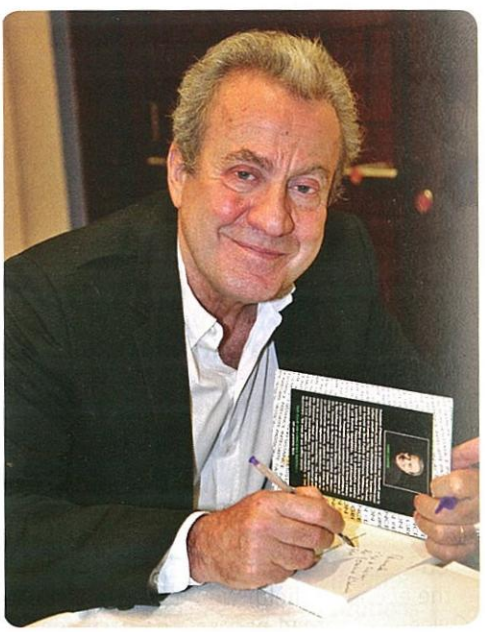
Farid Chehab: A Bet for a National Conscience



Rare are the instances when an idea is brought down to bear a transformative change that is instrumental in the evolution of a national model springing from plausible reality.
Unhindered by the murkiness of a crystal ball, it clarifies and builds on the available wealth of resources and expertise in a structured manner communicating reason by outlining the inherent potential that has been shamefully discarded.
Speaking all tongues, it advises the exhausted populace of the merits the tools at their disposal hold in ushering a second coming.

Getting the country out of the quagmire that is destroying it, bringing together Lebanese people around a visionary project, launching a grassroots participatory movement unlike anything seen before, maintaining existing political parties by transforming them into partners in this project. That's the wager that **Farid Chehab** is betting on.
A unifying economic program, citizen participation, group influence, a road map, a 5-year plan, an innovative proposal, meaningful, constructive, comprehensive, and unusual. That's what Farid Chehab is proposing in his first book *"A Bet For A National Conscience."*
Chehab writes: *"Let's allow ourselves a chance, an opportunity to freely and openly communicate economic-based ideas that hold great promise of prosperity for the country and well-being for its people. Let's respect their intelligence, give common sense the benefit of the doubt, nurture personal dignity and respect, and trigger their sense of civism. Then, and only then, will tangible results be had, results that will not only baffle, but also exceed everyone's wildest hopes, wishes, and dreams."*
If Farid Chehab has written this book, in three languages and in 9 months, it is because he has given up on finding a realistic political solution to the existing divisions. His book suggests a new path, a new language, capable of being approved by all: an economic language, or, more precisely, a federative economic language, source of unity and growth. A federative economy closely associated with citizen participation through an unprecedented path in our young history.
The federative economic solutions that Chehab suggests are numerous, all innovative in content and in feasibility. First off, water, followed by electricity, decentralization, high technology, and creative economy. He suggests joint funding (government/citizen) and civil entities, independent from government to maintain projects that are politically unstable and allow Lebanon to finally develop 5-year plans that can ensure growth, increase employment, and create revenues capable of erasing the national debt in less than 10 years.
Farid Chehab believes that through an initial five-year plan to transform our hydraulic sources into a source of permanent revenue, we can create a common interest able to form the base of agreement between citizens for the emergence of a future National Conscience based on common economic interests for the entire nation.
In order to accelerate the creation of new economic ideas, Farid Chehab wants to create a Group of Influencers. This entity can best create a new approach, free of political or religions influence, and able to propel the economy, the people's priority, forward.
"A Bet for a National Conscience" is as optimistic as it gets. It is a must read that reveals an innovative, non-political approach capable of breaking the vicious cycle that is holding back the evolution of this country.
In order to reach a wider young audience, the book is written in French, English, and Arabic, and available in printed and e-versions. The online version of the book has an added bonus: it is interactive. The book evolves according to the comments of the readers. This makes it the first participatory book in the Middle East, and maybe even in the world.



300 wonderfully written pages, a true page-turner. The introduction and the first part of the book cover our ancient and young history, in an objective and neutral way that has long been forgotten. The rest is a full road map to reach the goal spread until 2030. Farid Chehab takes his time to clarify his sole role as moderator, hoping that all Lebanese citizens will contribute to this project that is devoid of any political agenda.

An enlighteningly-suggestive work available in French, Arabic, and English in book form and online: *pari-rihan.org*



How would you describe your book? Is it a manifesto? A political project?
One cannot talk about a National Conscience without talking about politics, of course. However, the political path to a National Conscience is locked up, and will be for a long time. But this country doesn't have the luxury of time. Within this negative context, the book presents an alternative project: building the nation through a federative economic program. So, I would call it a manifesto: an economic, civic, and apolitical manifesto.

Tell us about the main ideas of this book.
The only way to bring the Lebanese together is through an economic language. In the economic field, we find few divisions between concerned parties. The basic idea is to create a national consensus around big federative economic projects. These projects are meant to interest the citizens, and revolve around our essential national resources and opportunities, the most important of which are water, electricity, the environment, wide decentralisation, high-tech, and a creative economy.
The management of these projects has to follow essential conditions:

1. Raise the interest of the entire Lebanese population, and mobilise it through a series of 5-year plans.
2. Raise the interest of citizens through a mixed participatory investment scheme (private/public).
3. Entrust the management of the projects to independent bodies, accountable to the state and the citizens that make up a board.

> *I woke up one day in January 2011, probably frustrated by our actual deadlocked and depressing political situation, thinking, "It's now or never."*

The citizen mobilisation for these projects needs to take place around a civic and apolitical influence group. We need a kind of economic "lobby", unlike anything seen before in Lebanon. An influence group, that, in order to maintain its integrity, does not get involved in politics, but works in an efficient way to create a public opinion, united around the native federative projects.
The final objective consists of awakening a new perception in the citizens of their rights and duties vis-à-vis the nation, and in the politicians of their duty to serve justly, and not exploit, through the economy.

How was your project born?
2011 was a turning point in my career. By becoming Honorary President of Leo Burnett, I have a duty vis-à-vis myself, my company, and Lebanese citizens to give back to Lebanon what it has given me over the years in my career in communication. In addition to this,
I have been talking about this project to my wife since our first meeting, and we

Biography

- Honorary Chairman and Advisor to the Board Leo Burnett MENA Born in Lebanon and raised in Beirut, Chehab is a Public Law and Political Sciences Graduate.
- Beside the honour of having contributed to the "Humankind" philosophy of Leo Burnett WorldWide, he was elected "Man of the Year" by ArabAd in 2010. He has a special passion for political communication and was the advisor of one President of the Republic and several well-known political figures in Lebanon.
- Chehab is a talented speaker . He has given several regional and international conferences to the communication Industry. Among them: *"The knife and the Sharpener"*, *"Nobel or Cannes"* ,*"The Mother-of-all-Integration"*, *"Brand Building - The New World"*, *"Welcome to the 21st Century"*, *"Soldiers or Commandos"* and the most recent one *"Ten ways for one million returns"*.
- *"A Bet for a National Conscience"* is his first book.

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met a very long time ago. Now, it's time for more than words. I woke up one day in January 2011, probably frustrated by our actual deadlocked and depressing political situation, thinking, *"It's now or never."*

How long have you been working on it?
For a long, long time. Years of reading have given me a deep perspective of the influence history has had on our country, on the influence of the economy, on politics in general, but also on the evolution of the region through a global political and economic context. My role in Leo Burnett has allowed me to stay aware of economic and social developments, and of the most promising citizen insights. It was all in my head, completely disorganised, but there. Then I locked myself in for three weeks to write the plan of the book, then, in the space of four months, I read a number of required documents, writing as I went along, during the day and at night. The outcome is the French book, written in four months. I needed to also launch the English and Arabic versions at the same time. For lack of an English collaborator who also mastered French, I had to write the book in English, then asked Jad Haidar to rewrite it. The Arabic version was handled from the beginning by Antoine Costantine and Roula Zeidan, both of whom master French perfectly, and both of whom were passionate about contributing to this book in which they truly believe. Without them, the Arabic version wouldn't have seen the light of day in December. I am infinitely thankful to them.
So, in 11 months, 3 versions were written. That includes the creation of the site and of the electronic versions that went online in May 2011. For this, I owe so much to the teams in Leo Burnett, and more specifically to Samer Shoueiry that managed the entire interactive side of the project.

Who is this book for? Who would you like to read it?
Ideally, all Lebanese people. I wrote it in three languages precisely to make it accessible to everybody, without favoring a specific culture. The book is meant to launch a grassroots movement. But that's not easy, hence the need to means of influence. I would really like it if leaders, business people, entrepreneurs, industrialists, and everyone linked to our economic fabric read this book. It is through them that the group of influence can be created, and the quicker it is created, the quicker we will find a way out of our national stalemate.

How did your advertising background help you?
In every way. Advertising makes us generalists. We go through economic problems in a macro-way, rather than specialists. This allows us to have a more global view of the different parameters that make up the problem. Our Lebanese problem is not any different or more complicated in its structure than the survival problem of an international brand in a risky, competitive global context. The path to finding a solution is not different. The problems are, of course, different, but the reflection to finding a solution is the same.
In addition to this, as I've already mentioned, advertising gives us access to insights, things that are unspoken by people. In the case of this book, it allows us to get a better sense for the pulse of the people, and to communicate with them in a more convincing and human way.
Then, the large part of drafting a solution comes from the creation of a group of influence. Communication, without euphemisms, is something that advertising can do.

Were you inspired by other books while working on yours?
Maybe *"Une Breve Histoire du Futur"* (A Brief History of the Future) by Jacques Attali. He really made me want to start writing my book.



In your opinion, do Lebanese people lack a vision, at least when it comes to a collective vision?
Of course. Lebanese people are individualistic. They don't know what teamwork is or what *"collective effort"* means. I spend a few pages in the book discussing this. In addition to this, our commercialism makes us fans of instantaneity. We don't know how to have a vision. We think and act in the short term. I spend a lot of time in the book explaining the importance of time and planning to reach sustainable solutions.

Who do you think are the visionaries of the world, that inspire you?
Those who are able to concretise. The late Steve Jobs is a good example.