement Social did not radically alter people’s social networks.

The Importance of Family

All of my informants had close relations to their families.⁶⁵ Only one of them, a girl from a village in the Bekaa valley, lived outside of a family household. While studying at a Beirut department of the Lebanese University, she was sharing an apartment with another girl. The others lived either with their parents or spouses, and the family was a central institution in their lives. Family members would take good care of each other, and would also have much influence on the lives of their siblings or children.

⁶⁴ See chapter four.

⁶⁵ Samir Kalaf (2003: 117) in his work on the importance of the family in Lebanon holds that people in post war Lebanon often ‘... found themselves drawn closer to members of their immediate and extended family than they had been before the war.’ Referring to previous studies, he notes that ‘... there was hardly a dimension of one’s life which was untouched by the survival of family loyalty and its associated norms and agencies.’ (Ibid.) The importance of family is also stressed by Muhammad Faour (1998: 63), who in his study of youth in post-war Lebanon notes that ‘... the influence of the family on the life of the individual surpasses all other institutions including the state. The whole family shares one’s success or failure and is held accountable to one’s transgressions and sins.’

The parents, especially the father, were the decision makers in the family. Discussing Lebanese's way of life with Nabihah, she emphasised the influences of the parents. 'You never change, it is inherited; it is from your parents. I am like this because my parents were communists. If my parents were Hezb'Allah, I would not be talking to you now. Believe me.' Many of my informants also explained their engagement with MSL as due to their families being liberal and supportive of such involvement. They had parents who had been involved in social work, or were leftist, or liberal, and whom had been influencing their decisions to begin volunteering.

My informants would prioritise spending time with their families. But, since many of them had time-consuming obligations outside of their household, such as studies, volunteer work and employment, they would spend most of the day away from home, and thus only see their families in the evening. Those who were living away from home due to studying would usually spend the week-ends visiting their families.

Gender and Social Work

The staff consisted almost exclusively of women, while both genders were represented on the board. Among the volunteers the gender ratio was more balanced, but women tended more than men to take an active part in the normal work. According to the Director, there were two main reasons for the overrepresentation of women. Firstly, that women were generally more involved in social work, and, secondly, that men did not accept the low wage level in the organisation. She also saw a gender division among the volunteers, where men were more prone to political involvement rather than low profile social work.

The above view was shared by the volunteers. The division between men and women was not only taking place in Mouvement Social. According to Nisrin, this was common also in the student organisations. Civil society at her university would be divided between mainly female social organisations, doing work similar to MSL, and a male dominated political sphere. In similar ways, one of my informants, Nabihah's cousin Wasif, claimed that Movement Social was characterized by '...mild political social work, which usually attracts women more than men. Men prefer direct political action, like parties and so on. That is why you do not encounter many [women in political] parties.'

Aman viewed this to be in line with the normal gender roles in Lebanon. Expected to become the head of a household, young men were being told by their parents to focus on getting a family, on getting a job and earning money, and, thus, there was little time for

volunteering and social work. She recalled that when she began as a volunteer, there had been a male employee at the main office. However, he left the position because he ‘...was obliged to get a higher salary, [since] his wife did not work and he had to pay for her and for his family.’

Relating to Society

‘Lebanon’s reason for existing and remaining is first and foremost one of human order.’ The quote, taken from the 1993 annual report (MSL 1994: 4), portrays the way most of my informants felt. They were all fond of Lebanon, but they found it hard to define the country in a manner that could be shared by all Lebanese. It was, in other words, difficult to speak of Lebanon as consisting of one people, as one nation. They were all Lebanese, but, as Hisham put it, ‘...the problem is that each group has a different understanding of what it is.’ When talking about the Lebanese’s attachment to their country, people would usually describe it as being based in ‘patriotism.’ However, I did not experience that people doubted the country’s legitimacy. Hisham argued that ‘...if the Lebanese were not convinced that they should live together, they would have divided Lebanon into two different countries. After 15 – 20 years of civil war, Lebanon is still one country.’

My informants did not question the existence of Lebanon. They were also confident that most of their fellow Lebanese agree with them on this issue. Aman viewed this as being a matter of belonging. To her the Lebanese’s ‘...main priorities are family, confession and religion, and then comes belonging to the nation.’ So, to her it was not a situation of not being Lebanese, it was a matter of this not being the main identity. People’s main allegiance was not with the state or country, but that did not mean that there was none. But, with each group relating to the country in a different manner, finding a common Lebanese identity was difficult. Aman viewed Mouvement Social as being able to do this; to agree on a common identity. ‘In Movement Social you have the belonging to the nation and to your country first, and then to [your other identities].’

Thus, acting as Lebanese, they were very concerned with what they viewed as common social, economical and political difficulties. Both staff and volunteers shared the same views of the cause of these problems. When they were discussing the problems, they were mainly focusing on the sectarian leaders and peoples poverty. They were particularly concerned with the deteriorating economic situation and rising sectarian tensions, which they perceived

as being ignored by the sectarian elite.⁶⁶ Among my informants the elite was perceived as running the country as their ‘... private bank,’ as Nisrin put it. They were frustrated by noticing how political leaders were playing on sectarian feelings to keep their position and protect their interests. My informants were, similar to most of the Lebanese I talked to, sceptical to the sectarian leaders. The manner in which my informants differed was their chosen approach as citizens, not primarily as sectarian members.

They viewed the system as being stagnant and increasing grass root sectarianism. Hisham told me that ‘...the war didn’t really end. Well, the shelling and the bombing ended, but there was no reconciliation between the Lebanese. Lebanese still hate each other. So, instead of blaming the actual politicians, or the actual [system], they still blame the other religion for the worsening economical situation. [They do not see] the Hariri factor, or the Berri factor, [...] they only see the other religion as being the one which is benefiting from the state, at their expense.’⁶⁷

Still, despite the problems in Lebanon, my informants accepted the country as it was. Even if they were opposed to sectarian politics and the confessional organisation of the country, they also regarded it as an inherent part of Lebanon. In Hisham’s opinion this was merely the way ‘... things’ were. He viewed the ‘...religious establishments [to be] very powerful in Lebanon. They exist and you cannot evade them. And they have the right to exist, [...], people have the right to assemble as they want to. If they want to assemble on a sectarian basis, they have the right to do. Even if we are against it, we do not have the right to banish it.’

Developing a Common Stance: Citizenship

Mouvement Social aimed to involve Lebanese, regardless of sectarian belonging, in common social action. Doing this, the members had to relate to the many of the country’s ethnic groups, as well as to the fact that these communities were also represented in the organisation. The staff and volunteers were very much a part of their different sects, even if working for Mouvement Social. So the participants needed to build a common space amongst themselves as a basis for their efforts.

⁶⁶ See separate overview of the economic situation in the appendix two.

⁶⁷ Both Rafik al Hariri and Nabih Berri have been influential political figures in post-war Lebanon. The former was a successful business man and prime minister, while the latter was Speaker of Parliament and the leader of Harakat Amal.

When I discussed their motivation for involvement with my informants, they usually explained it as being based in 'citizenship.' Looking at themselves as citizen, with rights and obligations within the state, they managed to construct a common platform and give meaning to their actions. For the volunteers, this was one of the main motivations for partaking. The focus on being citizens was also useful to the employees, especially in their daily work. To Huda the concept of citizenship meant an alternative social identity, and was thus helpful in disregarding sectarian matters while relating to her colleagues.

In the annual report of 1993 (MSL 1994) the organisation stated that focus on citizenship was a priority in its agenda in post-war Lebanon. During my fieldwork, nine years later, the slogan 'Let us Develop Citizenship' expressed the continued importance of this focus. According to the employees this was still a difficult issue and developing citizenship was mainly an internal focus in the organisation. Working in a society characterised by mistrust and antagonism between the social groups, they regarded the atmosphere as being too sensitive to start lobbying for alternative social identities outside of the organisation. But, for the staff and volunteers it was nevertheless an important concept. Talking about the issue with the Director, she told me that '...to fulfil our mission we must be faithful to our values, [...], and believe in citizenship.'

Dealing with Sectarian Surroundings: People, Identities and Common Action

Introduction

In the preceding four chapters I have outlined historical and contemporary aspects of Lebanon. I have aimed at providing a frame for understanding Mouvement Social and its participants. My presentation of the organisation has portrayed its history, constitution and principals, its projects and presence in post war Lebanon, and the staff and volunteers' manners of and motivations for participation, as well as their social ties. Through their involvement they had to relate to each other, to their different social ties, and to doing common actions within Mouvement Social. I have, thus, described people from different backgrounds acting together in a complex social context.

In this chapter, I will focus on how MSL dealt with its sectarian surroundings. In doing so, I will elaborate on my informants as socially constituted persons. I will deal with some significant social identities and attempt to explain the importance of these, as well as how they relate to each other. I will begin by proposing a theoretic approach to social identities, before debating my informants' ties to family, sect and locality. I then turn to discuss how MSL related to sectarianism, focusing upon external and internal aspects, before finally debating the concept of self in relation to people's identities.

Different and Similar: the Participants of MSL

'Lebanon in the twenty-first century is in as a curious a situation as it has ever been. It is caught between two contradictory tendencies: a hardening of the particularistic perspectives of identities, and a new form of cosmopolitanism. Curiously enough, both tendencies have been the product of the protracted civil war.' (Harik 2003: 31)

My informants were living within the complex social setting of modern Lebanon. They grew up in different locations and had different sectarian affiliations, as well as being unlike in terms of material resources, lifestyles, gender and personal beliefs such as religion. Still, they gathered in the same organisation, for a common cause, and subscribed to similar values. They embraced a range of different identities, some of which, like sectarian and national ties, were radically different, or even contradictory.

The matter of people's identities is complex and highly dependent upon the cultural contexts within which social life takes place. Debating this issue in the context of Bosnia-

Herzegovina Bringa (1995: 32), building on Strathern (1992: 182), holds that ‘... some scholars argue that in order to create a collective identity individuals must submerge the heterogeneous sources of their identity, rather than just add these to one another. [...] In Bosnia, however, Bosnians emphasized and added their heterogeneous sources of identity to one other, so that the overarching Bosnian homogenous identity was never ideologically and institutionally constructed to supersede this.’ Further, she (Bringa 1995: 83) argues that ‘... in different social environments different dimensions of a person’s identity came into play. Through the household, family, and sometimes the neighbourhood, they entered a Muslim social space. Through the village, friendships, and social life generally they entered a Bosnian (Muslim and Catholic) space. And through the education system, the Yugoslav People’s Army, and employment, Bosnians entered a “Yugoslav” social space.’

As Bringa accentuates, different identities are tied to different situations and contexts (for instance family, locality, and nation). Thus, I suggest, it is necessary to address the particularities of, and relationships between, Lebanese’s identities. By doing so I want to provide an understanding of how my informants viewed themselves and others within the frame of post-war Lebanon. By using identity as an analytic approach, I want to discuss the constitution of the social landscape my informants acted within, and hence provide a basis for a further discussion of Mouvement Social as a social organisation within this landscape.

A Theoretical Approach to Identity

Introduction

Before discussing my informants’ significant identities, I will outline a theoretical model for addressing identities. As I portray in the preceding chapters, my informants’ affiliations to family, confession and locality indicated their position and belonging within Lebanese society, as well as within the smaller spheres of neighbourhood or village. Other identities, such as those related to nation and gender, were also central parts of my informants’ lives. When participating in Mouvement Social, however, not all of these identities can be said to be of equal relevance. As I have portrayed in the preceding chapters, there was a particular focus on the participants’ sectarian identities.⁶⁸ In order to create a common space for their actions, this identity constituted a significant boundary between people. At the volunteer camps and in the main office, learning how to deal with each others as members of different sects was a main concern for the staff and volunteers.

⁶⁸ This identity is by Iliya Harik (2003) labelled as Lebanese’s signature identity, understood to be the primary identity by which Lebanese are categorised in the public sphere.

This suggests that appreciating the context people act in becomes important in order to understand the significance of identity. Discussing analytical dimensions in the comparison of social organizations Barth (1996) suggests that comprehension of the way members of a society organise their activities requires a definition of the situations in which actions occurs.⁶⁹ He argues that actors' definition of a situation forms the basis for cooperation, in addition to suggesting the statuses, out of the individual's repertoire of statuses, which become relevant.

The contexts my informants met in will be discussed and theorised further in the subsequent chapter. Here, I will elaborate on my approach to identity as an analytical tool. I will also, since it was an important focus for the participants in MSL, discuss sectarian identity.

Identities, Situations and Interaction

Social identities say something about the affiliation between individuals and social organisations. Jenkins (1997) views social identity as made up of two interrelated aspects: a name and a practical meaning or an experience. That is, a nominal and a virtual, respectively. Furthermore, discussing the distinction between nominal and virtual, he suggests that social identities are practical accomplishments rather than static forms. (Ibid.) This implies that identities are given meaning when people act in contexts of particular social and historical processes, and that they, concerning meaning and importance, should be thought of as potentially variable. I view the increase in importance of confessional identity in post war Lebanon, as I will address below, as an example of such variability.

Further, Jenkins (Ibid.) views identities as practical accomplishments which are based in the mutually interdependent, but theoretically distinct, social processes of internal and external definition. He sees identity as being a product of the interplay between these two processes, which also can be described in terms of group definition and social categorisation, respectively. I will address these processes further below, when debating ideology.

As the quote from Barth (1996) stresses, in a social analysis it is essential to consider the situation people act within and the statuses they act upon. In this regard I would argue that although the nominal aspect of an identity can apply to a range of societies, it is important to

⁶⁹ He suggests that the *social constitution* of people and the *meeting* between them are aspects that should be addressed in order to understand social organisation. Furthermore, he hopes that by developing a typology of different way of constructing society to avoid being misled by the superstructure of society. By inquiring into this approach he hopes to develop a better analytical base for social comparison.

recognise its situationally defined virtual dimensions. For instance, gender identity, like being a man, is a commonly used category although the practical significance of this identity varies.⁷⁰ That is, being a man should be understood according to the specific, and situationally placed, processes of internal and external definitions of which the identity is a product.

Thus, identity is an outcome of social interaction which in turn is contextually situated. Jenkins (1997) proposes a model of social interaction ranging from informal to formal. Among the most informal interaction he finds the primary socialisation of children by their care takers, interaction which belongs in the private realm; away from public gaze. At the other end of the scale is the official classification by which governments and bureaucracies organise the subjects of a state. With reference to what I have described through my empirical elaborations, my informants' families would be the sphere of their most informal interaction, while their sectarian belonging would make for formal interaction.

In between these two contexts of social relations, Jenkins (Ibid.) finds a range of different kinds of interactions. Market relationships, employment and organised politics would belong to the more formal part of the scale, while routine public interaction, sexual relationships and communal relationships would belong to the more informal. Routine public interaction refers to daily interaction taking place among others, and can both be verbal or, thinking of clothing and other bodily signs, non-verbal. These types of interaction, however, should not be understood as separate or hierarchically organised. Rather, Jenkins (1997: 70) holds that they '... overlap systematically in complex and interesting ways: routine public interaction, for example, takes place within a number of the other social contexts mentioned.'

As I will address further below, my informants were part of a society with a plurality of categories and groups. These were produced and reproduced through social interaction, and internalised by groups and made a part of individuals. This, however, raises an important matter; namely how categories become accepted by people. Jenkins (1997) identifies several processes whereby categories become accepted internal definitions. Relations of power and authority in social context can facilitate the internalisation of categories through existing social groups, through long lasting processes of cultural change and through the use of force.

⁷⁰ As described in 'Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity & Culture in the Middle East' (Ghoussoub 2000), where the authors analyse the different constructions of male identity in several Middle Eastern societies.

Considering the concepts of group definition and social categorisation, and the number of identities my informants related to, consequently implies that there were a range of social organisations within a larger social structure. Families, localities and sect, were all overlapping and interrelated, but primarily organised in different criteria, including kinship, area of origin and religious affiliation, respectively. In view of these interrelated, but yet, separate identities, it I would hold that it is important to consider the relation between identity and context. That is, why some identities become relevant in some situations, while other are less relevant. Anja Peleiks (2001) argues that identities can be understood as pluritactical constructs. She thereby refers to that in a social situation, actors include or exclude others strategically by emphasising elements of sameness or difference. I view this approach to be consistent with Barth's (1996) approach to actors and social situations, as described above. In the case of Movement Social, this was particularly apparent with sectarian identities, which were played down in order for the members to focus upon the national identity and citizenship.

Ideologies of Identification

As I have argued above, identity is an outcome of situationally dependent processes of group identification and social categorisation. However, it might be useful to also propose a model for approaching the base of these processes, that is, from where they draw their force. As I have elaborated on above, my informants identities where based in their belonging, to family, locality, and sect. Thus, their identities were tied to spheres of social life, which both were distinct and overlapping. Distinct in the sense that each of these spheres was defined by a separate set of cultural traits, such as kinship in a family and religious ties in a sect. At the same time they were also overlapping, with different families sharing a locality which in turn could be strongly affiliated with a sect.

It seems, thus, that people can embrace a plurality of social identities. And in one way, this plurality is a necessity, for, as Sökefeld (1999: 418), points out: '... there can be identity only if there is more than one identity, and in this sense differences constitute and precedes identity.' Jenkins (1997) proposes a model for thinking about the difference between identities by looking at the basis of identification and the encompassing ideology of identification.⁷¹

⁷¹ Kapferer (1988) sees ideology as '... a selective cultural construction whereby certain significances relevant to experience are systematically organized into a relatively coherent scheme. The ideas that are brought into ideological relation may have a grounding in a variety of different ontologies. [...] In Geertzian terms ideology is both a model of reality and a model for it'

He (1997: 84) views ideology as a body of knowledge ‘... which make claims about the way the social world *is* and, crucially, the way it *ought* to be.’⁷² Further, he holds that ideology is also intimately tied to culture, and, thus, reflected in everyday social life.⁷³ In terms of identity and belonging, this body of knowledge can be used to define who belongs to a group and who belongs elsewhere. It does, in other words, support processes of inclusion and exclusion by outlining to whom membership applies and to whom it does not.

The table (below) depicts the relationship between the bases of identification and ideology. It shows a range of ideologies, which to varying degrees are part of different kinds of societies, as well as indicating an overlapping relationship between them.

As the table shows, ethnicity is given much consideration. Discussing the concept, Jenkins (1997) formulates a basic model for it. He sees ethnicity as being essentially concerned with culture and as fundamentally politically. In one sense it is about shared culture within a group, that is: shared social models. But it is also about cultural differentiation between groups, and in this sense it emphasizes identity as an outcome of the production of similarity and difference. Further, ethnicity is situationally dependent, and is produced through social interaction. Ethnicity, thus, varies with changing circumstances of

Basis of identification	Ideology
<i>Kinship</i>	<i>Familism</i>
<i>Co-residence</i>	<i>Communalism</i>
<i>Co-residence</i>	<i>Localism</i>
<i>Co-residence</i>	<i>Regionalism</i>
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Ethnicism</i>
<i>Ethnicity/Nationality</i>	<i>Nationalism</i>
<i>Ethnicity/Race</i>	<i>Racism</i>
	(Jenkins 1997: 85)

societies and contexts. To Jenkins (Ibid.) ethnicity is both collective and individual. It is externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification.

In the table, ethnicity is portrayed as a basis of identification both in relation to nationalism and racism. Jenkins’s (Ibid.) focus on ethnicity, in this regard, is an attempt to clarify the ambiguity of the concept. While other forms of identification, such as kinship, have accepted usage in social sciences, this is not so with ethnicity. He (1997: 85) views this as being partly based in ‘... the fact that we use ‘ethnicity’ to refer to both a source and a kind of social identification *and* its attendant ideology. It may also, however, be the case that when

⁷² Knowledge, in this sense, does not account for validity or reliability.

⁷³ I will discuss the concept of culture further in chapter seven, where I argue that culture can be understood as a model for shaping social reality.

faced with an ethnic ideology – an ethnicism – our response is to identify it as either nationalism or racism.’

In relation to my own material, I find the parallel drawn between ideologies of racism and nationalism, both as being based in ethnicity, to be interesting. In chapter two I refer to the work of Makdisi (2000), who identifies sectarianism as a modern phenomenon; as modern as nationalism. He (2000: 7) argues that ‘...sectarianism emerged as a practice when Maronite and Druze elites, Europeans and Ottomans struggled to define an equitable relationship of the Druze and Maronite “tribes” and “nations” to a modernising Ottoman state.’ One of his main arguments is that sectarianism only draws meaning within a nationalist paradigm, and that it, thus, as much as nationalism belongs to modernity. Following Jenkins’s (1997) ideas of approaching nationalism in terms of ethnicity, I would suggest that this also could apply to sectarianism. That nationalism and sectarianism can be categorised as similar social formations, both being about ethnicity. However, this is not a major argument in my thesis, but merely an attempt to systemise different identities and relate these to each other.

I propose the link between sectarianism and other ethnic ideologies, such as racism and nationalism, in order to stress an essential quality belonging to them. Jenkins (1997: 84) argues that ‘... these are bodies of *political* knowledge oriented towards the systematic constitution of the world in particular ways and the advancement of sectional interests.’ Thus, I would argue that sectarianism also should be viewed as such a body of political knowledge.

Significant Social Identities: Family, Sect and Locality

The Family

As I have portrayed in the preceding chapters, the family was a very important part of my informants’ lives. They all had close relations to parents, spouses and children, and all apart from one lived in a family household.⁷⁴ The volunteers were financially supported by their parents, according to the state of the family economy, while they were studying. Huda, in the same manner, contributed to the family budget while working and still living at home. Many of my informants stressed the importance of family values and socio-political orientation. Noor, for instance, said that she would never have gone to Beirut if it was not for the moral

⁷⁴ A girl from a village in the Bekaa valley, who shared a flat with another girl while studying in Beirut.

support and left wing values of her parents. Nabihah saw, in the same manner, the values and political orientation of her family as an important influential factor in her own life.⁷⁵

Scholars, working on this topic, isolate the family as a primary social institution in Lebanon. Throughout the past decades of civil war, urbanisation and change from agriculture to service related occupations, the family has remained an essential part of society.⁷⁶ Faour (1998) argues that the importance of family ties supersede those of confession. The significance he ascribes to the family is shared by Khalaf (2003) who holds that family loyalties are influential in almost every aspect of a person's life. Building on previous studies, he argues that a person's status, occupation, politics, personal values, living conditions and life style to a large degree is defined by kinship affiliation. (Ibid.) I view this as being the case for my informants as well. As I have previously described, their lives were to a large extent based in their families, and their actions and life choices were in accordance with their parents desires.

When my informants were talking about their families, they were usually speaking of the nuclear family.⁷⁷ That is, about themselves in relation to parents and siblings, or about themselves in relation to spouse and children. So, when referring to a household, it would usually encapsulate two generations; parents and children. Noor, for instance, certainly felt a part of both her own household and that of her parents, but she would still differ between the two. Still, even though people tended to live in nuclear family households, their relations to the extended family remained close. Hisham, for instance, when moving to Beirut for his studies at the American University of Beirut, found it natural to stay at his uncle's house. Faour (1998), investigating the relations between university students and social institutions, found that they have the closest ties to their nuclear family, followed by their extended family, local ties and religious sect.

Faour (Ibid.) argues that the Lebanese family should be understood as a patriarchal construct. I will further elaborate on patriarchy in the following chapter, while debating gender relations, and here just use it to indicate the power relations within the family. Being a male dominated social organisation, the relations between family members still remain close.

⁷⁵ During one of our conversations (chapter five) she told me that '... you never change, it is inherited; it is from your parents. I am like this because my parents were communists. If my parents were [members of the] Hezb'Allah, I would not be talking to you now. Believe me.'

⁷⁶ Both Khalaf (2003) and Faour (1998) observe that family relations have become more important to people in post war Lebanon than they were in the 1970s.

⁷⁷ According to Faour (1998) are 78% of Lebanese households nuclear, that is, consisting of parents and dependent children. The figure is taken from a 1996 survey.

Suad Joseph (1994) argues that people are tied to the family through a psychodynamic process whereby people do not perceive themselves independently of others. She (1994: 55) holds that ‘... boundaries between persons are relatively fluid so that each needs the other to complete the sense of selfhood. One’s sense of self is intimately linked with the self of another such that the security, identity, integrity, dignity, and self-worth of one is tied to the actions the other. Connective persons are not separate or autonomous.’⁷⁸ So, the actions and achievements of a person are not only of consequence to on him or her but the family as well.

So, as I have debated above, the family played a significant role in the lives of people. For my informants, however, the issue of family was not prominent when they were working for Mouvement Social. I suggest that this has to do with the close ties between kinship, residence and confessional ties, as I quote Khalaf on above. That is, that family background was strongly linked to confessional background, and thus was outside of the civic and national focus of MSL.

Sectarian and Confessional Belonging

Introduction

Sectarianism and confessionalism were typically used as overlapping terms by my informants. In academic literature I view the use of the terms to be ambiguous; in some instances meant to refer to the same social structure, and in other usage they refer to different, but interrelated, structures. I will elaborate further on this below. In this dissertation I apply the terms as referring to the same thing; namely the political organisation of Lebanese society based in people’s religious affiliations. That it is, as based in people’s identities as Shi’a Muslims, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, etc.

When dealing with people living in a complex social setting such as my informants, I view it as important to map out the meaning of their social identities. In this part I shall discuss the significance of their confessional and sectarian identities, in relation to Lebanese society in general and their collective and religious aspects. These identities are also tied to family, as I elaborate on above, and to locality. The relationship between locality and identity will be elaborated on in the subsequent part of this chapter. For Mouvement Social, as an actor in the Lebanese public sphere, confessional identities consequently became an important issue. As I have described in chapter two, the political organisation of Lebanon follows confessional lines, and people’s religious belonging within this social structure therefore

⁷⁸ She uses the word connective rather than connected in order to stress that this should not be viewed as a state of being but rather as an activity.

acquires great significance.⁷⁹ In Mouvement Social, as an organisation reaching across these divisions, dealing with the participants' diverse backgrounds was a prioritised task.

Even though Mouvement Social worked to provide a non-confessional, or non-sectarian, space, confessional identity was still an important part of my informants' lives. My informants, like Noor and Huda were living within confessionally based communities, where family, and commonly neighbours, shared the religious affiliations. Even though they were used to disregarding these identities while participating in MSL, they were still, like all other Lebanese, part of different communities. The social and geographical borders of their communities were significant to my informants. For instance did my Christian informants rarely or never visit an area like Ghobeiri, which was largely Shi'a Muslim, and similarly did Shi'a informants in Ghobeiri rarely visit a Christian area such as Achrafiye.⁸⁰ Thus, confessional identity was, in other words, very influential on the way they led their lives. Debating this aspect of Lebanese society Ahmad Beydoun (2003) holds that confessionalism tends to reduce the ambitions of an individual to the confines of his or her community.

The efforts to address confessionalism at the volunteer camps were also a good indication of the weight of such social ties. When talking about their involvement at the camps, my informants recalled particularly how the leaders focused on cooperation and dealing with difference. And they also recalled many instances of confessional quarrels and antagonism between the participants. When debating this issue in more general terms, they held that there had been an increase in sectarianism and confessionalism after the war.

Sectarianism and Confessionalism: a Conceptual Clarification

As mentioned above, I view the use of the terms sectarianism and confessionalism to be ambiguous. However, since my informants used them interchangeably, I will let both terms hold the same meaning. But, in order to clarify both the nominal and virtual dimensions of these identities, and how they can be treated as both alike and different, I view a further discussion of them as necessary.

Ahmad Beydoun (2003: 75) understands confessionalism '... in the context of the contemporary Lebanese state [...] as an unequally accepted and diversely interpreted contract

⁷⁹ It should, however, be noted that there are communities in Lebanon that are organised in nationality rather than confession. The Armenian and Kurd populations count for 7-8 % and 2-3 % of the population, respectively. (Corm 1988)

⁸⁰ Confession, however, was not the only difference between the two areas; there were for instance more poverty among the inhabitants of Ghobeiri than those of Achrafiye.

between the confessional communities that constitute Lebanese society.’ Confession is, thus, not only about religious faith or belonging, but also about describing political identity. To MSL, as I have portrayed in the previous chapters, the religious convictions of the members was not made into a problem, but, rather, tolerated in the daily work of the organisation. What was important to the organisation was to address the communal and political aspect of confessionalism, and furthermore to constitute an alternative to this. Thus, the organisation focused on citizenship and nationality instead of confessional belonging, not on secularism instead of confession.

I understand Beydoun (Ibid.) to use confessionalism instead of sectarianism, and then as referring to all the political communities of Lebanon. Farid el-Khazen (2003), on the other hand, uses both terms. He (Ibid.) sees confessionalism as referring to the division between Christians and Muslims, while sectarianism refers to all the religious groups in the country. Thus, his utilization of the concepts differs from Beydoun’s usage. El-Khazen (Ibid.) thus uses sectarianism to refer to all the different political communities in the country. This might be a more accurate application, since not all of these groups bear religious labels. The Armenian population, for example, is organised in nationality. However, I will not deal at length with this debate, but rather try to focus on the practical significance of my informants’ confessional and sectarian identities.

The Importance of Sectarian and Confessional Identities

Confessionalism, viewed within the context of Lebanon, provides the foundation for the main identity formation. Iliya Harik (2003: 9) describes the confessional identity as people’s signature identity, which he in turn defines as ‘... the distinctive label that stands out among all other defining social attributes, which locate the primary position of a person on the social map.’ Other scholars on Lebanon agree with Harik (2003) on the significance of the people’s confessional ties, as well as the increased importance of this belonging in post war Lebanon. ((Hanf 2003); (Khalaf 2003); (Peleikis 2001))

Ahmad Beydoun (2003) isolates some major factors leading to the increase of the importance of confessional identity in post-war Lebanon. In order to understand the significance of this identity, I consider his approach as very useful.

First, he highlights the increased influence of religious authorities. In post-war Lebanon religious figures have been able to acquire more prominent position than prior to the war, and have done so at the expense of the state and secular forces. (Ibid.) One of the ways their

influence has been manifested has been through an increased cleavage in the educational system. The education of young Lebanese has become more adapted to their sect, and less to the state.

Secondly, he refers a coincidental process, namely that of the decrease of intercommunal mixture. Following the years of fighting the country has experienced an increase in homogenous confessional residential areas. This has consequently resulted in a ‘... repartition and ghettoisation of several institutions and public services, the decentralisation of markets, the duplication of all sorts of agencies, etc. all curtail possibilities of contact between Lebanese from different communities.’ (2003: 78)

The third point he makes is that of the rural bias of the political system. This point should be understood in relation to people’s local identities, which I will also attend to below. Beydoun (2003: 78 - 79) sees this as being strongly linked to ‘... the fact that certain large [urban] communities identify closely with their geographical and historical origins, either a region of the mountains or peripheral areas, and desire to associate the main elements of their political representation with these origins. Other communities have traditionally been concentrated in the cities. Willingly taking advantage of the backward-looking motivations of others, which they actually share, they reduce the cities, the representation of which they practically monopolize, to a political status worthy of large villages.’ These dynamics were apparent during MSL’s project in Qartaba.⁸¹ Many of the villagers actually lived and worked in the larger coastal towns during most of the year, and then usually spent the summer in the village. Similar to other Lebanese who did not belong to any of the communities in the larger cities, they lead their political lives from the village. So, during elections they would return to their village to cast their votes, and thus empowering rural Lebanon at the expense of the more confessionally mixed cities.

The final characteristic Beydoun (2003: 79) observes is ‘...the evolution of the system towards a narrower communal control of individuals. We are witnessing an unprecedented collectivization of cultural practices. [...] Anniversaries that once passed unnoticed have seen their profile hyped in order to lengthen the list of days on which the common confessional affiliation is reintroduced to the target audience.’

⁸¹ See chapter four.

Perhaps one of the most explicit examples of communal control of an individual during my field work was the attack on Gregoire Haddad, described in chapter four. Haddad, hosting a televised religious debate show, was twice attacked outside the recording studio. Both attacks, the first one only verbally while the second included physical violence, was carried out by fellow Christians. They were generally interpreted, among people and in the media, as being motivated by Haddad's progressive religious views. I believe an important aspect here is not what really motivated the assailants, but that the incidents were generally interpreted in terms of confession. Judging from Huda's reaction, the confessional frame of reference is quite apparent. She was both offended by the attack itself, as well as of what she perceived as others', and in particular Shi'a leaders', critique of the Maronite community for being violent and vengeful.

I view the incident as describing the gravity of confessionalism and sectarianism in Lebanon very well. That Haddad, a soft spoken and tolerant cleric, is reacted against so harshly indicates the dominance of confessionalism as well as the lack of alternative spaces. Beydoun (2003: 79) write that '... it is not surprising that non-conformists feel like renegades. They must be secretive about their thoughts and way of life, and they find that spaces where they can express these are constantly growing smaller. [...] Since the war, confessionalism has enjoyed immense popularity.'

Confessionalism and Religion

Discussing the difference between religious and confessional loyalties Samir Khalaf (2003: 131) argues that there are '... a few paradoxical and seemingly inconsistent features that reveal the sharp distinction between them. Clearly religiosity and confessionalism are not, and need not be conterminous.' Drawing on a war time study (1982 – 83), he locates an increase in religiosity through examining the intensity of people's spiritual belief, their commitment to a faith and to observing its rituals, practises and religious duties. Furthermore, he (Ibid.) finds that relevance of these practices was diminishing in people's lives, while sectarianism and confessionalism were becoming more vital. A significant element in understanding the increasing importance of sectarianism and confessionalism is that during the war, people sought safety mainly within the family and the community, not so much religious institutions. This can, however, be contrasted to Beydoun's (2003) observation of increased post-war focus on religious events as well as the increasing confessionalisation of the educational system. My point is merely that the relationship between religion and confession is not static. It can be seen as based in different social

mechanisms, and, thus, that it should be thought of as more or less coinciding, but not the same thing.

Khalaf's (2003) findings are in coherence with my own experiences. My informants differed between confessionality and religion in that they viewed the actions of confessional leaders as being motivated by political and economic interest, not religious. In other words, they saw the people's confessional affiliations mainly in terms of belonging to a community within which individuals could fulfil their social and, in particular, material requirements. Religious affiliation, on the other hand, was viewed as being primarily about personal conviction and a fulfilment of spiritual needs. So, in the context of MSL, with the organisation's focus on resource distribution, expressed as the need to assist underprivileged social groups in managing life in post-war Lebanon, confessional and sectarian logic became the focal point, not people's religious conviction. It is, thus, not that they did not recognise the impact of religion, but as Khalaf (Ibid.) discusses, saw a difference between the two.

Conclusive Remarks

Consequently, to summarise the main points, I have argued that people's confessional and sectarian belonging are key identities placing people within the social and political map of Lebanon. The confessional identities constitute cultural boundaries used by the individual to distinguish between her community and others' communities. However, even though the confessional and sectarian identity usually bears a religious label, it should be understood not merely in terms of religious affiliation.⁸² Rather, they were key identities for participation within the state and civil society of Lebanon.

Locality and Belonging

All of my informants had close ties to what they considered to be their home place. It was commonly a village or, in larger cities, an area to which they felt a special sense of belonging. Their local identities usually coincided with confessional and family ties. The incident I described from the grocery store in Qartaba, gives an indication on the importance of locality and belonging in Lebanon.⁸³ While the proprietor was rather indifferent to where I, as a foreigner, came from, he showed a great interest in the local identities of my fellow volunteers. They, in turn, reacted negatively to his attempt to map out their backgrounds. They perceived him as acting in a sectarian manner, and, thus, as shifting the focus away from the sameness of Mouvement Social. They were being placed within the social map of

⁸² With some exceptions, as I mention above, of groups like Armenians, Kurds and Palestinians.

⁸³ See chapter four.

Lebanon, both in terms of confession and locality. So, people's local identities, their ties to a locality and area of residence, were given much importance.

Many of the volunteers, being university students, were living other places than where they were born and grew up. However, they all maintained strong ties to the villages and towns of their parents, and would make frequent visit. Even though they, like Nisrin, who felt that village life was too conservative, might not have any plans to live there, they still kept special relations to these locations. These relations were also officially manifested by the state bureaucracy since they were all registered as residents in the home towns of their parents.

Furthermore, even though they, like Hisham, Nisrin, Noor and Huda were living in another area than the one they considered to be their home place, there were still similarities between the two locations. As a Maronite, Huda had moved to the Christian area of Ashrafiye, and Noor, being Shi'a, had in a similarly manner moved to the Shi'a dominated suburb of Ghobeiry. Thus, there was a concurrence between the religious affiliation of their places of origin and their other places of residence.

This, I suggest, points to two aspects of local identity. The first is that the affiliation between locality and person does not need to be based in daily interaction with the other residents of a location; people maintain their local identities even though they are living elsewhere. The second is the relationship between locality and confessional belonging, which I found to be closely linked. Discussing these matters in post-war Lebanon, Anja Peleikis (2001: 24) argues that '...the local identity previously produced in daily social interaction has been redefined and essentially confessionalised through rural-urban and transnational migration, and especially through the realities of civil war. This process was reinforced by the "territorialisation of identities," i.e. the emergence of confessionally-defined spaces during the civil war.' In his elaboration on the new social setting of Lebanon Salim Nasr (2003) also stresses the increased confessionalisation of locality. He (2003: 149) argues that '...sixteen years of protracted strife have profoundly altered the social geography of the country. The multi-secular trend towards pluralism and greater communal territorial admixture was reversed.'

So, local identity can, especially as a result of confessionally based fighting during the war, be seen as linked to confession. However, as my material suggests, it is still important to differ between local and confessional identity. They should be also perceived as different

aspects of people's lives. The experiences of Huda and Noor emphasize this difference. In different manners, they had both learned that even though they were living among people of the same confession, they were still perceived as outsiders because they were not from the same area. Huda and her family experienced this when moving to the village in Kesrwan, while Noor felt different from the "original" Shi'a residents of Ghobeiri. And even though Noor married a local man, officially registered as a resident of the municipality of Ghobeiri, she still kept very close ties to her village in the south of Lebanon. Considering these examples, I argue that even though there normally is a correlation between confession and locality, these should not be seen as the same identity.

Finally, I will briefly sum up the main points. I am arguing that my informants' affiliations to a locality should be understood as being a significant identity in their lives. And, they did not need to live in the localities they felt part of. Local identity was not merely based in everyday interaction between residents. Furthermore, there is a relationship between confession, family ties and locality. But, as I say above, confessional and local identity should be kept apart. As was the case with both Noor and Huda; although living among confessional peers, they were viewed, and saw themselves, as different based on their local identities.

Dealing with Sectarian Surroundings

In the above I have identified sectarianism and confessionalism, as they were referred to by my informants, as a fundamentally political identity, and as analytically distinct from other identities such as kinship and locality. Now, that I turn to look at how sectarianism was handled in Mouvement Social, there are several aspects that should be addressed. I have focused the discussion around two overarching parts, the first being how MSL related to its sectarian surroundings, the second how they related to sectarianism among the participants. I will begin by looking at how MSL related to the general level of sectarianism in society. Initially I will discuss the matter based in the history of MSL, before I turn to look at it in the context of post-war Lebanon.

To Mouvement Social, sectarianism was a major issue, and it had been a concern to the organisation since its initial stages in the late 1950s. In chapter three I refer to how the founding committee was constituted; by a representative of each of the major sects in Lebanon. The main initiator, Haddad, did not include himself on the committee '...so that it

would not be labelled as Greek Catholic.’⁸⁴ The central concern to Haddad was to avoid the organisation being affiliated to one sect in particular, since that would ruin the non-confessional space MSL was trying to constitute. Considering the strong sectarian divides in Lebanon, this was a crucial issue then, as it has been since. MSL existed as an inclusive social formation among these divides, and its success dependent on remaining as such. The central point here is that MSL was as much a part of Lebanese reality as the sectarian groups, and to the organisation it was thus vital to be perceived, by society in general, as non-confessional. It depended on having credibility as a non-confessional group in order to be able to act in Lebanese society according to its own principals.

The way it had to take heed for the general level of sectarianism in society also became apparent during the civil war. During this period the administration limited the organisation to a group of core employees, and stopped all the volunteer activities. The obvious reason for doing this was the dangers involved in doing social work in a war zone, but there was also another consideration to make. The administration was concerned that the increasing sectarian division in society should be mirrored inside of the organisation as well, leading a disintegration of MSL as a non-confessional organisation. I would argue that these cases highlight how exposed MSL was to the intensity of sectarian feelings in society. In order to avoid becoming part in the sectarian game, the NGO had to make carefully considered approaches to society. I experienced this to be an issue that had been with the NGO since its beginning, and had gained relevance in the increased sectarianism of post-war Lebanon.

During my fieldwork I found these issues to be no less relevant than they had seemed to be before the war. Rather, on the contrary; people viewed sectarian tensions to be extremely high. Bakhacke, the Director of MSL, claimed that these tensions had increased after the end of the war. Thus, it seemed, sectarianism was now a serious concern that the organisation had to deal with. An example of this is the gap between its public role, and what was listed as organisational aims in the 1993 annual report. (Mouvement Social Libanais 1994) Among others, it was aiming to heighten public awareness around its own values through arranging meetings and debates. However, I found that MSL had difficulties entering the public discussions; it tended to keep a low profile in its work. The hesitancy to enter public forums was much based in the dangers involved in taking up an active political stance. If doing so, they could run the risk of being publicly affiliated with a sectarian group in particular, if for

⁸⁴ Haddad’s confessional background. The quote is taken from an interview I did with Haddad. See chapter three.

no other reason than coincidentally shared meanings. However, in the tense sectarian atmosphere of post-war Lebanon, becoming publicly viewed as linked to particular sects could be very damaging to their non-confessional profile. Thus, the organisation found itself forced to remain in a marginal position, and to quietly conduct its projects.⁸⁵

In the daily work, however, I found that MSL had learned to function alongside its sectarian surroundings. While I was working in Ghobeiry, there were no apparent sectarian issues that the staff had to deal with. That is, sectarianism certainly presented a challenge to the organisation considering the principals they adhered to and what they would like to achieve. However, in the daily work and doings of the organisation they had adapted their efforts to the sectarian surroundings, and thus managed to conduct their work without running into problematic sectarian issues. Thus, I would argue that the organisation had a non-provocative approach to society; it generally sought to avoid confrontations over tense public issues. In terms of its projects, this seemed to be a successful strategy. They managed to conduct their work amidst the difficult social and political conditions of post-war Lebanon. Still, some of my volunteer informants expressed wishes for a more political twist on the organisations involvement. They wanted MSL to be more of a public voice.

Although managing to avoid sectarian conflicts through their everyday work, this had not been the case on many of the volunteer camps that had been arranged through the 1990s. My informants all remembered instances of sectarian tensions at these camps. I will deal with the tensions among volunteers below, and here focus on how MSL as an organisation handled the sectarian environment it acted in. In contrast to the daily work, which was normally performed by people with a long experience and often social ties to the community they were working in, the volunteers attending the camps could not be said to possess either one. At the camps, conflicts between the volunteers and the locals had occurred on many occasions. My informants mentioned cases such as stones being thrown by local residents, instances of conflict cause by general mistrust and misinterpretations of the volunteers' intents, and authoritative figures in a local community taking a public critical stance against MSL.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ An example of the low public profile the organisation kept is its rather muted response after the attack on Haddad, as described in chapter four. Although publishing a statement denouncing the assault, the organisation did not use the incident as an opportunity to initiate public debate of sectarian forces. Haddad, even though receiving much attention from national media, also avoided making the incident into a public debate. Rather, he excused his assailants, saying that they were individuals who had departed from the tolerant foundations of their religious faith.

⁸⁶ See 'Local Hostilities' in chapter five.

These conflicts, however, needed not be primarily based in sectarian identities. As I discuss above, social identities are often overlapping, such as locality and confessionality. The conflicts the volunteers experienced at these camps might also be viewed as rooted in local identity as well as in sectarian belonging. Since MSL members generally did not reveal, or discuss, their sectarian background, it would be sensible to also view these conflicts in terms of locality and belonging.

At the camp in Qartaba the camp leaders were focused on avoiding tensions among MSL participants and the local population. Although all of the volunteers had been active for several years, and had previous experiences with both MSL's projects and camps, they were still being told to keep a low profile while working in the village and to avoid actions that could provoke the villagers. Although experiencing minor instances of sectarian confrontations, the camp went well. According to the participants there had been an unusual low level of conflict at the camp. I perceived this to be largely due to the high level of camp experience among the volunteers that participated.

I would hold that one of the main reasons for both MSL's focus on avoiding conflict at the camps, and for the conflicts that took place, is, at least to a large extent, based in these camps being the first meeting between different Lebanese. They highlight the significance of sectarianism, and other bases for identification, in that these constituted the immediate boundaries over which MSL participants and locals interacted. Each time MSL entered a new social arena in Lebanon, for instance the different villages where they would conduct volunteer camps, they had to be conscious about the conflicts that could occur. Thus, I will suggest that these camps highlight the general patterns of social tensions in Lebanon which MSL constantly had to take into consideration. Compared to the everyday projects, the camps also indirectly showed the value of the careful and considerate approach to society that MSL portrayed through their everyday work.

Different Sectarian Ties and Common Action

I have, in the above, argued that MSL dealt with its sectarian surroundings through a non-confronting, non-provocative and tolerant approach to society. In the subsequent part, I will discuss how sectarianism was dealt with internally in the organisation.

Although MSL did not confront sectarianism through their everyday interaction in society, the issue was not overlooked among their own ranks. In this respect there were distinct differences between volunteers and employees. While sectarianism seemingly was not a big issue among the latter group, it was so among the volunteers. Especially at the camps where the volunteers interacted among themselves and among others, that is, among the population living in an area MSL had picked to host a volunteer camp. I would argue that the training the volunteers were given here indicates the attention sectarian boundaries, as well as social divisions in general, was given by MSL. At the first camps the volunteers attended, there were a range of programs and exercises set up to teach the attendants to deal with sectarian tensions. Through focusing on language, that is, on how the volunteers addressed each other, through conflict resolution in the shape of acting out staged problems, and through accomplishing projects together, such as constructing an irrigation system in a farm area, the volunteers had to deal with each other on different levels.⁸⁷ They were encouraged to be conscious of how they related to each other, of how to deal with conflicts, and how to cooperate and work together. There were, as I have described in chapter five, instances of conflicts and tensions at the camps. Still, my informants found these exercises to be valuable, and when talking about their involvement at the camps, these experiences were given much attention. It was through them that they had learned to deal with their fellow volunteers, despite the difficulties of representing different communities in a post-war setting.

However, in terms of addressing sectarianism I would hold that there were important differences between the employees and the volunteers. I find Hisham's remark about the significance of sectarian ties to encapsulate some central aspects of the sectarian system. He held that teenagers can be taught a different set of values at a camp, but when they become adults and prepare to start families and get jobs, they still have to address sectarian institutions.⁸⁸ What he essentially points to is that a person's life situation is very influential on how he or she relates to society. For children and youth, sectarianism need not be a significant aspect of one's life, family and community is likely to be more important. While as an adult one has to address the sectarian system when exercising one's political rights and getting married, and often when seeking employment.

⁸⁷ I describe these events in chapter four and five.

⁸⁸ See chapter five.

So, in terms of the employees I would argue that sectarianism was a potentially tense issue, and difficult to deal with explicitly. The employees were both members of Mouvement Social and members of sectarian communities, which could be conflicting positions. The reluctance of Ilham and Noor to influence their students ideologically in terms of introducing them to the values of MSL indicates how conflicting these positions could be.⁸⁹ They would have no problems of acting according to MSL standards among other members of the organisation, but would at the same time be conscious of their sectarian belonging. So, as Huda observed, the interaction in the office was guided by a silent agreement. The employees, hence, needed not openly agree upon avoiding sectarian issues. But, they were aware of the tension such issues could cause, and thus, were conscious not to stir sectarian feelings.

Still, for both volunteers and employees alike, their involvement in MSL was about accepting difference. As I have portrayed in the previous chapters, none of my informants presented any ideas of Lebanon as belonging to a homogeneous Lebanese population. Rather, Lebanon was often described as being fundamentally divided. That is, it was thought of as embracing a number of distinct social organisations rather than one Lebanese entity. But, recognising the basic social divisions of Lebanon, they still viewed Lebanon as being a country. As I quoted Hisham on in chapter five: ‘... if the Lebanese were not convinced that they should live together, they would have divided Lebanon into two countries. After 15 – 20 years of civil war, Lebanon is still one country.’ Thus, I would argue that MSL was not only about developing an alternative to confessionalism. It was also very much about learning to live with accepted social divisions of Lebanese society.

So far, I have discussed the internal relationship to sectarianism through the more direct attention the issue was shown at the volunteer camps, and the rather indirect manner it was dealt with among the staff. However, MSL management of sectarian feelings was not only limited to a choice of addressing and ignoring the issue. Focusing on common issues was a central concern to the members of MSL.

Through the work they performed the participants attended as Lebanese, and acted in a Lebanese setting.⁹⁰ At the volunteer camp in Qartaba, for instance, there were several instances where the participants stated this identity. An example of this occurred on the bus

⁸⁹ See chapter four.

⁹⁰ I will address the concept of work in relation to MSL further in chapter seven.

ride to the camp, as I described in chapter four, when the volunteers began to sing the national anthem.⁹¹ A similar incident occurred when a group photo was to be taken on the last day of the camp. When someone spotted a large photo of the Lebanese president, it was immediately placed at the centre of the group. I interpret these events as expressions of being Lebanese; of a common identity among the camp participants. Thus, I hold that people did feel Lebanese, although their social backgrounds varied.

Thus, my informants expressed their national affiliation on several occasions, although they did not use this stand to mobilise publicly or as a stand in the political arena. Furthermore, I did not hear this identity begin clearly defined or strongly articulated by my informants.⁹² It was rather expressed through agreeing on national symbols, like the Lebanese flag or the national anthem, to which they all could relate. When we were discussing their ties to the nation, they would usually range this affiliation as less important than their ties to the family or confessional community.⁹³ They accepted that it was difficult to view Lebanon as one nation; that the Lebanese are several communities who all are an inherent part of the country.

Considering the Self

Initially in this chapter I proposed a theoretic model for approaching social identities. I have then outlined significant identities of my informants, and the manner which they dealt with sectarianism. In this last part of the chapter, I will debate the concept of self which I view as an important aspect of the relation between people and social identities.

'No doubt a Serb is different from a Croat, but every Serb is also different from every other Serb, and every Croat is different from every other Croat. And if a Lebanese Christian is different from a Lebanese Muslim, I don't know any two Lebanese Christians, nor any two Muslims, any more than there are anywhere in the world two Frenchmen, two Africans, two Arabs or two Jews who are identical. People are not interchangeable, and often in the same family, [...], we find, between two brothers who have lived in the same environment, apparently small differences which make them act in diametrical opposite ways in matters relating to politics, religion and everyday life. These differences may even turn one of the brothers into a

⁹¹ It is titled '*Koullouna lil Watan*,' meaning 'All for the Homeland/Nation.'

⁹² The Lebanese identity seems to be being particularly vague and difficult to deal with. Ahmad Beydoun (1992: 95) writes that '... far from providing the mortar to guarantee unity, as soon as the Lebanese identity is mentioned it begins to tear apart.' Scholars on Lebanon agree on the difficulties of viewing the Lebanese as one nation. Rather, they suggest that Lebanon should be viewed in terms of competing nationalisms, that is, the nation viewed within the particular cultural context of the each of the country's sectarian groups. ((Firro 2003); (Hanf 2003); (Salibi 1988); (Khashan 1992))

⁹³ Like Aman's quote in chapter five; '... [People's] main priorities are family, confession and religion, and then comes belonging to the nation.'

killer, and the other into a man of dialogue and conciliation.' (Maalouf 2000: 21)

Having outlined a set of identities that were significant to my informants, I find Maalouf (Ibid.) to encapsulate a central aspect of their lives. What he refers to is how people embrace several identities, and that shared identities are, in a strict sense, not a guarantee for people being alike. Certainly, people sharing identities will be similar, in that these identities are based upon common aspects of their respective lives. But at the same time there will always be difference between people.

Another aspect of this plurality of identities is that some of these might be contradictory. That is, they might require different approaches to society, like the case is with my informants having both a sectarian and a national identity. These two identities can be viewed as conflicting in that they both outline different premises for how people should relate to Lebanon. As was the case with my informants, to whom both identities were meaningful, although they were conscious about which identity they acted upon in a given social situation. They would, for instance, not act upon their sectarian affiliation when partaking in MSL. I would therefore suggest that the concept of 'self' can be useful in order to understand how my informants embraced some identities, while distancing themselves from other identities, depending upon the context they acted within.

My informants would frequently refer to themselves (English 'I;' Arabic 'ana') when describing matters of society and Mouvement Social. Events and stories were portrayed according to the individual informant's interpretation of them. When discussing participation and action, it was often important for the individual to describe the way she or he had been a part of it. In other words, even though participating in an organisation underlining commonality they were still individuals with different histories and social ties. While recognising a common identity with others, they still differentiated between others and self. My informants frequently recalled the initial meeting between themselves and other participants in Mouvement Social as being about establishing which identities would be relevant in such a setting. For the individual it was about learning how to present themselves and view others within the social space of the organisation.

Henrietta Moore (1988) views the focus on self and the actors' own understanding a situation as a move away from having people's behaviour determined by structuralism. She (1988: 38) sees this as having been useful to feminist analysis, since it takes heed for women's

actual experiences, and argues that ‘... this emphasis on experience necessarily involves some consideration of the ‘experience of self’ or ‘person.’’ In particular, Moore (Ibid.) is concerned with gender constructs, and she emphasizes that it might be analytically problematic to view women primarily in terms of their femaleness. While gender constructs is a part of social life, other aspects such as people being individuals, with good and bad personal qualities, are also central elements. Thus, Moore (1988: 41) argues that these ‘... constructs are linked to concepts of self, personhood and autonomy. Any analysis of such concepts necessarily involves some consideration of choice, strategy, moral worth and social values as they relate to the actions of individual social actors.’

However, Moore (Ibid.) does see a problem related to the concept of individuality. Arguing that the concept, in Western thought, ‘... is a very specific constellation of ideas, which combines theories of autonomy, action and moral worth with a particular view of the way in which individuals both make up and stand apart from society,’ she (1988: 40) is sceptical about using it when debating other cultures. She (1988: 40) concludes that ‘... to assume that western notions of the acting ‘individual’ or ‘person’ are appropriate to other contexts is to ignore the different cultural mechanism and expectation through which this process of evaluation proceeds.’ (Ibid.)

So, if trying to grasp the individuality of an actor cannot be done without possibly being ethnocentric, this is a problem when considering people’s selves.⁹⁴ The issue, then, is perhaps also how people can be approached in terms of ‘self’ without linking them to a particular aspect of western culture. In other words, how to develop a general notion of self, detached from its traditional Western understanding.

In his discussion of ‘self, identity and culture’ Martin Sökefeld (1999) elaborates on the matter. He (1999: 418) claims that ‘...the significance of the self is greatly underestimated in anthropology. Two approaches to the subject can be distinguished. The first implicitly maintains that anthropology’s subjects have an identity (shared with others, derived from a culture) *instead* of a self. The second analyzes the selves of these subjects by contrasting them with a paradigmatic conceptualization of the “Western self” (that is, the still mostly Western anthropologist’s own self), and because it denies the paradigmatic characteristics of

⁹⁴ I do, however, not argue that people should be considered to appearing fully independent of others. People connect in a many ways, for instance through shared identities, and, to paraphrase Joseph (1994) above, through connective selves. She (Ibid.) views people as connective since the production of selfhood is depending upon the boundary between the self and others selves.

the Western self to anthropology's non-Western subjects it actually denies them a self.' Further, he holds that considering people's selves becomes necessary in order to understand how individuals can embrace a plurality of identities.

Discussing the relationship between the self and identities, he views it as creating a need to find something that remains a stable point behind shifting identities. He (1999: 424) argues that in order to '... conceive of a plurality of identities that can simultaneously and/or subsequently be embraced and enacted by the "same" person we need something that somehow remains the "same" [...].' (Ibid.) Moreover, he suggests that this "same," or self, can be understood as a continuous, but not stagnant, base for a subjects' evaluation of situations and (strategic) actions. The self should thus be viewed as a reflexive sense that makes possible for the individual to self-consciously distinguish herself from everything else.

So, both Moore (1988) and Sökefeld (1999) seem in agreement on the necessity of considering a person to be more than a mere set of identities. However, where Moore finds the concept of individuality to be an obvious Western concept, developed within and belonging to the frame of Western culture, Sökefeld sets out to investigate it further. He aims at developing a general notion of 'self,' and, although he does not want to give a set definition, suggests that it should be understood as a parallel term to 'culture.' That is, as an open concept; as a common aspect of social organisation, and particularly, in line with Descartes' thoughts, in terms recognising the unique and ongoing selfsameness that should be seen as fundamental to every individual.⁹⁵

Thus, he ends up proposing a general notion of self, which attributes the actor with individual self-awareness and reflexivity, which in turn can be viewed as a precondition for action.⁹⁶ I understand this to be similar to the individual as Moore sees her; vested with understanding and agency based on the personal experience of one's life world. I will therefore argue that, when dealing with the relations between persons and social systems, individuals should also be considered in terms of selves; they should be understood as more than just a number of identities. As Maalouf (2000) suggests, the actions and viewpoints of people cannot be

⁹⁵ I understand selfsameness to refer to the stability of the self; that is, that the self is identical with itself, and thus functions as a guarantee for an individual's stable perception of the world.

⁹⁶ Concerning the issues of action, Sökefeld (1999: 430) writes that '...my argument that agency is characteristic of the self and the self is a precondition for action may seem circular, but in fact the two or, better, three aspects cannot be separated: agency, reflexivity, and the self go hand in hand, each requiring both the others.'

claimed to be predetermined merely by virtue of their social identities and belongings. I will also suggest that acknowledging people as selves, as reflexive beings with individual agency, is important in order to understand why people become members of Mouvement Social. I will return to latter issue in the subsequent chapter, when discussing my informants' participation with the organisation.

Final Remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the social identities which I perceived as important to my informants. Debating social organisations, such as family, sect, and locality, I have attempted to say something about the significance of them, and how they relate to each other. I have aimed to portray my informants not merely within the context of Mouvement Social, but also that of Lebanon. I have therefore differed between the identities that were of direct relevance when my informants were participating in MSL, and those that were less relevant.

Furthermore, I have discussed how MSL related to sectarianism. I have argued that the organisation acted as an inclusive space to its participants among others by not challenging their sectarian ties. MSL avoided confrontations with sectarian sentiments, both internally and externally, by choosing a non-provocative, non-confronting and tolerant approach to society.

In addition to discussing the manner in which MSL's related to sectarianism, as well as looking at my informants in terms of social institutions and appending identities, I have also discussed the concept of self. I have, thus, aimed to look at how my informants related to their social ties, and how they embraced a plurality of identities which importance was situational. I have, in other words, suggested that identities can be viewed as pluritactical constructs. Furthermore, I have proposed that identity should be seen as a name, and an encompassing experience; as being about group definition and social categorisation; and, as being ideologically based.

State, Civil Society and Mouvement Social: Searching for an Alternative Space in the Social Landscape of Lebanon

Introduction

In the preceding chapter I have discussed identity in relation to MSL and its participants. I have focused on their approach to sectarianism in particular, and proposed how my informants' sectarian identities should be understood in relation to other identities such as kinship and locality. In this chapter I will focus on MSL as an organisation within Lebanese civil society. Two central aspect of the discussion will be the manner in which the organisation related to the concepts of state and citizenship.

I have previously described how Mouvement Social acted within the complex social landscape of Lebanon. It was one among many social organisations that operated within the arena constituted by the Lebanese state. When I now address the manner in which MSL related to the state, civil society becomes an important concept. Embracing the sphere of ideological and political struggles in society, civil society is, as I will discuss further below, intimately tied to the state.

So, in the following I will propose a theoretic approach to civil society and the state. I will then debate the meaning of the state and citizenship to the employees and volunteers, before I finally turn to look at MSL within the context of Lebanese civil society. Furthermore, I will address some central characteristics of MSL as a social organisation, as well as why people participated.

Civil Society and the State: a Theoretic Approach

Approaching Civil Society

The term 'civil society' is vague and frequently used in a broad manner.⁹⁷ (Centre for Civil Society 2003) Due to its wide usage it is therefore necessary to define how civil society should be understood. The term has a long history, and was discussed by both Georg Hegel and Karl Marx. To Hegel civil society was neither family nor state, but a third dimension beside the other two. Marx continued Hegel's work, but radicalised the aspects of class,

⁹⁷ Modern civil society encompasses a wide array of actions and institutions. It consists of ideas, values, organisations, networks, and individuals located primarily outside the institutional complexes of family, market, and state, and beyond he confines of national societies, politics and economies. (Centre for Civil Society 2003)

capitalism and citizenship (Neocleous 1995). Both Hegel and Marx viewed this social dimension as consisting of individuals belonging to the bourgeoisie, and as being characterized by socio-economic rather than political relations. Hegel and Marx made important contribution to the contemporary understanding of civil society, including the theoretic conceptualisation I have subscribed to in this analysis. But before I propose a model for understanding the sphere, I will briefly describe its general complexity.

Systemising this vast sphere of social organisation is a comprehensive task. Its actors take on a variety of forms and might appear in local, national and global contexts. In its yearly publication on civil society the Centre for Civil Society has presented an effort to systemise these actors.⁹⁸ In the table below (Centre for Civil Society 2003) common types of civil society organisations have been organised according to the form of organisation and the aims of the participants. The table also seeks to provide links between those organisations commonly thought of as being non-profit and profit based corporations.⁹⁹ It seeks to portray the strategic aspect of civil society, in terms of listing how these organisations relate to their socio-political surroundings and the networks they are part of. However, although the table gives an insight into large actors and the networks of the global civil society, it does not say much about the dynamics of civil society; its structure and processes.¹⁰⁰

In her extensive work on civil society, Neera Chandhoke (1995: 168) writes that ‘... civil society is simply the sphere where groups organized on class and other social bases – gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, environment – engage in political and ideological struggles. It is the sphere of

Forms	Main Actor	Of primary interest to	Example
New Public Management: Civil society organisations as sub-contractors to robust national and IGO policy-making	NGOs and devolved government	Supporters and Reformers	Oxfam, World Visions, Save the Children
Corporations: Civil society organisations partnering with companies	NGO and TNCs	Supporters and Reformers	Nice and Greenpeace; Starbucks and
Social capital or self-organisation: civil society building trust through networking	NGO and associated alternatives	Reformers; Rejectionists; Regressives	Community building organisations, faith-based
Activism: civil society monitoring and challenging power-holders	Movements, transnational civic networks	Reformers and Rejectionists	Global Witness; Corporate Watch; Social Forums

(Centre for Civil Society, 2003: 8)

organized politics, organized not only in the sense that these practices are carried out by

⁹⁸ The centre is based at the London School of Economics.

⁹⁹ NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation; TNC: Trans National Corporation.

¹⁰⁰ Addressing civil society in terms of NGOs is problematic. Both Chandhoke (2005) and Demirovic (2003) stresses that such organisations do not necessarily represent anyone. Rather NGOs frequently claim to be representing someone; they claim to be acting on behalf of people. The case is often, though, that the people they claim to represent have not asked for representation, and there might be few, if any, social relations between NGOs and their constituencies.

institutions such as political groups and social movements, but organized in the sense that public opinion about issues undergoes a process of crystallization.’

Chandoke’s definition focuses on approaching civil society, or rather, civil societies, within the local settings they are part of. At the same time she outlines a general framework which takes account for the different constitutions of these settings. The manner in which social organisations appear and participate depends, then, on the local conditions. While civil societies can be vivid and dominant spheres in some countries, like in Lebanon, it might lay dormant in other, which was the case in many Eastern European countries before the collapse of the communist regimes.

An important aspect of civil societies is their function as arenas of contest. Chandhoke (Ibid.) refers to India’s numerous languages, religious and ethnic groups, as important bases for group mobilisation, and as constituting a fragmented and active civil society. Civil society, thus, becomes a concept which accounts for the relations, be it contest or cooperation, between such social organisations.

The recognition of the contest within civil society leads to another important aspect, namely the manner in which civil society oppresses itself. That is, the manner in which the organisation of this sphere makes it vulnerable to some groups repression of others. As a sphere of engagement and political participation it is not open for all to partake; while some groups are dominant others might be marginalised and oppressed. Lebanon might be a good example of this in that the sects, as political communities, have appropriated both civil society and the state, at the expense of other political communities such as nationality based alternatives.

The Notion of State

In his discussion of the state Philip Abrams (1988: 82) writes that ‘...the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is.’ What he refers to is the manner in which the state often becomes reified, the way it easily can become treated as if it was an establishment detached from society. To Abrams ‘the state’ is not a thing in itself, but rather an aspect of modern society compromising two parts; the idea of the state and the state as a bureaucracy. He holds that the assumption that the state can be studied, more than as an idea or a system, only produces difficulties in an analysis. He is being supported on this issue by Trouillot

(2001: 126) who argues that the ‘...the state can never be an empirical given, even at the second degree (the way, say, particular governments can be thought to be) [...]’

Still, in Neera Chandoke’s (1995) work on civil society the state is an important concept. She holds that the state and civil society must be considered as interrelated, and she views civil society as an entry point to the study of the state. The concept of civil society, she argues, provides both a focus and context for such a study. To Chandhoke (1995: 41) civil society provides a relation between the state and society, it also provides ‘... a vantage point for the study of political practices and of social movements which construct civil society as a zone of engagement.’ Furthermore, she (1995: 49) sees the state as ‘... simply a social relation, inasmuch as it is the codified power¹⁰¹ of social formation. This carries the corresponding formulation: that any attempt to think of the state without society can be both problematic and inadequate.’ Thus, a state, as well as a civil society, needs to be understood within the local context it appears.¹⁰²

Inasmuch as the state is the codified power of social relations, it is an essential element in structuring society. Chandhoke (2001: 14) argues that the state ‘... is neither dis-embodied nor dis-embedded from the power structures of society, for the *state both condenses as well as codifies the power of social formation*. If this is so, we need to note that *the power codified at the level of the state is gathered up and condensed from society*. State power, in other words, rests on the constellation of power in society.’ Furthermore, she (2001: 14) holds that ‘... the specificity of the state lies in the fact that it codifies a dominant set of power relations in society, gives to them fixity, and therefore, gives society stability.’

So, to summarise, I view the state as intimately tied to civil society: society’s arena for ideological and political struggles. Its power rests on dominant power structures in society, and these structures are exercised through state related practises. Hence, the state, while acting as a frame for society, is still subjected to the structure of power relations in society.

¹⁰¹ I understand ‘codified power’ to refer to the state’s (sole) ability, by force or by citizens’ consents, to organise society. The state is embraces a set of political practices which is claimed to serve collective interests, it monopolises the use of force, and has the ability to set the strictures within social organisations acts. However, Chandhoke (1995:68) stresses that this is not an infinite system, but as long as society do not reorganize and regulate itself, it is regulated by the state.

¹⁰² It is, in this respect, important to differ between state and regime. While the state represents the political formation of society, a regime refers to polices and doings of a particular government.

Relating to the State

Introduction

As I have described in the previous chapters, the state was an important institution to MSL. Since its initiation under President Chehab in 1961, it has been focusing its attention and efforts within the frame of the Lebanese state. I would argue the significance of the state to MSL is apparent on several levels. One side of it is, as I discuss in chapter six, its attempt to deal with the sectarian tensions that often appeared as contradictory forces to a common Lebanese state. But, I would hold that the state was not only a matter of ideology to MSL, an important idea, it was also a physical presence in their everyday work. The organisation found and conducted its projects within the geographic confines of Lebanon, as well as cooperating with state institutions such as the Municipality of Ghobeiri and the Ministry of Environment.¹⁰³ So, in the following, I will discuss the relevance and meaning of the state to MSL. I will also discuss citizenship and gender, as bases of social mobilisation within the frame of the Lebanese state.

The State as a Geographical Frame

The geographical area of the Lebanese state constituted the frame which Mouvement Social conducted its projects within. Both through its ordinary work, as well as the volunteer camps, locations all over Lebanon would be suitable. The empirical chapters have been written based on my own participation on three locations, two in Beirut and the camp in Qartaba, and have accordingly presented the organisation's work in these locations. However, as the map in chapter two shows, the organisation had centres in different locations around the country.¹⁰⁴ Ranging from several centres in a city like Beirut, to one in a smaller place like Zahle. The employees were equally dispersed, according to the needs of the respective centres. The local affiliations of the employees were as varied as the project areas of the organisation. As I describe in chapter five were Noor and Ilham and Huda, although living and working in Beirut, from the south and Mount Lebanon respectively.

Geographical variation was a noteworthy characteristic among the volunteers as well, both in terms of where they were from and the projects they performed. Of the volunteers I introduced in chapter five, one was from the Bekaa valley to the east, one from the southern town of Nabathiye, and three were from different parts of Beirut. The volunteer camps were

¹⁰³ See chapter four. MSL cooperating with the Municipality on a regular basis while conducting projects at their centre in Ghobeiri. The trip to Qartaba was arranged in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment.

¹⁰⁴ The map portrays MSL centres in seven cities in Lebanon, from Tripoli in the north to Nabathiye in the east.

normally arranged in rural areas in quite different parts of the country. The camp I describe in chapter four was set up in Qartaba in the central region of the country, while the two preceding camps were arranged in Sir Ed-Danniye in the north and the Bekaa valley to the east. Hence, I would argue that MSL was a Lebanese phenomenon in terms of both its members and projects being linked with different locations nation wide. So, the geographical boundaries of the Lebanese state were the confines within which MSL performed its actions.

Cooperating with State Institutions

In chapter three I note that the employees, General Assembly and the executive committees of MSL did a reassessment of their efforts in the aftermath of the war. The main thought behind this was to consider how the organisation could best operate in post-war Lebanon. One of the strategies surfacing from this re-evaluation was an increased attention to coordination of efforts. This was grounded in an idea of increasing the impact of their work; they wanted to avoid doing work that was already being performed by other organisations or by state institutions. However, during my field work I did not notice any significant cooperation with Lebanese NGOs, but, rather, cooperation with official institutions such as the Municipality of Ghobeiri and the Ministry of Environment.

The centre I worked at in Ghobeiri cooperated both with the Municipality and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Both state agencies lacked resources, and to them the cooperation with MSL was highly valued. The basic element in this cooperation was that they to a large extent were addressing the same constituency; namely the citizens of Ghorbeiri.¹⁰⁵ Administrative staff from both agencies regularly discussed their evaluation of the socio-economical conditions in the area with MSL, and consequently they all became able to better assess the needs of the population. MSL also had good connections to the schools in the municipality. Many of the youth at the centre in Ghobeiri had been recommended by local schools that did not have enough resources to deal with difficult students. That is, students dropping out of public education. MSL's efforts were therefore of help to the municipality, and hence the state, in that the organisation coordinated its work with that of official institutions.

The volunteer camp in Qartaba is another example of such coordination. The camp was arranged and conducted in cooperation with both the Ministry of Environment and the village authorities. The Ministry supported the efforts of MSL, both financially and in terms of

¹⁰⁵ As well as the majority of the residents of Ghobeiri, who were officially registered as living in the south of Lebanon and the Bekaa valley, and thus did not possess the same rights as those belonging to the municipality. See chapter four.

giving official support for the project, and, as a result, made it easier to convince the village authorities to allow the project to take place. In this case, similar to the one I discuss above, MSL coordinated its efforts with those of state institutions. The theme of this project, recycling of bio-degradable waste, was of concern to the Ministry, and the cooperation between the two made it easier to conduct the camp.

I will, thus, suggest that the efforts of Mouvement Social were oriented not only within the geographic and social confines of the state, but also towards supporting a common Lebanese state. That is, the projects I have listed above were dealing with matters of education and environmental protection. Both these issues were of concern to the state, but the lack of resources, among others, made it difficult for the responsible institutions to deal properly with them. MSL's efforts, I will argue, can therefore be viewed as filling in, or covering, for a weak or absent state. The Lebanese state was, as I elaborate on in chapter two and will return to below, dominated by the sectarian forces of society. However, to the projects of MSL, focusing on matters that could be viewed as being of equal concern to all Lebanese, the state nevertheless was a significant frame for their cohesive action. Through their work they made the state matter by consequently relating to it as an institution common to them all.

The Ambiguity and Usefulness of Citizenship

'Citizenship'¹⁰⁶ was a term I regularly encountered during my fieldwork. As emphasised in the empirical chapters, the term was normally used with reference to the internal affairs of the organisation. Employees and volunteers could, for instance, explain their actions and social strategies as being motivated in their citizenship. Huda, when describing how she adapted to the sectarian mixture of the organisation, saw herself as acting as a citizen¹⁰⁷ when she was at work. Among the volunteers it was also common to explain their actions in terms of citizenship. Frequently, when I asked why someone was volunteering, I was told that it was based in his or her duties as a citizen.

Still, I did not experience the term as clearly defined. During my fieldwork 'let us develop citizenship' was a slogan for the organisation. The phrase underlines that citizenship in the case of Lebanon is not predefined, and, thus, indicates the vagueness of the term. I perceive the slogan as an expression of the difficulties of applying the concept. Citizenship, needed to

¹⁰⁶ Ar.: *Muwaataniya*.

¹⁰⁷ Ar.: *Muwaatina* (f), *Muwaatin* (m).

be given a common meaning, it needed to be developed, if it was to be meaningful to my informants.

Debating the concept in relation to gender, state and civil society, Annika Rabo (1996) argues that the western concept of citizenship is based on the male individual. Further, she argues that this necessarily causes ambiguity in the Middle East since personhood here is not merely tied to the individual, but also to social groups such as family and religious and ethnic communities. (Ibid.) This suggests that the concept is not only expressing people's rights and obligations within a state. It is also a gendered concept, and a concept which connotations and importance can vary between different contexts.

Among the employees of Mouvement Social ambiguity surfaced when discussing citizenship in relation to Lebanese society. Although the citizenship argument was useful within the context of MSL, the employees were hesitant to use the term in the different communities they were working in. The basic problem was, as Noor expressed, that organisation could not agree on a definition of the term that could be valid for all the Lebanese communities. Since every community had its own definition of what it meant to be Lebanese, and its own particular way of relating to the state, it was difficult to present the concept in a manner people from different communities could relate to.

This problem is recognized by Suad Joseph (1996: 8), who argues that '... communities are problematic bases for citizenship and representation also because they are not coherent, bounded or fixed entities. Internally differentiated by class, status, region, religion, ethnicity, race and gender, subnational communities are not necessarily held together by shared mutual interests. While still valuing communities, fixed political rights or obligations should not be seen as based on community membership.' Adding to this, she (1996: 9) observes that '... citizens in Lebanon often exercise and experience their rights by knowing people upon whom they can make claims and who are situated to serve as providers or links to providers.' Thus, the elaborate *wasta*¹⁰⁸ relations in Lebanon further complicates both the emic and ethic understanding of citizenship. In Lebanon, where people belong to different communities and, hence, understand the concept within different contexts, it is therefore difficult to make people subscribe to a common idea of what citizenship entails.

¹⁰⁸ Referring to a system of social services and connections through the use of middle men.

Addressing citizenship, Neera Chandhoke (2003) views people's perception of the concept as being intimately tied to the manner in which people relate to the social organisation and the relations among the subjects of a state. Chandhoke's wide definition makes it possible to understand how the meaning of citizenship can vary in different countries and societies. So, in Lebanon, where people's primary social affiliations are located within sect, locality and kinship, citizenship needs to be understood in relation to this particular context. Thus, as I have argued above, thinking of citizenship as applying to all members of a state in an equal way is problematic, at least so in the case of Lebanon.

I will, however, suggest that to the participants in MSL citizenship was a valuable concept, especially since it made it easier to go about people's sectarian identities. It was a concept that gained relevance when the participants were acting as members of movement social; outside of this context they were not merely citizens, but primarily belonging to different communities. In terms of Richard Jenkins's approach to identity, which I elaborate on in chapter six, I view the difficulty of citizenship to be within its virtual dimension rather than its nominal. That is, the experience of being a citizen is quite varied among, for instance, my informants and their beneficiaries, although citizenship as a label might be common to all Lebanese. So, I suggest that the concept holds a potential that the participant of MSL utilised in order to create a common space for their efforts. Citizenship, thus, should be seen in relation to being Lebanese. I perceived it to be a status which, within MSL, gave import to the relationship between individuals within a shared state.

However, having argued that citizenship was an important term to my informants, I should also stress that I experience the term as being ambiguous, even within the organisation. Both 'citizen' and 'Lebanese' were labels that applied to, and were used by, the participants. Still, I did not experience any public debate concerning the meaning of these labels. Rather, I perceived them as silently accepted and loosely defined terms that all the members, despite their different backgrounds, could relate to. My point is that these labels in themselves were not the driving elements of MSL. I perceived them as difficult to deal with in that a debate over the meaning of citizenship or being Lebanese could easily expose their weakness. But, I simultaneously saw them as useful in coordination with other factors, such as common critical views of society. In other words, they held the possibility of an alternative base for social action in the Lebanese society. Furthermore, this base, although expressing a general relation between the individual and the state, did not necessarily hold the same meaning to all

the participants. Still, it nevertheless provided a platform where they together could address common problems.

Whenever I discussed matters of the state or of Lebanon with my informants, it would usually evolve into a conversation of sectarian difficulties. As I quote Hisham on in chapter five: he claimed that people first and foremost put the blame for the wrongs of society on other sects, rather than on the sectarian leaders controlling the state. Aman's view of society as being dominated by the core institutions of family, community and sect, rather than by national belonging, points to the same dynamics.¹⁰⁹ What they both refer to is the dominance of sectarian forces in society at the expense of national belonging. From their viewpoint, talking as Lebanese and as members of Mouvement Social, they would take a different view of the situation, and often blaming the political elite, irrespective of sectarian belonging, for the troubles of Lebanon. At the same time did both Aman and Hisham view Lebanon as fundamentally divided, and this division as being a typical Lebanese phenomenon. I never got the impression that they wanted to abolish sectarianism. Rather, it was the political elite in post-war Lebanon that they were critical of, and it was the social and economical problems of the country that concerned them.

So, even though my informants did not discuss how citizenship, for example, should be defined, they did discuss the problems of post-war Lebanon. And, regardless of their sectarian background, they were usually in agreement over what these problems were. They shared a critical view of sectarian leaders in general, and they shared a concern for the economical prospects of Lebanon as well as for increasing sectarian tension. They also agreed on the need to help underprivileged groups in the country, regardless of sectarian belonging. So, I would argue that citizenship, among the members of MSL, and as basic expression of the relation between the state and the individual, was a useful platform for social mobilisation in order to deal with these problems.

MSL's focus on citizenship, although being a loosely defined concept, hence opened for action outside of the sectarian confines. The term presented the members with an alternative stand from where they could relate to a common state. In bypassing sectarian manners of relating to society, MSL could function as a Lebanese space for social action. However, the members still belonged to their respective sects, which for MSL meant that they needed an internal policy accepting different sectarian affiliation while at the same time being a

¹⁰⁹ See chapter five.

common space. By working and dealing with society according to some clearly defined principals, as I portrayed in chapter three, the organisation was able to relate to the state without confronting dominant sectarian forces.

Gender and Social Action

I would hold that citizenship was not the sole base of action in MSL. Citizenship was important, but I would argue that it should not be seen as the only ground for mobilisation in MSL. Gender identity, I will suggest, coincided with citizenship as base of action. As I describe in the empirical chapters, the organisation was largely run by women. I experienced gender difference to be a rather apparent attribute of the organisation. But I do not believe this was a typical feature of MSL alone, neither did I experience it as a problematic issue. As I write in chapter three, the Director viewed the whole field of social work as being feminised. She argued that this was related to traditional gender division, where women have been the main actors within the fields of ‘... social work, nursing and education.’ Thus, she perceived the dominance of women in MSL as not being particularly related to MSL, but to society in general.

Also among the volunteers this division manifested itself. While my female informants were more engaged in everyday work, my male informants had been more into camp participation. And, as was common among the latter group, Hisham and Wasif had gradually shifted into more conventional politics as they grew older. I see Wasif’s view of social work as being ‘... mild,’ and therefore closely linked to femaleness, as expressing a very fundamental view. He perceived men, on the other hand, as preferring ‘...direct political action, like parties.’ Still, this division did not seem to be a particular concern to my female informants. However, the reason why my female informants did not address this topic in particular, is likely related to me, the anthropologist, being male. Rather, they expressed understanding of the men’s absence from the arena of social work, since men were required to financially support the family, and thus needed to focus on their careers.

In terms of my material, since it is dealing with civil society, taking notice of gender roles within the state becomes necessary. Annika Rabo (1996), discussing the relationship between state, civil society and gender in Syria and Jordan, suggests that the ideas of private and public are interconnected in both the Middle East and in the West, and that they

contribute to the symbolic representation of gender.¹¹⁰ She (Ibid.) argues that the status of women is strongly tied to the private sphere, implying that they in the public domain become symbolic markers of family relations and values. Both in the case of Syria and Jordan she finds that the state has redefined the traditional make up of the family. It has, through making people into citizens, opened for a new status for women outside of the family space. Still, she views the state as being a patriarchal construct, and inextricably linked to civil society and, thus, the family. Women tend to be the symbolic bearers of family values within both spheres, while the citizen, the public and political agent, generally is thought of as a man. She (Ibid.) holds that the burden on women has increased as both the private and public has become symbolic spaces for political power. This suggests that women, despite their status as citizens, continue to be subordinated to men within both spheres. Thus, I view my male informants' propensity to involve themselves in political work and my female informants' tendency to engage in social work as following a generalised pattern of a gendered society.

In sum, I hold that Lebanese civil society should be perceived as gendered, just as the patriarchal community and the family. Still, the male dominance does not exclude women from participation in private and public affairs. However, it does favour and encourage male participation and influence in social and political processes. But, women by virtue of being members of a state and rooted in local communities, can still act on the statuses inherent in these social organisations, and thus, actively participate in the public sphere.

MSL and the Formation of Lebanese Civil Society

So far I have pointed to civil society as the sphere of political participation, and the state as a social relation and a frame for this arena of engagement. I have also argued that civil societies take on a variety of forms. In this part I will look at the formation of civil society in the case of Lebanon; at what organises civil society and influences the manifestation of both this sphere and of the state. Chandhoke (1995: 10) writes that '... civil societies are defined by the practice of their inhabitants. These practices may lead to the sphere becoming a captive of the state, equally the sphere may realize its potential for mounting a powerful

¹¹⁰ Rabo (1996) observes the two neighbouring Arab states as different in terms of state and national identity. In that Syria, being a diverse state in terms of social groups, people look at themselves as Syrians. Jordan on the other hand is a comparatively homogenous society. Still, it has not had the same success as Syria in having its citizens embrace the national identity. Her observation is supported by Suad Joseph (1993: 26) who argues that '... attempts to separate state, civil society and kinship weds woman to the private domain and excludes them from the sphere of civil society and from the state.'

challenge to state oriented practices.’ In other words, the state can open for wide and complex civil society, which is much the case in Lebanon. In fact, as I will address below, it seems like the Lebanese state is dominated by civil society. On the other hand, and in other cases, the state can completely dominate civil society, and its apparatuses can cripple this sphere of engagement. The latter could for instance occur in the instance of the state becoming strongly affiliated with, or dominated by, one particular group within civil society.

Addressing Lebanese Civil Society

In Lebanon confession, locality and kinship is important elements in structuring civil society. As I have described in previous chapters society is structured along these lines from the social elites to the commoners. What is so particular in the case of Lebanon is that these powerful groups within civil society also seem to dominate the state. The Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (1999: 27) holds that ‘... whereas other countries have faced the problem of a state ruling group dismantling, repressing, or taking over civil society, Lebanon has witnessed the reverse phenomenon of “civil society,” largely of a communal type, invading and taking over the state.’¹¹¹

The quote above highlights three central aspects of Lebanese society: The dominance of sectarian organisations; the balancing of forces within Lebanese civil society (since no single group seems able to control the state); and the weak position of the state. Sectarianism is the dominant ideology, which successfully organises society. Still, as the examples of Mouvement Social shows, there is also a social base for organisation outside of communal Lebanon. Some observers, while discussing Lebanese civil society, differ between *al-mujtama al-ahli* and *al-mujtama al-madani*. The former is a broad term referring to society as based in kinship and tribal belonging, central elements in the sectarian organisation of civil society, while the latter refers to society as based in class or social movements. (Hillenkamp 2005) These terms highlights a central distinction within Lebanese civil society, where the dominant groups appear to be located in *al-mujtama al-ahli*, while Mouvement Social and similar organisations must be said to belong to *al-mujtama al-madani*.

Mouvement Social, Civil Society and the State

In chapters two and three I describe how MSL was formed during the Chehabist regime in the 1950s. As I describe, President Chehab was an unorthodox figure in the political elite of Lebanon. He was first and foremost a military man, and did not, as was common to most

¹¹¹ Official figures show that around 5000 NGOs are registered in Lebanon, with an additional 200 being established and registered every year. Around 700 of these are active on a regular basis. (Hillenkamp 2005)

other political leaders, belong to the traditional zu'ama.¹¹² In fact, he is described as having been distrustful of the political elite and as avoiding unofficial contact with its members. (Shehadi 1987) It is notable that Mouvement Social came about during the rather untraditional regime of Chehab. I would hold that the socio-political circumstances during this period provided favourable conditions for such mobilisation. As Haddad described,¹¹³ the president took interest in Mouvement Social, assigning to it official tasks such as distribution of medicines.

Considering the model I propose above, where the state is intimately connected to the dominant power equation in society, I would suggest that the Chehabist regime thus opened for alternative forms of social organisation, of which Mouvement Social is an example. Such an organisation might have been less viable to gain influence under the other regimes. However, even though experiencing a fair amount of success at first, the organisation did not see continued expansion in activities and extent. At later stages in history, for instance during the civil war, Mouvement Social had to limit their organisation to a small core of employees due to the increased importance of sectarianism and difficult working conditions provided by the war.

After the war ended MSL expanded its activities considerably, but it still had to take account of the increasing sectarianism in this context. That is, it had to recognise the dominance of sectarian forces in society, and although trying to constitute an alternative (non-sectarian) social base the members had to work in such a way that they did not directly confront the confessional hegemony. The organisation had for instance to focus upon educating volunteers on its culture and values, which suggests that the dominant structure of society was also an integrated part of the movement. This might also be a reason for the internal policy of avoiding discussing matters related to sectarians, such as other members' background. It was not in a position to mount a proper challenge to sectarian thinking. Thus, it kept a low profile in political matters although, as it stated in its 1993 (Mouvement Social Libanais 1994) yearly report, it aimed to participate more in the public debate.

Thus, I would argue that it is important to understand MSL as an actor in Lebanese civil society and as participating within the frame provided by the Lebanese state, rather than as a sole agent. Mouvement Social, although trying to create a difference, was exposed to the

¹¹² Influential political leaders; often belonging to notable merchant families. (Johnson 2001)

¹¹³ See chapter three

dominant power equation in society, which in turn set the parameters for which projects the organisation could undertake.

Mouvement Social can be said to belong to al-mujtama al-madani, as I mention above. It did not seek to mobilise on the conditions common to al-mujtama al-ahli, that is, on kinship, locality and confession, from which the sectarian system draws its power. Movement social mobilised primarily on people's belonging to a common country, and in a shared approach to the state. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, kin, locality and sect are important aspects of people's lives. More so, than citizenship and nationality, which were central to MSL.

In a civil society largely organised according to confession, kin and locality, and with a state that is subordinated to civil society, Mouvement Social's position became marginal. While the dominant forces within the sphere draw their power from potent ideologies typical to al-mujtama al-ahli, MSL had to focus on giving meaning to the manner in which they defined society. As I have portrayed through the empiric chapters; MSL had to be careful and considerate in its manner of relating to society. They had to take into account the background of their members, and be careful not alienated people in the organisation. As was the case concerning the debate on whether they should label the organisation secular or non-confessional, with the latter as the preferred choice among most members. MSL's strategy was not one of challenge, but of managing its position in society by acting in a non-provocative and considerate manner. Even though the organisation aimed to partake more in the public debate, to try to influence society and spread its ideas, it found it difficult to do so. As was the case in the example I mentioned in chapter four concerning lobbying for the idea of citizenship among the people they interacted with through their work. The staff I worked with dismissed the idea as being futile, since the concept would be differently perceived among different group, and thus the purpose of it would diminish. I would argue that this is an example of how civil society regulates itself. The power and hegemony of the sectarian system in Lebanon made it difficult to create viable alternatives for people to subscribe to.

The state, thus, in addition to what MSL in itself meant to the members, was a significant relation for organisation. Through focusing on citizenship, through working with the state apparatus, through focusing on, and agreeing on, a way to be Lebanese, the organisation looked to the state as an important frame for its work. The actions of MSL were focused within the Lebanese state, as opposed to within sectarian boundaries. This relation also

indicates the marginal position of the organisation, because while the state seemed dominated by civil society, MSL sought the state. Acknowledging a common state was an important way to give meaning to their actions. However, the participants also found motivation elsewhere, which will be addressed in the final part of this chapter when debating participation, culture and action.

Final Remarks

Finally, I would like to sum up the main arguments of this part of the chapter. My overall concern has been to discuss MSL as a part of civil society, how it related to the state, and the significance of citizenship to the members. In the course of this discussion I have also proposed a theoretical model based on Chandhoke's (1995, 2001, 2003) work on state and civil society.

Through my discussion of MSL and the state I have argued that the organisation worked closely towards an idea of a common Lebanese state. That they utilized the geographical confines of the state as the arena they worked within and cooperated with state institutions, such as different ministries and municipalities. I have also suggested that MSL's projects can be seen as supportive of a shared state, that it addressed people based in national rather than sectarian criteria, and its projects can be viewed as covering for the state. That is, as filling in for and dealing with matters rarely attended to by a weak or absent state.

Further, I have discussed the concept of citizenship, which was perceived as an important term in MSL, referring to a common ground of action for the employees and volunteers. However, it was an ambiguous term, which was rarely taken up to debate, even in MSL. I have also suggested that citizenship needed not be the only base for social mobilisation in MSL. The organisation was largely run by women, and I have suggested that gender might thus be a coincidental factor in motivating people to participate.

Finally, I have discussed MSL in relation to Lebanese civil society. Having applied the general model for approaching state and civil society to the case of Lebanon, I have argued that the sectarian system is dominating both state and civil society, and suggested that this might be a reason for MSL's marginal position in post-war Lebanon.

Mouvement Social: Participation, Culture and Action

Having, so far, primarily debated MSL in relation to its social and political surroundings, as well as common identities in which the participants could base their actions, I would like to address other aspects of the organisation. Following my discussion of state, civil society and citizenship, I will hold that these analytical approaches give important insight into the actions of Mouvement Social. However, I will suggest that there were also other factors motivating the acts of the staff and volunteers. Subsequently, I will, in this part, address some central characteristics of Mouvement Social.

As I mentioned in chapter one, I have been hesitant to use the term NGO in my approach to MSL. Viewing the term as ambiguous, I have chosen to refer to MSL as a social organisation, which I, in turn, have aimed to describe thoroughly during the course of the dissertation. Thus, I view it as useful to debate culture, participation and action in relation to MSL, so as to say more about what constituted this as a social organisation; to propose other anthropological models for addressing the organisation and what it does. Through this final discussion I also aspire to give some other perspectives on what motivated peoples' participation. So, starting with a brief discussion of culture, I will deal with the organisation's work and principals, and what they meant to the participants, before finally debating how Mouvement Social reproduced itself and managed to maintain a continuous presence in the Lebanese society.

The Matter of Culture

Culture is a broad analytical term and, simultaneously, an ambiguous concept to use. Barth (1996) views the concept as being an imprecise term referring both to observable patterns of social interaction and the ideas inherent in such processes. He warns that the term is ambiguous in that it easily leads to a confusion of description and explanation. Still, I would hold that the term refers to a central aspect of social interaction, namely a manner in which people perceive and relate to their social surroundings. As I portray in chapter five, my informants were critical in their analysis of society, especially so when addressing political issues, and these analyses were central to the manner in which they related to Lebanon.¹¹⁴

Debating culture, Sökefeld (1999: 427) argues that '... culture is understood not as something ephemeral but, according to a dominant view, as a "power" constituted by systems

¹¹⁴ In the last part of chapter five, I mentioned some examples of how my informants were critical in their view of society. Nisrin, for example, claimed that the politicians treated the country as their private bank, while Hisham viewed the civil war as still going on in the minds of the Lebanese.

of shared meaning that is effective in shaping social reality. Culture, Geertz (1966) tells us, is not only a *model of* but also a *model for*.¹¹⁵ I perceive Sökefeld, by this definition of culture, to touch upon a central aspect of Mouvement Social; their perception of social reality, and how they created a model for relating to society, as well as agreeing upon a model of it. Central elements in this model were their principals, as outlined in chapter three, the manner in which they related to the state, and their use of citizenship. I would regard non-confessionalism, for example, as such an element. It was expressed both as an official principal and through daily interaction in the main office where people's confessional backgrounds were of little concern.

So, the concept of culture might, I suggest, be useful in order to understand what Mouvement Social means to its members. That is, why they work with the organisation and how it inspires action. In this regard I view culture, as defined by Sökefeld and Geertz above; as being about shaping social reality and establishing models for interpreting and relating to society, to refer to an important aspect of MSL.

Principals, Action and Meaning

The projects undertaken by the participants were initiated by the administration, and followed policies agreed upon by the staff and governing bodies of MSL.¹¹⁵ Their projects were chosen based on principals, as drawn up by Haddad and the other initiators, and the post-war strategies outlined at the policy assessment in 1993.¹¹⁶ The actions performed by the participants were thus well planned and in accordance with the official policy of the organisation. There was, in other words, nothing random about the work and actions taking place; the actions undertaken were based in careful consideration and had a clear purpose.

The projects were set up in accordance with several factors. One was the basic principal of being '... a working movement,' as Haddad had outlined, another was to work with the underprivileged, which had become a priority especially after the civil war. Yet another was to continue creating a non-confessional platform for social action. Furthermore, MSL had to focus on what could actually be achieved, recognising the marginal position the organisation held in Lebanese society.

Henrietta Moore (1988) argues, referring to Burman (1979) and Wallman (1979), that '... work is not just a matter of what people do because any definition must also include the

¹¹⁵ See chapter three for a detailed overview of the organisation.

¹¹⁶ See chapter three.

conditions under which that work is performed, and it's perceived social value or worth within a given cultural context.' Applying this approach to work to the projects of MSL, I suggest that the work being done was valued according to both external and internal conditions, as well as the particular view of these conditions held by the members of the organisation. The external conditions I am referring to are located within the particular social and economical circumstances of post-war Lebanon, while the internal reflect the constitution of the organisation and, as I talk about above, the model it comprised for relating to society. Both these set of conditions were viewed in light of the principals listed by Haddad and Backache, as referred to in chapter three.

I would thus, as suggested by Moore, argue that there is a notable relation between work and culture. Within the cultural context of MSL, the participants' actions were highly valued. I would propose that the value aspect of the work was especially apparent in the case of the volunteers whose efforts were non-remunerated. But, I also found that the staff viewed their efforts as meaningful in light of what MSL represented. It was through the actions undertaken by employees and volunteers that the principals and aims of MSL were given worth; it was through its work that the organisation became a part of Lebanon. After all, its overall project was not merely to create non-confessional space; it was to create a non-confessional base for action within Lebanese society.

Thus, the relation between the work, the aims and the principals of Mouvement Social played a significant part in defining the organisation. To the staff and volunteers the principals constituted important guidelines for their work and participation. They were important in outlining both the shape and the actions of the organisation, and in this sense they also constituted a set of values. In a discussion of values, Barth (1996) stresses the emic aspect of such definitions. He views values as cultural products that influences on feelings and motivates actions, and as notions whereby actors orientate themselves. As focal points in cultural analysis he sees values as useful since they contribute to guiding our attention to a manner in which institutions and representations are linked to the actor, and thereby to how social life unfolds itself. To Barth (Ibid.), values are always influential on people's actions in their life worlds. I find Barth's arguments to provide a useful perspective to the case of MSL.¹¹⁷ The principals of the organisation were central to people's involvement. I will

¹¹⁷ Debating the difference between values and norms Mohammad Faour (1998: 3 - 4) argues that '... social values refer to abstract beliefs about preferable or desirable behaviour while norms are concrete rule of conduct.' I have chosen to focus upon values since I am interested in, as Barth points to, how values *motivate*

suggest that these principals were important in coordinating both people's efforts, creating a common ground for the participants, and finally as a base for outlining and initiating the projects of the organisation.

I would regard the principle of non-confessional social action to be most noticeable during the volunteer camps. At these camps, especially those arranged in the mid and late 90s, the volunteers had to learn to deal with each other, learn to cooperate across sectarian divides, before partaking in common action. As I describe in chapter four and five, sectarian difference was dealt with through games and exercises, such as conflict resolution, role play and focus on language and communication. Through my discussions with the volunteers I learned that they perceived the outcome of these exercises through the accomplishments of tasks and projects. That is, that their ability to work across sectarian divisions was proved by their ability to complete projects together, such as the project in Qartaba. I will argue that this is an example of how its work was given value according to its principals. Furthermore, I would argue that this was a general feature of MSL; the purpose of the organisation, the usefulness of its being, was proved through the different projects it undertook.

The concept of voluntarism had been a central element in the constitution of MSL and was still highly valued during my fieldwork. Notions such as non-remunerated work, commitment, responsibility and reflexivity were central to my informants' understanding of voluntarism. The concept of voluntarism created a frame that explained for the volunteers how they were related the organisation. And, as I mention above, the staff also subscribed to the ideas of voluntarism.

So, the participants' focus on being a '... working organisation' was not only something that benefited those they were working for, it was also important for the organisation itself. It was through these actions that the success and worth of their values and principals became apparent. The work, thus, proved the usefulness of the non-confessionalism as a base for social formation; that it was possible to work together as Lebanese; as well as relating to and working within a society they approached as Lebanese.

people's actions. The members of MSL are not forced to participate with the organisation, and I therefore believe that looking at motivation in terms of values becomes important in order to understand why they partake.

Learning to Interact

The volunteer camps were interesting to me as a field researcher since MSL's principals and aims were being communicated more explicit than in the office. In the office the manner of which people related to each other came without saying. As Huda said it, the interaction in the main office was guided by a '... silent agreement.'¹¹⁸ People were aware of what they could say, and knew how to relate to each other in order to avoid conflict. It was an atmosphere marked by respect for each other differences, at the same time as these differences were disregarded; they were not made to matter. The focus was rather on what they were doing together, as employees of Movement Social and as Lebanese.

This interaction was not something that came naturally. As Huda remarked, when she began working with MSL she was initially very cautious at the office. She was unsure of how to behave towards her colleagues, and it took her some time to understand the routine of interaction and feel comfortable at work. It should be noted that Huda was one of the few who did not have a background in the organisation. Different from what was common, she did not know the organisation well before becoming employed. For most of the other employees, who had a long background in MSL; many as former volunteers, working at the organisation was not a problem. They knew the way of things, and were comfortable in their work and in relating to others through MSL.

Final Remarks

As I argue above, if culture is to be understood in terms of shared meaning and as a model for shaping social reality, the culture of MSL was essentially very much tied to its principals. These, in turn, were manifested and valued through the participants' work and doings. It could perhaps be expressed as a culture of non-sectarianism and social work. These were both important concepts to my informants when they were describing what MSL meant to them. For the organisation, it was, thus, essential that new employees shared the principals and views common to the organisation. Through volunteer camps and daily work they were able to reproduce their way of shaping social reality, and, thus, creating continuity in the organisation.

¹¹⁸ See chapter four.

Concluding Remarks: Creating a Common Space in a Sectarian Landscape

Setting out to investigate common action across social boundaries marked by violent conflict, I have, in this thesis, portrayed and debated my experience with Mouvement Social Libanais.

During the course of the dissertation, I have elaborated on Mouvement Social Libanais, its history, participants and projects. My empirical elaborations have, further, been placed within a larger context, embracing historic and contemporary aspects of Lebanon. Looking at the history of the organisation, I have portrayed how it came about during the Shehabist area of Lebanese history. Being a social organisation basing itself on the Lebanese identity of its staff and volunteers, the organisation has been aiming to conduct its work all over the country and across sectarian boundaries. Through its history, MSL has had to manage challenging conditions for non-sectarian work, and especially so during the sixteen years of civil war and the post-war period.

Furthermore, I have portrayed how Mouvement Social dealt with its sectarian surroundings. As an organisation, it had to focus upon creating a common space for its members. However, sectarian identities have been of great importance in Lebanon, and particularly so in the post-war era. To MSL this proved a delicate issue. While aiming to create an alternative base for action, if for no other reason than to avoid sectarianism among its members, it approached the matter of peoples' social identities with great consideration. While trying to enhance commonality by focusing on 'citizenship' as a base for its actions, it still experienced difficulties in defining the notion in a manner that people could relate to, irrespective of sectarian background. With the Lebanese social and political arena essentially being sectarian, Mouvement Social's common efforts became marginalised. It had to adopt a discreet position; conducting its projects while steering clear of public debates on order to avoid becoming entangled in the sectarian game.

Still, among its members, sectarianism was not an issue. Rather, they focused on conducting social work according to the principals in which the organisation was founded. Through its work, thus, the organisation acted on a non-sectarian principal. It conducted its projects amid what it considered to be underprivileged groups in Lebanon, among which uneducated youth and women were given special attention. By addressing Lebanon as one arena, it avoided using peoples' sectarian identities as the parameters by which it approached society. This was both an internal and external focus, that is, a concern both among its members, as well as

when relating to its social surroundings. So, even though it did not advocate a public debate on Lebanese identity or its members' sectarian belonging, it managed to create an alternative space through its practices, and through a silent agreement upon common action.

I have utilized two main theoretic approaches to my discussions on Mouvement Social. One being identity theory, which I have used to debate peoples' social belongings, the other being theories on state and civil society, which I have applied when discussing the larger frame in which MSL acted. In the first part of my discussion, I argued that my informants held a set of identities, such as kinship, locality and sect. Following this, I have isolated their sectarian belonging as a significant political identity. In the second part I argued that civil society is the politicised sphere of society, and that the state cannot be seen as separated from civil society. By placing MSL within this theoretic frame, as a part of civil society, I have held that its members related to a common Lebanese state. The state, however, seemed dominated by the sectarian forces of civil society, which, consequently, contributed to MSL's marginal position in the social landscape of Lebanon.

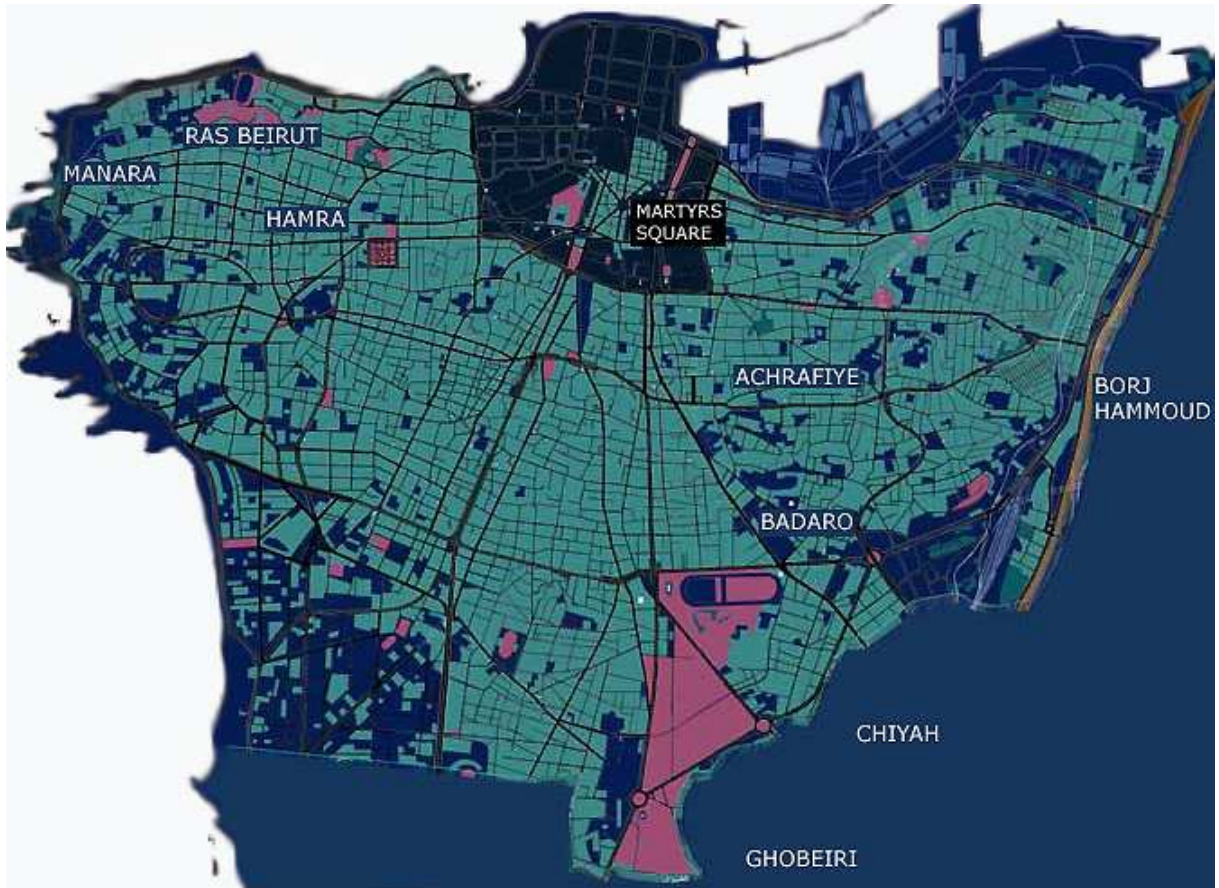
Furthermore, in order to provide other perspectives on Mouvement Social and social action, I have also addressed the organisation through looking at culture, work and principals. By doing so, I have held that the work and principals of the organisation were important sources of motivation for the staff and volunteers. In addition, I have suggested, by using 'culture' as an analytical approach, that the participants, through their involvement, shared a manner of relating to and interpreting Lebanese society.

So, returning to my point of departure for this dissertation, I hold that MSL managed to work across sectarian boundaries by not making these divides matter. That is, even though the participants had different sectarian ties, these were of little relevance to the projects of MSL. Through its activities, the organisation managed to create a context that opened for interaction based on other identities, such as citizenship and being Lebanese, as well as gender. The organisation engaged people in work within the confines of the Lebanese state, and did so in a manner that was not challenging people's social belongings. Rather, Mouvement Social appeared as a Lebanese enterprise through its non-sectarian social work and its acceptance of the heterogeneity of the country.

Appendix 1 – Maps of Lebanon and Beirut



Lebanon



Beirut

Appendix 2 – Financial Overview 2001, MSL

Mouvement Social receives funding from their own activities, private donors in Lebanon, international NGOs, and Lebanese and French official institutions. In 2001 their total income was equal to their expenditure, reaching a total of US \$ 950 000.

Income

Mouvement Social Libanais: USD 371,910 (39%)
(Artisan du Liban, Production by workshops, Beneficiaries)
International Partners: USD 225,025 (24%)
(Broederlijk Delen, CCFD, CESVI, Christian Aid, Partage)¹¹⁹
International Cooperation: USD 148,775 (15%)
(French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ile de France Regional Council, Belgian Cooperation)
Governmental Institutions: USD 97,400 (10%)
(National Employment Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Environment, Municipalities)
Local Funds: USD 110,650 (12%)
(Cellis, UNICEF, Friends and local donors)¹²⁰

Expenditure

Administration: USD 209,000 (22%)
Vocational training of youth and young adults: USD 201,000 (21%)
Coordination and local networks: USD 136,000 (14%)
Women and workshops: USD 137,000 (14%)
Pre-vocational clubs and education: USD 113,000 (12%)
Health: USD 99,000 (10%)
Volunteers: USD 27,000 (3%)
Communication and training: USD 26,000 (3%)
Environment: USD 6,600 (1%)

Source: MSL, 2002

¹¹⁹ Broederlijk Delen, Belgium. CCFD; Comité Catholique contre la faim et pour le développement, France. CESVI; Cooperazione e Sviluppo, Italy. Christian Aid, UK. Partage, France.

¹²⁰ Cellis is a Lebanese commercial company.

Appendix 3 – Confessional Composition of the Lebanese Population: 1932 Census Figures and 1984 Estimates

Confession	1932	1932	1984	1984
	Population	% Population		%
Shi'a	154208	19,6	1100000	30,8
Sunnis	175925	22,4	750000	21
Druze	53047	6,8	200000	5,6
Muslims	383180	48,8	2050000	57,3
Maronites	226378	28,8	900000	25,2
Greek Orthodox	76522	9,7	250000	7
Greek Catholics	45999	5,9	150000	4,2
Armenian Orthodox	25,462	3,2		
Armenian Catholics	5694	0,7		
Armenians			175000	4,9
Syrian Orthodox	2574	0,3		
Syrian Catholics				
Other local churches	528	0,1		
Protestants	6712	0,9		
Other Christians			50000	1,4
Christians	392544	50	1525000	42,7
Jews	3518	0,4	No figures available	
Others	6301	0,8	No figures available	
Total Population	785543	100	3575000	100

Sources : 1932 census figures from Hourani 1946: 121

1984 estimates from Johnson 1986: 226

Note: There has been no census of confessions since the French Mandate

Johnson 2001: 3

Appendix 4 – Statistics, Population and Living Conditions

Distribution of households and resident population by mohafazats

Mohafazat	Households		Individuals	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Beirut	99123	14,8	407403	13,1
Mount Lebanon	261537	39,1	1145458	36,8
North Lebanon	126815	19	670609	21,6
South Lebanon	57992	8,7	283057	9,1
Bekaa	79195	11,8	399890	12,9
Nabatieh	44244	6,6	205411	6,6
All Lebanon	668906	100	3111828	100

The table (UNDP 2004) gives an overview of the distribution of the Lebanese population according to mohafazats (governorates). As the table portrays, over half of the population lives in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, particularly in the area of Greater Beirut.

Distribution of resident households and individuals according to the living conditions index and by mohafazat. (As percent of total households and individuals in the mohafazat)

Mohafazat	Low		Intermediate		High		Total
	Households	Individuals	Households	Individuals	Households	Individuals	
Nabatieh	51	51,4	39,8	40,8	9,3	7,8	100
North Lebanon	43,8	48,9	37,6	36,1	18,7	15	100
Bekaa	40,6	43,8	43,5	43,3	15,9	13	100
South Lebanon	36,9	39	44,7	45,1	18,4	15,9	100
Mount Lebanon	24,7	26	43,6	45,2	31,7	28,8	100
Beirut	18,4	19,2	38,7	41,2	43	39,6	100
All Lebanon	32,1	35,2	41,6	42,2	26,4	22,6	100

The table (UNDP 2004) indicates that the Mohafazat of Nabatieh has the lowest standing with respect to the satisfaction of needs. It is followed by the northernmost Mohafazat, where well over 40 percent of individuals and households manage on a minimum of resources. Bekaa and the south of Lebanon come next, before Mount Lebanon and Beirut that get the highest scores on living conditions.

Distribution of Families According to Monthly Income, 1997

Income bracket (in thousands of Lebanese pounds, 1500 LP = 1 USD)	Beirut	Beirut suburbs	Mount Lebanon without suburbs	North Lebanon	South Lebanon	Nabathiye	Bekaa	Lebanon
< 300	4,1	2,8	3,6	8,5	10,4	7	7,5	5,8
300 - 500	10,3	9,6	7,8	17	22,8	14,5	13	13
500 - 800	15,9	21,5	15,5	23,3	24,5	25,4	22,4	21
800 - 1200	18,9	22,4	19,3	21,5	18	24	24,1	21,1
1200 - 1600	14,7	15,2	14,2	11,5	10	13,4	13,3	13,4
1600 - 2400	14,9	12,2	16,2	10,6	6,8	9,7	11,9	12,1
2400 - 3200	7,3	7,2	9,9	3,7	3,4	3,6	3,9	5,9
3200 - 5000	6,3	5	8,2	2,1	2	1,6	2,6	4,3
> 5000	6,7	3,8	5	1,5	1,6	0,6	1,3	3,1
Unkown	0,8	0,3	0,2	0,3	0,4	0,2		0,3

The table (Khalidi-Beyhum 1999), presented by the Lebanese Central Administration for Statistics in 1998, shows the distribution of income according to Mohafazat.

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