

PhD Thesis Proposal (PTP)¹

General Information		
PhD Thesis Title	Life Stories, War Memories	
USEK Doctoral Program	PhD in Social Sciences	
Joint Guardianship/Cotutelle	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Partnership university's doctoral program:
Research Center		
Research Group	IDEES Multidisciplinary Research Group	
Research Axis	Patrimony: heritage and memory	
PhD Supervisor	Name & Title: Prof. Mirna Abboud Mzawak Email: mirnamzawak@usek.edu.lb	University Address: Holy Spirit University of Kaslik - USEK
Co-supervisor (if applicable)	Name & Title: Dr Joanna Azar Email: joanna.azar@usek.edu.lb	University Address: Holy Spirit University of Kaslik - USEK
Location (s)	Location 1: USEK Location 2: (if applicable)	Work shift calendar /per year (%) Work shift calendar /per year (%)
Potential funding and scholarship	Not yet	

Applicant's Name and Profile			
Comps Exam Language (to be check-marked by the PhD Supervisor)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Oral Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> French	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English

Subject's national or worldwide context, objectives & research lines
<p>Lebanon is a country that has experienced continuous turmoil over the last fifty years, with each crisis leaving profound marks on its people, communities, and collective psyche (Bossard et al., 2024; Mzawak et al., 2025). From the devastating Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) to successive crises, including the 2006 Israeli war, the ongoing political instability, the financial collapse starting in 2019, and most recently, the catastrophic Beirut explosion in 2020, Lebanon has been in a perpetual state of crisis (Kingston & Ochsenwald, 2024). These events, each marked by profound loss, disruption, and violence, have left the country</p>

¹ The PhD Thesis Proposal should not exceed three pages. It shall be approved by the School/Faculty.

struggling to rebuild, yet they have never led to a period of lasting peace (Hirst, 1999; Younes, 2025). The socio-political landscape has been marked by fragmented memories and unresolved traumas (Mzawak et al., 2025), creating a deeply divided national consciousness (Bossard et al., 2024).

While the historical and political dimensions of these crises have been well-documented by scholars, journalists, and historians, the everyday lives of citizens remain underexplored. The resilience of individuals and families, how they have faced the challenges of survival, dealt with immense loss, managed the psychological toll of war, displacement, and economic collapse, and found ways to cope with ongoing adversity, has often been sidelined in favor of larger political narratives. What has been largely overlooked are the personal stories of the individuals whose lives have been shaped by these crises: the civilians caught in the crossfire, the families who lost loved ones, the communities fractured by violence, and those who endured life in displacement or poverty. These daily experiences, struggles, and acts of resilience form the hidden fabric of Lebanon's ongoing crisis.

This project aims to bring these often-silenced voices to the forefront by exploring the life stories of those who lived through the war and its aftermath. The study is an empirical one focused on the *life story qualitative methodology*. The focus is on the daily lives of citizens—those who have witnessed the pain of loss, the challenge of survival, and the immense weight of historical trauma. Through these personal narratives, this project seeks to give a voice to individuals who have been directly impacted by the series of crises Lebanon has faced over the past decades. By documenting their stories, it can better understand the intricate ways in which these crises have shaped their lives, their coping mechanisms, their resilience, and their hopes for the future.

The research objectives of this project are linked to this goal of extracting and preserving these lived experiences. Through life histories, it aims to gather personal narratives that will help shed light on how the conflict and its aftermath have affected the lives of citizens on a micro level, exploring the silent and often invisible aspects of their suffering, resilience, and ongoing struggles.

Outcomes (OCs): What do we wish to achieve?	
OC1:	Explore the memory of war through life stories to better understand the impact of conflicts on individuals and communities.
OC2:	Extract the authentic lived experiences of individuals to identify the fundamental pillars of coexistence in Lebanon.
OC3:	Preserve and promote these memories by integrating them into academic, societal, and educational frameworks.
OC4:	Create an expanded database of diverse experiences of war, which can serve as material for artistic projects, including film, theater, literature, and visual arts, thus contributing to the cultural and creative transmission of collective memory.

References (R) (5 most recent peer-reviewed publications in the field)
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R1:	Larkin, C. (2012). Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203137970
R2:	Abboud Mzawak, M., Younes, R. S., & Moukarzel, C. (2025). Echoes of the blast: A qualitative study of loss and adaptation among bereaved families of the 2020 Beirut explosion. <i>Death Studies</i> , 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2025.2452476
R3:	Hirst, D. (1999). South Lebanon: The War That Never Ends? <i>Journal of Palestine Studies</i> , 28(3), 5–18. https://doi.org/10.2307/2538304
R4:	Bossard, C., Daou, A. M., Daou, F., Al-Hindy, E., Simon, J., Girardot, M., Abboud Mzawak, M., Merheb, C., Demerjian, K. N., Ibrahim, C., Maksoudian, A., & Younes, R. S. (2024). Perceptions and practices of Lebanese pluralism: between pride, resignation and political challenge. <i>Observatoire Pharos</i> . https://www.observatoirepharos.com/projet/barometre-du-pluralisme-culturel-et-religieux-au-liban/
R5:	Kingston, P., & Ochsenwald, W.L. (2025). Lebanese Civil War. <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> . https://www.britannica.com/event/Lebanese-Civil-War