



The youth just want their voice to be heard: PAR in Lebanon

Written by Mazen Kobrosly. Part of our #YoungChangemakers series.

When I heard about the [Art, Language, Youth and the Legacy of Conflict in Lebanon](#) project (also known as *Lebanon: The Youth Roll*), I was immediately drawn to it. How is it that these deep terms have some sort of relationship with each other? How do they relate to the idea of post-conflict reconciliation in Lebanon? These are the types of questions that riddle me at the moment; I am curiously trying to find the answer for them. But first, let me explain a bit more about the origins of this entire project.

It is a sister project of Changing the Story based at the Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures at University of Leeds. It is the second phase of an [AHRC Open World Research Initiative](#) project led by Professor Paul Cooke entitled “Remapping World Cinemas for the Digital Age Finding Ways for the Digital Subaltern to Speak”. What drew me to take the role of a research assistant on this project is that the issue of marginalized communities, especially the youth within that cohort, is ever so prevalent in the city I live in: Beirut. It is home to various groups, such as the Armenians, the Christians, the Muslims, the Syrians, the Palestinians, and so on... The various narratives created after the civil war, either in the form of art or language, have permeated the core of Lebanon’s society so deeply that reconciliation is seen as an impossible utopia to achieve with all the discrepancies between each group’s narratives. However, one thing is common between all of their stories: the youth just want their voice to be heard. From my perspective, the goal of this project is not to reach a seemingly unachievable utopia. Its aim is to give a platform for the youth whose voices are left either unheard or disregarded in the face of national elite narratives about the war.



Mazen and Prof. Paul Cooke interview Cindy Mizher (Arts and Society Project Manager at British Council Lebanon) on campus at the American University of Beirut.

My first experience in the project was quite interesting. I got first-hand experience with film-making equipment, which will be crucial in the PAR (Participatory Action Research) phase of the project where the youth will be given the opportunity to tell their stories into high end camera equipment. I have always loved film-making to be honest. The feeling I get when I am seated behind a camera, trying to get the perfect angle of a shot has always been a stimulating one. I got the chance to learn techniques in film-making (and even video editing) that I now see as fundamental in producing a well-crafted documentary. Hopefully, we will be

able to transfer the film-making skills to the youth so that they are able to tell their stories to the world adeptly & creatively.

I see the next few steps as essential. We are going to conduct a rigorous literature review in order to get an idea of the art and language that has been produced in a post-civil war context. That will provide us with the proper background information to progress to the later stages of PAR training and implementation, where all the fun film-making starts. In the final stages, we are going to produce a report that details all of our quantitative & qualitative findings.

The youth are the future of this country. I am so eager to give them a voice for a simple reason: I am youth as well. I understand their struggles. I understand their mishaps. I understand that they are constantly overshadowed by the older generation's group narratives that run this country. This is why I want to see a change in the way things are. All these narratives, which are rarely discussed or mentioned, must be combined in order to find an objective truth surrounding the war. Despite our differences, we need to realize that our lives can be integrated together to reach some form of harmony. We, as youth, are going to try rewrite these scripts that leave debris across the city, both figurative and literal, in hope of a better Lebanon in the future.

This blog is part of Changing The Story's #YoungChangemakers series. If you are a young person leading alternative actions for civil society building in the Global South and would like to be featured in the series, [get in touch!](#)