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MIGRANT INFRASTRUCTURES IN BEIRUT

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Migrant workers in Lebanon are subject to a sponsorship (*Kafala*) system that ties their work and everyday living conditions to a local sponsor. As a result, their social and physical mobility are severely limited. However, one can see in Beirut places where migrants clearly defy and overcome these restrictions. One such place is Dora, a bustling multi-ethnic neighborhood where migrants find places to live, work, and socialize.

My research explores the alternative infrastructures that Beirut's migrant workers (re)produce and sustain in the course of their everyday lives. It looks into the different ways of inhabiting the city that such infrastructures enable. My aim is to examine the lifeworlds of migrant workers in Beirut focusing on the infrastructures that support them, meaning the infrastructures that allow these worlds to materialize and endure. The notion of infrastructure is employed here in ways that depart from the traditional definitions of the term; it includes both the material and non-material surrounding.

Using participant observation and ethnographic interviews, I investigate how different elements, including bodies, things, and signs of various kinds, function as infrastructures for migrant workers in Beirut and how such alternative infrastructures give migrants access to the city and in the process, take part in shaping the social and material landscape of this city.

Keywords: Migrant Workers, Diversity, Beirut, Infrastructure, Urban Space, Migration

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INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has long been a country of emigration with large numbers of Lebanese emigrating for reasons of economic and political instability. Since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, there has been an important change in migration patterns. While outward migration remained strong, the country has emerged as a place of immigration as well, receiving migrants from Arab and non-Arab countries (Tabar 2010). It was during this period that recruitment agencies for foreign domestic workers started to proliferate, bringing women from Africa and South-East Asia (Jureidini 2010). According to the Ministry of Labor, a total of 209,674 work permits have been granted to migrant workers in 2015. The majority of these permits (148,860) are renewals and not newly issued ones. These migrants come primarily from Africa and South Asia. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are around 250,000 migrant workers in Lebanon as of 2013. They come mainly from Ethiopia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Red Cross Red Crescent Manila Conference on Labor Migration 2015). However, these numbers do not include unregistered or illegal workers. It is difficult to calculate the total number of migrants living and working in the country and numbers might differ considerably. For example, a report released by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimates that, as of December 2013, there is a total of 29,113 Filipinos in Lebanon categorized as: 1,573 permanent, 24,640 temporary, and 2,900 irregular workers. The number of Filipinos, as well as migrants from other nationalities, working in Lebanon as per the Ministry of Labor is shown in

the table below.[1]

Table 1: New and renewed work permits for 2015. Source: Ministry of Labor 2015.

Country of Origin	First Permit	Permit Renewal	Total
Ethiopia	27,832	45,587	73,419
Bangladesh	15,799	33,337	49,136
Sri Lanka	973	7,894	8,867
Sudan	150	1,539	1,689
Syria	1,102	1,048	2,150
Palestine	223	625	848
Philippines	4,191	19,415	23,606
Cameroon	1,125	1,204	2,329
Madagascar	194	1,136	1,330
Egypt	1,225	17,232	18,457
India	927	6,487	7,414
Nepal	348	2,320	2,668
Kenia	3,846	4,526	8,372
Other	2,879	6,510	9,389
Total	**60,814**	**148,860**	**209,674**

Although they form a significant part of the country's labor force, migrant workers and their labor do not fall under the ordinary Lebanese Labor Law. Instead, they are subject to a special set of regulations that govern their employment and living conditions known as the *kafala* or sponsorship system. According to this system of migration and employment, workers cannot enter the country unless they have a sponsor, typically the employer. Work contracts usually serve for the period of two or three years and they are renewable. The majority of migrants who enter the country

[1] The Ministry's 2016 report states that 232,330 work permits were issued for that year among which 155,125 are renewals but the numbers are not broken down according to nationality (Ministry of Labor. 2016. "التقرير السنوي حول االإنجازات للفترة ما بين شهر كانون الثاني عام 2016 و شهر كانون الأول عام 2016." http://www.labor.gov.lb/_layouts/MOL_Application/AnnualReport.aspx?lang=ar).

through recruitment agencies are women. As domestic workers, they live in the homes of their employers. Some of the migrant women work as freelancers; they enter Lebanon as live-in domestic workers and stay on after the expiry of their contracts. Other women come here to work as freelancers and they get a Lebanese sponsor who agrees to act as such in return for a fee. Another category of these women are those who run away from their employers and end up working independently and living with friends or on their own (Jureidini 2004).

Male migrant workers in Lebanon are less visible in the literature on migration.[2] Though their work is also subject to the sponsorship system, it is possible that less has been written about their experiences as migrant workers in the country because they have relative autonomy since they do not reside in their employers' households. The majority of the male migrant workers in Lebanon come from other Arab countries mainly Syria and Egypt. There is also a considerable population of male non-Arab migrant workers coming from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines among others. The difference between migrant workers and refugees is not always clear cut as many men coming from Sudan[3], Iraq[4], and more recently Syria[5] arrive in

[2] At the exception of John Cahlcraft's work on Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon. See for example, Chalcraft, John T. 2008. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

[3] The UNHCR states that it has 270 registered Sudanese refugees while Anjo, a group that works on supporting Sudanese refugees in Lebanon, estimates that there are around 900 to 1000 Sudanese refugees in Lebanon (The Daily Star 2015).

[4] A 2007 Human Rights Watch report estimates that there are about 50,000 Iraqi refugees in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch. 2007. "Rot Here or Die There." *Human Rights Watch*. December 3. https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/12/03/rot-here-or-die-there/bleak-choices-iraqi-refugees-lebanon).

[5] In May 2015, the UNHCR stopped registering Syrian refugees upon the request of the Lebanese government. Following that decision, any Syrian entering the country needs to acquire a visa (Al Jazeera

Lebanon fleeing violent conflicts in their home countries. While residing in Lebanon they need to find employment and support themselves. Their legal status depends on whether or not they manage to get registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[6] Many of these men enter the country illegally, that is, through different trafficking routes that get them into Lebanon through Syria, and their legal status might remain undetermined for some time or indefinitely (Trad and Frangieh 2007).

In the past few years, mobilization around issues pertaining to migrant workers has been increasing. Many NGOs and activists in Lebanon are engaged in highlighting and fighting abuse related primarily to women domestic workers (Insan 2014; Chamoun and Ayoub 2017). More recently anti-racism campaigns have been highlighting the case of Syrian male manual laborers as victims of racism (Thelen 2013). Activists' demands include reforming labor laws and policies and increasing legal protection for migrant workers against physical abuse and against exploitative working conditions. Organizations such as Insan Association, Migrant Workers Task Force (MWTF), and

English 2015). In addition to that, the General Directorate of General Security issued new regulations whereby no Syrian is allowed entry into the country as a refugee and those refugees registered with UNHCR (prior to January 2015) have to sign a pledge to not work in the country (Saliba 2016).

[6] Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and it does not have a national law concerning refugees. Two legal instruments govern the entry of refugees and their stay in Lebanon. The first, is the Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country which stipulates that foreigners whose life or freedom is under threat because they were convicted of political crimes may be granted political asylum, in case a decision was taken to expel a political refugee, he or she cannot be sent to a country where their life or freedom may be in danger, and foreigners entering the country illegally may be subject to punishment by prison or fine (Saliba 2016). The second, is a memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR signed in 2003 through which the Lebanese government grants an asylum seeker a temporary residence permit while the UNHCR review the asylum claim and seek to find a solution for the claimant; usually a resettlement in a third country (UNHCR 2003).

Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) organize campaigns, activities, and cultural events that aim at increasing visibility, spreading awareness, and promoting the cause of migrant workers and their rights. They also work on empowering migrant workers and providing spaces for them such as the Migrant Community Centers (MCC) established by ARM. According to ARM's website, MCCs are places where migrants can improve their skills, by attending free language and computer classes for example, and have access to resources and information and to a space for social gatherings and celebrations.

Studies about migrant workers in Lebanon and the Arab region (Jureidini 2003; Lan 2003; Esim and Smith 2004; Hamill 2011; Lee 2011) highlight important issues such as work conditions, abuse and violation of human rights, expressions of sexuality, and the need for more protective laws and regulations. Because of the nature of labor migration in this region, these studies focus mainly on female domestic workers. Migrant workers enter Lebanon as temporary contract workers but while many come and leave, many others remain here. Some manage to bring family members to live and work with them and others start their own families here. Although researchers (Tabar 2010; Jureidini 2003) have noted that Lebanon has become a place of immigration and one of the destinations of South-South migration, there is a lack in research focusing on migrant workers who end up taking long-term residence in the country.

Migrants in Lebanon are becoming more visible through their transformation of certain parts of the city. Some neighborhoods in Beirut are emerging as spaces of diversity, be it through the many migrants who reside in them or through the shops that cater for migrant workers and that spread throughout the city. New and different products, foods, spaces, and events hint at the role that migrant workers play in

transforming the city. We know little, however, about what supports and sustains their long-term presence in Beirut. In addition, migrant workers' contribution to the transformation of the cityscapes remains unrecognized and underexplored. Hence, the idea behind this research project: the aim is to shed light on the everyday lives and practices of migrant workers living and working in Beirut while shifting the focus from households to the city space and its transformations. Although migrant workers are present in diverse areas of Beirut, I decided to focus on Dora which is a commercial and residential area that lies in North-East Beirut.

Dora became a transportation hub during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). Prior to the war, Martyr's Square, which lies at the heart of downtown Beirut, was the city's transportation center; it was known then as *Sahet el Borj* (the tower square). During the war, Beirut was divided into two belligerent sides separated by a demarcation line that cut through Martyr's Square which became a dangerous and deserted zone. Two transportation hubs emerged as a result of that division, Cola for West Beirut and Dora serving East Beirut (Niasari 2011).

On Sundays, Dora transforms into a lively, multiethnic district. Migrant workers flock to it from inside and outside the city. Many of them live in the area because of the conveniently cheap rental prices. The streets become crowded with people, always in groups, coming and going, lingering on the sidewalks, sitting in cafés or restaurants, examining store windows, going from shop to shop, bargaining, stopping here and there to greet familiar faces... The whole street starts buzzing and the diversity of people, ethnicities, and dialects is exhilarating. These migrants come from Egypt, Syria, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, the Philippines as well as other countries.

Food stores, clothes shops, hair salons and restaurants that cater for this growing class of consumers are multiplying in Dora as well as in other parts of the city. Some of these businesses are set up and run by non-Arab migrants, others are run by Lebanese locals and have been transformed to meet the demands of the clientele, made up largely of migrants. For example, a casual wear store displays saris in its window shop and a hair salon displays pictures of African women with African hairstyles. This area is densely populated and a stroll along its streets takes you across various dialects that reflect the mixture of nationalities, identities, and backgrounds that make up Dora. My interest in this project is in uncovering some of the infrastructures that support this place and make it possible.

When we think of infrastructure, we typically think of basic facilities and utilities that organize the city and facilitate its functioning, like sewerage, the power grid, and roads. These technologies are essential to our understanding of life in cities and of how people make use of the material built environment to optimize their chances of survival and prosperity (De Boeck 2012). Some studies of infrastructure have departed from the traditional definitions of the term and expanded it to include both the material and non-material surrounding, extending their analysis to people and their activities (Simone 2004), information and knowledge practices (Elyachar 2012), and semiotic systems and collective desires (De Boeck 2011).

This concept of infrastructure has been used to understand what makes life in the city possible when resources are scarce, inaccessible or unequally distributed, in severely underserved areas with poor populations and absent or decaying infrastructures (Simone 2006; De Boeck 2015; Amin 2014). The case of migrants in Dora is not so

much a failure of basic infrastructure in the city but a case of exclusion manifested in the lack of infrastructure available for the migrants to consolidate their presence in Lebanon, such as migration and labor laws that open up opportunities for workers instead of restricting their chances. In this sense, migrants in Lebanon are disenfranchised and denied access to resources and so they are faced with a situation where they need to find ways of making, on their own terms, the city a hospitable and productive space for them. In this research project, I examine the lifeworlds of migrant workers in Beirut focusing on the infrastructures they use, create, and maintain, meaning the infrastructures that allow these lifeworlds to come into being and endure. My aim is to uncover the modes of interaction and the practices that make up migrants' everyday lives. I will explore what Simone (2012) calls the "in-between" as the space of potential where people can think about and act on what they can do together and the ways in which this space and what materializes within it "attracts people, draws them in, coalesces and expends their capacities."

In this study, I use infrastructure to mean the complex systems that bring together heterogeneous elements, creating connections and opening up possibilities (Simone 2012). They are not and should not be limited to the material surrounding. After Simone (2004), I thus approach infrastructures as "complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices." I focus on three components of infrastructure – fixed sites, people, and circulations. I explore how such elements of a different nature combine to form the ground for protection, economic collaboration, and specific ways of dwelling in Lebanon on one's own terms for the migrants who live in Dora or meet there on Sundays.

Infrastructures represent that which enables exchange between people thus supporting social activity and reproducing it. They are objects that enable the functioning of other objects and as such they form systems. These systems are not connected by linear, hierarchical relations, but are embedded, recursive systems (Larkin 2013). For example, modern roads are the infrastructure for the circulation of modern vehicles and these modern machines - their mass production and distribution - are the grounds for the creation of complex roads and highway systems. I build on the richness, complexity, and productivity of infrastructures to push to the surface a different city within Beirut and to trace the networks and social practices that support it. For example, in a place like Dora that gathers migrants, some of whom are undocumented, the exchange and timeliness of information is critical in preserving one's safety. Thus, the buzz of a crowd of consumers at a Dora terrace café on a Sunday afternoon, and the business of the café manager, depend in part for their materialization on the circulation of information about how to move safely through the city on that day. To achieve that, an immaterial, flickering network of information is built into the public transportation system; the main means of transportation for migrants. The following anecdote illustrates this exchange of valuable information and the kinds of networks and infrastructures that information travels through in the city:

> On a Sunday afternoon, a bus driver stopped a few meters before the Dora bus stop. After exchanging a few words with a fellow bus driver parked on the side of the road, he asked all those in the bus to step down if they do not have legal papers because there is a checkpoint ahead. Soon after several Sri Lankan ladies stepped out of the bus which then resumed its usual trip.

The bus driver might have been trying to avoid wasting time with an investigating officer or he might have been simply protecting his interests (the

customers). Whatever the case may be, he recognized that this information is potentially useful for the migrants who might have come to expect this recognition from bus drivers. The interaction reveals a kind of infrastructure that is contingent and volatile (if the bus driver had not stopped to talk to his colleague, would he have been informed otherwise of the checkpoint?) but nonetheless effective at enabling a different kind of life for migrants.

Methodology and Data Collection

This research examines the lifeworlds of migrant workers in Beirut with a focus on the infrastructures that support them, meaning the infrastructures that allow these worlds to materialize and endure. It aims to uncover the networks, relations, circulations, and practices utilized by migrants in the course of everyday life and consequently incorporated into the making of the city. It asks the following question: what alternative infrastructures for which ways of inhabiting the city do Beirut's non-Arab migrant workers (re)produce and sustain in the course of their everyday lives?

To answer this question, I look at the activities that migrant workers undertake in Dora, especially on a Sunday since it is a day off for most workers and the time of the week when they gather in Dora. I follow some people and take part in their experiences exploring how space, people, and practices are rendered productive infrastructures that push past restrictive regulations to open up a more creative and easeful space for migrants in the city. My interviews and fieldwork observations focus on the following:

1. Activities: What are the activities that non-Arab migrants do on their day off? How does a typical day-off look like for the domestic worker and the freelancer

that visit Dora on a Sunday? What are the places they visit? How do they distribute their time between these places? Where do they do their shopping? Where do they meet friends? Do they prefer to visit them at home or to be outside, for example to get together at a café or a restaurant? What kind of leisure or entertainment do they seek? And is there a difference between men and women when it comes to choosing things to do and locations to visit? For example, the cafés open to the sidewalks are usually exclusively filled with men smoking *arguileh*. Do some migrants worry about encountering the police? And does that restrict their access to certain places in the city? Does it also push them into specific spaces?

2. Networks and practices: What networks and relationships are built or made possible through spending time in Dora? Do these relationships cut across the traditional social boundaries of ethnicity or national origin, religion, gender, and language? Do people try to maintain a separation between different social spheres and the relationships that belong to each, for example, work, fun, worship? How do people expand the potential benefits of certain practices? For example, one goes to church to practice one's faith but also to meet women or men, to find potential partners or to get advice on how to avoid a confrontation with one's employer while standing up for oneself (Pande 2012). We usually presuppose a certain futurity to our relationships with others that influences our present actions and decisions. A simple example are contracts or loans that project those involved in them into a certain time in the future when payments are due or commitments are to be met. What happens when futurity is limited or

even highly uncertain? Does the fact that migrants are transient workers or in some cases threatened with deportation at any time affect the relationships they have with others; business relationships, intimate relationships, marriages? How does one manage such contingencies and still obtain cooperation from others? How might migrants' integration into various networks defy their supposed state of transience and help them sustain a prolonged stay in Beirut?

3. Tapping infrastructures: What do non-Arab migrants derive from the infrastructures they invest in and what do they contribute to them? Are they seeking information, support, protection, companionship, advice? Do people exchange one in return for the other? For example, since migrants whether legal or illegal are vulnerable to harassment either by the authorities or by individuals who exploit their situation, how do they protect themselves? How can networks be useful, and what kinds of networks are useful for avoiding arrest, deportation and harassment? What elements of the migrant infrastructure achieve visibility and which ones must remain invisible or only partly visible? For example, a church group needs to be advertised and made easily accessible to people as one can notice looking at the posters hung all over Dora. But a warning network that alerts migrants to check points must be concealed from the law enforcers and made visible/recognizable only to concerned migrants and anyone else involved in relaying information.

My fieldwork was conducted over the period of two months, November and December 2016, during which I made regular visits to Dora. I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with migrants and six interviews with Lebanese participants.

These interviews were tape recorded then translated and transcribed later. Three Lebanese participants asked me not to use the tape recorder so I took notes of our conversation during the interview. Most of the interviews were in Arabic and a few were conducted in English; Filipino participants were more comfortable talking in English as well as two Ethiopian participants. Interviews were conducted either in a café or restaurant or at the participant's workplace. The migrants I interviewed are from the following nationalities: Ethiopian, Sudanese, Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indian, and Bangladeshi. In addition to these arranged interviews, I had many casual conversations with participants during the course of the fieldwork from which I derived a great deal of my material.

Participant observation was conducted mainly in Dora. I made regular visits to the following places: an Ethiopian restaurant, an Ethiopian hair salon, and a café popular with migrant workers, especially Filipinos. Other places I visited in Dora include Ethiopian and Filipino restaurants, grocery stores that sell imported products, cafés, variety stores, and a church. I also made visits - during which I made observations and spoke to people and later recorded field notes - to places outside Dora, such as, a church and a store in Badaro, a wedding hall in Jnah, and a restaurant in Basta. For the majority of my commutes to and from Dora I used the bus and I sometimes used service cars. During these trips, I took notes of any interesting observations or conversations that happened with or between passengers.

I had two participants who significantly contributed to my meeting additional participants from their communities as well as other migrant worker communities. The first one is Emnet, an Ethiopian woman whom I met before I started my fieldwork while

she was working at a relative's household. I told her about my research and asked if she could take me with her during her visits to Dora and introduce me to some of the places and people she knows. The second is a Sudanese man named Osman who at the time that I met him was working at a coffee shop in Achrafieh. I was a regular visitor to that café and on one of my visits I introduced myself to a Lebanese employee there and asked if I could speak to the Sudanese man to ask if he would like to participate in my research. Both these participants became major contributors to my research; they took me to places they visit in Beirut, introduced me to their friends, invited me to attend events with them, and helped me recruit some of my interviewees by talking to their friends about me and about my research and asking them if they would like to talk to me. Another approach I took to meeting people and talking to them was walking into some shops in Dora that had visible signs of being places that cater for migrant workers (posters, advertisements, scripts …) and introducing myself and talking to the people that work there. On one occasion when I was sitting alone at an Ethiopian restaurant in Dora, I was approached by three Ethiopian women who invited me to join their table. I told them about my research and we had a long conversation over lunch and coffee.

I took pictures of most of the places I visited as well as pictures of some streets, shop signs, advertisements and posters to capture the juxtaposition of different places within this space and the different signs that have found their way into Dora and that hint at the presence and activities of the migrant workers there.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 1 explores succinctly the history of Bourj Hammoud and presents a brief overview of the different phases of settlement and investment that contributed to its growth as a residential and industrial area which is today both highly populated and highly diverse. From this background, I take some cues as to what makes Dora which is a district of Bourj Hammoud a central place for Lebanon's migrant workers. Dora is easily and cheaply accessible due to its location and its connectedness to other parts of the city through various public transportation means (buses, minivans, service cars). It is an ideal place to live in for migrants who work in Beirut and want quick access to it but cannot afford to live in more expensive parts of Beirut like Hamra or Achrafieh. This is a space where activities, interactions, exchanges, and collaborations between migrants and between migrants and Lebanese take place and as such it has become an integral part of the migrant infrastructure in Beirut. Chapter 2 focuses on migrant entrepreneurs by looking at some of the businesses started in Dora by migrant workers in collaboration with Lebanese locals. These entrepreneurial activities are the only viable alternative for migrant workers who refuse to work under the conditions of the *kafala* system. The main focus of the chapter is an Ethiopian woman called Mary who manages a restaurant and a hair salon in Dora. Mary's story illustrates the conditions under which such entrepreneurial activities might take place. In her case for example, her marriage to a Lebanese man gives her great advantages. But her ability to work independently in Lebanon and succeed relies on several factors all of which are necessary components of the migrant infrastructure. These factors include building a knowledge of the city and how it functions, for example, in terms of housing and renting commercial spaces but

also in terms of interactions with others and developing the appropriate social and business acumen that helps one overcome adversity or cope with it. Chapter 3 discusses how migrant workers constitute a profitable market. They support local businesses like the various shops, money transfer places, ethnic food restaurants, and stores for products imported from countries of origin like the Philippines or from intermediate places like Dubai. Some Lebanese citizens are aware of the profits one can make out of such businesses. Profitable businesses that have to do with migrants were once confined to hiring agencies, today they have expanded to food, entertainment, housing, shipping, and other commercial investments. All the businesses that I visited in Dora and in other parts of the city are set up through partnerships between Lebanese and migrants. There is a need on the migrant's side for a legal cover but also for a facilitator when it comes to such transactions as renting a place. On the Lebanese side, there is a need for an access point to the market of migrant customers and to know-how. According to my Lebanese participants, this market of migrant workers is vital since it sustains Dora's economy. Chapter 4 looks at the support networks that migrants in Beirut maintain. Such networks are a crucial part of the migrant infrastructure. They are links and connections that channel all kinds of exchanges: money, knowledge, advice, information, and care. The stories included in this chapter show how this infrastructure of social relations maintains people's safety and their access to information, work opportunities, and financial support. Without such infrastructure, the migrants' way of life as independent workers and residents of the city would not be possible. Having this kind of support allows one to make plans for a future that is not entirely outlined by options offered by state laws. For migrants, is the basis for expanding their field of

potentialities. This is not to say that this infrastructure is a guarantee for success in living on one's own terms but that it makes different ways of living in Beirut possible.

CHAPTER I

DORA'S HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Space is socially produced and reproduced. Always an already modelled space, it is altered by the endeavors of those who have occupied, used, and shaped it for their own ends and those who come to occupy it after them:

> The permanent production of space never starts from nothing, from a clean slate. Always, according to Lefebvre, "a new mode of production, a new society, appropriates, that is to say organizes for its ends the pre-existing, pre-modeled space. The social classes are invested differently, according to their hierarchical position within the society, in these occupied spaces"(Martin 2006, my translation).

For some migrant workers in Beirut, space appropriation can come in the form of a ritual procession, like the annual march around Labor Day. Migrants, activists, and supporters walk through the streets of Beirut shouting slogans and demands. The march ends at a point of gathering. For the past couple of years this has been a Hamra parking lot that becomes for that day a market for food and artifacts, a place for street performance, music, dance and protest. It is an appropriation bounded by time and occasion; it is an organized event. For a day streets and places in the city are altered by a different kind of presence and activity.

In Dora we see another mode of appropriation of space that is more durable, that is anchored in the everyday rhythms of living in the city, and that is always being pushed towards endurance. This appropriation rests partly on migrants' investments in existing infrastructures. We can imagine the city itself as being a complex arrangement of infrastructures articulated together; the city is infrastructure. And since infrastructures

are enablers we can always ask ourselves, what is it that the city, or *this* particular city, enables?

In their study of ethnically diverse high streets in the UK, Hall et al. (2016) suggest an evaluation of the migrant infrastructure through looking at three dimensions of these street spaces: the historical, the socio-spatial, and the local with the purpose of following the "temporal dimension of street infrastructure, […] how the material aspects of infrastructure co-constitute social relations," and what the location of these places offers or facilitates. They ask what makes a socio-space particularly appealing or attractive for certain migrants and "how the material and situated configuration of multi-ethnic city streets might assist in participating in the city" (2). Similarly, in this chapter, I will shed light on some factors that make Dora a place that is both attractive for migrant workers and conducive to their activities.

The first section of this chapter is a brief historic overview of Dora and Bourj Hammoud and the development of these places into densely populated, industrial, low-income areas. The second section looks at the emergence of Dora as one of Beirut's main transportation hubs which makes it accessible for people and profitable for businesses. Finally, the third section considers the less stringent social and security control that migrants face in Dora as an important factor that - together with some other features of this space - make it a suitable and receptive place of residence and enterprise for migrants. Throughout the chapter, I draw on existing literature on the area and on material from my observations and field notes to convey a sense of this place by considering both the local and global relations that produce and characterize it (Massey 1994).

Settlement and Development

Bourj Hammoud lies to the east of Nahr Beirut (the Beirut River). It developed from a stretch of marsh lands and agricultural plains to become a densely-populated area (Nucho 2014). In the 19th century, the Nahr Beirut area contained warehouses, shipping services, tanneries and silk factories. These local traditional industries declined in the following decades and were replaced by more modern ones (glass, furniture, tile and bricks, leather products…). The Nahr district was ideal for these developments because it offered cheap land, cheap labor and lax planning regulations (Frem 2009, 54).

Fig. 1. Bourj Hammoud in the 1900s. Source: https://www.area-arch.it/en/bourj-hammoud-district/

In the 1870s, Maronite peasants along with a smaller number of Greek-

Orthodox peasants left Mount Lebanon to look for work opportunities in the city. They settled on the eastern borders of Beirut next to other Christian neighborhoods and just outside the city in order to escape Ottoman regulations imposed on all the city's inhabitants and to stay closer to the roads leading to their homes in the mountains. These settlements marked the beginnings of the growth of Beirut's eastern suburb (Davie 1992, 37–38).

In 1921, the French evacuated the Armenian population of Cilicia, a region located in the southern part of Anatolia, and which was under the control of the French who then ceded it to Turkey (Sanjian 2001). The French authorities, granted mandate over Lebanon and Syria, organized the distribution of the Armenian refugees into camps erected on the Lebanese coast, in Latakia, and in Damascus. In these areas, construction sites were open where the refugees "would be obliged to work for wages lower than those current in the country. In this way they would be encouraged to find work in local industries while their labor would prove beneficial for the Levant States"[7] (Greenshields 1978, 285–86).

The refugees were first settled in tents in the Qarantina area and later relocated to "nearby areas of Bourj Hammoud[8] and Khalil Badawi, Karm ez-Zeitoon, and other 'popular' low-income neighbourhoods of the city" (Fawaz and Peillen 2003, 9). Abramson (2013) describes how Bourj Hammoud grew to become one of the main centers of Armenian refugees in Lebanon. His description of an area of parceled out

[7] The French subdivided the mandate region into six states: Damascus, Aleppo, Alawites, Jabal Druze, Sanjak of Alexandretta, and the State of Greater Lebanon.

[8] The land where the Armenian refugees settled in Bourj Hammoud was owned by the Maronite church and purchased by a member of the Armenian National Union in Lebanon (Greenshields 1978, 441).

plots is echoed in the urban character of today's Bourj Hammoud with its neighborhoods made up of small two to three-story buildings separated by narrow alleyways:

> The Armenians from Cilicia, who accounted for the great bulk of the refugees, coalesced into small associations (hayrenaktsakans) whose members all originated in the same locality in Turkey. The hayrenaktsakans would aggregate their money and purchase land, often at reduced rates, from obliging Christian landowners in Beirut. Each acquisition was then divided into plots that were parceled out to individual proprietors. Thus did the Armenian population centers in Beirut, most famously Bourj Hammoud, emerge in the twenties and thirties.

The early business enterprises founded by Armenians involved shoemaking and jewelry making, for which they established workshops in Bourj Hammoud, in addition to tailoring, photography, repair shops, metal work, knitwear, leather work, and trade in carpets (Migliorino 2008, 133–34).

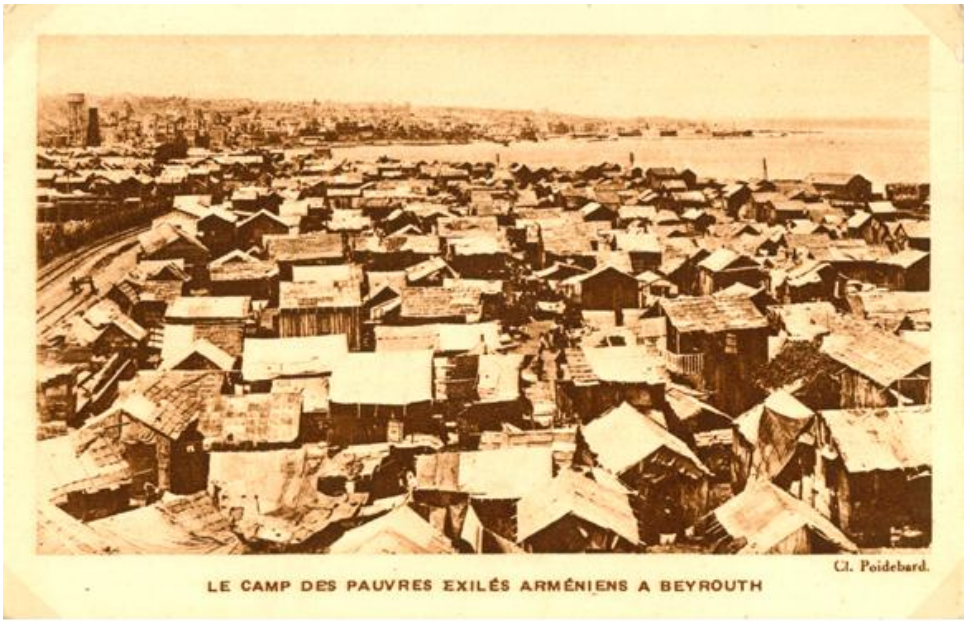

Fig. 2. Armenian refugee camp in Beirut. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Armenian_exiles.JPG

At the beginning of the 50s, the living conditions of the Shiite rural population

were declining. No longer capable to rely on their traditional agricultural mode of living, many began migrating to the poor suburbs of Beirut. In the northern suburb, they settled in Nabaa (Nasr 2013). But the exodus from rural to urban areas was not unique to the Shiites. In fact, the 1950s saw the beginning of these economic displacements that would intensify in the 1960s. People moved from their villages and came to settle in the urban suburbs, especially in industrial areas such as Bourj Hammoud, in search for employment. Consequently, new factories would set up in these suburbs that offered a supply of cheap labor made of rural migrants or foreign workers (Fawaz and Peillen 2003). In Dora, the area facing the port was slowly turning from a residential to an industrial zone as it attracted a number of oil, gas and petrol companies (Frem 2009).

In 1952, the governorate of Bourj Hammoud became a separate municipality that includes seven districts; Dora, Nabaa, Jisr Beirut, Sader, Al-Anbari, Al-Ghilan, and Mar Doumit. Dora is located in the eastern part of Bourj Hammoud and comprises a section of Armenia street that stretches from the Dora roundabout all the way to Gemmayzeh, crossing the Nahr Beirut.

The civil war led to the forceful reshuffling of the worker communities living in Dora to fall within the sectarian lines that came to divide Beirut, a Muslim majority in the West side and a Christian one in the East side. After the war, the Shiites returned to Bourj Hammoud and later economic migration brought in additional communities of low wage laborers; Egyptians, Sri Lankans, and Ethiopians among others (Frem 2009, 58–59). More recently Syrian refugees came to live there too adding to the population's volume and diversity (Karajerjian 2016).

Fig. 3. Bourj Hammoud districts. Source: Harmandayan 2009.

Bourj Hammoud is mostly marked by its Armenian community; many streets, for example, are named after hometowns in Armenia like Marash and Yerevan. The western Armenian dialect is still spoken in Bourj Hammoud. Other indicators of the strong Armenian heritage that marks the area are Armenian churches and schools, cultural centers, a publishing house that prints a newspaper in Armenian, and restaurants that serve the delicacies of the Armenian cuisine (Bucher n.d.).

Transportation

Dora is one of Beirut's major transportation hubs: "the Beirut-North highway connects to Bourj-Hammoud area at its [two] edges under bridges, which constitute major entrances to the District. At the eastern edge (the Dora area), the circulation node on the highway has developed into an informal terminal for the available transport systems, mini-busses and taxi-services, connecting to various regions" (Harmandayan 2009).

The scene at the roundabout and at the entrance to Dora from the Beirut-North highway is always loud and chaotic. In an effort to better organize circulation in the streets, the municipality has introduced some recent rules. The buses are no longer allowed to stop at Dora's entrance and wait for customers. A bus stop was recently set up at the roundabout but it seems more decorative than functional; it is located in the middle of the street where it is impossible for any passenger to stand and wait. The municipality also provided the taxi station located next to the roundabout, with a new tent and small cabin with a sign above its door that reads "Bourj Hammoud taxi

station." In addition to the buses and the taxis, there is a constant flow of mini-vans and service cars circulating in the streets all day long.

Five bus lines go through Dora in addition to minivans[9] that transport commuters to such places as Barbir, Souk el Ahad, Ain Mreisseh, Hamra, Antelias, Jounieh, Jbeil, Bikfaya, Bsharri… Some of these destinations are popular with migrants, like Barbir and Souk El Ahad for shopping, Jounieh for going to the beach in the summer, and Ain Aar where the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is located.[10]

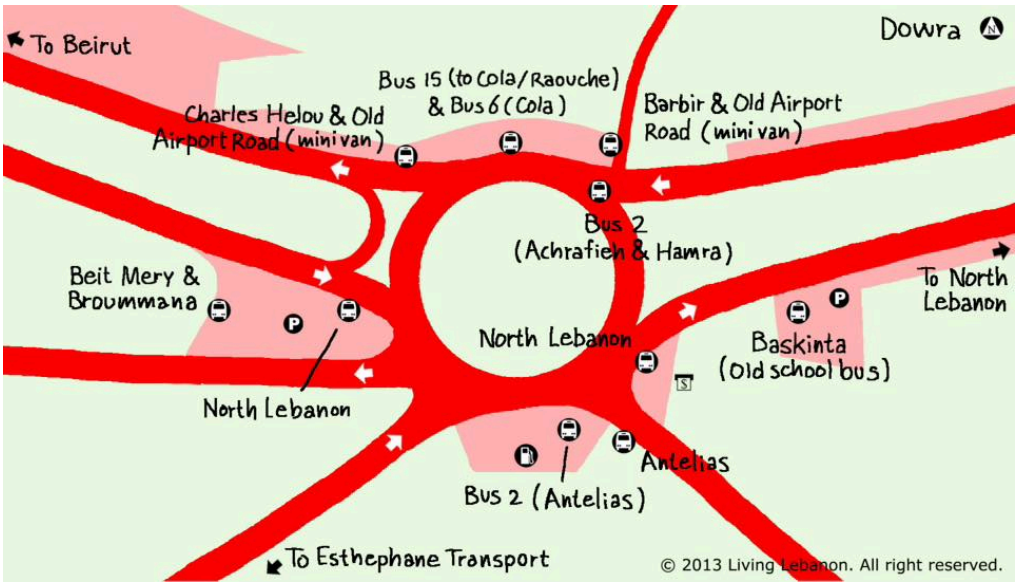

Fig. 4. Dora transportation routes. Source: The Bus Map Project.

Dora is not just a destination but also a transit area and Dora's souk benefits

[9] Not all the buses and minivans are numbered. Some just display a sign with the name of their points of departure and arrival and the main areas in between these two points, like the Bteghrin-Dora bus.

[10] Because of its distant location, this church is only used to celebrate important feasts, like Easter.

from the high traffic and constant influx of people. The availability of shops and cafés is convenient for people passing regularly through the area like Osman who is Sudanese and lives in Basta and whose favorite summer activity is going to the beach in Jounieh. Every Sunday, he has a rendezvous with a group of Sudanese and Ethiopian friends in Dora at a meet up point from which they head together to the beach. At Dora he can also pick up anything he needs before proceeding to Jounieh: "Sometimes I stop in Dora if I need anything, like a swimsuit, I buy it from the souk and then head to Jounieh."

A Migrant Workers' District

Bourj Hammoud and more specifically Dora has been gradually turning into a hub for migrant workers attracted by affordable rent, cheap products, and commercial spaces available for investment. Beirut has a number of businesses that cater for migrant workers, for example, in Hamra (small shops cater for Filipinos), Basta (shops run by Ethiopians and Sudanese), Furn El Chebbak (Ethiopian restaurant), Antelias (Ethiopian hair salon), Jnah (Ethiopian hair salons). Some stores do not cater for migrants exclusively but they offer some product specific to a migrant group like a grocery store in Rabieh that sells *injara* (Ehtiopian flat bread) to the Ethiopian women living in the surrounding households and an OMT store in Achrafieh that also sells *injara*. Such places are scattered here and there, across different neighborhoods in different parts of the city. Dora, however, is unique for the diversity of migrants that use it and the migrant-related businesses and activities concentrated there.

Fig. 5. Achrafieh OMT store.

The businesses in Dora that offer different products and services to migrants include restaurants, cafés, beauty salons, grocery stores, money transfer and money lending, shipping, clothes shops, shoes shops, and variety stores. Some of these places target a diversity of migrant groups, like the money transfer offices and the clothes and variety stores visited by customers looking for affordable prices. Some clothes stores, however, display clothing and accessory items adorned with national symbols, for example, a hat or a t-shirt imprinted with the map of Ethiopia. Restaurants and hair salons tend to be specific to one group of migrants and so an Ethiopian restaurant or hair salon is mostly, though not exclusively, visited by Ethiopians. Such places have signs written in the migrants' native language like Amharic or Sinhalese and often display flags or use colors of the national flag or pictures of native cuisine specialties. Grocery

stores often combine products imported from different places and provided for different migrant groups.

Fig. 6. Clothes in Dora store.

At the Dora roundabout circulation is not limited to the flow of vehicles but also includes people – commuters, police officers, residents, visitors and bystanders – as well as street vendors and push carts displaying various items. Some push carts are a fixed part of the landscape like the cart that sells freshly squeezed orange juice always stationed at the same spot or the cart loaded with a colorful pile of children's toys and a random array of small items, like knickknacks, lighters, and dusters. Gathered close to the roundabout are a bunch of popular fast food, cocktail, and ice cream shops that stay open until late at night and a Byblos Bank branch and ATM. At the entrance to Armenia Street, there is a large Western Union shop. This is one of about 23 money transfer

shops (Money Express, Cash United, Western Union) distributed all over Dora. A few steps from Western Union, there is a grocery store, called Pamma, with a sign that has the names of the following countries: India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. It sells food items and various spices typically used in Indian cuisine, it has a section for CDs and DVDs of Indian music and films, and another section dedicated for a small collection of colorful saris. Such stores are common in Dora. For example, if you walk further down the street, you'll find a newly opened grocery store with glass fronts. It is more spacious than Pamma store and has the feel of a small modern supermarket where you walk between shelves displaying products from the Philippines and India like food items, soaps, shampoos, oils for hair and body. It also has a book stand with short romance novels in Tagalog. The entire street is dotted with small and large shops, some look like they have been there for decades and others look renovated.

Fig. 7. Grocery, DVD, and clothes store in Dora.

The main street is the prime and most visible location for shops of different kinds. Most of the cafés that offer cold and hot drinks and *arguilehs* are located along the main street; a strategic location that seems to add to their attractiveness since it offers customers a view of the comings and goings on a bustling street. The narrow alleys that branch out from Armenia street hold a surprise for the new visitor. These labyrinthine backstreets that run in between shabby buildings and under webs of cluttered electric wires are filled with tiny shops: tailors and clothes repair shops, hair salons, clothes and shoes shops, antique shops, greengrocers… Many of these shops employ migrants, for example, clothes and shoes shops will often have a Filipina or an Ethiopian working for them. The restaurants, hair salons, DVD shops, and grocery stores that cater for migrants are managed and staffed by migrants. Some shops offer unique products, like a tiny shop I stumbled upon tucked inside one of the alleys, run by an Indian man who sells, among other things, beauty creams that he prepares himself.

While walking in these streets, you get the sense that the city has physically expanded. Perhaps this is an effect of the density and diversity that one experiences in a space that, from the outside, seems to occupy only a small part of the city. You get the same feeling when you walk in the streets of Arax and Nabaa and other neighborhoods in Bourj Hammoud.

A Space of Relative Freedom

For migrants, especially those who are illegal, living and dwelling in the city is a balancing act between finding a relatively safe space and being able to work and live freely. When it comes to finding safe spaces, migrants benefit from the lack of state

presence and control in certain areas such as the Dahiyeh (southern suburb of Beirut) or the Palestinian refugee camps. But the political parties that control these areas also impose their moral order and this could be in many ways limiting:

> Migrant women thus find refuge zones where they can live without having to fear police intervention. On the other hand, the social and political framework that prevails in these areas prevents freedom of expression and movement comparable to those of the eastern suburbs.
> Social control and moral standards in these areas - camps and neighborhoods - influence the relationship between migrants and the outside world. This form of control is certainly present in the eastern suburbs, but it is less prevalent and less strict: absence of clothing restrictions, lack of control on relations between men and women, free comings and goings (Dahdah 2012, my translation).

Because Dora is a place where restrictions on dress, social activities and interactions are less rigid, it is more convenient for migrants who want to dwell in the city on their own terms. For example, those looking for sexual and emotional relationships go there for flirting and for meeting potential partners. This is not always available for them in other places in the city that are also popular with migrants, for example, Barbir.

Barbir is another one of the destinations popular with migrants for shopping and for going out on a Sunday. The shops there offer products at prices similar to what one finds in Dora. They even have some of the same stores, such as Big Sale. One Sunday, I went with Emnet and two of her friends to Barbir. Emnet is Ethiopian. I met her at a relative's house where I would see her and talk to her often. Today Emnet and her friends were going to Barbir and looking to buy some clothes because one of them was going back home for a vacation and she was preparing a long list of gifts for friends and family. Her brother's wife wanted workout clothes and had very clear instructions on that, tight pants and a top but no short sleeves. The quest had been going on for some

time. Shops were visited in Dora and Achrafieh to look for the best fit and the best bargain but Ement wanted to look some more and so we walked to Barbir from the Franciscan monastery in Badaro where the Ethiopian Orthodox mass is held every Sunday.

Emnet prefers coming to Barbir for shopping because "it is much quieter than Dora." Indeed, Barbir's shopping area is much less crowded. For the Ethiopian women who go to church on Sunday to Badaro, Barbir is a convenient shopping area because it is within walking distance, so they head there after church. Barbir is also visibly a more conservative area; there is no loud music, no selling or serving of alcohol, no mixed couples. There were no migrants working in the shops we visited except for a clothes shop managed by an Egyptian man.

After we were done with shopping we sat at a restaurant to have ice cream. The other customers were mostly Lebanese families with kids, in stark contrast to the restaurants and cafés at Dora where the majority of customers on a Sunday are groups of men (Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian...), groups of women (Ethiopians, Filipinas...), or mixed couples. Dora is also a popular dating scene according to Vartan, a Lebanese-Armenian who works there as a restaurant supervisor. One Sunday afternoon, I sat at the restaurant where he works and where men and women – some young and some not so young – come to spend time, flirt, and meet people:

> Two Filipinas came in and sat at the table next to me. They look like they are in their twenties. Nice looking girls, just like all the women walking into this place most of whom were Filipinas. One of two the women had a guitar with her. She placed it on the floor and tucked it under her chair. Three young Egyptian men (I learned that from their accent) walked in, quickly scanned the place and soon decided to sit on the table right next to the two women. The men were chatting, occasionally they would glance at the two women. After a few glimpses and

> giggles, one of the men leaned towards the woman with the guitar and asked her if she could take a picture of him and his friends. She took a picture and then another one. The man thanked her, twice. The conversation ended there.

I spent several Sundays sitting at that restaurant. It is very popular with Filipinas who by far make up the majority of its Sunday customers. The restaurant is pricier than other places in Dora which might explain why more Filipinas visit it since among the migrant workers in Lebanon, they get the highest salaries (Jureidini 2001). It is not uncommon to see at the restaurant tables with men or women only looking for an opportunity for a conversation or an interaction.

The street outside is the same; there are always people watching. The men are watching for friends and for women. The women put in a lot of effort into looking nice; the makeup, the hair, the high heels… the whole look is carefully crafted. For these women, remaining invisible is generally a good strategy to avoid harassment. But in Dora, and for this one day, attracting attention seems to be a desirable outcome.

Conclusion

Dora is an important node in the migrant workers' infrastructure. Several characteristics make it a place that attracts migrants: it is part of an area that has a long history of population movements from inside and outside Lebanon, it has developed as an industrial zone and a residential place for low wage workers employed in its several industries which reflects on the cost of living in the area making it affordable for low income earners, it lies in close proximity to central Beirut where most jobs are to be found, it enjoys easy accessibility since it is connected to the rest of the city through several public transport routes, and it offers migrants an environment of relative

freedom.

For the participants who contributed to this research Dora has taken on a central role in the lives and in their experience and perception of this place. This centrality was often brought up in the conversations I had with them. For example, Vartan, the restaurant manager, told me how Dora is at the center of Lebanon. I tried to understand whether he meant that literally and he went on to explain how the geographical location of Dora makes it an actual center because “wherever you're going in Beirut, you have to pass through Dora.” A few weeks later, I was talking to a Sri Lankan woman who visits Dora every weekend, she told me that “Dora is the center of Lebanon, everyone is here.” Dora is the new city center according to Tony, a Lebanese man who owns a business there. He likened the area with its vitality, density, vigorous economic and social activity, and its Sunday atmosphere to the pre-civil war downtown Beirut.

CHAPTER II

MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This chapter explores the entrepreneurial projects of migrant workers in Beirut as an outcome of the stifling work and living conditions imposed by the kafala system and the attempt to escape these conditions. In Lebanon, the *kafala* or sponsorship system – a set of regulations on the work and residence of foreign workers – imposes great inequalities on the migrants coming to work here. This system of employment reduces migrants to mere laborer and severely limits their prospects: for example, they have no right to live independently, they are tied to a specific set of jobs, typically low wage jobs with no possibility of advancement or wage increase, they have no right to have a family, and no way to be included in unions that could protect them and improve their conditions. Many migrants become freelancers by leaving their sponsors and seeking work on their own.

Those who work on their own, for example, as cleaners, salespersons at stores, or restaurant supervisors, use the words "free visa" to say that they are self-employed in a way. The expression is paradoxical given that there is nothing "free" about this visa. In fact, migrants have to pay for Lebanese citizens to act as their sponsors and some Lebanese make a business out of these transactions (Dahdah 2015). "Free visa" might also designate that a migrant is working in the country without having a legal sponsor, in which case the freedom from sponsors comes at the cost of being under the threat of arrest, long imprisonment, and deportation.

Migrants often become self-employed because of the restrictions they find in

the host countries, for example, the lack of job options and access to capital and the restrictions imposed by the country's regulations are reasons that push migrants towards entrepreneurial activities (OECD 2010). And so entrepreneurship becomes the only choice available for migrants who are facing difficulties in entering the job market (Marchand and Siegel, 2014). In Beirut, the entrepreneurial activities of migrant workers might range from small revenue activities such as preparing food for sale in the streets of Dora and Hamra on Sundays to larger projects such as opening an Ethiopian restaurant.

This chapter starts with an overview of the *kafala* or sponsorship system and the problems it poses for migrant workers. Then it focuses on the story of an Ethiopian woman named Mary who lives and works in Dora. Mary runs two successful businesses; a restaurant and a hair salon. She is well known especially in the Ethiopian community. Several Ethiopian women I met during my fieldwork mentioned her when I would ask them about Dora and the places they know there. Mary's experience reveals how migrants seek to better their lives and chances by working on spotting opportunities and acting on them even when there is risk involved. By focusing on her life story, I wish to show the different conditions and circumstances on which relies the success of a migrant trying to make a better life for herself or himself.

How Does the *Kafala* System Work?

The sponsorship system (*kafala*) originated in the old Bedouin hospitality principles that set obligations in the treatment and protection of foreign guests. Since the 1950s the Kafala system morphed in certain West Asian countries into a way to regulate

the relationship between the employer and migrant workers. These countries include the Gulf Cooperation Council countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and the states of Jordan and Lebanon. The objective of the *Kafala* system was to provide temporary, rotating labor that could be rapidly brought into the country during periods of economic boom and expelled in periods of economic slowdown. This system is strictly enforced in the Gulf states across occupational categories. In Lebanon, it regulates the employment of low-skilled workers coming primarily from Asia and Africa (Khan, Harroff-Tavel 2011).

Migrants cannot enter Lebanon and seek employment on their own. Instead, a migrant worker must secure an employment offer from an employer through which they can have a residence visa. These visas are issued by the General Security. The sponsor, who is most of the time the same as the employer, is responsible for processing and following up on the work and residency permits, providing an insurance for the workers, reporting run-away cases to the authorities and paying for the airplane ticket when the migrant worker returns to their home country. After entering the country, a migrant worker must remain employed by their sponsor. A migrant worker is not allowed to terminate his or her contract. Change of employment can only happen with the approval of the sponsor and it is dependent on the availability of another sponsor in which case a release is signed, transferring the sponsorship from one to the other. The initial sponsor has the prerogative of deciding on the release and the cost of that release. Migrant workers employed in sectors other than domestic work are subject to the same conditions, the kafala system conditions, but they generally have more freedom like freedom of movement because they do not live in the household of their employers

(Hamill 2012). Employees at cleaning companies, for example, are free to rent a place wherever they please.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) provided a Standard Unified Contract as a template to be used by countries of origin and destination countries while negotiating working conditions for migrant domestic workers. Lebanon adopted the unified contract in 2009 (Commission of the European Communities 2009). The contract stipulates some cases where the migrant worker is allowed to resign or terminate their contract without approval from their employer such as violence or sexual harassment (Mullally 2015).

The Role of Agencies

Recruitment agencies are located in the home country and in the country of emigration. The role of recruitment agencies in the home country is to find and mobilize persons and to help with the process of emigration. Agencies at the country of immigration advise clients on choosing a domestic worker, take care of the paper work required from the employer/client and the worker (immigration procedures), and advise clients on how to deal with migrant employees (ILO 2016).

In Lebanon, there are 700 licensed agencies out of which 441 meet legal standards (The Daily Star 2017). Workers pay a fee to the recruitment agencies at home and Lebanese agencies charge employers a fee that ranges between $2000 and $3500 covering the cost of travel to Lebanon, the fees to be paid for the initial 3-months work visa, and the agency's fees (Pande 2013).

Sometimes agencies allow migrants to request a change of employment after an

initial trial period but they can do so for a limited number of times. At other times workers' grievances are met with absolute apathy and indifference from the agencies. Agencies are supposed to play the role of mediator and facilitator between employer and employee but as an integral part of the sponsorship system they contribute to the ongoing abuse of migrant workers:

> The "sponsorship system" also involves private recruitment and employment agents. These agents charge substantial fees and commissions. They cultivate and feed off of the relationship of dependency between workers and employers because this dependency earns them a living. In other words, agents are beneficiaries of the relationship between employers and workers. As participants in the "sponsorship system", agents are also beholden to its confines and the way it entraps domestic workers with very few escape hatches. Agents are responsible for domestic workers during their first several months in Lebanon while migrant workers are still in the preliminary "trial period" with their new employers. But agents perpetuate the current "sponsorship system" on an ongoing basis because they make it their business to find and sell cheap labor to the Lebanese market while making substantial commissions through these transactions (Hamill 2012).

Right to Family

Low-wage migrant workers cannot sponsor the residency of their spouses or children but they are allowed by law to obtain a residency permit for any children born in Lebanon. In May 2014, the General Security started refusing requests to renew residency permits for children of migrant workers, resulting in cases of expulsion from Lebanon of the children or the children and their parent (Human Rights Watch 2014, 2017). In October 2014, the General Directorate of the General Security issued a directive asking employers of domestic migrant workers to pledge that their employee is not married or in a relationship and that in the case that such a relationship or marriage takes place they should notify the General Security after having purchased a ticket for

the migrant worker to return home (Legal Agenda 2015). Under pressure from local and international NGOs, the Ministry of justice overturned this directive in July 2015 (Heinrich Boll Stiftung 2015).

In a study conducted by KAFA, around 90% of Lebanese employers interviewed declared that they would send a MDW back home if she got pregnant. Interviewees also expressed their worry about a MDW going out, getting a boyfriend and getting pregnant (Abdulrahim 2010).

During a conversation with a Lebanese acquaintance, the subject of my research was brought up:

> Rami told me, "you know these Ethiopians for example, the moment she leaves the house and you allow her some freedom, she gets pregnant. And then who would have to take the responsibility [of caring for her]? Me, the employer." When I expressed some bewilderment at his assertion that an Ethiopian woman would certainly get pregnant if she was "allowed" to have a boyfriend, he replied, "yes believe me. I know this is a generalization but they come from a conservative, restrictive environment." He explained that he thinks that these migrants do not have the opportunity to have relationships in the countries they come from and once they are here they will want that if they were given the chance and the freedom.

Migrant workers are viewed as coming from backward, deprived places and moreover they are pictured as being incompetent when it comes to making decisions about their personal lives. The women are infantilized by depicting them as incapable of protecting themselves (Abdulrahim 2010) and unable to handle relationships; the moment they get in a relationship they will get pregnant. The possibility that women might get emotionally and sexually involved with someone is disturbing for employers who mention being worried about these girls because they might catch a disease, like AIDS, or become pregnant. It is a bit puzzling to see this awareness of AIDS as a health issue given that the subject is still a big taboo in Lebanese society in general, yet people are at

ease in discussing it when it comes to migrant workers. The model and honor of the Lebanese family is something to be protected against these women who are seen as being of questionable morals. Employers sometimes describe their relationship to their maids as a mother-daughter or father-daughter relationship whereby the employer has an obligation to protect the migrant from harm, abuse[11], and dishonor (Abdulrahim 2010). Pregnancy of course becomes a great burden to employers of MDWs if they see them only as providers of labor force; if a maid gets pregnant she is no longer useful, that is, at least for a period of time.

Abuse Facilitated by the *Kafala* System

Practices that fall outside the kafala system regulations but that are facilitated by it include denying a worker their day off, confiscating their identity documents and passport, locking them at home, restricting their communications,[12] and withholding their wages (Pande 2013; Jureidini 2011).

Exploitation results from the absence of any oversight by the government on work conditions and violations of contracts, and migrants have no means of legally pursuing offences committed by employers:

> One of the biggest problems behind the kafala system is that it makes it so difficult for workers to contest or complain when any part of their contractual agreement is not upheld, when any of their legal rights are violated, or even

[11] I have heard several women expressing their fear that their maid might be "tricked" by some man. Often these fears are used as a justification for restricting the maids' freedom of movement or for not giving them a day off on which they can leave the house and be on their own for some time.

[12] A Lebanese man in his thirties told me about the Ethiopian maid working in his house: "to avoid trouble, we don't let her meet other Ethiopians. She might run away. So, when we go to visit friends who have an Ethiopian maid, we do not take our maid with us. If our friends have a Sri Lankan maid, for example, we bring our maid along."

> when they face more serious forms of abuse. Complaining puts them in conflict with their sponsor, who has the power to cancel their residence visa and have them deported … However even migrants who have a good relationship with their sponsor can be frustrated by the sponsorship system. Without their sponsor's agreement, they are not able to take another, higher-paying job even if they have worked for that sponsor for several years, unless they work in a country that has amended its sponsorship regulations. Their wages may be kept artificially low, since sponsors don't need to rely on paying attractive wages to keep talented or experienced employees (Migrant-Rights.org 2015).

In addition to that, migrants such as domestic house workers have to work for long hours for a meager salary; some get as little as $150 a month. Some women who used to be domestic house workers tell me that even though the families they worked for were very decent and treated them well, the salaries were just too low while the work load was too big so they decided to leave. "Given the salaries they get, it is no surprise that migrant workers run away from the homes where they work," said Elias, a Lebanese man who offers shipping services to Ethiopia and the Philippines.

A 2016 ILO study on employers of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon found that nationality influences a migrant worker's salary with Filipinas being paid the highest salaries and workers coming from Bangladesh and Indonesia being paid the lowest salaries. Years of service with the same employer also lead to higher salaries but not in all cases, higher socioeconomic level and higher education level of employers also correlate with higher salaries for MDWs. Since MDWs do not fall under the purview of the labor laws, the minimum wage, currently set at $450/month, does not apply to them. Among Lebanese employers surveyed 42% paid MDWs a salary that ranges between $200 and $299, 36% paid a salary that ranges between $150 and $ 199, 14% paid $300 to $399, 3% paid $400 or more, 2% paid less than $150. The survey was conducted with 1,200 Lebanese employers in three regions, greater Beirut, Jounieh and

Jbeil, and Saida (ILO 2016).

Commenting on the *kafala* system and the violations committed by recruiters and employers, Pande (2013) states that the sponsorship system of migration and recruitment in the region (the *Kafala* system) not only creates conditions for many of these violations, but also systematically produces a new population of readily exploitable workers – the category of "illegal workers."

Under such circumstances, many migrant workers find themselves faced with the choice of either accepting the degrading work and living conditions they find here or walking away from their employment. Many migrants end up with the second option. They leave their employers to try out their chance in working on their own despite knowing that they are putting themselves at risk by choosing to work and live in the country illegally. Through entrepreneurship and self-employment, migrants have a risky but viable option of maintaining their livelihood outside employment under the conditions of the *kafala* system. I do not use the term "entrepreneurship" here with the connotations it has under neoliberalism of innovation, flexibility, and self-making (Pilotta 2016) or to say that these migrants are entrepreneurial because they are after the fulfillment of the ideal neoliberal self (McGuigan 2014). For them, there is a reality where one is left with very few options, if any, and so one is rather forced into the sorts of entrepreneurial projects they undertake. Entrepreneurship is a strategy of survival.

Dreams and Delays

"You can make a lot of money here if you have your own business. There is an Ethiopian woman who has a hair salon in Dora. *Māshāʾallāh* her business is flourishing

and she is making a lot of profit!" exclaimed Emnet. She has dreams of starting her own business in Ethiopia; a restaurant. She has often discussed this idea with her friend. "We would need a third partner, someone like us, someone we can trust. And our president would give us a loan for a very reasonable interest because he wants to encourage his countrywomen." She says that these small business ventures are very popular in Ethiopia, everyone wants to have his or her own little establishment. The business strategy that people follow is that "they start with something small, a place offering breakfast, for example. If the business takes off, they move on to something bigger like adding a lunch menu." Dreams of making enough money here to go and start a business at home are common among the participants I spoke to. It is not clear however how much time is needed to make enough money, and it is generally easier for those with a steady income, even if it was low, to make such plans. This uncertainty comes primarily from the obligations that migrants have towards family members back home. The complexity of such obligations depends on forms of kinship and the related societal norms (and expectations) in the migrants' home country. For example, Jessica – a Filipino participant who is a single mom – has to defer her business project until she gets her daughter through school and then university, while Mustafa – a Sudanese participant – has to pay for his younger siblings' education but also for the needs of extended family like uncles and cousins:

> My younger brothers are studying. The idea was that one of us had to sacrifice for the others to get an education. This is because we were in need. If I want to study, there will be no one to provide for them. This is what made me travel and *hamdulellah* (thank God) my brothers are studying now… The majority of the people who live in Khartoum have family members in Darfur or other places, and these family members are their responsibility. Because in my country, the family is not limited to your brothers and sisters and your father. Even your uncles from both your father's and mother's side are considered part of your

> family. For example, I give money to my brothers, my uncles and even my cousins if they are still studying and they need money. I have to, it is obligatory. I can't say no I don't want to give them money. This is why we had to leave our country and come here. Personally, I had decided that I will stay here for 2 years and then go back and finish my studies. However, it has been 6 years and so far I did not save enough to open a business so I can go back there and live from it. Now *khalas* (it's over) I forgot about studying. Now, I am trying to provide for my family and for myself so we can keep going.
> After I left Sudan and came here, for a month or two I was very emotional thinking that a man should study something. I decided that I will stay for two years. I wanted to start a small business and go back to Sudan and finish my studies. During those two years we had an accumulation of issues and problems in the family. In general, all the Sudanese men that you see here... have some customs, maybe bad customs, I don't know, for example, if you have someone who works abroad all the problems become his responsibility. Your uncle calls and says: "something happened. I need money." And you know that it is not *rujūlah* (the manly thing) if you have money, to say I don't have any or I will not give you [any money]. You give to this one, you give to that one. These are the problems that we face. Very seldom you will find a Sudanese man who can save money for himself. All is spent on his brother, his father, his mom, his cousins. The entire family lives on his expense. In general, these are the problems that we face.

For Mustafa and migrants like him putting together a clear plan with a clear timeline is almost impossible. War in his home country adds to the uncertainty of his situation. I recently returned to the neighborhood where I met Mustafa a few months ago. The restaurant is closed. I do not know what Mustafa is up to now.

Mary's Restaurant

Emnet and I went to Dora because she wanted to buy shoes for her brother as a gift. A friend of hers was going to Ethiopia and she wanted to send the gift with her. Emnet knew where she wanted to buy the shoes from because she had spotted them on a previous visit. The shop we went to is tucked away in one of the small alleys. I had never been to it but Emnet seemed to be a regular customer; she knows her way around and she is well acquainted with the neighborhood. The Syrian shopkeeper greeted her

with an air of familiarity. The shop is a about 4 meters long and 2 meters wide. It is entirely filled with shelves, stacked with shoes for women, men, and kids. The man's son, a boy of about 8 years old, was sitting on the only chair in the shop, completely absorbed in some game he is playing on his father's smart phone. He has an older sister, about 11 years old, who is sometimes in the shop to help her father. Emnet grabbed the pair of shoes and looked at them closely, twisting and turning them and examining the soles and the seams. They are blemish-free but she wanted them in a different size. The shopkeeper asked for details about the man who's to wear them, his size and height and then confirmed that these shoes will fit him. But Emnet remained skeptical. We left the shoes and went to a "centrale," a place where you can make local and international calls for a fee, where Emnet used an old Nokia cell phone to call someone. She spoke in Amharic and the Lebanese man who runs the "centrale" understood that she is asking someone about shoes. He translated some of her words into Arabic, looking at me and indicating that he understands her. We paid him and headed back to the shoe shop. Emnet was now convinced and she bought the shoes. The man offered to put them in a box but she did not want it; she knows they'll have to be crammed into a fully-loaded suitcase next to other gifts from other friends destined for mothers, fathers, siblings and children somewhere in Ethiopia.

Now that we had our gift, we headed to an Ethiopian restaurant. It is located in one of the small alleyways that flank the main road. I've been to that place before. "It is called Tana restaurant," I tell Emnet. "Really?" she replied. "Yes, have you looked at the sign above the door?" I asked. We were getting closer to the restaurant and I pointed to the sign which was visible to us now, "there, look." Emnet had never noticed it

before. I have just recently noticed it as well. The shop sign does seem like a bit of an extravagance; none of the other Ethiopian restaurants I've been to in Dora have one. But they all share the same design on the outside; a glass and aluminum front entirely covered with large posters, the background colors are invariably red, green and yellow and they often display pictures of Ethiopian dishes. The writing on the sign of the restaurant is in three languages; in Arabic it says restaurant (*mat'am*), in English and Amharic it says "Tana restaurant." This place is one of the few Ethiopian restaurants in Lebanon that you can find on Zomato; a popular online guide to restaurants that lists maps, menus, photos, telephone numbers, opening hours and customer reviews.

Fig. 8. Ethiopian restaurant in Dora.

We entered the restaurant. It was the afternoon, the place smelled of fresh paint

and the tables and chairs were pushed to one side of the room. They were not serving that day because they were doing some maintenance work. On one of the chairs sat a young Ethiopian man with short dreadlocks. He was busy looking into some papers. "Salam," Emnet greeted him and they spoke in Amharic. She told him about my research then she introduced us, his name is David and he is the brother of the Ethiopian woman running this restaurant. He said I could pass by the restaurant anytime I want and that I could put my recruitment flyers there. After we left, Emnet said that David asked her whether the papers I wanted to put there had anything to do with *dīn* (religion). She reminded me how she had warned me that people will ask these questions and that I should probably mention in the text of the flyer that I was not going to talk to them about this topic. I learned later that the Ethiopian Orthodox, the denomination that Emnet and David belong to, were sensitive to evangelizers. In Lebanon, both the Ethiopian Orthodox and Ethiopian Evangelical denominations are present. According to Emnet, the Evangelicals have lost their way but it is not their fault since it is the devil who led them astray. Still, it is not acceptable to her that they do not abide by the strict church dress code[13] and that they sing and dance in church and they do not have *may* (holy water). Most importantly, and I think this is the main point of contention, they try to convert Orthodox Ethiopians:

> At Dora, Emnet pointed to a building where she used to attend Sunday mass[14], "the Evangelicals used to gather for Sunday mass in the same building. If you go to their church, you'll see that they do not dress properly (she made a gesture on her thigh to mean short skirt). They sing and dance. They do not fast. They say Jesus did [things] for us but we do not have to live like him. That is wrong! We

[13] Women in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are required to wear long skirts and cover their hair in church.

[14] Now the congregation meets at church in a Franciscan monastery in Badaro.

> are supposed to learn from him. Also, they say that Jesus did not come from Mary. This is fundamental disagreement between us […] When they get sick they always come to us. They don't have [holy] water. We have it. We give them some when they come to us. If you are sick or you have some pain, you take some [holy water] and after seven days you go back to work. They know they are wrong. But it is not them, it is something inside them". "Do some orthodox come here and become evangelicals?" I asked. "Yes, some of them," she replied. "How does that happen? Do they give them these flyers you told me about?" "Yes" she said, "and they tell them come to us. They put their number and address on the paper. And then you go to them and they tell you lots of stories [to convince you to join them]. They talk a lot."

The woman that Emnet told me about who runs a hair salon and who makes a lot of money out of it is the same woman who runs this restaurant. Her name is Mary, she is Ethiopian by birth and Lebanese by marriage. I sat with her in the restaurant one day, she prepared her *arguileh* and told me how she came to Lebanon and how she started her business here:

> I was 17 years old when I came to Lebanon and I've been here for 17 years. At first, I worked as a maid for 10 months. I did not get along with my employers so I decided to leave. I did several jobs after I left, including working at a clothes store and a poker place. Then I met my husband who opened a shop for me in Dora where I sold shoes and clothes. We were unmarried at the time. The store was unique because I would come up with the designs for the clothes and have a tailor draw and execute them so the items I sold could not be found anywhere else. Then I got married and got pregnant and I had to close the store. When I got pregnant the second time, my mother said that my younger sister should come join me in Lebanon to help me during my pregnancy. I waited till my kids got a bit older. I told my sister, in the meantime, start learning how to do hair styling and soon after we were working together in the hair salon.

I learned from a conversation I had with Mary's husband that they started their business in a smaller place in Dora and then they moved to the current location. I met the husband, Tony, one day when I was with Emnet at the restaurant about to order some food. The meeting was a bit strange because although he initiated the conversation by offering us suggestions on what to order, he immediately recoiled after I asked

whether he was the owner of the place:

> As we were talking to the waitress, a Lebanese man entered. He is in his 50s, has grey hair, a grey beard. He is short and a bit full around the waist. He stopped next to us and looked at me intently then said in English, "hello, welcome." I said "hello" in English and then I spoke to him in Arabic. He heard me saying to the waitress that I did not want to eat meat, so he started explaining about *shero*, "it is like *kishk* (a powdery food made of cracked wheat and yogurt), and they put spices in it. You have to come during lent for vegetarian food." I said that I will take the *shero* and then I asked if he was the owner of the place. He didn't answer my question and instead said something about the food. Then he left. Emnet did not know who he is. I suggested that we ask the waitress so she went and spoke to her. "He is one of the partners in this place, there is him, another man, and a woman," said Emnet after having consulted the waitress. "Is the woman you are talking about Mary?" I asked. "Yes" she replied. "The other man must be Lebanese too," I said. "Yes sure. You cannot rent a place without having a Lebanese partner. But Mary makes more money than this man," said Emnet talking about the Lebanese man who just spoke to us. "Really? I think she pays him rent," I replied. Ement seemed convinced that Mary is the partner who gets the biggest share, she said, "Yes, she pays him rent but they do not split the profits half-half."
>
> A boy came in as we were talking. He has light dark skin, he went to the waitress. Then the Lebanese man returned and sat on a chair close to us. We were talking about coffee and he suddenly joined the conversation, "in Ethiopia they use charcoal to boil the coffee… you have to go there, you will see what nice people they are. Those you see here are not Ethiopians. People over there are so respectful they would not even drink coffee in the presence of their elders. My wife is Ethiopian."
>
> Then he pointed to the boy who came in a while ago, "this is my son." Emnet looked at the boy affectionately and said, "he is a beautiful boy *asmar ma fi hon metlo* (he has a dark skin, there are no boys like him here)." The father told us that his son learned Amharic, "but you have to see his sister. She is smarter than him, she learned Amharic in no time and she memorizes all songs in Amharic."

Mary's marriage to a Lebanese man (considerably older than her) was a major factor in her success at making a life for herself in Lebanon. She has a family and kids, she is running two businesses and supporting herself, her husband, children, and her siblings. She has a Lebanese passport and a driver's license, and she owns a car. Mary

never told me how she met her husband and I never felt that this is something I can ask about. Before I got to sit down and talk to her, I asked Emnet whether she was married and she said that she is married to an Ethiopian and that the husband lives in Ethiopia. One day, I spoke to a young woman at the restaurant who said she was Mary's sister but when I spoke to Mary a week later, she said that her sister left Lebanon years ago. Also, Mary was pregnant and she gave birth to a baby girl. Emnet told me the news and I congratulated Tony, the husband. I thought I should do the same when I saw Mary and to my surprise she replied by saying, "I do not have babies, my kids are old." I never tried to pursue these strange inconsistencies and these little incidents made me feel like I have to tread carefully. For people to be discreet about questions that touch on their intimate, romantic or sexual lives is not wholly surprising but a lot of the reactions and stories I got from people were confusing and I often found that these parts of the infrastructures I was pursuing were stubbornly elusive.

Managing the Neighbors

Mary and Tony first opened their hair salon in a street parallel to the one they are located on right now. It was small and they had taken some space out of it to fit one table where they would serve home-made Ethiopian dishes to eager customers. Their clientele grew quickly and soon the one table was no longer sufficient to satisfy the demand. So, they decided to move because they needed more space. And though they were only moving a few meters away, the relocation was challenging. Mary told me how they had to overcome the neighbors' objections:

The neighbors here are really awful. When they knew that I wanted to rent this

> place, they objected and they told the owner, don't let the place for her because she will open an Ethiopian restaurant and there will be problems and noise. They did not know me and yet they started talking about me! I got the owner's telephone number and I spoke to him. He said, 'no please I do not want any problems.' I said, 'do you know me?' He said, 'no.' 'So how did you know that I will cause problems for you?' I said. He asked me to come to his office so I went and we talked. He is a very nice person. When I went to his office and spoke to him he said, 'honestly, I did not expect an Ethiopian woman to be so strong. I support you and I will give you three months for free. Go ahead and work.' Then he said that people had given him the wrong impression about me. I told him that's because they are jealous of me because they are unable to rent this place. I have been here for three years now. I pay the rent every three months. I am never late and these neighbors *khalas* ..." "So they got used to you," I asked. "Yes," she said, "You cannot interact with them. You have to stick to greetings 'bonjour' and that's it. You cannot invite them for coffee. The next thing you know they are all over you. They are really bad. I stayed in the other neighborhood for three months and I had no problems. [It was] much better. Then I came here and found that the men are not like the men there. They are worse than women, they talk all day long. They have nothing to do so they sit in front of their stores and watch my place all day. They gossip about people and watch who's coming and who's going. What business is it of theirs? This is a place for work, right? I am not responsible [for people]. I just want to serve my food and I have to receive anyone who comes to my place. Right?

Dora has the feel of a busy street where many people including passersby, shoppers, commuters, and suppliers go through it on a daily basis. As a transportation hub, it is a place of transience. But it also has a more intimate character, that of a neighborhood where people know each other or where people pry on each other and try to enforce some degree of control on each other as is the case with Mary and her neighbors. Joseph (1978) describes how women's neighborhood networks in Bourj Hammoud operate:

> The networks also operate as a mechanism for social control, thus containing behavior within the customary boundaries. The street is a place of airing disputes and gaining support as well as a mechanism for integrating new residents into community life. The street is so significant because Lebanese society is one in which public institutions do not uphold public order or justice and people feel the need to find order elsewhere. A network of family and friends thus becomes critical.

Although written in 1978, a time when the civil war was still raging in Lebanon, the need for security through resident initiated watch groups is still relevant to Lebanon's neighborhoods today. In a country where the security situation is still perceived as volatile, we see the resurfacing of these groups whenever some alarming event takes place. For example, Tashnag's[15] political clubs, located in each neighborhood of Bourj Hammoud, serve as places for social and political activities and also "as an information hub, informal police station, and security office, maintaining order and taking care of neighborhood disputes" (Nucho 2016, 22). Social policing is a common practice in neighborhoods around Beirut and Dora is no exception to that. But Dora's proximity to the highway and the open wide street from the roundabout creates a feeling of anonymity as opposed to the small alleys that you find in the residential part of the area. It is a mixture of closed, intimate spaces and more open impersonal spaces. That it is a space that combines intimacy and anonymity was brought to my attention one night during a visit to Dora I made with some friends at night:

> It's a Saturday night, it's around 10:30 PM. The street is calm. Few stores are open, only some sandwich shops and cafés. We walked up and down Armenia street. The streets were empty. The only noticeable activity apart from the occasional customer grabbing a sandwich or the few men sitting in a café was prostitution. Two women were standing at a building's corner, right on the main street, close to the highway exit. Sometimes a car would stop next to them, one of the women would approach it and talk to the driver. One of the two women got in a car and some minutes later she returned and rejoined her friend. A few meters away from that spot, a man and a woman were sitting on two plastic chairs outside a shop that was closed at that time. A car stopped next to them, the woman approached and spoke to the driver, she got in the car then the man approached the car and spoke to them briefly then they took off. The man returned to his seat.

[15] The Lebanon branch of the Tashnak party founded in Russian Armenia in 1890 (Collelo 1989).

I have seen two other spots in Dora where such activities take place. The proximity of Dora to the main highway gives it an impersonal character; a place where anyone and everyone can go through, a place of transience and anonymity. At the same time, Dora has the character of the small intimate neighborhood. The highway, the sea side, and the area around the roundabout are different from the inner area. In no more than five minutes, you can move from a fast paced, high traffic place into an intimate neighborhood like the place where my friends' aunt, Laure, lives. She is a single 50-year-old woman and she lives alone in her apartment in Dora. She told me that there are no migrants in the neighborhood where she lives. They are in fact living a few minutes away. But it seemed to me that she would like to maintain the conviction that her neighborhood is unchanged ever since she came to it, some 20 years ago. Her apartment is in an old building with one tree standing outside in a sort of backyard like it insists on weathering the change, the waves of different businesses, different people that hit the place, the fragile little fence standing around that building like it could keep something or someone out, and her apartment made into a home with the delicate crochets and the pictures of saints and the coffee tables and family portraits is almost like a place from bygone times, trying to hold on. There is a sharp juxtaposition of temporalities. Laure represents the older residents of the neighborhood along with other forms and norms of sociality that do not encompass the foreigners who reside now in the neighborhood. There is a time before Dora was filled with foreigners and a time after that and she is certainly partial to the time before.

Policing and Controlling

Mary also manages a hair salon located a few steps away from the restaurant. Emnet tells me that the Ethiopians view her as a successful entrepreneur and her success has been a source of trouble for her. I first learned about that through Tony, her husband:

> The *darak* (police) come and pester me all the time. Why? Because I do everything legally. You cannot be *ēdame* (a good honest person) in this country. If you want to write something in your research write about this. They want to harass me. I have a girl [a maid] at home. I completed all the legal requirements and applied to sponsor her. It's been a year now and they won't give me the papers. Today I made a big fuss. I went to the police station and I told the officer cross yourself, what if these women were at a church would you go there and stand at the church's door asking for their papers? Everyone else is illegal over here yet they only come after me.

It is true that there are many migrant workers in Lebanon who are illegal and that many of them live in Dora. But I was wondering why Tony might think that the police are going after him specifically. He said, "it's jealousy, they want to scare the customers." Emnet agreed with him, "you know what happens? It is not because of the Lebanese. It is the *ḥabashiyyēt* (Ethiopian women). They start talking about this place. They gossip." I said that I am a bit surprised at this. Tony said, "that's true." Emnet continued, "they are jealous of Mary. They say, why is she doing so well? Why does she have stability?" The conversation reminds me of the time when I went to see Mary at the hair salon. I was with Emnet. When we went in she said, "this is Mary." Mary said in a grave voice, "yes Mary, Mary. Everyone says Mary and now look at all the trouble I am in." Emnet suddenly had a very serious look on her face. She lowered her head and said, "yes, that's right." Then she brought her fist close to the counter and knocked on the wooden part three times. I felt compelled to do the same.

I returned later to the hair salon. It was on a Sunday. The place was very busy and Mary was alone working there because the police arrested the two women that work with her as well as the woman who helps her at home. Both women are held in the infamous Adlieh prison, located under the Adlieh bridge. Mary has been there, she said, "they place 100 persons in a room the size of this place. They are all sick, they cough, they have the flu. It is disgusting. There is barely any sunlight in that place and it is very unhygienic." The reasons for which the three women were arrested are not very clear and it's been difficult for Mary to get a clear answer but she blames her neighbors for all of this:

> I have two girls who work in the salon and one who works at home. They came and took them. Why is that? Because two are under my name [I am their sponsor]. Their residence permit expired, I went to renew it and they wouldn't let me do that. I asked why and how and nobody gave me an answer. The police came in and said that there was a decision to arrest them. Why? I am legal. I have a permit for my salon. Why wouldn't they agree to renew [the residence permits]? I do not know. Yesterday I sent one [of the women] back [to Ethiopia] and there are two more in prison. They are not to blame. They have done nothing. These girls are working and they want to live. I am doing what is required of me by the government and I am paying the fees and I am legal. This is what bothers me the most. There are others who do not have a residence permit, they have a salon, they are working and they have no troubles, so why me?

Word spreads quickly whenever the *ma'lumēt* (the word means information and is used to refer to members of the intelligence division of the Lebanese General Security) come to the restaurant or the hair salon. Everyone hears about it because they all know Mary. Then people get scared and for a few days after no one goes out or comes to Dora. Of course, her business suffers greatly because of that but it also affects other businesses in the neighborhood. In the few days following the arrest of the girls working for her, the street was quiet and it wasn't seeing the usual crowd of people and

customers. The neighbors were complaining so Mary told them that this should serve as a good lesson for them and that perhaps "if they reduce the amount of gossip they spread, they would have less to complain about."

I asked her if she can bring someone else from Ethiopia and she said that she would bring these women again if they are willing to come back because she is tired of getting new people and getting used to them and training them on the tasks to do at home and at work. She decided to remain alone for the time being, even though that means that she would have to tackle almost all the workload by herself. She said, "I will let them go home, relax and then I will work on their papers and try to bring them back here."

Police raids on migrants in places of work or residence happen from time to time as a form of control it seems. I have heard similar stories about the police coming and rounding up a few migrants. They involved a case of rivalry between people and business owners. All it takes is for someone to pick up the phone and drop a piece of information about a place somewhere that employs illegal migrants.

On the one hand there is a lack of control and regulation at the border with Syria where many migrants are trafficked into Lebanon and a lack of regulation concerning illegal agencies who bring in migrant workers into the country without actually providing any jobs for them. This is a point raised by Elias, one of the Lebanese participants:

> "Most migrant workers here are jobless and the office bringing them here is making huge amounts of money. The majority of offices are bringing these girls to Lebanon and throwing them in the street. This is causing a crisis for migrant workers and for the Lebanese government as well. Every other day there is a new office opening up and this is how they operate.
> "How do they make their money?"

"There are two kinds, the fake sponsor and the regular sponsor. The regular sponsor pays the office as usual and the office makes the profit. The fake sponsor is when a girl comes here, pays the office $2500 and they let her work on her own (free visa) and then her papers expire and she becomes an illegal resident. I know a guy, he has made so far about $15000 through 4 or 5 people. He took $4000 from a Bangladeshi guy and he still hasn't done anything with his papers, the Bangladeshi man wants to bring his brother here. Also, he took $3000 from a woman and didn't get her a job. He is the worst, he exploits migrants, takes their money and doesn't deliver and they can't report him, they are scared because they have no legal papers. People tell me that he has a villa in Baalbeck now. And [the migrants] are a scapegoat they end up in the streets. If they find a job that's good, if they don't find one… well some of them are doing jobs *mech mazbouta* (not decent). They have many problems.

Thousands of women here in the country have fake sponsors. The office pays the people who act as sponsors and takes extra money. This is the case with women that want to come into the country for the first time, now in here there are additional ways to make money through women who are working here and want to have a *tanēzol* [to change sponsors]. They get them a fake sponsor and they draft a *tanēzol* from one sponsor to the other and they give the new sponsor a certain amount of money. Some women pay as much as $3000-4000 and the whole process barely costs the office $2000."

"And if a woman cannot pay the whole amount all at once she would be indebted to the office?"

"Yes, it will be a debt and some offices don't even fix the women's papers. They can if they want to. No one talks about these things, you don't see these things in the media or on TV. They talk about "normal" things like women who come to work here and have meager salaries. And most offices are well known. Some people just deal with a licensed office, these offices get a preliminary approval[16] from the Ministry of Labor then they give this approval to someone to work with it.

To open a hiring office, you need a license and a deposit of 50 million LBP or something like that. And most offices work without a license. The number of foreigners in the country is increasing because of this. The smallest hiring office makes about $15000 / month."

"And there is no checkup?"

"No, because the people running these offices are backed by politicians or such influential people. One time they banned the women from travelling from Ethiopia to Lebanon,[17] [people] started smuggling them through Kenya. Some women are being exploited because they don't find jobs. In certain areas for

[16] A migrant worker must get a preliminary approval for their work permit from the Ministry of Labor. This paper must be later presented to the General Security when the worker applies for an entry visa (Hamill 2011).

[17] In 2008, the Ethiopian government banned economic migration to Lebanon as a response to the human rights violations committed against Ethiopian domestic workers ("Ethiopia Bans Economic Migrations to Lebanon." 2008. *Sudan Tribune*. May 3. http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article26981.)

example, in Jounieh, they do inappropriate jobs."

Cracking down on migrants in places of residence is the means available for the authorities to regulate the presence of illegal workers and residents and to counterbalance the lack of regulation on the migrants entering the country. Moreover, the police raids aim to intimidate migrants. For example, the Lebanese army made a series of raids on apartments where Syrian, Egyptian and Sudanese migrant workers reside. The men were beaten and when some of them asked what was going on they were told that they were harassing women but no formal investigations or arrests took place and the men who were rounded up and beaten had legal papers (Human Rights Watch 2012). Police raids targeting migrant workers are common and sometimes they are prompted by neighbors reporting on an apartment where they claim illegal activities like prostitution are happening. In such cases migrants are arrested and investigated with no distinction between migrants with and without legal papers (Jadaliyya 2016). These crackdowns on migrants appear to be aimed primarily at intimidating people and reminding them of the constant threat of arrest, violence, maybe even deportation. In other cases, such as those reported by Elias, Mary and her husband Tony, business rivalry and competition are mentioned as the main reasons behind these raids since they are prompted by neighbors reporting on each other. Migrants wishing to maintain their businesses must carefully navigate their everyday interactions and make sure that while maintaining enough visibility to keep doing business, they must not attract too much attention (and perhaps even too much success) so that they can mitigate rivalry.

Mary's Hair Salon

At the hair salon, Mary was going from one client to the next without interruption. When I walked in, she was working on a weave. She braids the hair to use the braids as a base and then, using a needle and a black thread, she sews strands of hair extensions into the braids. A young woman sitting on the couch next to her was cutting the threads in equal length and handing them to Mary. After the sewing is done she styles the extensions using a curling rod. The process is very lengthy. It took about two hours. She charges 50,000 LBP for the weave and 15,000 LBP for simple hair straightening. Mary told me that she worries about her work, she's got lots of customers coming in and she wants them all to be satisfied: "all the customers that come in a day you want them to leave satisfied. I might work for a customer for an hour or an hour and a half and she might get upset, she might not like my work so I am always worried."

All the customers that day were Ethiopian women although Mary tells me that she occasionally gets some Lebanese customers; like young women who would like to braid their hair African style. The last time I visited the salon, there were two young Lebanese men. One of them had a Mohawk haircut and was having his hair braided. He said he is a regular customer at the salon and that this was his second visit this week.

Saturdays and Sundays at the salon are very busy. The women come in and sit on one of the sofas waiting for their turn. Often the customers would wash each other's hair while waiting. Sometimes they start braiding their hair or each other's hair. There are always trays of food and Turkish coffee brought in from the restaurant and trays with empty dishes and coffee pots brought out of the salon. On busy days, there isn't even time for a five-minute break so I would see Mary having her lunch in installments.

She eats while standing in a back room, stealing a couple of minutes to take a few bites in between customers.

The glass door leading into the salon is entirely covered with posters. The window display is chaotic; a busy arrangement of bottles and jars of different hair products, mixed with accessories and small plastic bags with colorful beads in them; the colors are green, yellow and red. The salon is quite spacious. On one side, there is an L-shaped counter with statutes of the Virgin Mary on it. There is occasionally a candle or some incense burning next to them. In front of the counter, there is a small desk and a chair behind it, that's where the cash drawer is. Behind the small desk there are two mannequins; one with a traditional Ethiopian dress and a pendant with an Ethiopian wooden cross and another pendant with the picture of Haile Selassie. The waiting area is made up of a two-seat sofa and some plastic chairs on the opposite side. A large flat-screen TV is fixed to the wall above the chairs, it displays six screens from surveillance cameras; two from the restaurant, two from the hair salon, and one from the street outside. Behind that, separated by a wall that runs halfway through the room, there are four hood dryers and a sink and chair that make up the hair washing area. The walls are filled with hair extensions of different sizes, colors and shapes. Other items on display are hair care products, mostly oils, and accessories like bracelets and necklaces. Mary says she travels to Dubai to get the hair products and she brings the hair extensions from Nigeria.

Family and Future Plans

Mary does not think of going back to Ethiopia because she has her family and

her business here. Though she initially came here to work for a few years and return home, now she does not think that this will happen anytime soon. She explained to me that this is the case with most migrants who come here:

> I wanted to work and I wanted a better future. Whatever you do for work [back in Ethiopia] you do not make money as much as you make here. To work for one or two years and then go back and start your own business, this is what you have in mind when you come here. [Your plan] might work out and it might not. I first said [to myself] that I would stay here for two years and it's been 17 years that I am here. You see? It doesn't work. Because the longer you stay the more things you want. This is what happens. *L'insēn ma bye'tene'* (people are never content). You become greedy and finally you wake up one day and you find you're much older. I think I ended up fine because I got married and I have a family and kids but so many people spend a lifetime here and don't get the chance to get married and have kids. It is sad. I do not have anything to regret. I am living my life with what I invented for myself.

Mary's siblings came to Lebanon through her. First, there was her oldest brother. She did not encourage him to come to Lebanon. When I asked her why she said she did not think he would be able to withstand the hardship and to develop the kind of fortitude one needs to be able to work here. Her brother wanted to come and try his luck anyway. Mary was right though; he worked here for a short time and returned to Ethiopia.

After the older brother the youngest sister came to Lebanon. That was around the time Mary got pregnant with her second child. The sister stayed here for seven years and it has been two years now since she returned to Ethiopia. Mary is the one who encouraged her sister to go back to Ethiopia:

> I did not want her to stay here. I said you have worked here and made some money now go back home and live your life.
> She wants to live her life. You know over here there is no future […] I mean at your age you want to meet someone. There is a time for everything. I did not want her to be like me. I came here and I missed out on many things that I should have experienced at different stages of my life. That's why I told her, go back and work in your country, meet people, go to places. I mean she needs to

use her time. She is happy, she's got nothing [to worry about].

After the sister came the other brother. He is also younger than Mary. He finished his college education back in Ethiopia but the salaries he was getting were so bad that he decided to come join his sister in Lebanon. He's been working here helping out in the restaurant and at the hair salon. He says that he learned how to do hair styling when he came to Beirut. He also works in shipping stuff, such as clothes, gifts, furniture and other belongings to Ethiopia. He got married when he came here and he lives with his wife in an apartment in Dora. He says his wife is working but not in Dora. Eventually, he would like to go back to Ethiopia but that is not going to happen anytime soon. He is pleased to be here and to be working and making money.

Activities for Making Extra Money

On Sundays, there is a small street in Dora that turns into a busy food market. Filipinas standing in the street, offer food packed and sealed in plastic containers and laid out on the sidewalks and stairs for sale. They prepare these meals and sweets to sell them to the Filipinos visiting Dora and eager to have a taste of home. The food is often bought and consumed on the spot; people sit on the sidewalk or take some space on the stairs, with friends or alone.

Jessica, one of the Filipino participants, says that some of these women have an employment as domestic house workers, but "their madam is nice, she lets them prepare the food at home so that they can make some extra money." She told me about other products you can buy in the streets, like clothes and socks. When I asked her what is special about them, she replied, "nothing, they are nice and they are from home. I buy

them like souvenirs." She explained that people bring back these items with them from the Philippines, they buy them there at a cheap price, and sell them here for a small profit. Unlike the things that are made back home, like the Ethiopian chili powder and the injara bread which have in them some ingredients that are hard to find here like the teff flour, these products are coveted because of the place from which they came. Buying them is a form of remembering the home country.

Conclusion

Migrants' entrepreneurial activities could take the form of small projects, like the Filipinas who prepare food and sell it in the streets or larger ones like running a store or a restaurant. Migrants' initial plans are to come here and make some money to start a business back home. But then something like the reality of things hits you and you find that your plans for a business, for a life in your country, for a certain future you imagined for yourself are pushed further and further away in time. Mary remarked on some women who "change" as if they get tired of waiting for their lives to get better so they decide to do things otherwise. She was not explicit in her comments and all she could divulge about these women is the change they go through and her surprise at seeing this transformation. Perhaps she is talking about women who engage in such activities as prostitution but no matter what this change is about, she sees it is a result of growing tired with the plans that are never materializing.

By working independently - that is, independently of a sponsor/employer - migrant workers seek to escape the restrains and injustices of the Lebanese *Kafala* system and of overbearing employers. Even though independence often means

illegality, many migrants are willing to take the risk. In Mary's case, marriage to a Lebanese man puts her at a great advantage: her husband is a partner in the business and she and her children have a legal status. But her marriage is certainly not the only condition for her success in moving from being under the mercy of the *Kafala* system to becoming a successful entrepreneur. She is a hard-working woman, she takes care of two businesses and a family. She learned how to navigate a hostile social environment and still manage to get what she wants (for example, when she went straight to the shop owner after the neighbors had pressured him into refusing to give her the place for rent). She understood the dynamics of the neighborhood (the nosy men, the unrelenting gossip) and managed to respond to it in a way that safeguards her and her work. She has come to learn that keeping a low profile is the best way for her to keep troubles at bay. Her strategy for staying under the radar is not sharing details about her life and even giving misleading information about it as a way to divert other people's attention from sensitive details that could potentially be used against her. She relies on her collaborations with family members who come to Lebanon to help her at crucial times and who provide labor and help her manage the business.

CHAPTER III

MIGRANTS AS A MARKET

Consolidating the migrant infrastructure relies upon the presence and participation of Lebanese citizens. These Lebanese actors are drawn to the foreign workers for a variety of reasons. They might find in their encounters with them an opportunity for romantic and sexual relationships, an opportunity for abuse and exploitation, an opportunity for financial gain… This chapter focuses mainly on encounters brought about by the opportunities for doing business. But these encounters hardly ever remain confined to business and profit-making and the effects or the new realities they produce always exceed those purposes. As shown in the previous chapter and as the stories in this chapter will show, the boundaries that frame interactions are always shifting and changing.

Lebanese locals make investments in businesses that cater for migrants. These businesses are the result of collaborations between migrants and Lebanese. The migrants usually provide labor and access to the market of customers. The Lebanese provide the opportunity for migrants to enter investments. In this chapter, we will see examples of several businesses in Dora and Beirut in general that cater for migrant workers.

This chapter looks at a variety of collaborations among residents, Lebanese and migrants to explore the ways in which people come together to test possibilities and see if they can make something happen together (Simone 2013). It attempts to answer a number of questions: through what collaborative means do residents carry out projects

and make investments? Who are the people involved in these investments? What further potentialities do these collaborations open up or make way for?

The chapter is built around short presentations of projects encountered during field work and the people involved in them. My purpose is to highlight the diversity of practices and actors involved in the realization of such projects and to describe how a place like Dora with its multiplicity of shops and products and people flourishes. The projects we are about to explore give us a look into the diverse material and non-material elements that, by coming together, create the infrastructures that sustain migrant workers and integrate them into the city. In addition to that, we take a look at what some of the local Lebanese residents think of this place: What is Dora? Who does it belong to? How do Lebanese residents make sense of the migrants' presence there? And do they sanction or refuse it?

The Disco

Osman is a Sudanese man that I met at a coffee shop in Achrafieh where he used to work. We exchanged phone numbers and agreed to meet again. He called me one Sunday afternoon and asked if I was in Dora. I said that I am heading there soon and we agreed to meet once I arrive:

> I called Osman when I got to Dora. Then I waited for him in front of the large Western Union store. A few minutes later he arrived. He said he was sitting somewhere with a group of friends and invited me to join them. We crossed the street and walked into one of the small alleyways. Five minutes later we were at the place where Osman and friends were gathered, it's at the ground floor of a building and it's open to the street. Osman was sitting with an Ethiopian woman and three Sudanese men. They were having *arguileh* and drinking some kind of energy drink. There was very loud Ethiopian music playing, as in nightclub loud.

> You have to shout so that others can hear you. The place was full, one of the people sitting at the table had to leave to give me his chair. There were Ethiopian women, Sudanese men, Lebanese and Syrian men, and Filipino women. There was a constant flow of people coming in and out. Almost all the tables had *arguileh*. This place serves drinks and *arguileh* only. It looked like an improvised café or pub or something in between. No expense or effort was put into it except for the bear minimum, some chairs and tables, speakers, and a couple of fridges for cold drinks placed behind a small bar at the end of the room. A man walked in carrying packs of beer. He took them to the bar where three Lebanese men were standing and serving drinks. The Ethiopian women were particularly pleased with the music since it was Ethiopian music, they were singing along, some were moving to the music as they sat down.

This place was unusual and a little bit difficult to define particularly because of the loud music that was playing. It seemed pretty popular but it was hard to figure out what its main attraction is; the interior is quite rudimentary, you have a seating area and some drinks and *arguilehs*. People seemed mostly interested in each other or just in being around many other people. Compared to other places in Dora that attract migrants, this place did not have a specific character to it. Maybe the absence of a particular kind of food or cuisine contributes to that. The male customers were Arab, Lebanese, Syrian, Sudanese and the female customers were either Filipinas or Ethiopians.

This day was the Orthodox Easter Sunday and a big concert was organized in Dora with Ethiopian singers who came from Ethiopia for the occasion. The ticket for the concert cost $30 but that was no deterrent for the many women attending it. For the rest of that day the concert took up most of the conversations. Whenever a friend comes to join Osman and his friends, the first question after hello would be, “are you going to the concert?” There were different attitudes and opinions about the event but most of the Sudanese men including Osman thought that the ticket was too expensive:

> After spending some time at the place with the loud music, we decided to move

> to a quieter place. We went to a café on the main street. It serves coffee, tea, soft drinks, juices, and *arguileh*. Outside on the large side walk, there are a couple of plastic tables and chairs. We sat outside. We were four people, me, Osman and his two flat mates, Ibrahim and Ahmad who recently moved in. Ibrahim ordered *arguileh*. Every now and then someone would pass by, Osman and his friends would greet them, some people would stop and chat, others would say a hello in passing. Osman says that there are many people here that he knows by face but not by name, "I recognize their faces, I've seen them and spoken to them before." "You see this guy I just spoke to?" he said, pointing at one of the Sudanese men who just passed by, "I met him at the beach in Jounieh. I haven't seen him since last summer, almost a year ago. That's what's nice about Dora, you meet people that you could not possibly have met otherwise. One time I was walking here, I accidentally bumped into a man. I turned to him and said, 'I am sorry.' He said, 'no problem. Where are you from? Sudan? Me too.' And then we had a small chat. That's how it happens."

Dora is a great place for meeting people according to Osman. "Ethiopians and Sudanese get along," he said. "Even though they speak different languages?" I asked. Ibrahim said, "*nafs el dam* (we have the same blood). We are neighbors just like Lebanon and Syria." Then the two men demonstrated their ability to effectively "read" the people they encounter here:

> Osman pointed to a black woman walking on the sidewalk on the other side of the street, "there are all kinds of people here. You see that women there with the yellow shirt? She is *afri'iyeh* (African). She is not Ethiopian." "Why do you say that? How do you know?" I asked. Ibrahim confirmed his friend's observation and then said, "we know *men damha* (from her blood)."

In Dora, one has the opportunity of meeting others who are also interested in open-ended encounters. It is a place where migrants become more visible in the public spaces of the city, and this visibility enables people to meet, not only with friends but to meet strangers and to explore possibilities.

The guys are telling me about a "disco" (a nightclub) located in Raouche in a hotel building. It is an investment by two men, a Lebanese and a Sudanese:

> "How did such a project take place?" I asked. They said that this Sudanese man works with the Lebanese at the hotel and he's been working with him for a long time. They trust each other and one day they decided to start a business together. They each put in a certain sum of money and they agreed on how to split the profits. Their customers are Sudanese, Ethiopian, Lebanese, and Syrian. They explained that this is how businesses start. I asked how a place like this becomes known and gets customers. "It happens though word of mouth. For example, I come here to Dora to this café and I have *arguileh*. I tell my friends this place makes a great *arguileh* so they start coming here," said Osman.

The two men's decision to open a nightclub that receives migrant workers and Lebanese comes from their familiarity with and recognition of a certain form of sociality that exists in Beirut and that includes Lebanese and migrants from different nationalities. They also recognize that this form of sociality does not merely exist but is actually in demand so that people seeking it will go to their nightclub and spend their money there to drink, party, and meet others.

The Cook

Rosa is from the Philippines, she works as a cook at a Filipino restaurant in Dora. She's been in Lebanon for 35 years. She is married to an Armenian-Lebanese man and they have a 7-year-old daughter. She lives in Dora and her daughter goes to an Armenian school in Bourj Hammoud. Rosa understands Arabic and speaks some but she prefers communicating in English.

When I asked her how she decided to come to Lebanon, she beat on the table with her fist and told me that she never planned to come here. She ended up living and working in Lebanon by mistake. She never wanted to come to here, especially in 1984 when the civil war was still raging. But she was working for a Lebanese in Cyprus and her employer suggested that she come to Beirut for a short period until he renews her

visa to Cyprus. When she got to Beirut she stayed with madam Samira, her employer's relative. Soon after Rosa found herself alone because madam Samira left the country. After that Rosa was stuck here with no sponsor. She worked in cleaning, then joined a household and was sponsored by her employers. Rosa then married her Lebanese-Armenian boyfriend.

After getting married Rosa did not have to worry about her legal status anymore but she still needed to work and make money so she went to work at the Metropolitan hotel in the housekeeping department. Then the 2006 war happened and she found herself like many others out of employment. She did not have a job for quite some time until a friend, also a Filipina, opened a restaurant in Dora. She rented it from a Lebanese man who according to Rosa is not the owner but is a renter himself.

Rosa worked at the restaurant and then decided to quit after her friend died. But the Lebanese man kept on calling her and insisting that she come back because he trusts her and he does not want to hire someone else to keep the restaurant going. Eventually she returned to her work. Nowadays she comes to the restaurant every Friday. She buys the grocery and the meat she needs from Bourj Hammoud and she prepares the food for the weekend.

Sunday is the busiest day of the week. The customers at the restaurant are mostly Filipinos but there are also Ethiopian, Syrian and Bangladeshi customers. On Sundays, they have karaoke in the underground floor. Rosa says that people come here to have fun, "they will drink, they will sing, they will dance." The women, mostly Filipinas, come to meet their friends and their boyfriends here.

Customers also come for the food. Rosa's cooking is delicious and highly

appreciated among her customers. For only $10 customers can enjoy a full meal, a choice of rice or noodles with a side of chicken or meat and a soft drink. The food is placed on a counter like a buffet, you have trays of different options to choose from. The buffet is prepared in the restaurant but the little plastic boxes containing sweets are prepared by Filipina women who get a share of the profit made from the sale of their products.

Fig. 9. Filipino restaurant in Dora.

The street where the restaurant lies has a concentration of businesses for Filipinos. There are three Filipino restaurants in there and a grocery store that sells products from the Philippines. There is also a hair salon that's particularly crowded on the weekend and whose clients are mostly Filipinas. This is also the spot where Filipinos come to sell home-made food in the street on Sundays.

The Trendy Restaurant

A large percentage of the profit made by businesses in Dora comes from the migrant workers. The Lebanese participants all agree on that. Vartan, a Lebanese-Armenian restaurant supervisor, explains the importance of the migrant workers for the economy of Dora:

> This place, you know, the Filipinos, Egyptians, Bangladesh, Sri Lankans, Africans, Madagascar, 85 per cent of them work, how shall I say this, in homes, as maids. We do not see them often on weekdays, from Monday to Saturday. They take [a day] off only [on] Sunday from 8 AM till 6 PM. This means that starting 8 AM on Sunday I have a full house until 6 PM and you'll find no Lebanese among the customers. They take over the restaurant. This is their day off, it is their right to come here, take pictures, meet each other, they need *yfesho khel'on* (to unwind) just like the Lebanese who want to go out on a day off. And you notice that on Sunday and Saturday evenings, places in Dora make more profit. These Lebanese places, the cellphone shops, clothes shops, Big Sale, Akil Bros, these big stores that you see, they rely on Sundays. Even on April 24. You know that the Dora municipality is part of the Bourj Hammoud municipality which is Armenian. April 24th is the commemoration of the Armenian genocide. Because the 24th was a Sunday the municipality did not ask people to close [the stores].The municipality *tfahhamet umūrun* (was sympathetic). I mean the rent of a store in Dora starts at 10,000 USD.
> So, all of Dora and Bourj Hammoud [was closed on Monday] by order from the municipality. Maybe one or two places were open but that was for redecoration or some other work they were doing on the place. On Monday there is no souk in Dora anyway. That's why on Sunday Dora is completely different than other

> days, this restaurant is usually full, the *souk* and the streets too, there is a large number of people who come here. Sunday's profit is equivalent to the entire week's profit, from Monday to Saturday.

I asked Vartan about the difference between the Dora and Bourj Hammoud souks. He said that the two shopping areas have different clientele. Dora is basically considered a place for migrants whereas other souks in Bourj Hammoud are reserved for Lebanese locals. The difference in prices marks this categorization. Although Dora's commercial shops are visited by people, migrants and Lebanese, looking for affordable prices, Vartan's description suggests that the area is acquiring a racialized character as being a place for non-Lebanese. He tells me that this neighborhood is now "taken over" (*msaytrīn*) by the Filipinos after having been taken over by the Sri Lankans:

> Bourj Hammoud is totally different from Dora. Bourj Hammoud's market is for the Lebanese. Even the Lebanese cannot afford to buy from Bourj Hammoud. But Dora's market offers a different quality. Bourj Hammoud is like... the same as what is sold in malls… same prices or maybe a little less pricy. Especially Arax street in Bourj Hammoud, the rent there has gone up, it's like renting in malls. They do business but you do not see the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian or the Syrian or those who work just to live. Sometimes they need a shirt or shoes they come to Dora because here you have Big Sale, Akil Bros and they make offers but this does not happen in Bourj Hammoud.
>
> The foreigners are renting places, you have a place next to us, another one facing us, a place over there for Filipino food. Listen, right now the people who are taking over are the Filipinos, I mean in terms of numbers in Dora but also in general. When you get a maid, what do you get? The Lebanese automatically ask, "do you have a Filipina?" They focus on Filipinos mostly. The Lebanese started relying on the Filipinos. I mean before you would see... there was some kind of embarrassment, thinking that the Filipino *mech min mustawēna* (is not our equal). They are coming from a third world country but gradually the Lebanese are beginning to accept the Filipinos and to think that they are the same as us. They even began partnering with them to start businesses. They tell them, we start a small restaurant or coffee shop with you. The capital and management of the place are [the Lebanese partner's] responsibility, and they would bring their friends. The business is benefiting and at the same time the Filipinos are benefiting.

> There are people in relationships. You see on Sundays many of the Lebanese who come here have a Filipina girlfriend or are married and have kids. They come sit here, they order food, and they "target" you know what I mean? The Filipinos are now among *aktar el tawā'if (*the largest sects) that have come to Lebanon and *staqarro* (settled here). I mean they are bit by bit taking some rights, starting their own clubs, their nightclubs you have "à peu près quatre ou bien cinq nightclub" (about four or five nightclubs) in Lebanon. Or for example, many Lebanese are acting as mafias they lend them money with interest. It means that a Lebanese guy for example, knows a Filipina and he knows that she is bound by [a sponsorship] contract and cannot leave [the country]. He makes profit by lending her money to be returned with an interest.
>
> They used to call this place Dora Lanka because it was previously filled with Sri Lankans. There is no new name for it yet, maybe it will be called Dorappine. He explained that Dora is "not ours." When I asked him what he means by that, he said, "well maybe it is 50% ours and 50% theirs." Then he continues, "but I find that it will not be ours. They are growing in numbers, for example, *mukhelif* (illegal residents) are in Dora. The illegal migrants are getting larger in number. Many women leave the households they are working in because they are promised a job in Dora. Someone tells them, for example, 'come work for me as a waitress, we'll pay you $400 and you make tip. Here you'll work 9 hours/day, at the house you will are working 24/7.'"

Vartan is evidently ambivalent about the presence of the migrant workers in Dora.[18] On the one hand, he expresses a feeling that Dora no longer belongs to the Lebanese because the migrants are "taking over." And on the other hand, he knows that the migrants are bringing in profit for businesses in Dora, like the restaurant he works in, and so their presence there as customers is vital.

But migrants are not only valuable as customers but as business partners as well. The Lebanese recognize that there are opportunities for profit in starting businesses with migrant workers. Some Lebanese "investors" then take the initiative in presenting offers of partnership to migrants and even at presenting convincing

[18] This ambivalence was also present in my conversations with other Lebanese participants who own or run businesses in Dora.

arguments to try and secure such partnerships like telling the women that they will give them better offers than those what they have by working at a household.

Vartan refers to the migrant workers as "those who work just to live" which reflects a view of migrant workers as people who are only after a salary and providing some basics like food. This is a widely-held view, for example, among employers of MDWs (Abdulrahim 2010, 13). Judging by the general practices and attitudes towards migrant workers, it seems that being someone who works just to live amounts to being someone who lives just to work. But Vartan also thinks that migrant workers have the "right" to go out on a Sunday, to have a place to sit, relax, and meet friends.

Mixed Marriages

Relationships between Lebanese men and Filipinas are commonplace and Vartan has a detailed explanation for the social and economic reasons and circumstances under which such relationships develop:

> I am telling you the Lebanese have started making profit out of the Filipinos. Not all the Lebanese but some of them. Many have made their money through Filipinos. Many got married and went to the Philippines and stayed there. I know a lot of men who met Filipinas here, they went with them and they bought houses and are living in the Philippines now.
> Some people are married, they are living here, they have kids, they send their kids to school, to private schools even not to [public ones] ... Here is what happened, the *infitāh* (openness) of the Lebanese to the Filipino happens for two reasons. The first, is the arrogance of the Lebanese woman, she wants this and that, a house, a car, a shop... "honey if I have all those I would not marry you. I would not marry at all I just live my life day by day!" Men are having difficulties finding women [to marry]. I am talking about strong men. These men grew older and [since they are still single] they have no solution but to go to the Filipinas. The Filipinas think like Europeans, you can talk to them easily, it's not like you have to arrange for a date and use WhatsApp, you can talk to them

> directly. They are very simple. If she encourages you, you sit with her and talk to her. She is not like the Lebanese women, you get a slap on the face if you approach them. The second reason, is that there are lots of men who have weak characters. They cannot talk to a Lebanese woman. Maybe they do not have any money, they have reasons of their own. Eventually they want to have a relationship, so *byetarro* (they are forced) to go to the Filipinas. The third thing, is the age factor. So a man is 40-45 years old, he made some money and he finally wants to enjoy his life. He goes and meets a Filipina and marries her. The majority of those [Lebanese men] married to Filipinas are older not the young men. The young ones who are in relationships with Filipinas are in it for fun but the older men *khalas* (that's it) they want someone. Many just take it *'adeh* (as a normal thing). They take these women to their homes, they are officially married, in a church or something like that. That is it.

This analysis of mixed marriages reveals the tensions that arise from such relationships. Vartan's account is not merely a description, it is as if explanations are in order to justify marriages that fall outside what is socially sanctioned or what is conceived as possible or desirable within this social imaginary of marriage. And although his interpretations that mention economic difficulties, the Lebanese men's personal character and insecurities, and the Lebanese women's demanding attitude as opposed to the simple and uncomplicated nature of a Filipina might not be representative of the reality of mixed marriages, they certainly echo many of the conversations I've heard around the subject of marriage in Lebanon.

The Street Vendors

Street vendors survive on the fluctuation between enforcing the laws and turning a blind eye to violations. The municipality might decide to remove them from the streets sometimes and at other times they let them be. I asked Vartan if the municipality allows the carts and the people who sell stuff on the sidewalks to be there:

> No, the municipality doesn't do that for sure. Sometimes they send people to remove them, you see... [the vendors] alert each other whenever the police are after them. Sometimes the municipality turns a blind eye, because these guys who work at the municipality are just employees, they barely make a living, they see that these vendors are human beings, they are just placing some bags in the street, displaying shoes to sell. The municipality employee does not want to deprive them of their livelihood but sometimes he gets orders. [The vendors] are not allowed to be in the street but finally the police say they are only there on Sundays not every day and it is *bayn ba'd* (between them). Anyway you hardly see any Lebanese passing by except if they are coming to the restaurant specifically or if they are store owners. The municipality is turning a blind eye, not because there is nothing they can do but because they are sympathetic. You see beggars here, they come especially on Sunday. You'll see when you come. Come here on a Sunday and take a picture... Dora is a very important topic. Notice how many people are begging, some people are desperate to sell something so that they can make a living, some people come here for shopping, others to have fun but all these people are not Lebanese and they are all in Lebanon. This is the problem in Dora.

The vendors are a constant element of the landscape in Dora, especially on Sundays. They too find in the migrant workers a good market for their affordable products. For example, you could see on the streets an Indian man selling Indian movies and music on a side walk of the main street, Syrian men selling clothes on push carts, there are men selling various items and accessories, like watches, perfumes, and prayer beads. They are part of the vibrant souk in Dora and their presence benefits residents and other business. This might be a reason for the municipality's tolerant approach to these vendors. There is a sort of unspoken arrangement whereby street vendors know that they might be sometimes pressured to leave but never prevented from coming back (so you see more or less the same carts and stalls every week). In this context, migrant worlds find a place for themselves to exist and persist.

The Real Estate Market

Vartan is in his late twenties. He started his undergraduate studies at the university but he quit after the first year; he was studying graphic design. He has two jobs, one at the Ministry of Energy and Water which, as he told me, he got through *wāsta* (through connections), and his job as a supervisor at the restaurant. He's been working at the restaurant for a little over one year. He has lived in Bourj Hammoud all his life. He knows Dora well, he is a regular customer at some of the places, for example, a café that "serves a very good *arguileh,*" and the fast food shops.

Vartan explained to me that Dora has become mostly a place of residence for migrant workers. The growing number of migrants who are looking for a place to stay is introducing change into the real estate market in Dora. Owners of apartments find that it more profitable to rent these apartments to several migrants instead of a single family. And the migrants find living in Dora convenient because it is both cheap and practical when it comes to commuting between home and work:

> Even the Lebanese who has a house in Dora, instead of renting it to a Lebanese for $500, he rents it to 5 workers for $800. The worker thinks that if I work here around Dora and have a house here I will save transportation money. Instead of living in Sin El Fil and taking a bus to Dora and then from Dora walking to work, I will save time. That is what they are doing.

Here the migrants' expanding presence in Dora is not just a matter of them "taking over" as if they simply choose or plan to live there but also a result of Lebanese owners' quest for higher profit which leads to an arrangement convenient for both the landlord and the migrant.

Some Lebanese residents on the other hand are either moving out of their apartments or putting them to other use:

> For example, look at the first floor you have here (Vartan points at one of the building on the other side of the street), the one with the red shutters. This person bought stores down here [in the street] and turned the apartment into a depot. He wants business. Instead of renting the apartment for $500-600 he turned it into a depot. They [the Lebanese] are thinking not about *sakan* (residence) but about *'intēj* (profit).
> There are less and less residential spaces in Dora. The Lebanese also is running away because of the traffic and high density; you cannot sit on your balcony on a Sunday, you cannot sit on your balcony in the evening because of all the honking. They started letting these apartments to workers. The worker comes home, eats and sleeps. And then wakes up and goes to work. He knows that anything he or she needs is down in the street, a pharmacy, a hospital, a school, bus, transportation... you know foreign workers don't have cars. That is it.

Migrant workers settle in Dora because it is cheaper than other parts of the city and it provides easy access to Beirut where most jobs are to be found. Apartment owners in Dora profit from the high demand for housing especially for migrant workers who live and work independently. The gradual settlement of these migrants in Dora comes also as a result of the many shops that employ migrants or are managed by migrants. As Vartan, suggested people decide to live in a place close to work where they do not need to have a long daily commute so that they can save on money spent on transportation.

The Photography Store

On one Saturday afternoon, I met Jessica in Dora. I had spoken to her before; I met her at her workplace and we sat together for an interview during her break. We spoke in English. Jessica is from the Philippines, “from Isabella a place very far from Manilla,” she said. She is 28 years old and she came to Lebanon in 2009. She worked for several families when she first got here but she did not get along with any of them. Each time she went back to her agency and asked to be sent to a new employer until she

found her current job:

> Oh! A horrible thing. I came to the agency. I was on a contract but the madam is very bad so I went back to my agency. This happened six times. I had already changed my sponsor two times and we are only allowed three times to change our job and to find a *kafīl* (sponsor) for our paper. So the last time, very horrible. I don't know. I was seventy kilos before I came to Lebanon, after three months I became fifty kilos. So, I ran away from my old employer and I went to my agency and I found this job and they fix everything for me. So, *hamdellah*, now I am getting six years here. Horrible things happened to me but that is the past. Now I am happy.

Jessica is a single mom she works as a cleaning lady in a school in Achrafieh. She has an 8-year-old daughter who lives back in the Philippines with her mother. The daughter is going to school and Jessica says that she wants to give her a good education. She sends money home regularly to support her daughter and her mother.

After meeting in front of a large clothes store, Jessica and I went to a place where her friend works with her Lebanese husband. It's a tiny shop in Armenia street. The entrance to the place is narrow, I had never noticed it while passing by. At the store, Jessica greeted her friend and started talking to her in Tagalog with a loud musical tone. Her friend was standing behind the counter handling some papers. There were boxes scattered on the floor, they were unpacking some merchandise. I could not understand what the two women are saying but I heared Jessica say in English, "5 minutes only."

A man was sitting on the stairs at the back of the store. He apparently understood the conversation. He said, "tell me, what do you want to know? You can ask me." I turned to speak to him and he introduced himself. His name is Hagop, he is Lebanese-Armenian and he is the husband of Jessica's friend.

Hagop opened this place in 1999. It was a photography place; he still has some antiquated cameras in the window display. Three years ago, he changed the business

and started getting products from the Philippines. He started with selling cosmetics and one year ago he started bringing food items like crackers.

There are four suppliers in Lebanon who ship products from the Philippines. They are not "big" importers. They get orders, they wait until they have a fully loaded container, then they ship it to Lebanon. Four of them go straight to the Philippines and two go to Dubai. Two of the suppliers are married to Filipinas. There is one individual who imports from India and Sri Lanka. Hagop gets his products through these suppliers and sometimes he and his wife ask friends and acquaintances to bring stuff back with them from the Philippines.

Hagop still works as a photographer but for Filipinos only. He does not work with Lebanese and Syrians:

> Because they are *nawar* (cheap). The Filipinos are much better; they work in Lebanon and spend their money here and they bring in more business. For example, they go for a visit to the Philippines, they take 50-60 digital pictures they come and print them all. Printing costs 500 LBP/photo but it depends on the total number of photos you are printing.

Hagop and his wife met in this store, she used to be his customer and they got married in 2004. They had a civil marriage in the Philippines. Now they have three kids who all have Filipino passports. The kids go to school here. He says his kids do not have to deal with racism in school because they are not black. "There are many Filipinas married to Lebanese men" he says, "they live here, they are happy, they are making money. It's better than living in the Philippines. Egyptian men marry Filipinas but they cannot take their kids to Egypt nor to the Philippines. And in the Philippines, the men do not work." He said that his wife does not send money to her parents regularly because he doesn't want them to get used to this and to take advantage of them. He

thought it was better to make this point clear from the beginning.

According to Hagop, there are 4 or 5 Filipino restaurants in Dora. Migrants in general buy everything they need from Dora. Filipinas come here on days off, they go out with their boyfriends. There are trips organized for Filipinos; they pay $30 per person and that usually includes homemade food, prepared by Filipinas.

He goes on to tell me how before Hariri's assassination business was much better, since then it is down by 50%. The Sukleen company employed 3000 Indian workers. Before the Hariri assassination, the place next door - a grocery store - was run by an Indian Sikh. All his customers were Sukleen workers, they would come for shopping on Saturday and Sunday. The guy running the store now is Tamil.

The Cargo Office

Elias' office is in Achrafieh in Karm El-Zaytun, literally the olive grove. There are no olive trees there today, instead it is a densely populated little quarter in Achrafieh. The area is an older part of the city. Going from Sassine square with its large sidewalks and fancy buildings and shops down towards Karm El-Zaytun the landscape changes gradually and drastically, the streets become narrower, sidewalks begin to shrink as well until they've totally disappeared, buildings get shorter and older. There are many small shops, grocery stores, cellphone shops, shoes shops, and clothes shops. One place looked like an improvised clothes store with racks of clothes displayed in a small semi-roofed recess. There was no one in the store. Right next to it there is a house with a large balcony looking onto the street, positioned a few steps above the sidewalk. Two Lebanese men in their 40s sat on the balcony hunched over some green herbs,

parsley or Jew's mallow, arranging them into neat little bunches. I was walking with Emnet, we decided to enter the shop. One of the men sitting on the balcony called on someone to come out from the house. An Ethiopian woman showed up, went down the steps and came to help us. Ement is always looking for a good bargain and takes the opportunity of finding whenever possible. But today we did not buy anything. We kept walking to the cargo office.

Fig. 10. Posters at the entrance of Elias's office.

At the entrance of the office there are many small posters with writing in Amharic and some in English, promoting different things: Ethiopian food only offered on Sundays[19], T-shirts with Ethiopian crosses, flags, and phrases like "I love Ethiopia," "100% Ethiopia," "We are the champions of marathon," a poster showing an Ethiopian

[19] This was written on a flyer hung on the glass door of a store that's right next to the office and that belongs to Elias as well.

woman talking over the phone with the words “ethio telecom” on it...

We stepped into the office. At the entrance hung an A4 paper with a young Ethiopian woman's picture on it and some writing in Amharic and a telephone number. I learned later that this woman was hit by a car, she was badly injured and her friends are collecting money to help her pay the hospital bill. The office is divided into two parts, to the left there is a large desk with an office chair, a TV, and a seating area facing the desk. To the right there is a small computer desk; someone is sitting there, typing something. Facing this man there are some shelves and several items on display, like injara bread, creams and hair products, booklets among which an English-Amharic-Arabic dictionary, and on the adjacent wall, there are some framed pictures of Elias with a group of Ethiopian men.

Elias provides a service for migrants that is referred to as “cargo” which means shipping. This is usually needed when one is leaving Lebanon definitively and going back home or when one wants to send gifts to their family and relatives. The “cargo” service he provides is mainly to Ethiopia but he sends shipments to the Philippines as well:

> “I have been in the cargo business for about 10 years.”
> “You only ship to Ethiopia?”
> “The Philippines too... [migrants] send their personal belongings in shipping. They are allowed a maximum of 40 Kg on the plane and they usually have things in excess that they cannot carry with them.”
> “Who receives the cargo in Ethiopia?”
> “Either they receive it in person or they send a parent or a relative... We send a box or a bag or a plastic barrel but this is not allowed anymore. The barrel is expensive over there. They use it for shipping and then they use the empty barrel as a water tank. But you can still send barrels by sea […] There are containers that get filled up with barrels and boxes and they send them by sea. They pick them up over there at the customs. They go by land to Djibouti and from there to the customs.”
> “To Djibouti?”

“Because they have no sea over there.”
“Oh, I understand, I didn't know that.”
“But we rarely work on this (sea shipments), we mostly ship on airplanes. But [shipping by sea] is cheaper, they pay half the price. They wait two additional months to collect their [stuff] if they want to save on money.”
“How did you first think of working in cargo?”
“This happens naturally since I’ve been working with the migrants, for more than 18 years as I told you.”
“Are there many cargo offices in Beirut?”
“Yes, there are many in all regions across Lebanon. But some people are more trusted than others. As I told you, there are many [offices] but they use our office more because they know that if anything gets lost we take responsibility for it and we refund them but others don't do that. That's why I was telling you earlier that what I care about is to build my reputation. That is why people say, one makes sacrifices for one’s name [reputation]. We must do that.”
“Does shipping to Ethiopia and to the Philippines cost the same?”
“No, to the Philippines we send boxes; small, medium and large.”
“And is it more expensive?”
“No prices are almost the same… It is a bit more expensive. There is shipping in airplanes and by sea but it is mostly by sea. The shipment takes about 3 months to arrive. And by the sea it is always cheaper because it takes more time and there is more space [on the ship].”

In Dora, cargo advertisements are everywhere and there are many offices for shipping. One time Emnet pointed out one of these shipping barrels as we were walking in Dora, she said this is for cargo. It is one of these blue plastic drums. Elias says that his Ethiopian customers reuse these barrels once they are delivered and they utilize them as water tanks. A group of Ethiopian women told me about another cargo office, next to airport. They said his service is faster than Elias cargo and he can send someone to pick up your stuff from home and weigh them. The women usually send clothes and shoes and some electrical equipment to Ethiopia. This office can bring stuff back from Ethiopia but this service is more expensive and so rarely ever used.

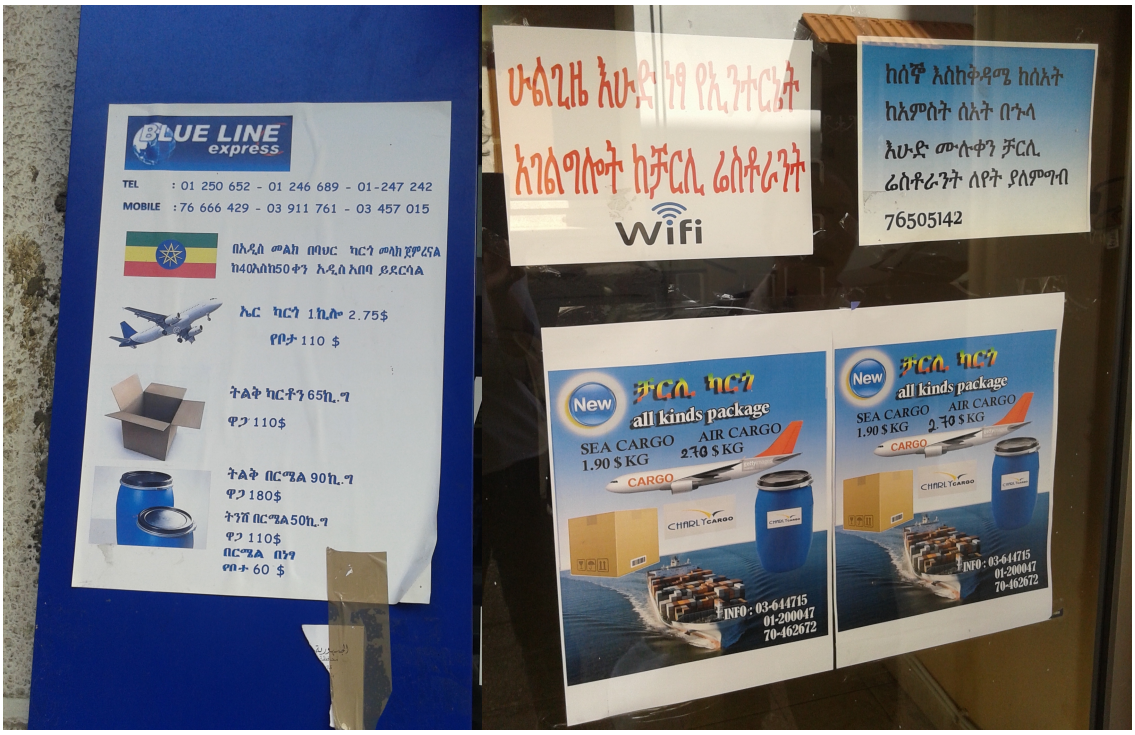

Fig. 11. Posters in Dora advertising cargo companies and shipping prices.

Elias says that his main business is in providing satellite and generator subscriptions and he insisted several times during our conversation that he would never work as a hiring agency. “It is a lot of headache,” he said. Then he told me that the ma’lumēt came to the neighborhood a couple of days ago and arrested some migrants. Someone made a phone call and gave them some information about a place that employs illegal migrants. It is rivalry or competition between people that drives them to “report” to the ’amn (General Security).

During our conversation, Elias kept on reminding me that his “main” business was in generators and satellite. It was obvious, however, that his business with the migrant workers was important. For example, for the entire time during which I sat at

his office he had one Lebanese customer, two Ethiopians and a Filipino man. His more "formal" business venture when it comes to migrants is the shipping business but as the next section shows, Elias' business activities with migrant workers is far more diversified than that. They include, a yearly concert, parties for Ethiopians at various restaurants, beach parties, trips to Faraya and to religious sites all over Lebanon, and even lending money. Far from being a well-defined formal venture (shipping), his is a more diversified and creative type of business that suggests a close understanding of and involvement in migrant worlds in Beirut.

Entertainment Events

Elias is in his mid-forties. He started his business by providing telephone lines for people and opening a "centrale." Through that, he got to know and deal with the migrant women in the area, the majority of whom were Ethiopian. Eighteen years ago, he began organizing events for Ethiopian migrants, like parties with DJ music and buffets of Ethiopian food and trips to religious sites and to the mountains during the snow season. The events were successful and soon after he started organizing concerts, bringing well-known Ethiopian singers to Lebanon. The first concert was in 2010 when he brought one of Ethiopia's most famous singers, Teddy Afro. The concert was held at the Michel El-Murr stadium in Dora, next to City Mall. Elias said that he had arranged for the concert in 2009 but had to cancel and postpone because the singer was imprisoned following charges of manslaughter where he allegedly killed a homeless man by accidently hitting him with his car. Fans of the singer believe that the accusations are false and that they are an attempt to intimidate and punish him because

he has been an outspoken critic of the government. So, the concert was delayed to 2010 when the singer was released from prison after getting a reduced sentence.

Fig. 12. Poster in Dora for Ethiopian concert.

The tickets for the concert are sold by Ethiopians who distribute them to their friends or to their customers if they run businesses. For example, Mary's brother David is one of the people who sell tickets . The poster for this year's concert had a long list of

names and phone numbers at the bottom, those are the people whom you can contact in order to purchase tickets. Elias says that the purpose of these concerts is not profit but advertisement:

> "These concerts that we organize do not generate much profit because I pay a lot of money to make them a success. I am paying a good deal of money to the people who sell the tickets. Others don't do that and their parties are not successful. And even those trips that we organize are not [very profitable] we charge people 10,000 or 15,000 LBP per person and we give them a T-shirt. Our work [profit] relies mostly on shipping and the satellite and generators... The parties and events I organize are not good business, mostly it is trips to churches for a small fee, to the mountains, to the snow or to the beach and I charge small fees because I am not looking for profit, I am using these events as a marketing strategy, *'am bebne esem la'ele* (I am making a name for myself) with Ethiopians. I mean what is 10,000 LBP? If they pay $10 they get a T-shirt for free... Regarding the concert posters I do not put my logo on them because some guys work in the cargo business and they might feel that I am competing with them. I don't even use my logo."
> "Where do you mostly put the posters advertising for the parties?"
> "I put them everywhere but [mostly in] Dora because it is like a souk over there, so I put more. I put a banner there too… yes mostly in Dora. And then I have the girls who work in households and the men, Ethiopian men and women who sell the tickets. They sell them to their customers or to their friends, they get the tickets to them fast. There are some people who compete with us and organize parties but they don't succeed. For example, the beach parties and the parties with DJs we organize. Others are not successful at doing that, they don't get more than 100 persons. And the same applies to the concert, they don't get as many people as we do."
> "Where do you do the beach parties?"
> "The last one was in Maameltein, at a piscine and we prepare a buffet and we get bread from Ethiopia too, not from here."

Elias puts in a lot of effort into organizing these events, he brings *injara* bread from Ethiopia for these concerts. It is more authentic because it is made with the flour they use for bread which is not the wheat flour we use here. He says, "I get a lot, for example, 400 loaves, they cost us about $700. To get them through the customs here we need to pay around $400." There is a man in Ethiopia who sends him the bread and the necessary customs papers. He says he did not meet this guy here and that he knows him

through someone. Elias has never been to Ethiopia and when I asked him how he gets in touch with people over there like the person who provides the bread, the singers and the bands he brings here every year, he said it is through people he knows.

Elias' relations with migrants then extend over networks of acquaintances that run through Lebanon to Ethiopia. His varied activities that aim at making a name for himself in the migrant community are rooted in a space of connectivity where someone like Elias interacts with migrants, becomes familiar with their worlds, needs, and then identifies needs and opportunities for business. My point is that unlike other businesses that involve migrant workers, the biggest in Lebanon being the hiring agencies business, migrants are perceived as people who can makes their own assessments, who will – when deciding where to go to get their business done – make assessments about what is available and what is preferable (which cargo office to deal with). This is a form of sociality which I am wary to call 'equality', but does constitute in the national Lebanese context a form of openness where less boundaries between people (the Lebanese and the migrant) open up the way to more forms of collaborations and partnerships.

The Restaurant or Real Estate Office

I went to Dora with Emnet to talk to Tadelech, an Ethiopian woman who prepared and served food for us in an Ethiopian restaurant we had visited a week ago. After being lost for a while in the little alleys, we found the restaurant. We pushed the door open and to our surprise, we found the place changed. Instead of the restaurant tables and chairs there was a large desk and two chairs in front of it. The owner, a Lebanese man in his 50s was sitting behind the desk. He welcomed us, we walked in

and sat in front of his desk on which there was the official gazette, a Lebanese flag, and a wooden name tag with the man's name, Khalil, and his title, "real estate expert." I asked him if I can talk to Tadelech and he said, "she is not here now but I can ask her to come." He made a quick phone call then told us that she will be coming soon.

Last time I was at this place with Emnet, Khalil got quite upset when he saw us come in. We could hear him arguing with Tadelech asking her to call someone and saying, "what if that woman sent her?" She told him that she has seen me here before and eventually he calmed down and even came and sat next to us. We exchanged a few words and we had our meal. This was a week ago.

While waiting for Tadelech to come we had a conversation. I asked why he closed the restaurant and he just said, "yes this became an office now. The restaurant was open for 4 years." Khalil did not answer my question but gave me a short reply after which we just switched to talking about his previous job. This type of interaction where things are never really clear or well defined was common. People never expressed their unwillingness to discuss a topic, there was always a ready answer for any question I ask except that often times the answer was nothing but a diversion. My conversations with participants, both migrants and Lebanese, were frequently full of unexpected diversions that seemed to be intended at keeping things (or the relations between things, between a manager and an employer, between a woman and her husband, between family and business…) vague in an attempt to gain some flexibility or some cover.

Our conversation was interrupted by an Ethiopian woman who came in carrying a few plastic bags. In one of the bags she had clothes for kids, she showed them

to Khalil. Emnet spoke to the woman in Amharic and told me later that this stuff was being sent to Ethiopia for Khalil's kids.

Khalil has been working in Dora for 20 years. He lives in Bekfaya. He had a Lebanese food restaurant, a few meters from here. After 5 years of operation, he closed down the restaurant and started working in commerce. He also works as a real estate expert. He says that 20 years ago there were the Lebanese and the Armenians only in Dora. Then a few years ago the maids started coming to Dora. Rents went up from $100 to $500. On the main street rents are $1000. And today, "Dora *bteshteghel lal ajēnib*" (Dora works for the foreigners). He thinks that if the migrants leave, the shops will close down, "the migrants spend their money here and they send all sorts of things to their families, clothes, electronics, even fridges and washing machines," he said.

After spending some time at the office, we realized that Tadelech whom he supposedly called is probably not coming so we thanked him for and then we left. Emnet and I then discussed how strange it was for us to find the restaurant transformed. Emnet did not feel safe around this man and she asked me never to come back to his place[20].

Conclusion

The Lebanese who have businesses or work in Dora, say that it now relies mainly on the migrant workers. This reliance brings with it an acceptance of the migrant

[20] Emnet's sentiment did not only result from the awkwardness of finding the place transformed. Towards the end of our conversation, Khalil told me that he has apartments in Dora for rent and that if I want I can come and live in an apartment he has here. I asked how much the rent is and he said, "no, you don't have to pay anything." Emnet told me later, "don't talk to this man again."

workers' presence even if it remains a circumspect and reluctant acceptance. The Lebanese participants express a worry that Dora might no longer belong to them but at the same time they are aware of the importance of the migrants' presence in Dora in terms of the financial benefits they bring to shop owners and to property owners.

For migrant women marriage to a Lebanese puts one at an advantage in terms of living and working in Lebanon, for the Lebanese men marriage to a migrant woman could be about what Vartan described; it's simply easier and it's an opportunity to have companionship and a family. Marriage to a migrant woman also opens doors to business opportunities because it creates an access point to a specific migrant community. But these marriages are subject to a lot of criticism in a society where racist attitudes towards low-wage migrants whatever their nationality are commonplace. Such unions require a certain disposition towards others that escapes ethnic and social barriers; an Ethiopian woman who finds that marriage to a Lebanese man is a possibility, a Lebanese man who does not think of a Filipina as someone unfit to become his wife and the mother to his children. Understanding the conditions under which such dispositions are formed and expressed in people's everyday lives and life choices requires a more prolonged and systematic investigation. In my research, I faced some difficulties with regards to learning about these relationships and marriages because of the social stigma attached to them and the fact that my interlocutor are well aware of it which makes them reluctant to discuss such relationships.

CHAPTER IV

SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The social infrastructure that migrants rely on and contribute to bring into being include various relationships and people such as neighbors, friends, siblings, taxi drivers, bus drivers, church congregations, business partners, and countrymen and -women. Support is needed to preserve one's self, to guarantee one's safety, and to ensure one's access to information and opportunities. This infrastructure is visible in the material presented in the previous chapters: for example, in the intersection of friendship and kinship and access to work opportunities (in the cases of Rosa and Mary) or the development of familiarity and support around business relationships (in the case of Elias).

Networks form at the local level, for example, the neighborhood, but they could also extend beyond it. Churches and NGOs are significant actors and providers of support. These networks might include migrants from the same country or migrants and locals. During my fieldwork, I have come across several instances of such networks of support that grow out of the day-to-day interactions and intersections between people and their activities.

Migrants work out ways of accessing and offering help and support through formal channels likes institutions and organizations, churches and NGOs or through more informal channels like networks that are sometimes defined ethnically or by community. For example, members of the Filipino and Ethiopian communities started money pools where people contribute an amount of money on a regular basis and then

take turns in collecting the funds. But they also come together across ethnic boundaries and cooperation might arise between Lebanese and migrants or migrants from different nationalities. These networks arise along friendships or acquaintances or business partners or strangers.

These infrastructures for support are systems of exchange worked by the people who use and need them. They give access to information, financial assistance, job opportunities, solidarity, and services. The ways in which this infrastructure comes together are varied and transient which makes it sometimes difficult to trace. In the following section, I offer a list of examples on how it forms, what it offers, and how it transforms the urban landscape.

First, how do these infrastructures form?

- Through ethnically defined networks or migrant-Lebanese networks
- Through work or business relationships
- Through community gatherings facilitated by churches or community centers
- Through friendships and acquaintances

Second, what do these infrastructures offer?

- Warning about checkpoints
- Lending money
- Helping others get a job
- Pooling money
- Protection by landlord or employer
- Showing solidarity with countrywoman/man

- Lebanese offering help to Ethiopians
- Offering a domestic worker a job outside the household
- Substituting for lack of support and protection

Third, how are these infrastructures contributing to transforming the city?

- Creating safe spaces
- Enabling mobility
- Pulling more people out of the confined work as domestic help
- Reassigning roles to migrants
- Changing the composition of the workforce in some jobs
- Expanding the possibility for migrants to remain here for extended periods of time
- Circumventing government control

The rest of the chapter illustrates some elements of these infrastructures, the kind of people that are involved in them, and how they function.

Checkpoints

Many of the migrants living and working on their own do not have legal residence permits. For them, navigating the city requires a knowledge of the streets and of the areas to avoid and the times of day or year during which the risk of getting arrested is higher. People come to learn these details and they communicate them to others. Often, those who can move around freely will report on the conditions of the streets to others. Osman tells me that he generally circulates in the city freely, he does not worry about going to Dora for example, but he usually asks his friends whether or

not it is safe to go out on a Sunday and head there. Going out in the streets is always risky and there is always the possibility of encountering a police patrol and of being interrogated. One time, Osman got arrested by the *darak* but he managed to run away as they were taking him in: “I unbuttoned my shirt which I was held by and I started running. They cannot follow me.” His Ethiopian wife who ran away from her employer prefers to stay out of risk closer to home without venturing much into other areas. It is possible that women feel more threatened by the arrests because the violence that they might be subject too is greater. For example, Jessica’s worst fear is getting arrested by the police because of the stories she heard from her friends:

> Once the police will catch them it will be too difficult for them to stay in jail. Oh my god, I don't imagine. I don't want to go in jail because some of my friends that they go in jail they said police will rape you and everything. They do some naughty things. I don't want to imagine those. One of my friend, she is a runaway, and the police caught her. They put her in the mountain. There is jail in the mountain. What she does? She have sex with the police and the police let her go. You see, sorry for the word but that is the truth, you see?

Jessica told me what it is like for other Filipinos who work here without a legal sponsor:

> They do not go out that much. They don't go [out] at night. When they know that there are police, because, in Lebanon there are time when there are a lot of police on road. Especially in December, you know, there are a lot of police. So they don't go out. They stay at home. You know they rent a house for them and they stay there and they go to their work. Just those things.
> They have friends who have [legal] papers, you see, and they will ask, *shu*? (what?) There are a lot of police at the road? Okay, I am not gonna go out if there is, you see?

Jessica has a friend who used to live with her and who borrowed money from her. The woman was having difficulties and her brother had just died so Jessica felt like she had to help her. But the money she lent her has not been returned yet and Jessica has lost hope of getting it back. Other women would not lend her money either because she

is not legally employed here and so she it will probably be difficult for her to pay them back. Still they help her in other ways as Jessica explained to me:

> "[She works] part time, only part timers. If there is someone who will ask for her to clean something, she will go. She has a lot of friends, communications, if someone needs somebody to clean or somebody to be a waitress, any job she can do."
> "So, her friends can tell her?"
> "Yeah"
> "If they know that there is someone, they tell her there is a job that is available and then she can do that."
> "*Bas*, permanent job, she will not find. It is not possible for her."
> "Yeah, that's not easy at all."
> "That's not easy, never. Never for her and she must to rent a house for her. Anyway, if you have a lot of friends, a lot of friends can help you. But on my type, no, I stayed here, *khalas*, I am not friendly outside."
> "How can her friends help her? Do they help her money wise? Can they give her money?"
> "No, she works. They give her work. That's all. *Bas* to trust her to let her borrow money, no. Because she does not have paper."
> "Because she might not be able to pay it back."
> "Yeah, she might not be able to pay it back because she don't have paper. Maybe one day the police will catch her and will send her in the Philippines. How is the money? I was there before. I have a couple in the house. She ran away bas before she ran away she borrowed $580 from me. She borrowed that when her brother died. She cried on me, 'please *habibi*, can I borrow money because my brother died. I need some money.' But it is true that her brother died. So I let her borrow the money and she ran away and until now, seven years already, she did not pay it. So I forget it I say God will give me back that thing. I will not think about this anymore."

Jessica has helped her sister come here and work for a while. She has a friend who was treated badly by her employers. She asked her for help so Jessica got her employed in the same institution where she is working. She spoke to her employers and ask them if they can hire her sister and her friend and her employers accepted.

On the Sunday of the municipal elections, Emnet said that there were very few people in her English language class which she attends regularly after Sunday church. She said that was due to the elections and the security presence in the streets. But those

who miss the class would get that day's lesson sent to them by their friends on WhatsApp. The use of mobile phones and the ability to immediately connect with others breaks the forced confinement of illegality and precariousness. Emnet also told me that whenever friends of hers are going through Dora and they find good offers or discounts or someone selling clothes in the street for good prices, they send their friends messages so that they come take advantage of the good offers. Social media and messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Skype are used to communicate information, keeping people up-to-date with events and friends. It is also a way for migrants to remain connected to their families back home, especially since many women have children that they left back home with their families. In a study that surveyed migrant domestic workers in Jordan and Lebanon, Frantz (2014) reports that for migrant domestic workers living in Beirut, "one of the most important reasons for having a mobile phone was to allow them to keep in touch with their families back home" and that many migrants "buy phones equipped for dual SIM cards so that they can maintain two lines, a local number in the country of destination along with a number in the home country. This allows relatives to send messages cheaply to the number in the home country, and migrants can reply from abroad using the number in the country of destination."

Financial Support

Money pooling is a way for migrants to get financial support from members of their community. These types of funds are popular among migrant workers. The Ethiopian congregation that Emnet is part of does something similar. After Sunday mass in a church in Badaro, there was a woman sitting on the stairs which lead into the

church with a large notebook in her lap. Emnet went to her and gave her some money and presented her ID. The woman noted something down in her notebook. Later Emnet, her friend Aster and I walked from the church to a shop also in Badaro. We went to collect Aster's money; it was her turn to get the sum collected by turn. An Ethiopian woman works in the shop which sells clothes, shoes, gift items, accessories and dried injara bread and spices. Aster went downstairs and collected her money. Ement tells me that this money comes from the women who attend the church. Every Sunday, you offer whatever amount of money you want for this fund. The sum is distributed according to the needs of the women, for example, if someone is travelling or if someone is sick or has a sick family member and they need the money to cover their expenses. Participation in this fund is not obligatory and it is anonymous[21]. There is however an obligatory monthly payment, which is ten percent of your income. This money goes to finance the expenses of the church and the priests.

Osman sends money to his family every month. He gives the money to a friend who transfers it through Western Union. I asked him why he doesn't transfer the money himself, he said that he has never tried doing that. "Do you need to present a residence permit to be able to make a money transfer?" I asked. He replied, "yes, I think so." Then he told me that the friend who takes care of the transfer on his behalf has legal papers. Stories about friends who have legal papers were repeated in many of the accounts that I heard from different migrants regarding how they get certain transactions done especially when they they are required to present a valid residence permit. Emnet, for example, told me that the first thing that you need to present when you want to make a

[21] Emnet said that when you put in money you register your name but you give your baptismal name which is different from your birth name.

money transfer at Western Union is your residence permit, they make a copy of it, then you give the address to which you want to make the transfer. Like Osman, she said that migrants who do not have a residence permit use their friends' permits.

Sometimes Osman goes to Dora on Sunday. He sits somewhere with his friends and they have *arguileh*. I asked him if he ever worries about his own safety when he is going to Dora for example. He said that there is nothing to worry about. If there are any checkpoints his friend, who has legal papers, would message him and tell him not to come to Dora.

One time Osman got really sick. He needed an operation but he did not have the money to pay for it. The company he works for does not offer him any kind of medical coverage. He was able to have his operation with the help of his friend, his wife, and a Lebanese man who is his neighbor:

> I had to have an operation about a year ago. The company I work for does not help me. If a Lebanese [employee] gets sick, they would help him but not me. I was very sick. My friend took me to a hospital next to the Madīne Riyyadiye. They told me I had to pay $1500… I was in a lot of pain. They put me on a bed and they gave me a shot. The doctor came and examined me. He told my friend that I need an operation. My friend asked him if he has some time to bring him the money and the doctor said we have two days. My wife had $500 saved. My friend got the rest of the money. There is this man Abu Hadi. He is very nice. I can ask him for anything he never says no. He has a grocery store in our neighborhood. I go to him and take anything I need for the house and he doesn't ask me for money. I pay him later. So my friend went to him and told him about me. Abu Hadi said, "how much do you need?" My friend said that we need $1000 so he gave him the money. Then for a while my friend, my wife and I saved money from work and gave him back his $1000. He is a great guy.

Osman and his friends tell me about some of the tricks they use to escape deportation:

> "Sometimes we can fake our papers."
> "How can you do that?"

> "You make a photocopy of somebody's paper [permit] and you present it to the police whenever you are asked for your papers."
> "But how does this work? Doesn't that paper have a picture on it?"
> "Yes it does. But the officers cannot tell us apart."
> "Really?!!" I thought that was hilarious. I laughed and they laughed too.
> "It is true, they cannot make a difference. All they look for is whether the paper is authentic or not. They have a device that they run the paper through. So you can sometimes use somebody else's papers."
> "For example, if I get caught and I go to prison the officer asks what is my name. I do not say I am Osman. I give him the name of a friend or relative who has an *iqāme* (residence permit). When the officer asks for my *iqāme*, I say it is not with me and that I forgot it at home. Then I call that friend or relative and ask him to bring me "my" *iqāme*. He brings his paper, they check it and they let me go."

Cooperation Despite Adversity

Sometimes cooperation among nationals occurs despite long histories of animosity and rivalry and some dividing lines (like sect) might lose prominence over others (like national origin). This is what Emnet, who is an adherent to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, tells me through her stories about the Evangelical Protestant Ethiopians in Lebanon. She says that they are not on the right path but it is not their fault, it is the devil that leads them astray. She is critical of their worship practices and she tells me how they come sometimes to the Ethiopian orthodox church and they give them *mayy* (holy water) because the protestants do not have *mayy*. Despite their differences, the followers of each denomination find it necessary to protect each other:

> When our church was still here in Dora we used to pray in the same building as the protestant Ethiopians. Often after mass the women would fight, they would yell at each other. But this is *haram*. We are not in our country and we must not fight.
> I was intrigued by this remark and I asked, "so you must not fight because you are not in your country?" And Emnet said, "yes, because this woman that I am

> fighting with is *bent baladi* (my countrywoman) and I do not know anything about her situation, she might not have her legal papers. If we fight and the police come, they might take her away. I would not want that to happen to her."

Congregations and Churches

In an apartment in Armenia street, an evangelical Sri Lankan congregation holds mass every Sunday. The apartment is on the second floor of an old run down building. One Sunday, I decided to visit the church, I was in fact following the music I heard while I was passing by the building. I suspected that this is the sound of prayer but I was not sure what to expect. I looked for the entrance to the building, climbed the stairs and got to the apartment, the door was open. Inside, there were rows of plastic chairs. I stood for a second at the door and a man gestured for me to come in. There was music playing, just a beat that is repeating. All the people in the room where Sri Lankan, many women and only a few men. At the front of the room there were speakers, a keyboard, a drum set and microphones. Three men and a woman were standing there. I sat on a chair watching and soon after a women approached and without much talking took me to stand in front of the pastor. He put his hand on my forehead and uttered some prayers in English, "God, protect this woman, with your power save this woman..."

More women came to stand in front of the pastor. They would raise their hands up in the air and as he touched their head with the palm of his hand, some women would start shaking. The pastor continues with his prayers. One woman fell to the ground and another started jumping frantically. People started clapping their hands. Another woman walked up to the pastor and talked to him while showing him a picture on her phone. The

pastor raised a hand over the phone and uttered a prayer.

The pastor is a young man, 26 years old, who just arrived in Lebanon. I spoke to him and to his assistant; a Sri Lankan woman in her late twenties who has been in Lebanon for 15 years. This woman assists the pastor during mass by translating from Sinhala to Tamil. Today's sermon was about how we are all brothers and sisters in God. She said that most of the people here are Sinhalese but there are more Tamil coming.

I asked her about the problems that women have and she said, “depression.” “This might be a silly question but why?” I asked. The assistant and the pastor agreed that it is because they are away from their families for a long time. They feel lonely. Then they told about the activities they do with the community here and how teaching the bible is the most important one. According to the pastor, many conversions happen here in the community:

> “What sects are there in Sri Lanka?”
> “The majority are Buddhist, Hindu. There are Orthodox, Catholics and Evangelicals and some Muslims. But now many are converting.”
> “Are there people who convert here in Lebanon?”
> “Yes.”
> “How does that happen?”
> “It is a miracle. Like what you have seen with the women we were praying for.”
> “Can you help migrants with any kind of problem?”
> “We are planning on doing that bit by bit. We are still a small congregation now but in the future, we want to help those in prison and people with no [legal] papers.”
> “How many do you estimate you are now?”
> “Well maybe 50-60, like today I think there were 50 people here.”
> “What are some of the problems that women face here?”
> “Money. But there is a major problem they have. I cannot say it to you but I pray to God to solve it. The women do not tell me about this problem but I know about it. I am a man, they are women. I am waiting for my wife to get here so that she talks to them.”
> “What do you do after mass?”
> “I do house visitations, I leave my house at 6 PM and return at 10, 11 PM. I live in Dora.”

The apartment where the service is held is rented to several groups over the course of the day. The Sri Lankan evangelical congregation rent this room for $400/month to use it for a number of hours on Sundays and Thursdays. The service takes two hours and is followed by about two more hours for personal prayers. There is another service before this one, "African," said the pastor. I asked why they hold mass here and the assistant answered, "because Dora is the center of Lebanon, everyone is here." The pastor said that they want to hold the service earlier, at 9 AM. To do that they have to find another place in Dora because this apartment is booked on Sunday mornings.

Many evangelical churches are involved with migrant domestic workers by networking with human rights organizations like KAFA, INSAAN, Anti-Racism Movement, CARITAS, and the Lebanese Center for Human Rights. These churches serve freelancers or women who are allowed to leave the households where they work, they offer their spaces for migrants to hold their own services, they provide counseling services, and arrange for affordable medical service. And they find in Dora an ideal place for them to reach and attract migrants according to Dr. Chetti, an Indian-American faculty member at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary:

> Last year, in the beginning of 2015, we started an integrated center for ministry among the Migrant Domestic Workers called INSAAF: Justice and Compassion of Jesus. We initially ran it out of Hadath Baptist Church, but we discovered that the general location of the church was considered by the women as too "middle class," and they did not feel comfortable coming here. So we moved to a more working class area of Dora. The center seeks to provide guidance and orientation for newly-arrived migrant workers, instruction in professional skills, Arabic and English language courses, and advocacy and legal counsel. We also provide personal and spiritual counseling for these young women who have experienced unbelievable trauma. For those who are being deported, we buy them clothing, assist with tickets, and luggage so that they can travel home in dignity. We also recently contracted with a clinic to provide free or heavily discounted medical

> care for the women, many of whom suffer from chronic illnesses. The doctor of this clinic is a believer and only charges the women $3 for a consultation (a normal visit to the doctor in Lebanon is around $50 – too expensive for women making a couple hundred dollars a month) (khouri 2016).

The National Evangelical Church of Beirut started a project to support non-Arab migrant workers and refugees in Lebanon. In 2013, they started a day care that receives children of migrant workers up till the age of four years ("The National Evangelical Church of Beirut" 2017). One of the directors explains that the project started when she was trying to help an Ethiopian woman who was raped by her employer to find a day care. The day care now has 16 kids but they aim at having 70 to 80[22].

Pastoral Care for Afro-Asian Migrants (PCAAM), is an organization that provides assistance to migrants from non-Arab African and Asian countries with Christian communities, this also includes Sudanese refugees most of whom are from South Sudan. They provide legal assistance to migrants who have been abused, they also organize Sunday outings and radio broadcasts in several African and Asian languages ("Lebanese NGO Forum" 2017), as well as church service in English in 15 churches around Lebanon (ILO 2012).

Churches such as the Evangelical Church in Beirut invest in servicing and attracting migrant workers. They are part of the migrant infrastructure (there is a give and take relationship) and they operate as networks of care and support while also working as recruitment networks. Proselytizing is an aspect of the work they do as

[22] Mike Norman. 2014. Philemon Pre-School Project 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xl_O7M74Y-A.

Ement said when she talked about the flyers distributed by members of the Ethiopian evangelical church in Lebanon. The Sri Lankan pastor I met in Dora told me how conversions happen over here through miracles, but of course these miracles are mediated by people (church members and pastors) and through the existence of these spaces of prayer and get together. The migrants for their part, find in these networks opportunities that enable them to temporarily appropriate spaces in the city like the churches where they can go and have their own services and church yards used on Sundays for socializing, networking, sharing a meal, and unwinding. Through churches and their networks, migrants also gain access to all kinds of services such as cheap medical services.

Business with the Embassy

Elias told me that he has always had a good relationship with the Ethiopian embassy but that lately there has been some tension. He was on good terms with the previous employees at the embassy but now most of them are gone. He usually contacts the embassy whenever there is a need for that, for example, in cases of emergency like the incident that happened a week ago when an Ethiopian woman committed suicide in the apartment she shares with a group of friends by hanging herself using a shoelace. “I called them. They did not know about that,” he said. He still has a couple of people he can communicate with at the embassy, they are part of the old staff unlike the new employees that he is not on good terms with:

> I have a problem with the embassy. They don't like me, they consider that there is a competition between them and me because whenever a problem or something like that happens [to one of the Ethiopians] I help them, you see. The

> Ethiopian women call me for help and not the embassy that's why the embassy doesn't like to deal with me.

As Elias was speaking, Emnet was nodding her head in approval. I was wondering, what is the connection between a business owner such as Elias and the Ethiopian embassy in Beirut? It seems to me that he plays the role of an informal embassy or a liaison with the embassy who is either not willing or nor capable of addressing the concerns of all the Ethiopian citizens in Lebanon. During this year's migrant workers day march, an Ethiopian woman went up on a stage which was set for this event on the Beirut corniche. The stage was used to give the yearly speech delivered in three languages and then to allow migrant workers who participated in the march to express any ideas, concerns, or messages they have. The woman said that she asks the embassy to be more helpful to the Ethiopians in Lebanon and that if the embassy is not ready to do that then maybe they should shut down and "let us start our own embassy." It is possible that the embassy staff maintain relations with people like Elias as a way to offload some of their responsibilities onto informal channels of support and service.

For Elias, this supporting role complements his business activities with the Ethiopian migrant community in Lebanon. He even has some competition:

> A few months ago, the Ethiopian embassy brought a female Ethiopian singer and they cooperated with this nightclub in Mekalles in order to organize and advertise the party. They did not contact me. Instead of banning Ethiopian women from going to such nightclubs, they cooperated with one. The owner paid them $500 and they made him a sponsor. Imagine that an embassy is dealing with a night club!
> I don't want to talk about myself but I am the first person they should've come to but they didn't. It's not a problem if they don't deal with us but for them to deal with a nightclub. An embassy! It makes me sad.

There is a high moral tone in Elias' criticism of the embassy. His indignation at the fact that an embassy is dealing with a nightclub is also a frustration at the fact that

he is losing his access point to financially profitable events and projects. The embassy (or at least its employees) on the other hand, also seems to be in the business of money making since they received a 500 USD incentive from the nightclub owner.

Stranger Support Networks

Rahel is an Ethiopian woman who works in Achrafieh. She is working on her own now but she was first employed as a domestic house worker. She left and moved in with other Ethiopian women:

> "Did you know the people you're living with?"
> "*ye'ne bent baladik* (your countrywoman). When you are somewhere outside your country, you gather around people from your country, you become friends with them, you love them. This is how we live. It doesn't matter whether you know them or not. It's not necessary. We are *rūh bel rūh*, you know? This is not our country, *el mohem tdal bent baladik* (What matters is that she is your countrywoman)."

When Rahel decided to leave the house she was working in, she just walked out and sought the help of a service driver:

> I looked for a taxi. I told him there is a place where *bent baladi* are living. I told him to take me there and he took me. I found a woman and I told her *kaza kaza* (told her my story). I stayed with her. She found a job for me. And now *hamdellah* (thank god) things are good […] All taxis know... *hek* he knows everything in Lebanon. He brought me here and dropped me off. He said here, anyone you find in the street and I found an [Ethiopian] woman walking in the street.

Rahel knew that she can count on the service driver to get her to the place she needs because "he knows everything in Lebanon." She also knew that any Ethiopian woman she finds in the street will help her because she is her countrywoman. *Bent baladi* is an expression that all the Ethiopian women use. They show strong solidarity in dealing

with the daughters of their country. I guess the country takes on a whole different dimension and produces a different kind of belonging over here. When I was with Emnet in Dora she was greeting all the Ethiopians that we passed, for a while I thought she must know the area and the people well but when I asked her about it she said they were complete strangers. One time we went to someone's house and the Ethiopian woman who works there came into the room. Emnet stood up, they exchanged a very warm greeting with these strangers, they hugged and kissed and had a brief conversation. This is not just solidarity around a common ethnic or national background. It is the recognition that someone is leading the same precarious life that you are and that this person might turn out to be useful to you in some way. There is an implicit understanding that migrants, Ethiopians in this case, whether they know or have met each other or not, are bound together by the same conditions of vulnerability and uncertainty and through that by relations of support and reciprocity.

Protection and Patronage

Mustafa told me that the other Sudanese man who has a hair salon in this same street is renting from his landlord's cousin. The cousins seem to be powerful and well connected. They offer the Sudanese men their protection:

> It's like I told you... the man I am renting from, that's the same family. They stand by you even if you do not have a business here and you call them if something happens they come and support you.

This relationship of patronage and protection between Mustapha and his landlord seems to have developed out of their partnership and around the restaurant but once such relationships are established then they can be extended to others, to friends and family

or community members. This is what Mustapha's friend whose employer is from a prominent and wealthy Beiruti family tells me. But both men realize that these connections that afford them certain privileges as migrant workers (legal or illegal) are to be handled carefully. There is a fine-tuned practice of knowing when to ask for favors from their patrons, how often, for what purposes, and for whom. And learning how to recognize these subtleties and pay attention to them is key in ensuring the cooperation of employers/protectors.

Conclusion

Migrant workers create and use social infrastructures that are formed from existing networks of exchange and improvised collaborations. These infrastructures materialize in the everyday lives of people to compensate for, or counterbalance, the lack of social support and state recognition of its responsibilities and liabilities. They include institutions (like the churches), individuals (the Lebanese cousins who "sponsor" Mustafa and other Sudanese men in the neighborhood), entrepreneurs (like Elias) and they rely on the support that countrymen and women offer each other (watching over other Ethiopians or Filipinos).

Even though the practices and exchanges that make up this social infrastructure are provisional and dependent to a large degree on the actors involved, they are not ephemeral. These infrastructures support the livelihoods of migrant workers and contribute to the changing/emerging urban landscape by enabling migrants, even those who are illegal, to persist and survive in a largely uncooperative and hostile social and political environment. Whereas migrants - whether working and residing in or outside

households - are meant to be invisible and perishable outside the work and living conditions conceived for them by the state and by many segments of the Lebanese society (employers, sponsors, and agencies), they are made more visible, they are breaking out of the usual work spaces and occupations.

By continually working on circumventing regulations and restrictions, migrants forge ways of making a living and navigating the city that incorporates them into its fabric, even as they continue to struggle as marginalized inhabitants.

CONCLUSION

Faced with the precarity of their existence, migrant workers in Beirut forge infrastructures that support their livelihoods. The making of these infrastructures relies on everyday lived experiences with neighbors, family members, business partners, and police officers. These experiences reveal whom one can trust, whom they can collaborate with, what the dangers are and where they lie, what others want and what they can offer. So people, for example, evaluate chances for profit (there is a market for Filipino food) and make offers for collaboration (a Filipina cook engaged by a Lebanese to work at his restaurant). Relationships are entanglements of different people having different plans and obligations and making various attempts and improvisations that altogether create a ground for living and making a living in the city.

Theses attempts and practices are intensified in Dora where they begin to register in the form of a reconfiguration of the urban space. What is taking place in Dora is a convergence of various endeavors and collaborative networks that produce a gradual transformation in the physical and social landscape. This transformation remains invisible to many Lebanese or difficult to interpret for those who do see and experience it. When I first went to Dora after having been away from Lebanon for a while, I was immediately attracted and intrigued by this place that seemed to me to have turned as if overnight into something totally unfamiliar. The space in its materiality, the colors, sounds, shapes, and smells that permeate it invoked endless questions about this changing part of the city (How? Why? By whom?) and the desire to understand what kind of a place it is.

Dora's economy has come to rely in important ways on migrant workers' need for products and spaces of sociality, for a place in the city where they can live on their own terms. It is a place that provides for these demands and that creates more demand. Sociality and business are intertwined in spaces that provide for both. Much of the vitality of Dora's local economy relies on the migrants some of whom, as a result of being able to work on their own, have acquired a larger purchasing power and they have also accumulated more needs since they are living in their own households and more mobility since they are more in charge of their time.

Information and knowledge about the city and the way things work or don't in this place are valuable. Migrants share their know-how and their accumulated experiences of work, employers and madams, police, neighbors, and everything else one has to deal with and manage. Information is exchanged through networks of people who are familiar with each other but familiarity is not a necessary condition. One of the Ethiopian participants, Hala, told me that when there is a women from her hometown coming to Lebanon her parents would give her her telephone number. Then once she is here, she can contact Hala for help as she gets acquainted to life in Lebanon, to learning the language, and learning about the places to go for shopping. Migrants using public transportation get to learn a good deal from the bus drivers.

Many migrants have been living in Lebanon for extended periods of time. Their plans initially consist in working for a few years in order to save some money and then return home. Some migrants want to or have to stay for longer, this is especially the case of men and women who have children or younger siblings who are still studying at school or college. Typically, they need to remain here for an extended

period of time to be able to support their siblings and children financially and pay for their education until they graduate. This is a long-term project. Some migrants find their original plans changed and derailed by new commitments in which they engage, for example, marriage and starting a family in Lebanon.

The migrant community in Lebanon is growing in number because of the continuous flow of migrant workers into the country, the borders which are open to human trafficking, and the number of illegal migrants who are either smuggled in or have run away to live and work independently of their employers. This community though segregated by ethnicity or nationality, share the same residential and commercial areas in the city because it's members have more or less the same financial status. Dora is a central space in the functioning of this community and its persistence. Through collaborations with business owners or investors, migrants create ways for appropriating some city spaces and using them to increase their productivity and chances of survival and prosperity in a country that is not receptive to such plans and projects. These projects, if successful, introduce more stability into the lives of migrant workers and counter the transience haunting their existence in Lebanon. And despite the fact that there is much uncertainty in the endurance of these collaborations and the success of their outcome, migrants still rely on them.

The migrant worlds described here lie on the threshold of visibility. They develop and expand in Beirut's inner spaces and its overpopulated and overbuilt suburbs. They blend but they also stand out yet they remain for the most part invisible to many Lebanese. Perhaps they are of little interest or consequence to them but directing our attention to these worlds that take hold over parts of the city begs the question of

what kind of a city is Beirut? Does the lingering social imaginary of Beirut as the nexus between East and West still holds? Doesn't Beirut's "traditional cosmopolitanism" – that is, a diversity that celebrates the city's connections to European and North American cities, traditions, and languages – occlude another cosmopolitanism that engages different places and ways of life? It might be difficult for us to qualify this type of cosmopolitanism and we might be dealing here with a coexistence of several types of cosmopolitanism (Dahdah 2012, 125–47). But the opportunity that such observations give us is to examine our representation of the city and to question whether Beirut is not already something different from the city that lies in our imaginaries and narratives through which we define and perceive it.

By following the activities of the migrant city dwellers, meaning their businesses, their relationships with other migrants, with Lebanese, and the social practices they engage in or challenge, this ethnography explores the complex infrastructure used and maintained by marginalized actors that seek not only to survive but to expand their capability to improve their living conditions and their chances for the future. Since the concept of infrastructure I use is defined by the confluence of people, objects, spaces and practices, I have attempted to expose through my fieldwork the elements that seemed relevant to the migrant infrastructure in Beirut. Consequently, this ethnography is a collection of stories and descriptions of personal histories (migration, worries and aspirations…), relationships of various and overlapping kinds (romance, friendship, business…), objects in circulation (products, legal capacities…), and practices that go beyond professed purposes and functions (going to church, providing support…). All of these stories are employed to illustrate the dynamic,

creative, and contingent nature of this infrastructure and to convey the fact that it not a harmonious structure but is often itself contradictory — for example, it seeks to be both visible and invisible and often relies on incongruences like the provisions of law and its application. This infrastructure thrives within a social field rife with tensions but it also creates tensions in the social field as it stretches, defies and resists long-established practices; consider for example, the ambivalence expressed by the Lebanese participants between racism and exclusion and openness and inclusion and what it tells us about the tensions created as people waver between normative and subversive practices.

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