

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE ROLE OF MIGRANTS IN LOCAL URBAN
RESTRUCTURING AND GLOBAL POSITIONING:
THE CASE OF HIGH-INCOME SYRIAN MIGRANT
ENTREPRENEURS IN BEIRUT

By:

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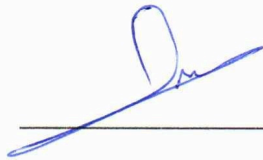
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The Role of Migrants in Local Urban Restructuring and Global Positioning: The Case of High-income Syrian Migrant Entrepreneurs in Beirut

Cities and migration are described by Portes (2000) as two sides of a coin. This notion outlines the strong and direct relation between them. This thesis explores high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs' economic, social and urban impacts on the city of Beirut from the lens of migration studies rather than refugee studies, focusing on migrants' dynamics with Beirut, and with other localities beyond the Lebanese borders. I consider high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs as active agents rather than passive subjects, interacting with and shaping the city, which is also a complex dynamic entity that impacts these individuals' experiences. My research aims to contribute to the understanding of the dialectic relation between migrants and cities. Through studying the entrepreneurial activities and urban practices of these high-income Syrian migrants in Lebanon, the research also intends to contribute to the literature on migrant entrepreneurship.

Building on Schiller and Caglar's (2010) framework, my thesis investigates the contributions of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs who relocated to Beirut after 2011 to the city's local urban restructuring and global positioning. My findings are four-fold. First, thanks to their high and diversified class resources, these individuals play a role in "facilitating privatization and neoliberal subjectivity" (Schiller & Caglar, 2010). Second, the "Syrian" identity/nationality of these high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs is not a divisive or discriminatory marker, which enables considerably their social and economic incorporation in Beirut. Third, Syrian entrepreneurs operate with a relative anonymity in the economic, social, and urban realms of Beirut, which makes them *independent* players, neither Lebanese nor "Syrians": rather, they are efficient

“wealthy business men and women”. Fourth, through their social, economic, and familial transnational networks with their home country and beyond, migrant entrepreneurs are impacting the global positioning of the capital city. The thesis ends with a set of policy recommendations that seek to enhance migrant entrepreneurs’ role in Beirut’s urban and global restructuring.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cities and migration are described by Portes (2000) as two sides of a coin. This notion outlines the strong and direct relation between the two. In this thesis, I explore high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs' economic, social and urban impacts on the city of Beirut from the lens of migration studies rather than refugee studies, with a focus on their dynamics in relation to Beirut, and other localities beyond the Lebanese borders. In other words, I consider high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs as active agents rather than passive subjects, interacting with and shaping the city, which is also a complex dynamic entity that impacts these individuals' experiences. The thesis thus investigates the dialectic relation between high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs and the city of Beirut from two entry points: entrepreneurship and urban studies.

As this research considers the city as a dynamic entity and its actors as active players, their relationship will be addressed as two structures that simultaneously shape each other. Migrant entrepreneurs' economic, social, and urban presence-as in economic activities, social networking, and urban practices, in the city should not be studied as a fixed state in isolation from their dynamic relation with the city. Thus, in order to understand the impact of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs on the *local* urban restructuring and the *global* rescaling processes of the city of Beirut, this thesis will study migrants as dynamics of inner resources and local and transnational networks, and the city as localities and opportunity structures.

Building on Schiller and Caglar's (2010) framework that argues how cities and migrants have interconnected relations, my thesis investigates:

How have high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs, who relocated to Beirut after 2011, contributed to the local urban restructuring and global positioning of the city of Beirut?

A set of secondary questions will also be addressed throughout the thesis:

- How do localities of Syrian entrepreneurs' point of departure and their trajectory influence their form of agency in the urban restructuring of Beirut?
- How do their class resources and social and economic local embeddedness facilitate and influence their entrepreneurial activity and urban participation, hence their contribution to the local and global restructuring of Beirut?
- Based on what factors did Syrian entrepreneurs interact with the opportunity structure of the city of Beirut? And how does that interaction vary?
- In what way do Syrian entrepreneurs' social and economic transnational networks and capital circulation contribute to the global positioning and dynamic scale of Beirut?
- Are these high-income Syrian entrepreneurs homogenous in terms of economic embeddedness and entrepreneurial activities?

Based on the content analysis of 13 qualitative in-depth interviews I conducted during spring and summer 2019, and winter 2020, in addition to empirical and theoretical investigations, my findings demonstrate that:

- High-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs play an active role in the urban restructuring of the city of Beirut by being active agents “facilitating privatization and neoliberal subjectivity” (Schiller & Caglar, 2010).
- Due to, primarily, their class resources (education, work experience, and especially their capital), the nationality and the Syrian identity of these migrant entrepreneurs is not a divisive or discriminatory marker, contrary to their low-income peers. As such, this distinction has helped them considerably in their social and economic incorporation in Beirut.
- High-income Syrians in Beirut do not follow one particular set of strategies based on distinct national, political, territorial, or sectarian criteria in the choice of their businesses’ and/or residences’ localities. Therefore, Syrian entrepreneurs are endowed with a relative anonymity in the economic, social, and urban realms of Beirut and its agglomeration. They are *independent* players, neither Lebanese nor “Syrians”; rather they are efficient “wealthy businessmen/women”.
- High-income Syrian entrepreneurs possess a strong transnational network with their home city and, often, with other countries, based on economic, social, or familial ties. This means there is some social, professional, and financial capital inflow and outflow from and to Lebanon generated by these Syrian entrepreneurs,

which consequently contributes to the urban restructuring and global positioning of the city of Beirut.

This research aims to equally contribute to two main fields of literature: Syrian entrepreneurial activities and urban participation in Lebanon under the field of Migrant Entrepreneurship literature, and Migrants and the City literature. For little is known about the entrepreneurial activities and the spatial and urban practices of high-income Syrians in Lebanon, and on the bilateral relation between cities and migrants. As Schiller and Caglar (2010) believe, there is still very little within the scope of knowledge about how migrants impact the local and global restructuring of cities, and how cities shape this contribution. This research is also expected to improve the conception of migrant entrepreneurship in general, and stretch the list of consideration and factors that impact migrants' economic activities. In addition, I aim to debunk the common assumption that the Syrian presence creates a burden on the economic and social realms of Lebanon and instead consider them as an asset that could be further nurtured and invested in. I will also propose policy guidelines, recommendations, and strategic measures that would facilitate the economic incorporation of the city's new comers and would capitalize high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs' position in the economic local and global realm of Lebanon.

D. Methodology:

Existing literature on the entrepreneurial activities of Syrians in Lebanon is very limited, but fortunately there are some similar studies that I can rely and build on, which

are listed in the bibliography. Along with existing data generated and gathered from various types of documents (book, scholarly articles, technical reports and statistics done by UN bodies, and web pages).

My positionality as a Syrian middle-upper class individual allowed me to be familiar and have wide access to the social network of this group. Living in Damascus, Syria in an upper-end neighborhood (Malki), where most of this community resides, has given me a deep understanding of the area's socioeconomic structure. Moreover, I share the same circumstances and experience that led this group of Syrians to leave their home, and reside in different neighborhoods in Beirut and establish a business. In 2012, my family was one of the many Syrian families that decided to "temporarily" leave their home in Damascus, and settle in Beirut until the war would end. In addition, I had the chance to witness the journey of forming a business in Beirut: how it started, and why it ended, because one of my family members was one of these Syrian entrepreneurs. Therefore, being an insider and a part of this community helped me greatly access primary data and formulate the problematic and the propositions of my research.

Considering my training and the difficulties measuring the economic impact of the Syrian businesses in Lebanon, I adopt a qualitative method for the data collection in order to develop in-depth, critical and analytical insights about the daily social, economic, and urban experience of the Syrian entrepreneurs in Beirut, and a deep understanding of their mechanisms, structure, and dynamics. I also rely in my analysis on data visualization and mapping, which were used mainly as analytical tools rather than merely illustrative tools.

Participant observation has allowed me to access more details about the social context I studied (Greener, 2011). In addition, it is useful especially because the issue being studied is underrepresented in the literature and prior researches (Farthing, 2015). Moreover, being an insider and sharing the same social network with my study group, along with being familiar with their socioeconomic status and localities in their home country, I had a lot of opportunities to undertake observation.

As I privileged qualitative research methodology, I worked on a small sample (less than 20) of Syrian entrepreneurs, who were selected based on specific criteria (high-income, moved to Beirut after 2011, and mainly work in the hospitality sector). This may be critiqued as a small sample, but small sampling is not a disadvantage (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006), given I am not aiming to generalize my findings, but rather to develop critical and analytical insights and build deep, rich, and thick narratives and analysis.

Interviews were conducted in Arabic (though given that some interviewees are English educated, they tend to use some English words and expressions or be more comfortable in expressing their experience/selves in English) and transcribed in to English for the purpose of easier data analysis. The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' knowledge and permission. Moreover, the interviewees were referred in the research and the data analysis in ways that ensured anonymity and confidentiality (Farthing, 2015). All of the interviews were either conducted in the interviewees' home, or in their business place, or in café or a restaurant that is near their place of residence/business. Therefore, giving me some insights about their socioeconomic status,

their familiar territory, and their usual social/urban practices. I conducted 19 interviews, however, six of them did not fall under the specific criteria of the group I am researching. Four of these six interviewees were from a different socioeconomic class, one has already established his business before 2011, and one resides in Beirut and remotely operates her business that is located in Damascus.

Some of the entrepreneurs have more than one business. So, my sample constitutes 13 entrepreneurs who own in total 19 businesses. Eight of the businesses are located in Hamra (either home-based or official business location), one in Clemenceau, two in Achrafyeh, two in Down town Beirut, one in Hazmieh, one in Metn, one in Aaramoun, one at the Airport road, one in Mar Elias, and one in Al-Zalka. The physical space of the interviews were usually set in the interviewees' familiar settings; where I always gave them the priority to choose where to conduct the interview.

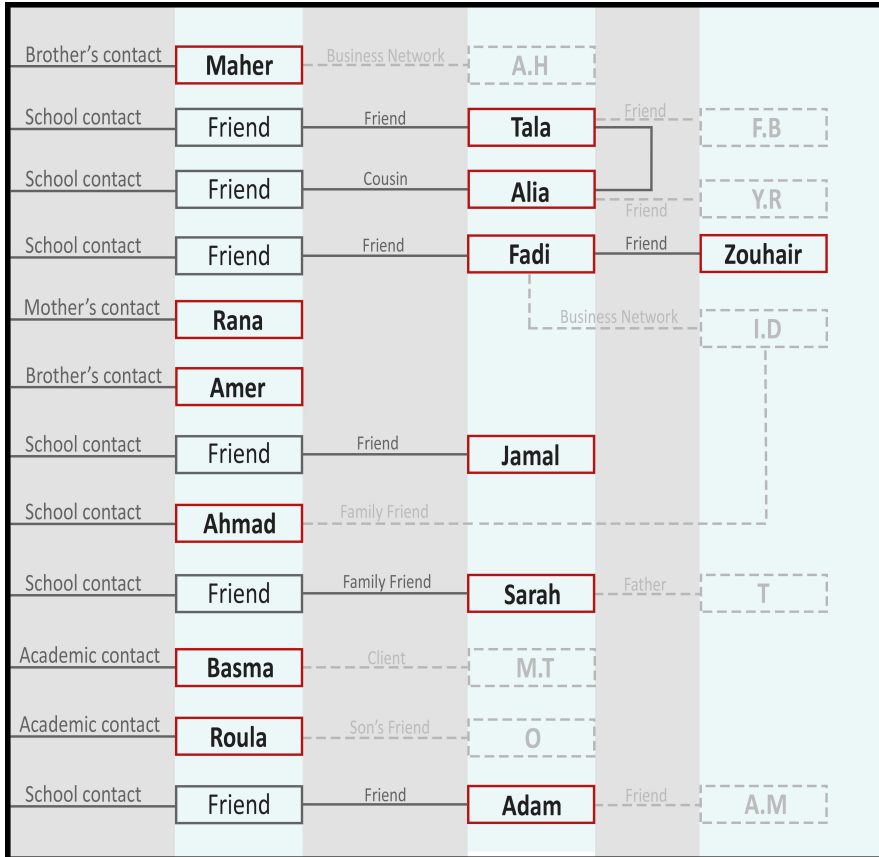
The interviews were qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews as this gives interlocutors more freedom in expressing their views and opinions (Bernard, 2002). My list of questions revolved around four themes: the first explored trajectory and socioeconomic network; the second measured transnational networks; the third assessed business operations; and the fourth assessed urban impact/restructuring. I also had a set of general questions that concerns the type, level, and place of education, the availability of other nationality, residency status in Lebanon, the availability of personal bank accounts, and residence location in Syria and in Beirut and the status of their properties (rented or owned apartments). This set of questions aimed to assess socioeconomic status and class resources (this builds on the methodology used by Harb et al., 2018). The “trajectory and social networks” set of questions focused mainly on prior work experience in Syria, why

did they chose to come to Beirut and establish a business, and whether it was their first choice of relocation or if they moved to other countries before settling in Beirut, and how social networks helped them in establishing the business or overcoming some difficulties. The second set of questions aimed to measure their social and economic transnational networks with their home city and beyond. It mainly inquired if they have other businesses still operating in Syria or other countries, where do their family members live, do they send or receive remittances, if their businesses operate online, if they have clients in their home country and abroad, and if there is any import/export activities or supply lines from/into Lebanon. The third set of questions were about business operations, mainly inquires about type of clientele, operation hours, capital needed to start the business, the scale of operation with regard to number of branches and employees, if they have a partner or not, and about their future plans. As for the urban participation set of questions, it aimed to investigate their social and urban experience in the city. As in their residence and business geographical locations, the reason behind choosing specific areas, the relationship of the business with the area surrounding it (the street, the alleys, and the shops), how the local community perceive their Syrian identity and nationality, if they own a car and how they commute around the city, and finally how they spend their daily activities, and what are the most frequented areas, places, and neighborhoods they spend their leisure time in, and with whom they spend it.

As for locating potential interlocutors, at the start of my fieldwork in spring and summer 2019, I contacted my friends in Damascus and Beirut to get information about potential interviewees and established a list of businesses I already knew are owned by Syrians. Though I am familiar with most of the interlocutors (due to a shared social

network), given the economic and legal environment that surrounds the Syrian entrepreneurs in Lebanon, some did not welcome discussing their business status and operation. In addition, due to their life-style, respondents regularly travel and are not always present in their business location or in Lebanon. On the other hand, some of the interviewees, out of respect and encouragement for academic studies and research, were very enthusiastic, cooperative, and open in discussing their businesses. Even some of them asked if they could read the research when it is done. Also, I tried to follow the snowballing method. However, very few of the interviewees knew someone from their network who has established a business in Beirut, or they referred individuals who were difficult to contact and interview, since they have already closed their businesses and moved out of the city (Figure 1). I was able to overcome these hurdles by reaching out to other Syrians, outside my social networks, who had introduced me to other Syrian entrepreneurs to work with. So, as indicated in the below figure, I had many entry points into this group of Syrians. For almost each one of my research participants was referred to by one individual from my close or extended social network.

Figure 1: Mapping the interviewees. Source: Author.



In the next phase, based on the interviews analysis, I identified crosscutting themes that characterized the dynamics of my sample of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs, which were discussed in Chapter 5. I also relied on mapping and data visualization, as indicated in Chapter 4, to analyze the entrepreneurs' geographical pattern and urban impact.

E. Thesis Content:

The thesis begins with an overview of the Syrians in Lebanon at two eras: the Syrian elites in Lebanon in the 1960s, and Syrians in Lebanon after 2011, as refugees and as, my group of study, "Economic Migrants". I examine the two main perspectives that

the Syrians' economic presence in Lebanon was studied from. I also discuss the main hurdles and difficulties that Syrians face when establishing a business in terms of the Lebanese regulative framework, and the banking and financial system.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of the literature on Migrants and the city, mainly based on the framework that was suggested by Schiller and Caglar (2010), and discuss briefly the several shortcomings that hindered a comprehensive understanding of their mutual relationship. I focus on main concepts; urban restructuring, city's scale, and localities. I also examine the literature that tackle the issue of Migrants Entrepreneurship and discuss the most common theories in it, and show the difference between it and Refugees Entrepreneurship. And lastly, I discuss migrants' dynamics and mechanisms in/with the city: migrants' class and social resources, the city's opportunity structure, and migrants' transnationalism dimension.

In Chapter 4, I profile each of the 13 high-income entrepreneurs, explaining their relation with Beirut, and give general insights about their social, economic, and urban experiences in Beirut. In the second part of the chapter, I dig deeper into their dynamics, structure and mechanisms. As I discuss the entrepreneurs' class resources, trajectories, the localities of their point of departure, point of settlement as in their residency and business geographical locations in Beirut, business operations and categories, and finally their urban and spatial experience in Beirut.

In Chapter 5, I study the mutuality of Beirut and these 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs from entrepreneurial and urban perspectives. I analyze how these 13 entrepreneurs through their national/local networks and transnational networks, along with the factors that was studied in Chapter 4, impact and play a role in the urban restructuring and global positioning of Beirut, and simultaneously how the opportunity structure of Beirut shaped this role and contribution. In the second part, I analyze their local urban dynamics and participation inside of Beirut, and how they impact the inner local urban restructuring of Beirut. As I study the urban experience and incorporation of the 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs from two dimensions: their national identity, and their choice of localities (for business, residence, and leisure), with its associated urban experiences and mobility.

The last chapter, in regard to the thesis findings and propositions, presents policy recommendations and strategic measures that focus on three main aspects: the first set of recommendations would focus on intensifying the local embeddedness of migrants, in order to tackle and enhance the transnational dimension of their economic and entrepreneurial activities. The second addresses the role of Syrian migrant entrepreneurs as *independent* players in the local urban restructuring of Beirut. And the third aspect focus on recommended policies that address the potential global positioning of Beirut.

CHAPTER II

SYRIANS IN LEBANON: AN OVERVIEW

“City air made men free” is a German saying that describes a principle of rules in the medieval period that entails the freeing of serfs/laborers -after a year and a day in the city, from his employer (Ikeda, 2010). This phrase holds in its folds the essence of urban life in cities: social, political and economic liberty. Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, has represented this liberty in all its aspects for its neighboring countries, especially for Syrians who suffered from a closed-market economy since the Baath Party came to power in 1963. Syrians’ perception of Beirut was rightly described by Ghosn (2003, 25), as “the neighbouring-urbanised-liberal-prosperous-francophile-multi-confessional-nonsocialist-Arab-capital.” Beirut was (and still is) for Syrians an economic refuge and an urban extension for their social and economic practices, for leisure and shopping, for academic pursuits, for medical care, for business (import and export), and for financial operation. Lately, Beirut also became a link to the “outer world” market, embassies and airport, and a transit area to meet family members, friends, or business relations who cannot enter Syria.

Given the geographical proximity, the minimal social and cultural differences, and the historical economic and political interconnections, the social and economic presence of Syrians has been established in Lebanon since the 1960s and even before. Kawakibi (2008) and Kiwan (2008), referred to the constant shared “back and forth mobility” of Syrians to Lebanon as “circular migration”. In some cases, “circular migration” becomes embedded in the reality of a geographical area, just as the

relationship between Syria and Beirut (Cassarino, 2008). Cassarino (2008, 3) described this circular migration embeddedness as, “when a form of symbiotic relationship exists between people and territories, when people cohabit with a border which (administratively but not physically) demarcates two territorial entities that are characterized by frequent exchanges of goods, contacts and interactions, when frequent circular movements exist despite and because of the border, then circulation migration is embedded into the lived reality of a territorial area which encompasses two or several countries.” Throughout history, many Syrians (either workers or the business community elite), have left their home country to seek economic opportunities in Lebanon (Yazgan, Utku, & Sirkeci, 2015; Chalcraft 2005, 2006; Mehchy & Doko, 2011) that would provide them with a more prosperous life, especially in the nationalization period during the unification between Syria and Egypt between 1958 and 1961 (Ghosn, 2003; Perthes, 1992; Picard, 2006). These business bourgeoisie’s success is manifested by their presence until this day in many sectors, such as A.R Hourie Enterprises in construction and development, Al-Fakhani supermarket chain, BLOM Bank by the family of Al-Azhari, Bank Bemo Saudi Fransi by the Obegi family, Boubess Group in the hospitality sector, Bonja Group Fine Jewelry, Librairie du Liban Publishers by the Sayegh Family, and many others.

Lebanon has a long history of immigration that has formed what was known as “Paris of the Middle East:” Starting with the series of migration from the mountains to the city, the internal displacement of Lebanese throughout the several wars that Lebanon went through, and the long lasting migration of the Syrians to the economic and social

hub of Lebanon, Beirut. As Portes (2000) argues: “cities do not perish from migration; they change” (Portes 2000, 165). Likewise, Nonini and Ong (2003) consider migration as “part of the larger process of deterritorialization” that impact how the identities of the people of the two countries are constructed. Migrants are thus among the many actors (natives and all forms of foreigners) that contribute to the spatial, economic, cultural, social and political production of cities.

1. Syrian elites in Lebanon in the early 1960s:

The Syrian entrepreneurial investments in Lebanon have been presence long since the late 1950s. Going back in history, one of the dramatic consequences of the land reform of 1958 and the nationalization of 1961 in Syria, was the excessive immigration of the business community (the elite), or what was referred to before the 1970s as the “national bourgeoisie” (Perthes 1992, 207), and their capital to Lebanon. Picard (2006, 7) described this wave of immigration as a “result of a deep divorce between Syria’s new revolutionary leaders and the entrepreneurial class.” According to Direction Centrale de la Statistique, the number of Syrians has doubled from 129,509 on 1 January 1963 to 255,264 on 1 January 1969 (Beirut: Ministère du Plan 1969). Moreover, the capital that was transferred to Lebanon was enormous; according to an official report published by the New York Times in 1966, the Syrian capital that was smuggled to Lebanon in the period between 1961 and 1965 was estimated to be more than \$200 million (The New York Times, 1966).

Several studies that tackled the migration of the Syrian capitalists to Lebanon in the late 1950s indicated that the Syrian entrepreneurs elite were privileged with certain

pre-migration business proficiency, financial capacity and excellent education they were able to take advantage of the economic space and opportunities that Lebanon offered and establish their businesses or invest mainly in deterritorialized activities such as trade and banking (Picard, 2006; Ghosn, 2003; Perthes, 1992). In 1970, Mansour (1999) reported that out of 70 bank managers in Lebanon, 22 of them were Syrians. Picard (2006) indicated that as the Syrian entrepreneurs elite were at a high degree of intellect and business experience, they were “smoothly” and “rapidly” embedded in the economic and social realms of Lebanon, and especially in the elite community. However, this group of Syrians maintained a certain level of anonymity, as they didn’t indulge in public practices like politics, and they were hardly mentioned in the press (ibid, 10), unlike the Palestinian elites at the same period (Ben Mahmoud, 2002). Also, at that time, the Syrian entrepreneurs community also had an urban impact on the city, where they settled in specific neighborhoods in Beirut. For instance, the wealthiest were concentrated in Hay al-Sarasqa; the Aleppians in Badaro; and Ras Beirut was mostly the choice of the Damascus Sunnis (Ghosn, 2003).

Furthermore, this high-end class was not banned from or threatened in Syria, as they chose to settle in Lebanon “...not because their survival was at stake, but because they wanted to regain the liberal atmosphere that had sustained their past prosperity” (Picard 2006, 10), they maintained trans-border networks with their home country, Syria, either economic, or social, or familial (ibid.). The trading trans-borders networks between the two countries significantly thrived. For the restrictive regulations that were imposed by the socialists regime in Syria strengthened the informal and illicit channels of

import/export trade relation between Syria and Lebanon (Ghosn, 2003). Also, the banking sector in Lebanon recognized the asset that the Syrian capital's circuit could bring to the Lebanese banks, so the banks "fervently filled the Syrian financial services vacuum, housing commercial transactions and managing financial portfolios of Syrian clients" (ibid., 34).

It is evident that this Syrian business community, i.e. the bourgeoisie that has immigrated in the late 1950s has gained economic power and social status in the Lebanese elite community. They were naturalized and granted the Lebanese citizenship. And their success is manifested by their presence until this day in many sectors as mentioned in the earlier section. Considering the similarities in the political and economic circumstances, the social and economic characteristics of the immigrant group, and the motive behind their immigration, we can possibly view that the immigration wave of the Syrian capitalists from Syria into Lebanon in the late 1950s as a parallel wave of the post 2011 migration of the high-income Syrians to Beirut.

The 2011 uprising of the Syrian people developed into a full-fledged war that led to a vast destruction in the social, economic, and urban infrastructure of the country. This was accompanied by massive displacement from various regions in Syria to the nearest havens (Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon). Amnesty International called it in 2015 "the worst refugee crisis since World War II" (Amnesty International, 2015). Out of the 6.7 million Syrian refugees that fled their country (UNHCR), neighboring Lebanon has hosted more than 1.5 million of them who scattered across its provinces, though only 950.000 are officially registered with the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2019).

2. Syrians as “Refugees”:

Refugees (*laji'in*), are the least privileged category in terms of access to social and financial resources, and their legal status that hinders their access to means of livelihood. They mainly settled in poorer rural areas because these were accessible and affordable: more than 60% of the registered refugees reside in the impoverished areas of Bekaa and North Lebanon, while only 25% reside in Beirut (UNHCR, 2019). Indeed, Lebanon has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world (Lebanon Support, 2016). Only 17% of these refugees are settled in Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs), as the rest resorted to the renting market (Ashkar, 2015). According to a study done by AUB's Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs, the yearly sum of the rent payments done by the Syrian refugees is 387 million USD, i.e. a rate of around 1.5 million USD per day (Yassin & Khodor, 2018).

Based on a bilateral agreement between Syria and Lebanon after the Lebanese civil war, Syrians had the freedom to reside and carry out economic activities in Lebanon (Picard, 2006). However, in late 2014, the Lebanese government adopted *the Policy Paper on Syrian Displacement* that imposed serious restrictions on Syrians' access to work and altered their legal status (Lebanon Support, 2016; Council of Ministers Minutes of Meeting, 2014). These measures labeled Syrians refugees “migrants” (*muhajir*) and deprived them from their right to work. According to the directives that were introduced by the General Directorate of General Security in late 2014 (<http://general-security.gov.lb/ar/posts/33>), if Syrian refugees are able to secure a sponsor (*kafeel*) and a work permit, their legal status is changed to “migrant workers” (Errighi & Griesse 2016:

11). This policy bounds the role of the “migrant” Syrians to the labor market, where their employment is restricted to “third sector jobs:” construction, agriculture and cleaning services (Decree 197 of the Ministry of Labor). However, because of the bureaucratic hurdles and the excessive costs that refugees face when formalizing their legal status or registering their businesses, many end up employed informally or investing in micro-small businesses that are not legally registered. According to a survey done in 2013-2014, 23% of the informal firms that were established before 2011 were managed by Syrians, whereas after 2011 with the refugees’ influx the number dramatically increased to reach 66% (2013–14 Lebanon Enterprise Survey on the Informal Sector). As reported by the Lebanon’s Statistical Yearbook in 2013 (<http://www.cas.gov.lb>), out of 50,000 first-time applied work permits for Syrians, only 508 were given and out of 141,700 existing permits only 725 were renewed. Consequently, as The International Labor Organization (ILO) states, 92% of the economically active Syrians work in the “third-sector jobs” informally without work contract (ILO 2014, 14). Additionally, despite the fact that the Syrian workers tend to work more hours per week than Lebanese (50 hours per week for Syrian male workers against the 48 hours average for Lebanese), they get paid less than the national minimum wage of LBP 675,000 and accept to work in worse work conditions (ILO, 2014). As Malecki and Ewers (2007) argue, many urban economies depend on the presence of this large population of migrant waged workers. This also corresponds with Schiller and Caglar’s (2010) findings, that show that the local and national presence of some industries and institutions rely on hiring migrant workers who are more flexible and accept much lower salaries, indicating how “migrant labor plays a crucial and varied role in making cities competitive regionally, nationally, and globally”

(Schiller, and Caglar 2010, 12).

However, in order to understand the whole picture, we also need to consider that not all refugees were officially registered, and not all Syrians in Lebanon are refugees.

3. Syrians as “Economic Migrants”:

Indeed, political turbulence and massive destruction were the main reasons that led many Syrians to flee their home country. However, for some affluent Syrians, economic motivations triggered their decision to leave (Yazgan et al., 2015). Many scholars urge to differentiate between an “economic migrant” and a refugee (Wauters and Lambrecht, 2006; Cortes, 2004). Yazgan et al. argue that “...most economic migrants have some story of difficulty driving them to other countries whilst all refugees have an obvious economic cause along with the immediate threat they are escaping from” (Yazgan et al. 2015, 182).

Given my positionality as a high-income Syrian individual, whose house in Damascus is located in one of the central neighborhoods, al-Malki neighborhood next to Abou-Roummaneh, I am well informed about the political situation in it and the social structure of the community that inhabits these high-income neighborhoods. Indeed, inhabitants of these two neighborhoods generally consist of old damascene rich families (Salamandra 2004, 26) who are from the upper classes, the high society (*al-akaber*) (ibid., 26). As Figure 2 shows, all the clashes occurred at the outskirts of Damascus (Eastern Ghouta, Daryah, Duma, Qaboun, Babbila, etc.), and none were in the central neighborhood, such as Malki, Abou-Roummaneh, Kafarsouseh, Mazzeh Villat, etc. This is mainly because most of the governmental centers, houses of senior political figures,

and security and intelligence buildings along with the office and house of the Syrian president are located in these central neighborhoods. Therefore, besides the discomfort and the general insecurity of the war at the outskirts of the city, residents in these middle-to-high income neighborhoods were not directly affected by the clashes. No physical destruction occurred in the center of Damascus, and since this community's business locations and leisure destinations are also located within the central area, they did not experience major mobility restrictions.

So, when members of this Damascene community decided to relocate to Beirut for a period of time (and my family was one of them), the immediate threat was not a main reason guiding their decision. Also, these Syrians maintained strong connections with their neighborhoods in Syria and with their familial, social, and economic network in their home country and beyond. As stated by Docquier and Machado (2015) (as cited in David, et al., 2018) "the impact of refugees is different from that of migrants in terms of timing of arrival and of flow composition." Thus, we can differentiate between this group of high-income Syrians' characteristics, economic functioning, and impact on the host country, and the less privileged groups and consider them, to a large extent, "economic migrants" rather than refugees or displaced.

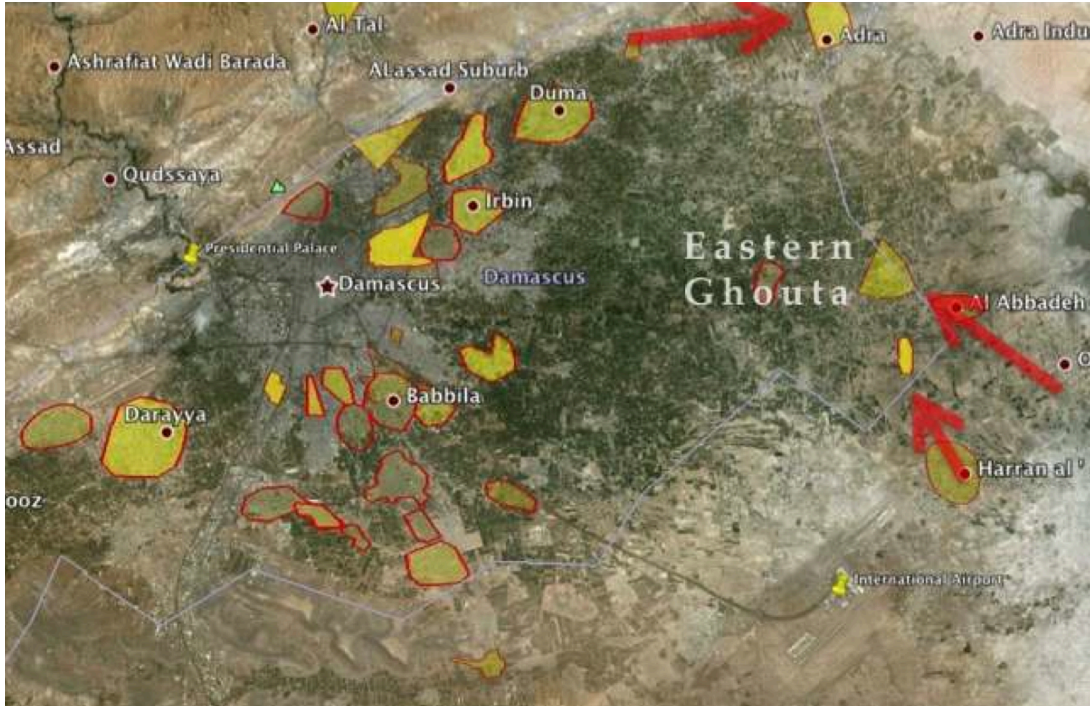


Figure 2: Map of the clashes at the outskirts of Damascus (Source: https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/DamascusReport.pdf)

As argued above, high-income Syrians are people who had the privilege of having the options of staying home or to relocate with enough social and financial capital either to start over, or to create an extension of their social and economic life in Syria. This category of Syrians has more resources than refugees that provide them with more potential to integrate in the economic, social, and cultural realm of the host country. As Li and Teixeira (2007) state, "...contemporary immigrants— especially those with higher educations and/or financial resources have the capacity to quickly integrate and transform destination countries at a much faster rate" (Li & Teixeira 2007, 96).

The first wave of Syrians into Beirut, in 2012-2013, consisted mostly of these upper classes that were able to afford residing in hotels or renting relatively luxurious

apartments, cars, monthly expenses, i.e. these classes were able to sustain an affluent life style (Barnard, 2012). Their impact on the real state market was evident. As in 2013, the rent of small apartments increased 30-40% due to the demand of Syrians (Ohrstrom, 2013). The Daily Star interviewed a broker in Vertica properties who estimated that 20% of the high-income Syrians were able to afford luxury apartments that ranged between \$50,000 to \$70,000 per year in Solidere and Caracas, while the rest of this group were looking for apartments of 100-250 square meters in the range for \$18,000 to \$30,000 per year (ibid., 2013).

Moreover, according to many Syrian reports (<http://www.syriasteps.com>), the Syrian capital that was transferred and smuggled into the Lebanese banks were estimated in 2017 to be USD 20 billion on the average, though they were not able to invest it due to law restrictions that the Lebanese government imposed (Eawiss, 2017). As reported by Syria Steps in 2018, Syrians rank as the second largest foreign investors in real estate markets in Lebanon in 2017, after Saudis (www.syria-report.com). The economic impact of the wealthy Syrians was mainly assessed through the real estate market, renting prices and apartment purchase, while their business investments was difficult to examine “since an opacity veils real-estate investments in Lebanon” (Ashkar, 2015). High-income Syrian investors either operated as silent associates with a Lebanese partner, or invested off the record (ibid. 2015), or, based on my observations and interviews, established cosmopolitan type of businesses that do not reference their Syrian identity (art gallery, delivery service, hand-made products, startups accelerator, etc.). Accordingly, it is difficult to trace and locate the high-income Syrians’ businesses, unless the researcher already have access to their community and its socioeconomic structure.

The focus of the literature on Syrian migrants has been mostly on refugees and labor workers (Fawaz, 2017; David, et al., 2018; Berti, 2015; Chalcraft, 2005, 2006, 2008; Seeberg, 2012; Thorleifsson, 2014; Dionigi, 2017; Yassin, 2019), given they are a new and the most visible phenomena in the city, hence are still considered as an alien from the cities' localities. Thus, the Syrians' economic and social incorporation in Lebanon was tackled mainly from two perspectives: either examining the refugees' informal economic activities (Yassin, & Chamaa, 2016) or the refugees' micro-small businesses (Bizri, 2017; Harb, Kassem, & Najdi, 2018; Najdi, 2018; Alexandre et al., 2019; Yassine, 2019). For instance, Bizri (2017) through a single case study in the Bekaa Valley of a Syrian refugee restaurant owner, investigates how the refugees' entrepreneurial business rely on their social capital. Along with the five attributes¹ the author identified, the findings show that refugee entrepreneurs rely heavily on their social capital, more than a mainstream entrepreneur does. As for Harb's et.al. (2017) research, it studied the entrepreneurial activities of middle-income Syrians in Lebanon, especially in Hamra Street where they are more evident. The research studies the experience of these business-owners and the obstacles they face when establishing their business and concludes that they have a complementary positive spatial and economic impact on the city. The research indicated two main obstacles they face: the institutional framework, and constraints in the opportunity structure. They identified four categories of Syrian businesses; the struggling, the coping, the comfortable, and the successful. Accordingly, their impact on the city differs: while the comfortable and the successful business-owners had a wider access to the city of Beirut and Greater Beirut, the coping and struggling

¹ Bizri (2017) identified five entrepreneurial attributes of immigrant refugees: "a 'one way- ahead' attitude, a pseudo family business perception, collective bootstrapping, a distinct network structure, and opportunity-seizing proliferation."

business-owners' movements mainly revolved around their home and business locations.

As indicated by Najdi (2018), Syrian refugees face many challenges in establishing their businesses in Beirut. The complex institutional framework and the constrained opportunity structure are a main hurdle in their business establishment. However, their social network with both Syrians and Lebanese enable them to access economic opportunities of the Lebanese market (ibid., 2018).

Regarding the difficulties that are related to the regulative framework and the banking and financial system, according to a survey conducted by the World Bank in 2017 with Syrian investors and business owners in Lebanon and other countries, Syrians business-owners indicated (Figure 3) that one of the major obstacles they face is the difficulty in officially registering their businesses or getting a trademark (30%), as well as 30% in terms of "restrictions in the industrial and professional sector", though the survey doesn't explicitly specify what type of restrictions are imposed. As for the obstacles regarding the financial operation, 67% reported that the main hurdle is opening a bank account (Figure 4), whereas in Turkey, where Syrians have established many large businesses and industries, only 9% reported such an obstacle.

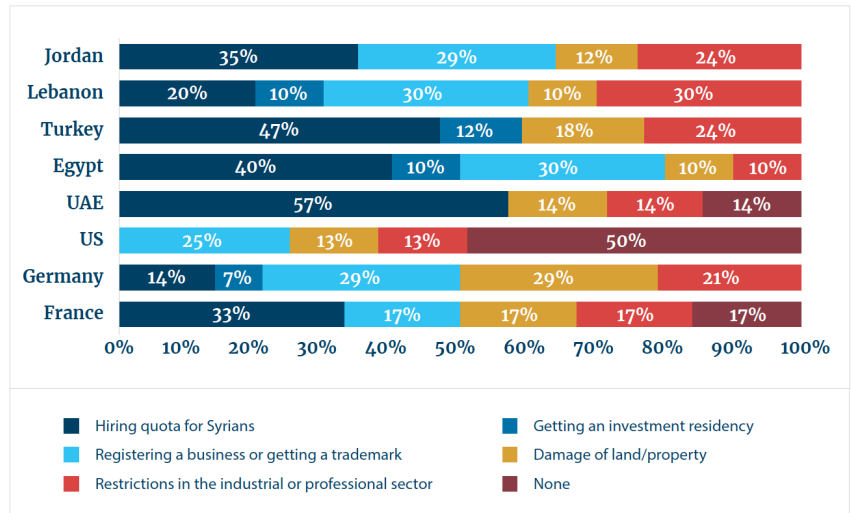


Figure 3- Obstacles Syrians face when establishing a business in Lebanon. Source: Word Bank, (2019). *The mobility of displaced Syrians: An economic and social analysis*. Washington, DC: World Bank

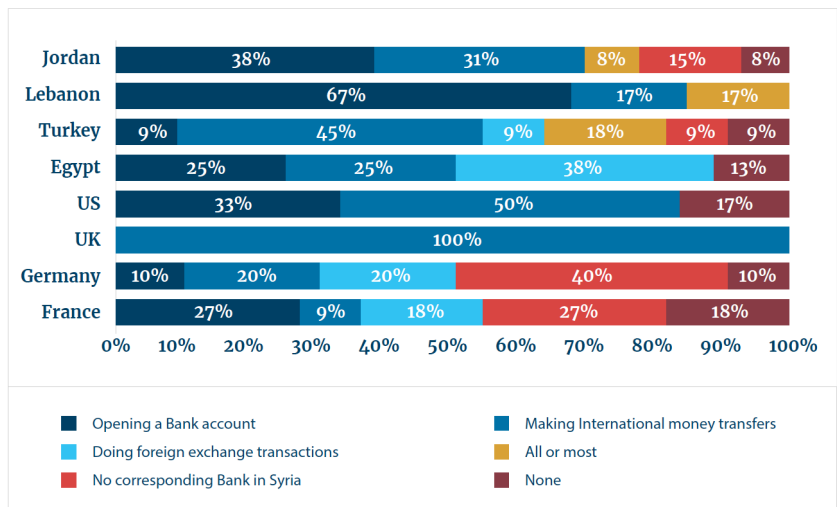


Figure 4- Obstacles around financial transaction that Syrians face. Source: Word Bank, (2019). *The mobility of displaced Syrians: An economic and social analysis*. Washington, DC: World Bank

In an interview with a branch manager of one of the very-well known private banks in Lebanon, Mr. Youssef² indicated that in order for a Syrians (or any foreigner) to open a bank account, they should provide the bank with; 1) any type of residency (permanent or temporary), 2) along with their residence address, and 3) the reason why

² The name of the interviewee is anonymized.

they wish to open an account. However, there are some exceptions where foreigners “...with a lot of money and well known reputation” were able to open accounts without residency or pre-conditions. According to him, it is “very easy” for a Syrian to open an account in LBP. However, the chief hurdle that Syrians face is the issue of Dollars. Syrians are not allowed to open an individual account in USD because of the embargo that was implied on them; Syrians are allowed to open account only in LBP or Euros. In “special exceptions”, Syrians can open a personal bank account in USD only if they provided the bank with a proof that their source of income is not related to Syria in any way, and their income is in USD from Lebanon or any other country other than Syria, thus they need a USD account. Mr. Youssef couldn't stress enough on this issue; for Syrians to open a bank account, whether personal or for their company, they should prove that their source of income is not related to Syria from any mean.

The same procedure applies on opening bank accounts for companies. Though there are some types of companies, such as (LLC) that is governed by the Legislative Decree No.35 (August 5, 1967) that allows 100% foreign ownership and management. However, in the last 4-5 years for a Syrian to establish a company the larger share of the company should be owned by Lebanese holders (49% Syrian share, 51% Lebanese share). Mr. Youssef stated, “It is really impossible” to register a company with only Syrian shareholders, “you have only 1% possibility to get an approval for such company. We don't approve on opening such companies anymore, that's why you have to have a Lebanese partner.” The bank would moreover do an account check on all of the partners included in the company to check if they have any source of relation with Syria. If the

bank tracked any capital activities with Syria, “they would not open the bank account completely.”

Moreover, the Lebanese law abides foreign investors with a capital contribution not less than 67.000 USD, along with the employment quota that requires hiring three Lebanese employees (in relative to the company’s size) and registers them at the NSSF, the National Social Security Fund (<https://investinlebanon.gov.lb>).

Regarding the regulatory framework of the most common types of companies (LLC and JSC), the minimum capital to deposit in order to establish a “LLC” (Limited Liability Company) is five million LBP, and for “JSC” (Joint Stock Company) is 30 million LBP, whereas for the “Individual Foundation” there is no minimum capital. The Lebanese law forbidden any commercial activities over personal accounts to ensure that citizens are paying their commercial activities’ taxes, since “if someone does commercial activities on his personal account he would only pay taxes for the *maliyeh*.” Thus, the government obliged individuals who want to start a firm by themselves to register it under the name of “Individual Foundation”. However, according to Mr. Youssef, since 2014, all foreigners, including Syrians, are not allowed anymore to establish an “Individual Foundation”.

Lastly, Syrians (and foreigners) can acquire a *permanent* residency based on their personal bank accounts; namely “Bank Guarantee” (*Kafale Masrafyeh*) type of residency. However, this type of residency does not authorize the applicant to work; they must sign a pledge not to work. For a six-months type of residency, the foreigner should deposit a

minimum 300 million LBP and freeze for more than three months. The bank then would sign a paper directed to the General Security in which they guarantee the foreigner. However, not all residencies require such minimum amount of deposited money. The “Work Residency” visa, although it is not easy to acquire, is granted for foreigners who want to establish their own business or are employees in Lebanese firms, and it has four types of categories: Class A, costs 1800000 LBP, Class B costs 1200000 LBP, Class C costs 400000 LBP, and Class D, costs 300000 LBP.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how the literature tackled the relationship of migrants and the city from an urban as well an entrepreneurial lens. I will also study migrants’ dynamics and mechanisms in/with the city: migrants’ class and social resources, the city’s opportunity structure, and migrants’ transnationalism dimension.

CHAPTER III

MIGRATION AND THE CITY: TWO SIDES OF A COIN³

“Cities that seek their place in the sun in the new international economic order must also be prepared for dramatic changes in the composition of their populations.”
(Portes 2000, 167)

A considerable amount of literature and studies has tackled the issue of migrants’ economic, social, and spatial impact on the city. Though some have acknowledged “local context” as a strong factor in determining the degree of social and economic incorporation of migrants and the role migrants play in urban transformation, they bounded their unit of analysis to either a specific group’s composition, ethnicity, and nationality, or to a defined scale (streets, neighborhoods, etc.) (Hatziprokopiou & Frangopoulos, 2016; Kohlbacher & Reeger, 2016; Hall & Datta, 2010). For instance, Ostertag (2016) investigates the impact of “temporary migration” on the urban environment, whereby creating what she defined as “transitory community hubs” in a neighborhood in Singapore, Little India. She considers transient migrants as agents of the urban transformation processes: the daily presence and practices of the immigrants in the study area, has led to social and economic revitalization. To deliver the demands of foreign workers (transient migrants), a new supply market started to emerge, ethnic-focused business, thereby creating a new retail mixity in the area (Ostertag, 2016). In another article, Balampanidis & Polyzos (2016) argue that, on one hand, immigrants have a role in urban transformation, and on the other, the socio-spatial characteristics of a space also define the immigrants’ contribution to it. However, few have explored the

³ Portes, A. 2000. “Immigration and the Metropolis: Reflections on Urban History.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 1 (2): 153–175.

relationship between migration and the city as interdependent, as in shaping-and-be-shaped relation (Portes, 2000; Schiller & Caglar, 2010, 2009; Hatziprokopiou, Frangopoulos, & Montagna, 2016).

Indeed, the insufficient analysis of the relationship between migrants and cities are due to several shortcomings. Schiller and Caglar (2010) discuss three main weaknesses in the relation between migration and urban studies. First, the questionable theorization of the concept of “locality”: most literature considers cities merely as a context or a background, disregarding their interactive and dynamic structure. Second, most scholars do not fully acknowledge the transnationality of cities: they do not consider the transnational connections that cities globally share with each other, or in other words, the city’s global positioning. And thirdly, they dismiss the role of migrants as active agents in the restructuring and repositioning of the cities, whereas they bound their role to the “labor force” and consider them only as “unskilled or talented laborers”. In addition to these shortcomings, there are two biases that seriously hinder a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between migration and cities: methodological nationalism and the ethnic lens.

The first bias is methodological nationalism, which is an orientation that bounds its analysis of the social and historical processes to the borders of a single nation-state (Smith, 1983; Schiller and Caglar, 2010; Schiller, 2014; Wimmer and Schiller, 2002). In this approach, “nation state” is the natural unit of analysis (Aninina et al., 2012). The city’s actors are divided into “natives vs. foreigners”, and these foreigners are perceived

as either “excluded” or “included” in the social, cultural, and urban realm of the hosting country. The framework assumes that natives uniformly share common social norms, and foreigners (migrants), for the sheer fact they have the same national background, are homogenous in matters of culture, norms, achievements, values and identity (Schiller & Caglar, 2010; 2013). “This perspective on culture and membership is a product of 20th- and 21st-century nation-state building processes. These processes legitimize a political ideology that portrays individuals as having only one country and one identity” (Glick et al. 2013, 496). Moreover, this framework disregards that there are globally shared norms, experiences, and values between migrants and natives through social, economic, and political processes, network, movements, and institutions that extend across nation states borders (Schiller & Caglar, 2010). For instance, Shalit (2019) states that the’ “city-level attitude” of natives towards immigrants differs from their “state-level” attitude. From a “city-level” attitude, natives consider common norms and values with immigrants, from which they look at them as “city-zens” (Shalit 2019, 272). Whereas, from a “state-level” attitude, natives look at immigrants as a threat to their rights that are provided by the “state” or within the “state’s” borders, such as employment, education, and housing. Admittedly, opposition to massive immigration is found among different social and economic classes: the lower income class (workers) see in immigrants a threat to their livelihood, while for the middle-class, immigrants are disturbing and crowding their urban and physical environment, and elites welcome immigrants’ presence as long as their numbers do not form a political threat (Freeman, 1995; Portes, 2000).

The second bias that impedes a comprehensive analysis of migration and cities is the

ethnic lens approach, that privileges “ethnic group” or “ethnic communities” as a unit of analysis. This approach considers only one incorporation pathway of migrants in the city: their ethnicity, and focuses on the centrality of the ethno-cultural characteristics of migrants in analyzing their economic activities and incorporation (Schiller and Caglar, 2010, 2013). Advocates of this framework, dismiss the fact that migrants build non-ethnic social transnational connections, within and across localities, based on economic, religious, professional, and political networks (Schiller and Caglar, 2010, 2013; Schiller, Çaglar & Guldbrandsen, 2006). As a consequence, wider and broader transnational restructuring processes are overshadowed.

Several scholars stress the importance of the historical economic and political relations between the “hosting” and “sending” cities (Portes, 2000; Schiller and Caglar, 2010), as well as the role of the city’s collective memory on immigrants (Schiller and Caglar, 2010) in determining migrants’ level of impact on the urban restructuring and global positioning of cities. Portes (2000) narrates the ongoing historical construction and destruction processes that cities go through, in which migrants play an integral role. He explicitly states the strong relations between cities and migration: “migration and the city can be viewed as two sides of the same coin, having built and accompanied each other's development over the centuries leading to the contemporary global system” (Portes 2000, 154). He also examines the relationship between migration and cities from two main points. Firstly, historical growth and expansion processes of the cities determine migratory patterns and flows. Each city has different histories and experiences and has a different global positioning. Thus, migrants’ roles, possibilities of incorporation,

positioning, and transnational connections are different in each city. As Hiebert (1999) also shows, migrants' role as "mediators" in the urban local/global restructuring of the city, differs according to each city's uniqueness (Hiebert, 1999). Secondly, migrants are active agents in the local and global urban restructuring of cities (Portes, 2000).

All these scholars are advocates of considering the mutuality of the relationship between cities and migrants, where cities are shaped by and shape migrants' incorporation patterns on the micro/local scale, and urban restructuring on the macro/global scale. Accordingly, this perspective approaches cities as flexible and dynamic entities, where the issue of scale matters.

1- Cities as "Localities" and Issues of Scale:

Exploring this dialectic process of understanding cities as shaping and being shaped requires developing a nuanced understanding of cities as "localities" and rethinking the concept of "city scale" and its utilities. Schiller and Caglar (2010) criticize world city studies that propose economic indices as the exclusive determinant of the city scale (Beaverstock, Smith, & Taylor 2000). They underscore how the flows of social, financial, and cultural capital (Schiller & Caglar, 2010), changes across the population's composition (Schiller & Caglar, 2010; Portes, 2000), and how the transnational networks of natives and migrants alike (Schiller, 2014; Schiller & Caglar, 2010; Li & Teixeira, 2007; Faist, 2010), are among many other processes that impact the dynamic scale of the city and its global repositioning. Schiller and Caglar (2010, 72) note: "in utilizing and developing this perspective, we approach scale not as fixed nested socio-spatial units of

territory or governance, but as dynamic and relative and fluid repositionings of territorially-based forms of organization within globe-spanning hierarchies of power.” As such, all cities can “compete on a global terrain [/scale]”, whether they are labeled as “global” or not (Schiller & Caglar 2011, 74). From a “world” theory perspective, Faist (2010: 1669) argues that the world system is a “...set of mechanisms that redistributes resources from the periphery to the core.” In that sense, the “core” is the developed world, and the “periphery” is the underdeveloped world. However, the “core” and the “periphery” are not in a fixed status with fixed geographic areas, they are rather dynamic and relative to each other (Faist, 2010). Hence, a “core” to a “periphery” could be a “periphery” to a different “core”. For instance, as Salzbrunn explains (2016), the neighborhood of Harlem in Manhattan represents a focal center of the globalized housing markets for the Senegalese immigrants. The neighborhood hosts the most important real estates agencies that sell houses in Dakar, Senegal, for the Senegalese migrants that live in Manhattan. Accordingly, Harlem has undergone a “rescaling” process that changed its global positioning and scale and made it a powerful trade platform/ business hub from which Senegalese transactions/ capital flows directly to the Senegalese localities (Salzbrunn, 2016). Therefore, immigrants are active agents in the neoliberal restructuring processes that lead to the rescaling, downscaling, and upscaling of cities.

2- Cities and Migration:

Schiller and Caglar’s (2010) believe that cities are neither bounded units of territory nor passive containers, rather they are flexible and dynamics entities, and subject to constant changes, and thus migrants’ impact on each city differs depending on the city’s

particular economic, social, cultural and political structure (localities). Their analysis “demonstrates that migrants are residents of cities and actors within them, understanding that to be a resident of a city is to live within, contribute to, and contest globe-spanning processes that shape urban economy politics, and culture” (Schiller & Caglar 2010, 19)

This thesis will build on Schiller and Caglar’s (2010) analysis that acknowledges this dynamic relation between migrants and cities, and suggests a framework that is two fold. On the one hand, it stresses the importance of “*locality*”, which embeds three processes:

- First, the continuous processes of capital formation, destruction, and restructuring that are based locally but connected globally.
- Second, the hierarchical positioning of the city’s “locality” within and across nation-states borders.
- Third, the neoliberal restructuring and rescaling processes that migrants as scale-makers and place-makers play an active role in (Schiller & Caglar; 2010).

On the other hand, because “migrants become scale makers as they labor, produce wealth, raise families, and create and reproduce social institutions, thereby contributing to the economic, social, cultural, and political life of their cities” (Schiller & Caglar 2010, 12), migrants are also scale makers and place makers, and have multiple forms of agency through which they become active agents in the neoliberal restructuring of cities. Authors identified five ways through which this active agency is achieved: i) as part of the labor force, ii) as historical agents, iii) as agents of neoliberal restructuring (gentrification), iv)

through facilitating privatization and neoliberal subjectivity, and lastly v) as agents of new social visions.

3- Migrant Entrepreneurship:

There is an extensive amount of literature that studies entrepreneurship among city's new-comers; refugees entrepreneurship (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2005; Gold, 1988, 1992; Jacobsen, 2005), ethnic entrepreneurship (Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006; Kloosterman & van der Leun, 1999; Phizacklea, & Ram, 1996; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990), returnee entrepreneurship (Kenney et al., 2013; Rath, 2006), and diaspora entrepreneurship (Newland & Tanaka, 2010; Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013), while migrants entrepreneurship was left relatively underrepresented in the literature or was not explicitly differentiated from the wider group of immigrants.

David et al. (2018), in their study of the economic impact of the Syrian crisis on the neighboring countries, argue that “while migrants arrive at a slower pace, obey to market and administrative selection criteria and have the time to integrate into the host society, refugees’ arrivals are much more important in numbers, they happen over shorter periods of time and they are generally perceived and treated as being transitory” (David et al., 2018). The time issue, whether it is long term or short term residency depending on the regulative framework that is available for refugees and migrants in the hosting city, is thus also important in determining the degree of migrants’/refugees’ incorporation in the social and economic context of the host city, hence the social and economic activities they might indulge in (Collins 2012, 321). For refugees, due to their “temporary” legal

residency status, face more restrictions and limitations in their daily life than migrants who have access to permanent and more flexible legal residency status. Wauters and Lambrecht (2006) emphasize the importance of differentiating between *refugees' entrepreneurship* and *immigrants' entrepreneurship* when analyzing and studying their impact and functioning. They indicated several differences between a refugee and an immigrant; their social network, the relation to their home country, psychological conditions that might hamper their self employment, access to the host country opportunity structure, and limited skills and qualifications (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006; 510). Moreover, while immigrants' entrepreneurship is market-opportunity-driven, necessity is what drives refugees' entrepreneurship (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Thus, given these differences, the functioning of these two types of entrepreneurships is distinctive from each other and must be analyzed separately (Bernard, 1976). For instance, immigrant entrepreneurs have more resources at their disposal, regarding human capital and financial capabilities (Panayiotopoulos, 2006), more grounded social network in the host society (Gold, 1992), more exposed to the institutional and administrative framework (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006), have more access to the host country's opportunity structure (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011), and have more chance to build transnational networks with their home country and beyond (Portes et al., 2002). All these factors affect the nature of entrepreneurial activities and its impact on the economic realm of the host city, and thus must be studied separately.

The most common theoretical lens in studying migrant entrepreneurship phenomena is the "mixed embeddedness" approach, which was introduced by Kloosterman and Rath in the late 1990s. This approach offers a framework that addresses

the relationship between the resources (social, cultural, and human capital) of the migrant entrepreneurs and the different kind of available opportunities that could be exploited by them (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001, 2018). In other words, this approach stress the importance of understanding the socio-economic context and the “openings” that it offers for immigrants to become entrepreneurs, “these openings are not everywhere the same; they are contingent on the wider socio-economic context. Immigrant entrepreneurs and their social embeddedness should be understood within the concrete context of markets and, hence, opportunity structure” (Kloosterman & Rath 2001, 10). Furthermore, scholars have called for more research that examines the social structures and processes that shape the entrepreneurial activities of individual migrant and their transnational dimension (Drori, Honig, & Wright, 2009).

4- Dynamics of Migrants in/with Cities:

In order to understand the impact of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs on the *local* urban restructuring and the *global* rescaling processes of the city of Beirut, this thesis will study migrants as dynamics of inner resources and local and transnational networks, and the city as localities and opportunity structures. So, in what follows, I will examine the literature on migrants’ *class resources*-which compose the structure of their dynamics, then I will study *the opportunity structure* of cities, and lastly, their global dimension that is their *transnational networks*.

A- Class Resources:

Some scholars urge to widen the scope and consider other factors besides ethnic forms of economic and social relations between immigrants and natives (Glick et al. 2013, Rath and Kloosterman, 2000, Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000). For instance, Min and Bozorgmehr in their comparative study between two migrants groups, Iranians and Koreans, in Los Angeles, explored the role of ethnic resources vs. class resources in determining or facilitating entrepreneurial performance. Class resources are in two forms: financial capabilities and human capital. Other scholars have expanded class resources definition to include cultural capital and social capital (Becker, 1995; Light and Gold, 2000). Many scholars have attributed the success of migrants' entrepreneurship to their "human capital" that is defined as their education and work experience (Min & Bozorgmehr 2000, 710; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002, 288; Kloosterman, 2010). Though it is hard to find groups with either pure class resources or ethnic resources (Light & Gold, 2000), Min and Bozorgmehr indicate that "...Class resources such as high education and access to financial capital are more important than ethnic resources in establishing and running large businesses that require sophisticated managerial skills and a large amount of capital" (Min & Bozorgmehr 2000, 710). Class resources are indicated by the migrants' level of education, English fluency, dependence on personal savings for capitalization, and prior business experience. Whereas, ethnic resources include the dependence on relatives, co-ethnic employees and costumers, the use of private loans and rotating credit associations, and the purchase of business from co-ethnic owners (Min & Bozorgmehr 2000, 711). Furthermore, Portes et al. suggest the correlation of migrants' "human capital" (education and work experience) with their entrepreneurial transnational

activities (Portes et al. 2002, 288). In other words, the higher the human capital of the entrepreneurs is, the higher the chance to have transnational connections and networks.

B- Opportunity Structure:

Opportunity structures are locality-specific, and in a capitalist societies, market-specific (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). According to Kloosterman and Rath (2001), in order for migrants to enter the market' opportunity structure they need to have the efficient resources, and especially the financial one. Each city offers a different opportunity structure, thus migrants' role and contribution varies accordingly (Räuchle & Schimiz, 2019; Schiller & Caglar, 2010). Opportunity structure is defined as the "...variations in regulatory regimes, local infrastructures and possibilities for entrepreneurial activities, employment, education, housing, and entrance into local political and cultural life" (Schiller & Caglar 2010, 3), which are also a product of the macro/global restructuring processes that cities goes through. Accordingly, the relationship between migrants and "downscaled" cities (underdeveloped cities) differ from that with "upscaled" cities (developed cities) that its structural positioning offers greater access to economic opportunities and more diverse openings in its opportunity structure (Glick Schiller & Çaglar, 2011). Where Kloosterman and Rath (2001) argue that opportunity structure is dynamic and might shrink or expand over time by various factors and circumstances, saying, "Urban economies tend to have sunrise and sunset economic activities, and this dynamic creates changes in the opportunity structure." Opportunity structure also includes *actors* within a specific locality that can be exploited by interest groups to pursue their goals. Such ability of migrants to mobilize their social networks

for the advantage of their goals is considered by Kloosterman and Rath (2001; 2010; 2018) as social embeddedness. For instance, Salzbrunn (2016) gives an example of how the Murid migrants in Harlem, New York were able to establish their religious, social, and political structure through getting familiar with their neighborhood's residents, and through building connections with key actors in the institutional, governmental, and religious institutions.

Unlike refugees, migrants, due to their more grounded social network, have easier access to knowledge about the structure, customs, and regularity and institutional framework of the host country (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006). Thus, as argued before, refugees and "economic migrants" differ considerably in their contribution and impact on the host city. Migrants, through their local and transnational networks, and their entrepreneurial activities, also contribute to the expanding of the local opportunity structure (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2011, 67; Rath, 2006).

C- Transnational Networks:

Examining the transnational network of migrants with their home country and other countries has significantly altered the research on contemporary immigration (Li & Teixeira, 2007; 96) and with its relation to urban studies (Schiller, 2014). Salih and Riccio (2010) stress the importance of understanding the transnational dimension of migrants in shaping local/global economic restructuring (Salih & Riccio, 2010; 126). Portes et al. (2002) focus on the "back- and- forth" relations that migrants build with their home country and how complex social fields emerge across borders from these relations (Portes, Haller, & Guarnizo, 2002; 279), which consequently impact both, the receiving

country and the sending country (Levitt, 2001). Thomas Faist defines transnationalism as “sustained cross-border ties, events and processes across the borders of several national states” (Faist, 2010), while Smith (2005) associates it with globalization and defines them both as “multidimensional social processes” (Smith, 2005; 236). In other words, transnationalism does not necessarily involve actual physical movements of the individual between countries (Nonini & Ong, 1997). For instance, social and financial remittances are a form of migrants’ practices that contribute to the widening, intensifying, or boosting of institutional transformation processes that are triggered by transnationalism (Vertovec, S., 2004). In 2010, when the Syrian emigrants who lived abroad were estimated by the World Bank to be 944.600 people and the immigrants who lived in Syria were more than two million people, Syria received more than USD 1.4 billion in remittances (Ratha et al., 2011). According to Salloukh (2005), some areas in Syria were dependent on the remittances that Syrian workers in Lebanon send. The capital inflow created by migrants represents a valuable contribution to the home and host country’s national economy (though relative to their geographical scale and population (Levitt, 2001)), and lessens the burden on the home country’s public expenses (Seeberg, 2012; Itzigsohn, 2000).

The first definition of “transnational entrepreneurs” was developed by Portes et.al (2002). These scholars identified three types of migrants’ employment: wage workers, domestic entrepreneurs (in the traditional local market), and transnational entrepreneurs. These three types differ in characteristics, socioeconomic status, and activities (Levitt, 2001). They defined transnational entrepreneurs as people whose businesses’ success rely on their contacts and networks with their home country or other countries (Portes et al.,

2002; 287). However, Harima and Baron (2020) disagree with this assumption, and demonstrated that what characterize the transnational dimension of migrants' entrepreneurial activities is "...the way they compose resources from different nations to create transnational entrepreneurial value" (Harima & Baron 2020, 31). Moreover, Portes et al. (2002) found a correlation between the local social ties of the entrepreneurs with their transnational networks and enterprise. They indicated a 1.5% increase in the probability of establishing a transnational enterprise with each additional local social contact (ibid. 289). This notion corresponds with Schiller and Çağlar's (2011) theory that suggests that the transnational networks of migrants, though it is global in its reach, is locally produced. From a regional planning and economic geography perspective, transnational activities of entrepreneurs are viewed as "a catalyst for the evolution of global production networks" (Saxenian, 2002). Furthermore, Portes's et al. (2002) findings indicate that people, who fled political turbulence in their home country, have less chance to build transnational network than migrants whose point of departure is at peace (Portes et al., 2002; 288).

After having discussed the literature on the relationship between migrants and the city, and migrants' dynamics in/with the city, we can conclude/extract that, first; cities must be studied as "localities" with a dynamic structure that interact with its actors (whether migrants or natives), hence is shaped by their practices and contributions, and simultaneously shaping their contributions. Second, as migrants and refugees differ considerably in regard to several characteristics and factors, their economic functioning, entrepreneurial practices, as well as their interactions with the city's opportunity structure

differ accordingly. And lastly, migrants' inner resources (class resources) play a vital role in shaping and defining how they interact with the city's *opportunity structure*; and based on this interaction their *transnational networks, which impact the global urban restructuring of the city*, emerges.

I now move to profiling the sample of 13 entrepreneurs and studying their economic, social, urban, and geographical experience in Beirut.

CHAPTER IV

HIGH-INCOME SYRIAN MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN BEIRUT: OVERVIEW, URBAN ANALYSIS, AND BUSINESS CATEGORIES

“Migrants become scale makers as they labor, produce wealth, raise families, and create and reproduce social institutions, thereby contributing to the economic, social, cultural, and political life of their cities” (Schiller & Caglar 2010,12). With this notion in mind, this chapter will study the social, economic, urban, and geographical aspects of the 13 high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs’ lives in Beirut. I will first profile each of the 13 high-income entrepreneurs, explaining their relation with Beirut, and giving general insights about their social, economic, and urban experiences in Beirut. In the second part, I will discuss the entrepreneurs’ class resources, trajectories, the localities of their point of departure, point of settlement as in their residency and business geographical locations in Beirut, business operations and categories, and finally their urban and spatial experience in Beirut.

1. Brief stories of some Syrian Entrepreneurs in Beirut

My sample is constituted of 13 entrepreneurs who own in total 19 businesses. The gender ratio is almost equal: 7 men and 6 women, and their ages mainly range between 24-34. The sample is focused particularly on businesses in the hospitality and service sector, with two exceptional cases: art exhibitions, and leather bags design and manufacturing. The types of businesses’ activities are mainly not limited to the local

market of a specific neighborhood or of the host city in general: 1 industrial food factory, 1 art exhibitions, 1 startups accelerator, 1 marketing agency, 1 hand-made leather bags brand, 1 chocolate and souvenir arrangements, 1 cake baking, 1 cake decorations, 1 delivery service, 2 furnished apartment buildings, 1 gym, 2 import and export companies, and 5 restaurants (Table 1).

I will briefly profile each one of the 13 entrepreneurs, focusing on their social and economic background, their social networking, why they moved to Beirut, how and why they started their own business, their business strategy and type, and their urban experience and social life-style.

Table 1: Type of Businesses. Source: Author

	Maher	Tala	Amer	Fadi	Rana	Alia	Jamal	Zouhair	Ahmad	Sarah	Basma	Roula	Adam
Type of Business	Industrial Food Factory	Home Bakery	Hand-made Leather Bags Brand	Furnished Apartment Buildings	Art Exhibitions	Delivery Service	Start-ups Accelerator	Furnished Apartment Building	Import & Distribution Company	Chocolate & Souvenir Arrangements	Marketing Agency	Import & Export Company	Restaurant
	Restaurant												GYM
	Restaurant	Cakes' Decorations											Restaurant
	Restaurant												Restaurant

Maher:

Maher is a single middle-aged man, originally from Aleppo. He studied English literature in Aleppo University, and then he acquired graduate diplomas in Hospitality, restaurants' management, and chef cuisinier and pâtissier in France and Switzerland. In Aleppo, he used to have 14 successful restaurants and coffee shops; he lost 13 of them (either because of the war or he decided to close them off). He used to live in a middle-to-high income neighborhood in Aleppo, al-Azizieh, where his parents are still living.

When the war erupted in Aleppo in 2013, his business got dramatically affected; hence he moved to Beirut in pursuit of economic opportunities and resided in a rented apartment in Antelias. When Maher first came to Beirut, in 2014, he established an industrial food factory in al-Metn area- Bauchriye industrial zone, with two other Syrian businessmen, who have a business base in Dubai. It took two years until they got familiar with the market and built their business network; meanwhile they struggled and lost considerable amount of money. Now, the factory caters food to over 170 restaurants in Lebanon, including his restaurants in Beirut. Maher's business continued to grow, as in 2015 he opened his first restaurant in Achrafieh, with a Syrian-Lebanese partner, whom he knew a long time ago through family relations (the partner's mother is from Aleppo). In 2017, they opened a second restaurant close to the first one in Gemmayzeh, and in 2018, a third one in Hazmieh, in partnership with a famous Lebanese basketball player. The industrial food factory employs 22 people, the first restaurant employs 51 (40 Lebanese and 11 Syrians), the second restaurant employs 20 (11 Lebanese and 9 Syrians), and the third restaurant 15 (9 Lebanese and six Syrians). All the Syrians in his restaurants work in the kitchen, and all the waiters/waitresses are Lebanese. He stated that he didn't deliberately follow this quota and strategy, "but it is rare to find a Lebanese who is willing to do the work that the Syrian is willing to do." When Maher opened his first restaurant, he greatly relied on his social relations and networks that he had in his previous business in Aleppo: most of his customers were Syrians. However, now, four years after of the opening, he is much more embedded in the Lebanese economic and social realms: his clientele is more mixed and most of them are Lebanese. He told me: "I live and work in Lebanon, so 90% of my relations are with Lebanese, whether suppliers or costumers." However, since his

business is working very well, he says he prefers to “play it safe” and keep his Syrian nationality low profile. He also favors the restaurants’ names being associated with his Lebanese partner’s rather than his, because, as he mentioned, “some people might accept it and some might not.” Furthermore, Maher maintains strong relations with his hometown: his parents still live there, and he sources raw materials from Aleppo for certain products for the sake of better quality. As a strategy to keep an economic presence in his hometown, he reopened in February 2019 one of his restaurants in the downtown area of Aleppo, al-Azizieh. He stated that the main reason he chose to reopen is to have some business running in Aleppo, in case he decides to return. When asked if he would like to return, he said that even though his work here is going very well and he wouldn’t consider it at all in the short term, “everything could happen, because Lebanon is not a stable country.” His restaurants and factory are working very well and his businesses is steadily growing and expanding: two new branches are planned to open in Lebanon, in Brummana and in the Dbayeh Waterfront, and two branches abroad: one in Saudi Arabia, and one in Romania. As for his social life and urban experiences, Maher moves around the city in his car, as his daily commute is between his house in Antelias and Beirut. As he said, everyday he passes by each of his businesses; the factory in Bauchriye industrial zone, and the three restaurants in Achrafieh and Hazmieh. It seems that his social life as a single, well-off middle-aged man mainly revolves around his work; he stated that his friends and acquaintances visit him in his restaurants instead of meeting them in other places.

Tala:

Tala is an early twenties young woman, originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, Abu Roummaneh. Her family is one of the well-known “wealthy original damascene” families. She studied Hospitality and Events Planning and creation in Switzerland. She did several internships in London, Scotland and in Beirut. After her graduation in 2017, she joined her family who moved to Beirut in 2013 in a 400m² spacious owned apartment. She did her masters studies in Culinary Arts at the Cordon Bleu College in Beirut, and started her business in home Baking “It was part of my studies...so I decided to open such a business, because I really enjoy baking, and I wanted to enhance my skills in cake decorations.” She started working as a food blogger on social media (Instagram). When she first started her business, her mother’s social connections helped her a lot in advertising her work. More than 60% of her business page’s followers are Lebanese, nevertheless when she started taking orders from customers in Syria, her “profit considerably increased.” She doesn’t have a partner; her family helps her either in the baking or in managing the business. She uses her regular travels to bring all her supplies from abroad, from the USA, London, and Doha, because, as she stated, “the supplies available in Lebanon are of poor quality.” She stated that because she buys a lot of supplies and keeps them in the storage, she was only able to break even recently. In early 2019, she created another small business through social media, selling cakes’ and sweets’ decorations. She has her own recipes and orders four factories to manufacture the cake’s decorations: one in Damascus, and three in Beirut, in al-Dahiya. She got to know the factories through her mother’s social network. Her targeted clientele are Lebanese home bakers. As for her “far” future plans, she is planning to open a patisserie in Damascus, in the Shaalan area because her family already owns a

shop there (a neighborhood that is similar to Hamra in its economic activity), and in Beirut, specifically in Hamra, because “Hamra has a huge market and clientele diversity”. Her social life and urban experiences as a young woman in her early twenties, expands to several neighborhoods in Beirut depending on the “mood”, “type of activity” and its time and day. She mentioned that though she mostly hangs out in Downtown Beirut, there are many places and neighborhoods she hangs out in; Mar Mikhayel and rooftops in Downtown and Achrafyeh or well-known night clubs for her nightlife; coffee shops like Starbucks Raoucheh; shopping in ABC Verdun and Beirut Souks; and Jounieh, Byblos, Harissa, and “mountains activities” on her weekends. She said that because she studied in Beirut and in several places, most of her friends that she spends her time with are Lebanese. For close areas to her house, such as Hamra, she walks instead of taking her car. She regularly visits Damascus where her father’s business is still based to deliver her Syrian clients’ orders. And as mentioned earlier, she travels “a lot” to London, other European cities, and the US for vacations with her family.

Amer:

When Amer graduated and moved to Beirut in 2013 and started his first entrepreneurial venture he was in his mid twenties. He is originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, Malki. His family’s business in Syria is mainly in real estate and urban development. He studied Marketing and did his masters studies in Finance in Bristol, England, along with a diploma in political philosophy. When he first moved to Beirut, through his father’s business networks in Beirut, he was hired in an private oil services company for seven months. However, employment was not what he

was aspiring for; he was searching for an opportunity to start his own business. At first, he was looking for a coffee shop to open, however he noticed that the rent is so high in Beirut, so he decided to “start with something smaller.” As soon as he quitted his job in early 2014, he rented an office in Mar Elias and established a fashion Brand Company and officially registered it as a “Limited Liability Company” with a Syrian fashion designer, whom he met through his social network in Beirut, and with his high school Syrian friend. They started manufacturing hand-made leather bag in Bourj Hammoud. The main objective of their business was to promote Lebanese hand-made products; “Although we are Syrians, we believed that Lebanon as an industrial market is very weak, and we wanted to promote Lebanese products.” Quality over quantity was their top priority. Amer mentioned that though the prices of leather and the manufacturing were very expensive in Lebanon in comparison to any other place in the world, they didn’t manufacture in Syria for two main reasons. First, neither the European leather that they were using, nor good quality accessories were available. And secondly, their business structure was an online business and they couldn’t do any online businesses in Syria. As he mentioned, though his and his father’s social network in Beirut was a big help whether in promoting and marketing their brand or in the legal and consulting relations, they faced a lot of obstacles in the banking and regulative systems that eventually led to closing their business in 2017. He said it would have been much easier if he had a Lebanese partner that he could trust, because in that case he would have registered the company in the Lebanese partner’s name and would have been able to get bank loans or get support from the Lebanese accelerators programs. Moreover, regarding the online banking system in Lebanon, Amer mentioned that the only available online payment gate

was Bank Audi and “it was very slow and so not effective.” Plus Lebanon doesn’t have Pay Pal, thus they couldn’t connect to Pay Pal, “which is a very huge problem for any entrepreneurship, it closes the gate for the worldwide market!” Furthermore, they were not allowed to open accounts in US Dollars, so they opened one in Euros, and because of these many hurdles, only once they were able to receive and send money through this bank account. Therefore, they stopped using their bank account in Lebanon and moved their financial operation to the USA. His uncle lives in the U.S. and has an American passport, so they were able to open a Pay Pal account through his uncle’s account and receive online payments. The business strategy they followed regarding the sale of their products was consignment: 30% for the shop when a product is sold. Along with the online selling, they sold their products in several shops in Hamra, Kaslik, and Mar Elias (all of the shops were Lebanese). They mostly sold in Lebanon and the US. They didn’t promote the brand in Syria, because as he stated, “Syria is still so primitive in perceiving new brands.” Their fabric and leather suppliers were all Lebanese: two leather shops on Dbayeh highway (the artisan in Bourj Hammoud told them about them), and they used to buy the fabrics from a Syrian’s warehouse in Hamra (who imports them from Italy), which Amer found by coincidence while walking around his house. Amer used to spend most of his daytime in Bourj Hammoud where he manufactures his products. He mentioned that though “it is not that easy to find a parking spot in there”, he prefers to use his car to go there. As for his social activities, Amer mostly spends his time in the pubs and bars of Makdessi Street, or in Mar Mikhayel or “the chill” Badaro. On “special occasions” in the weekends he might consider going to nightclubs at night, or going out of Beirut to the “mountains”.

Fadi:

In 2014, after moving around several countries, Fadi resided in Beirut and started his business in setting-up two buildings in Hamra as furnished apartments buildings. He made a 12-year investment contract with the building owner. He is originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-income neighborhood, Malki, and carries the Canadian citizenship. He studied business management in Montreal, Canada. After graduation he returned to his hometown and stayed for three years before the war started in Syria. Consequently, he went back to Montreal, then Dubai, then Erbil, and eventually he settled down in Beirut. As he stated, he was not planning to establish a business in Beirut, “Basically, Beirut was by coincidence, it wasn’t planned, I was about to move again to Dubai but everything got changed.” His entrepreneurial venture consisted of two furnished apartment buildings along with two shops on the street level: one restaurant and one supermarket. He founded the business with his Lebanese-Syrian friend from college in Montreal. Having a Lebanese partner was very helpful for him, as he mentioned, in getting access to local information and know-how about hotels and furnished apartments in Lebanon, and also, as a “safety net.” The capital needed to establish the business was about 400,000\$. His share was 70% with 30% for his partner. Most of his clientele were Lebanese or tourists (60-70%, British, Germans, Italians...), and Fadi underscored the importance of selecting his customers, saying “the quality of costumers is much more important than their quantity in maintaining the business: “I tried to really be strict with whom I allow to come in. I only wanted students from AUB and LAU. If I didn’t like a costumer I wouldn’t let him in...I tried to create a good atmosphere, a community.” Most

of his employees were Lebanese for two reasons: his Syrian-Lebanese partner used to manage his uncle's hotel so he already had a team of Lebanese employees, and because he wouldn't take the risk of employing Syrians with no official and legal work papers (since Syrians didn't always have official papers that legally allow them to work in Lebanon). Fadi sold the business in 2017 for several reasons and moved back to Damascus. First, the running costs were expensive: around 2000\$-3000\$ each month. Second, "the Lebanese laws and regulations were not very helpful." Plus, the market was "not stable": it wasn't safe enough for him to stay in business anymore. Fadi lived in a spacious apartment (300m2) in Verdun by himself, in the last year of his residency in Beirut, he moved into his furnished apartment buildings to cut some costs. He used to use his car to move around the city, and then he figured that it would be "less stressful" and would save him a lot of time to buy a motorcycle. "It used to take me like an hour to reach Hamra in the car, find a car spot and park...it was exhausting. So I bought a motorcycle..." As for his social activities, it also depends on his "mood", the day and the time of the activity. On his free time on the weekdays, he spends it in coffee shops (Hamra, Verdun, or Downtown), or at night he goes to bars and pubs in Hamra. On weekends, he is indulged in various leisure activities; he goes to the beach, clubs, drifting and racing, and to the mountains (Brummana, Aley, Faraya, Shouf). Also, he travels regularly to Dubai, Damascus, and Montreal.

Rana:

Rana is a resident of Beirut since 1998, however, she started her business in 2011. She is in her early sixties, originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end

neighborhood, Abu Roummaneh. In 1998 she married a Lebanese man and moved to Beirut. At first, she used to work as a freelance with a channel based in Dubai; doing short films on ancient houses in Lebanon. After that she did her masters in Cinematography in the Lebanese University. In 2011, she organized her first art exhibition in the Platinum Tower in Beirut to honor her teachers who were very famous painters (Louay Kayali, Nazir Nabaa, Fateh al-Mddaress). This particular exhibition helped her a lot in getting known. She had the chance to do the exhibition in the Platinum Tower because she knows its owner through her social networks (a Syrian millionaire who is a close friend of her brother, whom himself was the minister of Health in Syria). After the Platinum building exhibition she applied to do an exhibition in Solidere and she got a confirmation. Her social networks also helped her in getting this confirmation, since the husband of her Syrian friend works at SOLIDERE. At first, SOLIDERE used to have a share of the exhibition profit: 15% for them, and 15% for Rana. Then she figured that it would be easier and more practical to pay SOLIDERE in advance and rent the hall for 1500\$ for 15 days. As she stated, the halls in which she organized the exhibitions always get rented out because of the publicity they get out of the exhibitions. She started this business as a “hobby” rather than out of necessity “I started this business so I would keep my self busy...my purpose has never been the profit. It is not my livelihood. It is my hobby” that is way, as she said, she manages her business in organizing the art exhibitions from home, and she doesn’t have any partners; she occasionally collaborates with galleries, nor employees; she just hires part-time assistance when she needs to. Her social network is made of considerably rich people and she has contacts with a lot of wealthy and influential people in Lebanon, and as she stated, her work seriously relies on

her network with these high-end people; “It’s all about the contacts and the social network!” Also, her husband’s family (a very well known Lebanese family) helped in building social relations, though to a limited extent due to “sectarian issues”, as she stated. Moreover, the locations of her exhibitions, in SOLIDERE and al-Saifi Village, helped her a lot in meeting influential people. When she started her business in 2011, her goal was to support the Syrian artists, and the young artists around the Middle East and the exhibitions she prepared were in various areas in Lebanon; embassies; in several well-known galleries; in Sidon in the soap museum; in Beirut Exhibition Center in Biel, however most of the exhibitions were in SOLIDERE (Beirut Souks and Saifi Village). Most of her clientele were Lebanese expatriates who work in Africa or Dubai and very few of her clients were Syrians. She used to live in Verdun, but 4 years ago she moved to Achrafieh where she bought a house. The building that she lives in now is owned by a Lebanese man who is the husband of her Syrian friend. That is why she had trust in him and bought the apartment while it was still being built. As for her life style, Rana owns a car, however she mostly walks rather than drives. Her daily activities are mainly around her house’s area; she goes to a private gym at a walking distance from her house, or to ABC Achrafyeh, or Spinney’s for grocery shopping, and she likes *Hay al-Sarasaa*, where she daily walks there. Rana stated that the socio-cultural environment in her new neighborhood is much more comfortable than in Verdun, “here I can go for a walk in my pajamas and no one would stare or comment.” On the other hand, Rana prefers to keep a distance from “*sha3bee*” places, like “public gardens” or “Bourj Hammoud, for instance.” In her house’s area there is one of the few public gardens in Beirut, however she never visited it because she is “not a public gardens fan...public gardens are for “the

public.”” She indulges in cultural activities, such as cinemas and theaters and book clubs. And she used to go regularly to Damascus, but after her mother passed away, not so often anymore.

Alia:

Alia is a mid-twenties young woman, originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, Malki. In 2013 she moved to Beirut to pursue her studies. She studied Finance and Accounting at AUB and graduated in 2017. Her AUB-acquired-network helped her considerably in her career. She worked in 3 different jobs, which she found either through an AUB colleague or AUB career services. While she was working in a private distribution company, she and her Lebanese friend from college founded a delivery service business in February 2019. They advertised their work through social media and word of mouth. They decided to keep the first months as a trial period, so they didn't officially register the company. They had 3-4 delivery drivers and all of them were Syrians, because the Lebanese ones didn't agree on the salary (20.000 L.L per day). They operated online, and they had a relatively good number of clients in Beirut and in Damascus, because their prices were competitive compared to the market. However, she mentioned that this pricing strategy was a mistake because the profit the business generated was sufficient to cover only the costs. Two months later, her partner withdrew from the business, and she tried to maintain it but “it was hard”, because she was already working in a fixed full-time job (and she didn't want to take the risk to quit it). Hence, she closed it off in May 2019. Alia stated that she is still planning to either continue in the same entrepreneurial venture, or establish a new one, because she doesn't

want to stay an employee. However, it would be in Damascus as she thinks it would be easier than in Beirut in terms of support, finance, and competition. As for her social life and urban experience, she lives in Qraytem and owns a car that she uses for her daily commute to her work in Hazmieh. Alia stated that there is no precise place that she mainly goes to, “it depends on the day and the activity.” She sometimes goes to her friends’ houses, or they go to Down Town Beirut (Center Ville Café), or Falamanki Achrafyeh, or nightclubs mainly in Mar Mikhayel, and on the weekends, outside of Beirut, such as Harissa and Brummanah.

Jamal:

Jamal is a mid-twenties man, originally from Damascus, a resident of the mid-to-high income villa typology neighborhood, Qurra al-Assad. He moved to Beirut in 2014, for academic studies. He studied Finance and Accounting in AUB, then continued his masters’ studies in Finance and graduated in 2019. He stated that his first and last option was AUB, for both degrees, because he wanted to stay close to his home country and family. However, for his PhD studies, Lebanon is not one of his option, whereas he is planning continue his studies abroad “when the time is right.” After graduation, he established his business with three other partners (two Lebanese and one Syrian), one of them was his colleague in AUB, and the other two he knew through familial relations. “Out of passion...and for doing something for the future economy of Lebanon”, they established a startups accelerator in early 2019. They do market research, financial feasibility studies, and management consulting and structuring and if they found a project that is interesting, they would invest in it. They focus mainly on startups and NGOs, and

their main clients are students who have ideas and are trying to do startups. “It is the same as going to the consulting center about your mental health, you can go and consult someone about your business health.” Jamal highlighted the importance of their social network in advertising their business: “our social network...not *it helped us*, rather it was *the thing* that helped us.” Most of their clients are Lebanese and foreigners who live abroad. For instance, they have clients based in Dubai, because they offer the same services, yet 10 times cheaper than Dubai’s. They rented an office in a “serviced offices” company in Clemenceau, because the company “takes care of all the administrative stuff and we would focus on our main business.” Moreover, their employment strategy is project-based, which means that they employ people for a period of time according to each projects’ needs. He used to live in one of the most expensive furnished apartments in Hamra, then in early 2019 he moved to a rented apartment (35,000\$ yearly) in Ain el-Mreisseh with his cousin, who is his business partner. Jamal’s social life and urban experiences also depend on the time and day of the activity. For his night activities, he mainly hangs out in Hamra’s pubs and bars, sometimes he might go to Badaro or Mar Mikhayel “although it is getting very crowded”, for cafes and restaurants he mainly goes to Downtown Beirut, and he spends a lot of his time in AUB and his Office in Clemenceau. Also, he regularly travels to France and Europe to visits his sister or for vacations, and every a month or so he visits his family and friends in Damascus.

Zouhair:

Before 2011, Zouhair moved to Beirut for his academic studies. He studied Banking and Finance at LAU. He is originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end

neighborhood, Abu Roummaneh. Zouhair went back and forth many times between Beirut and Damascus before establishing his business in Beirut. In 2016, in his late twenties, he settled in Beirut and rented a building in Hamra, Beirut, and renovated it as a luxurious apartments building with his Syrian-Lebanese business partner, whom he had met in LAU. As he mentioned, since his college years, he and his partner liked the concept of “furnished apartments”, and wanted to do a business in this field but didn’t manage to. Years later, through his family’s connections, they found the building and invested in it, alongside the Lebanese building owner. They spent nearly 1 million dollars, as a starting capital, on establishing the business and renovating the building. Before launching the business, his residency was based on his bank account (*Kafale Masrifeyeh*), and he was able to acquire a work residency, through his father’s network with people in the Labor ministry and in the General Security. Moreover, since Syrians face a lot of obstacles related to the banking system in Lebanon, he also used his father’s connections in a bank to open a personal account in US Dollars. His work is going very well, as he stated, and before the economic situation in the Lebanon started to deteriorate in 2019, they were going to invest in another loft. His apartments are relatively expensive (1,500\$ per month), and attract many Syrians (more than 60% of his clients), who are either tourists or students. He doesn’t have Syrian employees, because as he stated, he exploited the quota that allows him to hire foreigners as he employs people from Bangladesh and Egypt. When he got married, he moved to Kuwait and established a carton cups factory business with his family friend, and his brother in law. He stated that establishing and managing a business in Kuwait “is much more easier [than Beirut], you have A, B, C...steps. Here, you have to *tleffi wa tdawri* (go round and round). And you

have to pay a lot of money to get your things done.” So now, he manages two businesses in Beirut and in Kuwait. He regularly moves around three cities: Damascus, Beirut, and Kuwait and often travels with his family to Europe for vacation. He owns a house in Hamra, and a car, which he uses to move around the city. He hangs out in several areas such as Hamra, ABC Verdun, Mar Mikhayel, and Dbayeh, however, as he stated, mostly in the Downtown’s restaurants and cafes or night rooftops and lounges, because “it has the most classy atmosphere”. On Weekends he goes outside of Beirut to “the mountains”, or to the beach in Byblos or Batroun.

Ahmad:

Ahmad is originally from Damascus, a resident of the middle-to-high income neighborhood, Kafarsouseh. Before the war, in 2009, he moved to Beirut for academic studies. He studied Business and Marketing at AUST, and then did his masters studies in International Business in London. His family joined him, in 2013, and they rented a house in Verdun. As “a natural expansion” of their family business in Damascus, Ahmad and his father launched an import and distribution line company in Lebanon, “because we are already living here, and it is our domain; we realized there are a lot of opportunities in the Lebanese market for such products, and there is some shortage in it; so there is a demand and we are filling this demand.” They mainly deal with personal care products, such as cosmetics, hygiene products, hair and skin care, etc. They are still operating in Syria, however the business in Syria and the business in Lebanon are separate operations. They have two different types of import lines: the first is importing international companies’ products and distributing them in Lebanon and other countries, the second

line is locally manufactured products under their company's name and distributed in Lebanon and the Middle East. They mainly import the products from Poland, Germany, Italy, China, and Korea, and distribute in Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, UAE, and they are "still expanding". In Lebanon, their distribution coverage expands to various areas: the South, the mountains, the Bekaa, the North, Byblos and Jounieh, and Beirut. They have 13 employees (10 of them are Lebanese) including six delegates, who distribute the products. They faced some difficulties in registering the company under their name without a Lebanese share, so they register it under the name of one of their Lebanese administrative employee, whom they already know and trust. Ahmad owns three cars that he uses to move around the city. He stated that his daily routine consists of going to the office, on the Airport road, in the morning; in the evening he goes to a private gym near his house in Verdun, and for leisure activities he mostly spends his time with his friends in ABC Verdun or Downtown Beirut, "there is everything you might need in there." Also, he participates in "self development" events and groups, such as book clubs, digital marketing courses, programming, etc. He and his family regularly visit Damascus, and they regularly travel to Dubai.

Sarah:

Sarah graduated from Switzerland in 2015, and moved to Beirut where her family had bought a house in Downtown in 2013 to which they relocated. She studied Communication and Media, with a minor in Studio Arts and Graphic Design. Sarah is originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, Malki. While Sarah's father is still operating his business in oil and gas in Damascus, he established a

business in Beirut in the field of telecommunication and now he owns a network of 11 outlets across Lebanon that distributes mobile services and products. After two years in Beirut, in 2017, Sarah officially registered and established her business in chocolate arrangement and souvenirs design. Her office is located in the Downtown area, near her house, in a well-known commercial offices building. She didn't want to rent an office at the street level because she doesn't have pre-made products to display. She first started with a page on social media (Instagram), and started taking orders. When her business started to get known, she officially registered her business with her mother and sister's partnership (her sister is married to a Lebanese and has the Lebanese citizenship). Sarah manufactures her products (chocolates and accessories) in several factories in Lebanon. She has clients in Lebanon, Syria, Africa, Dubai, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. She has one Lebanese employee and one delivery Syrian employee. Her business's administrative, financial and legal matters are mostly managed by her father. Her social life and urban experience are bounded to her "familiar" area, Downtown Beirut, "I spend most of my time in Downtown. Maximum I would go to Achrafyeh. Because everything I need is available here." She regularly visits Damascus, and she often travels with her family or friends to Europe (six times a year she said).

Basma:

Basma is originally from Aleppo, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, al-Mouhafaza. She studied Communication Engineering in Aleppo, and continued her masters' studies in Business Administration in London. In 2009, in her mid twenties, Basma established a marketing agency in Aleppo. However, when the war erupted in

Aleppo in 2012, she closed the business. She moved to Damascus for eight months, then relocated to Beirut in 2013 determined to reestablish her business again. Due to her work with international organizations, and foreign and Lebanese clients, she exploited her limited-but-already-existed-network in Beirut to get information on the economic, administrative and legal framework. She sought help from some of her former Lebanese clients, and got informed about the legal framework and how to establish and register her company. She officially registered her business as an “Individual Foundation” and rented a spacious office in Hamra so she would divide to several offices and rent them out. When she first started, her targeted clientele were Syrian businessmen who are moving their business operation from Syria to Beirut and who are “not taking the risk to rent an official office” or the ones who were “going through Lebanon as a transit country.” Then after a year or two, the target changed, and she started renting the offices to NGOs. Through her social network, she had a work opportunity with a very well known international organization. Thereafter, she worked with many international organizations and NGOs, mainly from London, the Netherland, the US, and Canada. When she first came to Beirut, she lived in Hamra, then Qraytem, then Achrafyeh, and now for the past four years, she has been living in Beit Meri in Brummana. The reason behind her choice to live outside of Beirut in Beit-Merri, is that she is used to spacious apartments and quite areas “when I first came to Beirut, I was shocked by the smallness of the apartments.” So she decided that it would be much more comfortable for her to live outside of Beirut in a spacious house “with more advantages” and where she can “enjoy the life of mountains.” Her work was going very well until 2019. As she mentioned, although Lebanon went through many crisis since she established her work, but her business didn’t got affected,

since all her business relations were with international organization. However, when the Hariri's government resigned last year, her work got seriously affected because most of the NGOs in Lebanon receive their funding from Qatar, "and now Qatar is not very cooperative or supportive anymore." Now, though it was her dream to work in marketing in Lebanon, because, as she stated, it has a very open market, she is planning to move to Oman, where she can start a new life and a new business. In Beirut, though she enjoyed building a business and a life, it was not easy at all and "the regulations were not helpful at all...and I couldn't do any savings, everything I earn, I spend." Basma commute daily from her house in Beit Meri to her office in Hamra. As for her urban experience, she seems very familiar with the city as she lived in many areas (Hamra, Qraytem, and Achrafyeh), and she moves around the city in her car confidently "after seven years of living in here [Beirut], I became very familiar with the streets and neighborhoods..." Moreover, she engages herself in a lot of social activities and gatherings, as she mentioned "...it is very difficult to do savings in Beirut when you have all these activities to do [restaurants, bars, pubs, cafes...]" which she mostly spend it in Hamra, Badaro, and Achrafyeh. She regularly travels to Europe since she has the Schengen Visa, and she travels to Damascus or Aleppo every now and then to visits her parents.

Roula:

Roula is a mid forties woman, originally from Damascus, a resident of the middle-to-high income neighborhood, Mazzeh Gharbyeh. When the school of her children got closed in Damascus, and her elder son was studying at AUB, she and her family moved to Beirut in 2012. Six months later, she and some Syrian women whom she

knows from Damascus started organizing charity work for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Through her and her husband's large social network in Lebanon, they met several influential Lebanese people who volunteered to register the NGO under their names (since Syrians can not register a company or an NGO by themselves without a Lebanese share): "back then, it was a very complicated procedure, but the minister of interior signed the legal papers immediately and hence we officially register it." Thus, she established an NGO for educating the Syrian refugees' "children in al-Bekaa." At first, the NGO's funding were all coming from Syrian people living in Beirut, however, after a while she started getting funds from international organization mainly from France and Germany. Recently, she established an import and export company. She exports damascene products from Damascus to Beirut, and from Beirut to Germany. She deals with the same organization in Germany that fund her NGO. She officially registered the company in order to facilitate the money transfer and the banking operation, however, now with the ongoing banking and economic hurdles, she is facing some difficulties in receiving the money from the Bank. Thus, she is planning to move her financial operation to Amman, Jordan, where they know "a multi- millionaire" who would help them. Moreover, their relationship with influential political and social figures in Lebanon helped them acquiring the Lebanese citizenship four years after their stay in Lebanon. She and her family live in a spacious rented apartment in Hamra, and they own three cars that they use to move around the city. Each member of her family spends their social activities differently, as she stated, her younger daughter "has memorized the city" since she moves a lot and spends her time in different areas in Beirut. As for Roula, she goes three times a week to the Bekaa in her car, and in her leisure times she mostly spends it in

Hamra, and sometimes she goes with her Lebanese friend hiking in the mountains. She regularly visits her family and friends in Damascus and regularly travels to Europe either for business or leisure.

Adam:

Adam is a mid-twenties man, originally from Damascus, a resident of the high-end neighborhood, Malki. He moved to Beirut in 2011 initially for academic studies. But he dropped out of college and started his business: “I wanted to indulge in the business world, I didn’t like to study.” Though his family owns a house in al-Rawshe, he preferred to live by himself and rented an apartment in al-Saifi Village (85,000\$ per year, i.e. around 7,000\$ per month), then after a year he moved to an apartment in Ain elMraisseh (35,000\$ per year). Through his social network, he met a Lebanese restaurant owner, who suggested to Adam to invest in his restaurant. And so, he started his first business in Beirut. Due to his large social network, the restaurant got very popular among the Syrians and they became regular clients: the restaurant worked very well and the owner, as Adam stated, opened many branches after his success in this particular restaurant. Six months later, for personal reasons, Adam withdrew from this business. In 2014, through family connections in Lebanon, he met the owner of famous gym branches. Adam invested in one of the branches, in Aaramoun. He spent more than 400,000\$ in renovations and purchasing new training equipment. However, the work is not going as well as he expected. Adam knew that the gym membership fees should be convenient to the socioeconomic status of its residents, so he initially started with 90\$ per month, nevertheless he lowered it to 50,000L.L. He mentioned that if he invested in a branch in

Beirut, the gym membership would be at least 300\$ per month. “At this rate of profit, it would take me 20-30 years to break even.” Moreover, he faced some difficulties with the Syrians in the area. When the Syrians knew that his political views support the regime in Syria, they stopped coming to the gym. But, he is not planning to close the gym or withdraw from it, since, as he stated, “he is not losing anything. And you don’t know what would happen in the future.” His third business was an investment in another restaurant in Hamra, with two Syrians he knew. The restaurant operated for almost 10 months then got closed. The expenses and the rent were too high, and he had some problems with his partner. He regularly travels to the US, since he has the American citizenship, and now he is planning to move there and establish a business. As for his social life and urban experience, he mostly spends his time in cafes and restaurants either in Downtown Beirut or Sodeco, Achrafyeh.

Personal Observations:

On the whole, it may be concluded that all of these entrepreneurs are able to sustain an affluent life in Beirut, where they managed to familiarize themselves with the social, economic, and urban contexts of the city. It was notable in different stories above, that this familiarization was achieved mainly through their class resources (education, work experience, and financial capabilities) and their social networks that they exploited to acquire certain advantages that facilitated their economic and social integration in Beirut, such as bank accounts, residencies, Lebanese citizenships, and information about the local legal framework. Moreover, these entrepreneurs’ types of businesses don’t assume any specific ethnic or national identity, i.e. they don’t reference their Syrian

identity in their business, but rather they are characterized by their contemporary ideas and concepts. As such, their businesses' activities are not confined to a certain geographical area, type of clientele, or the local market needs. Unlike Najdi's (2017) group sample, where she identified four business's typologies out of which three typologies (23 out of 27) define their activities with the Syrian character (mahmasa/Syrian sweets and spices shops, and traditional Syrian food restaurants) or the neighborhood's local market needs ("furn" (bakery) and the "express"). Also, different business strategies and coping mechanisms were adopted based on the entrepreneur's motive, previous experience, and future plans aspirations. As for these 13 entrepreneurs' urban experience and integration, they reside in middle-to-high end neighborhoods (Downtown, Achrafyeh, Ras Beirut, Verdun, etc.), and their urban footprint, in terms of social activities and movements, are also confined to middle-to-high neighborhoods. When compared with their counterpart locals with the same socioeconomic class, a similarity in the urban experience can be noticed. These 13 entrepreneurs shop in private malls (ABC Achrafyeh, ABC Verdun, Beirut Souks); they are costumers of posh restaurants and cafes; and they enjoy the nightlife of Beirut that offers variety of nightclubs, pubs, bars, rooftops and lounges. They are also indulged in cultural and intellectual events, such as theater, cinemas, public talks, art exhibitions, and sports, like hiking, drifting and skiing.

After briefly narrating the stories of these 13 entrepreneurs, we can confirm that they are all from a high socioeconomic class with homogenous characteristics in terms of class resources. A closer examination at their social, economic, geographical, and urban

functioning in the city is needed to reach a nuanced comprehension of their role. Thus, in what follows, I will examine in detail the 13 entrepreneurs' trajectories, the localities of their point of departure, business and residence geographical locations, their class resources and some indicators of their financial capabilities, their different business operations and categories, and their urban and spatial experience.

2. Geographies and Trajectories, Class Resources, and Business Operations

First, I will start with the entrepreneurs' localities of departure and their trajectory, as they are related to each other. Second, I will discuss in detail their class resources (education, work experience, and financial capabilities). Third, I will map their business and residence geographical locations in the city and I will examine the factors that determined these locations. Then, I will explore their business operation and categories. And finally, I will study their social life and urban/spatial experience in the city.

2.1. Localities of Departure and Trajectories:

Localities of Departure:

My thesis considers cities as a dynamic entity that interacts with its actors, whether migrants or natives, and acknowledges that each city has its own unique economic, social, cultural, and political localities. In what follows, I analyze the role of the point of departure's localities of the high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs in

shaping their economic and urban contribution to the city of settlement's scale and its urban restructuring.

As already explained, I consider these Syrian entrepreneurs “economic migrants”, as they didn't flee their country out of fear of immediate threat. All of my 13 interlocutors used to live in middle-to-high end neighborhoods in Damascus and Aleppo (Figure 5, 6). Except for the two Aleppean entrepreneurs, Maher and Basma, whom businesses got seriously affected by the war, the 11 Damascene entrepreneurs' maintained a close-to-normal lifestyle during the war, thanks to their residency and businesses' locations in Damascus. Many scholars from different fields of studies, whether urban or sociology or migration, stress the importance of studying migrants' point of departure localities (Portes et al., 2002; Schiller & Caglar, 2010; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006; Smith, 2005) since it determines the form of agency they might play in the host city. For instance, Portes et al. (2002) indicate that people whose point of departure is at peace have more chances to keep strong communications with their home country and build a transnational network, which influences positively their chances of finding economic opportunities across borders.

Figure 5: The 11 Damascene entrepreneurs' points of departure. Source: Author.

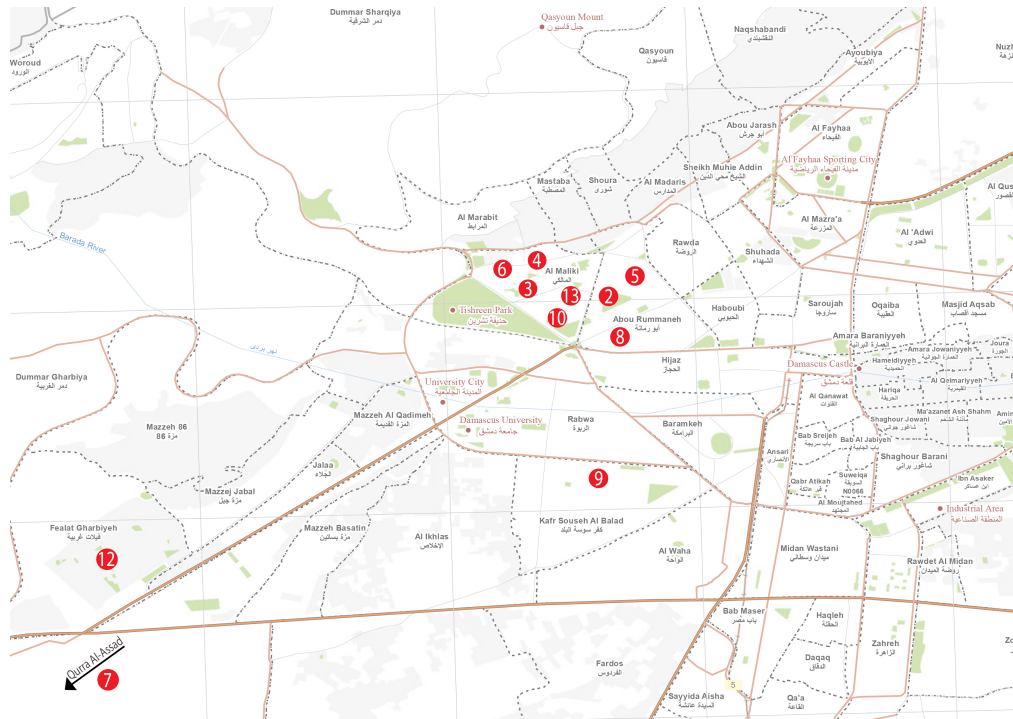
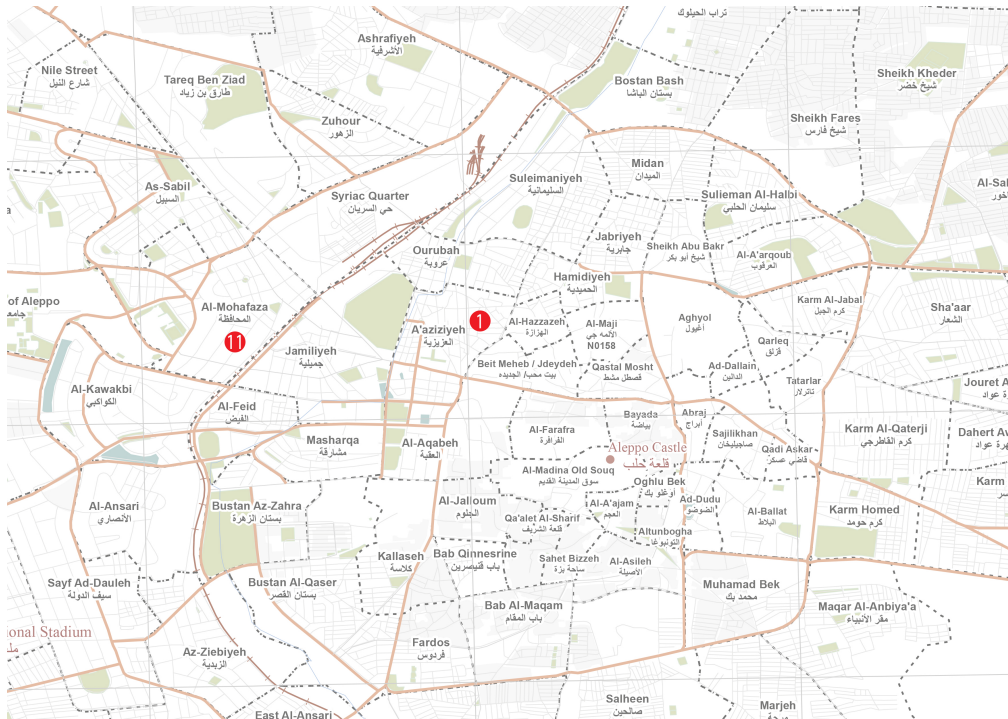


Figure 6: The two Aleppo entrepreneurs' points of departure. Source: Author.



Trajectories: Circular rather than Linear

As I discussed the point of departure of each entrepreneur, which has an influence on the entrepreneur's impact and role in the host city, in this section I will be tracking the rest of the entrepreneurs' journey/path, which also, as Harima and Baron (2020) argue, has a weight on the entrepreneurial activities of migrants. Cassarino (2008) sees that due to globalization, as in the internationalization of profession and education, and the development of the transport and communication technology (Iredale, 2001), "circular migration" is becoming more and more common. In the sense that migrants do not necessarily move from point A to point B, rather they might move from point A to B to C, and then from C to A, or from C to B. This "circular migration" can enhance the cosmopolitan attitude of the immigrants, i.e. strengthen the connection between migrants and the cities they moved from and to, hence affect their sense of belonging to their home country or to any other city (Harima & Baron 2020, 31). As a consequence of these movement pattern and migration experiences, the human and social capital of migrants are enriched, hence positively impact their entrepreneurial activities (ibid., 31). And as Portes et al. (2002) suggest, the higher the human capital of the entrepreneur the higher the chance to have transnational connections and networks (Portes et al. 2002, 288). Therefore, modern migration and its entrepreneurial activities, especially the transnational one, should be looked at from multilateral contexts, rather than confining it to a bilateral relationship between home and host cities (Harima & Baron 2020, 32).

So, in this section I will examine if the city of Beirut was a main relocation destination or was it a transitory place, why did these Syrian entrepreneurs choose Beirut, and if they have any regular mobility (i.e. leisure travels are not considered as a part of their trajectories) between their city of residence, Beirut, and any another country. For these considerations determine the nature of entrepreneurial activities, and accordingly the role these Syrians play in the urban restructuring of Beirut. As mentioned, all of the entrepreneurs are from Damascus, except for two who are from Aleppo (Maher and Basma). This could be attributed to geographical proximity and the strong historical economic and social connections between Damascus and Lebanon. Conversely, Aleppo has stronger business connections with Turkey, either in trades or industries, since the economy of Aleppo is mainly driven by industries and factories. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics in Syria in 2010, Aleppo had a third of Syria's industrial companies and industrial workers (<http://cbssyr.sy/index-EN.htm>), whereas Damascenes' main income is generated from trades and services. So, when Aleppeans sought refuge in another country, they appear to have mostly relocated to Turkey (82% of Syrians in Istanbul originate from Aleppo) (Kaya, 2017), where they thought they have more chances in establishing their businesses, which are mainly related to industries.

Most of the interviewees or their families, moved to Beirut between 2012 and 2014. Except for one case, Rana, who operates the art exhibitions business, used to live in Egypt with her first husband, but in 1998 she married a Lebanese man and moved to Beirut. Not until 2011 that she started her business. Four out of the 13 entrepreneurs (Alia, Jamal, Ahmad, Adam) initially came to Beirut for academic studies, and after they

finished, they established their businesses. Adam dropped out of college and, thanks to his large social network, he started investing in the restaurants business. Also, since he carries the American citizenship, he regularly travels to the USA. And now after the economic deterioration of Lebanon, he is planning to resettle in the USA, “preferably Los Angeles” and opening a car wash business. As for Ahmad, he moved to Beirut in 2009 for academic studies, and his family joined him in 2013. After three years, in 2016, he and his father established their business in Beirut. In 2018 he went to London to do his masters studies, and a year after he returned to Beirut where his life is based now. He and his family also maintain regular travels to Dubai (most probably they have a residency permit in there, though he did not share details about their link with Dubai). As for Jamal, though for the time being he is permanently living in Beirut where he established his startups accelerator business, which is going well so far, however, he stated “when the time is right” he is planning to continue his PhD studies abroad. Likewise, Alia who closed off her business in delivery service and currently working in a private firm in Beirut, she stated that the next time she decides to establish a business, she would establish it in Damascus rather than Beirut. Tala, Amer, and Sarah moved to Beirut after they finished their studies abroad. They started their ventures shortly after. Amer closed off his business in 2017, and moved to Tartous, Syria where he is managing his family business in real estate development. And now, in 2020, he is planning to move to the USA or to Bristol, England (where he used to study) to establish a business and start a new life abroad of Syria. Maher, Zouhair, and Basma moved to Beirut in pursuit of economic opportunities. Zouhair went back and forth many times between Beirut and Damascus before establishing his business in a furnished apartment building in 2016.

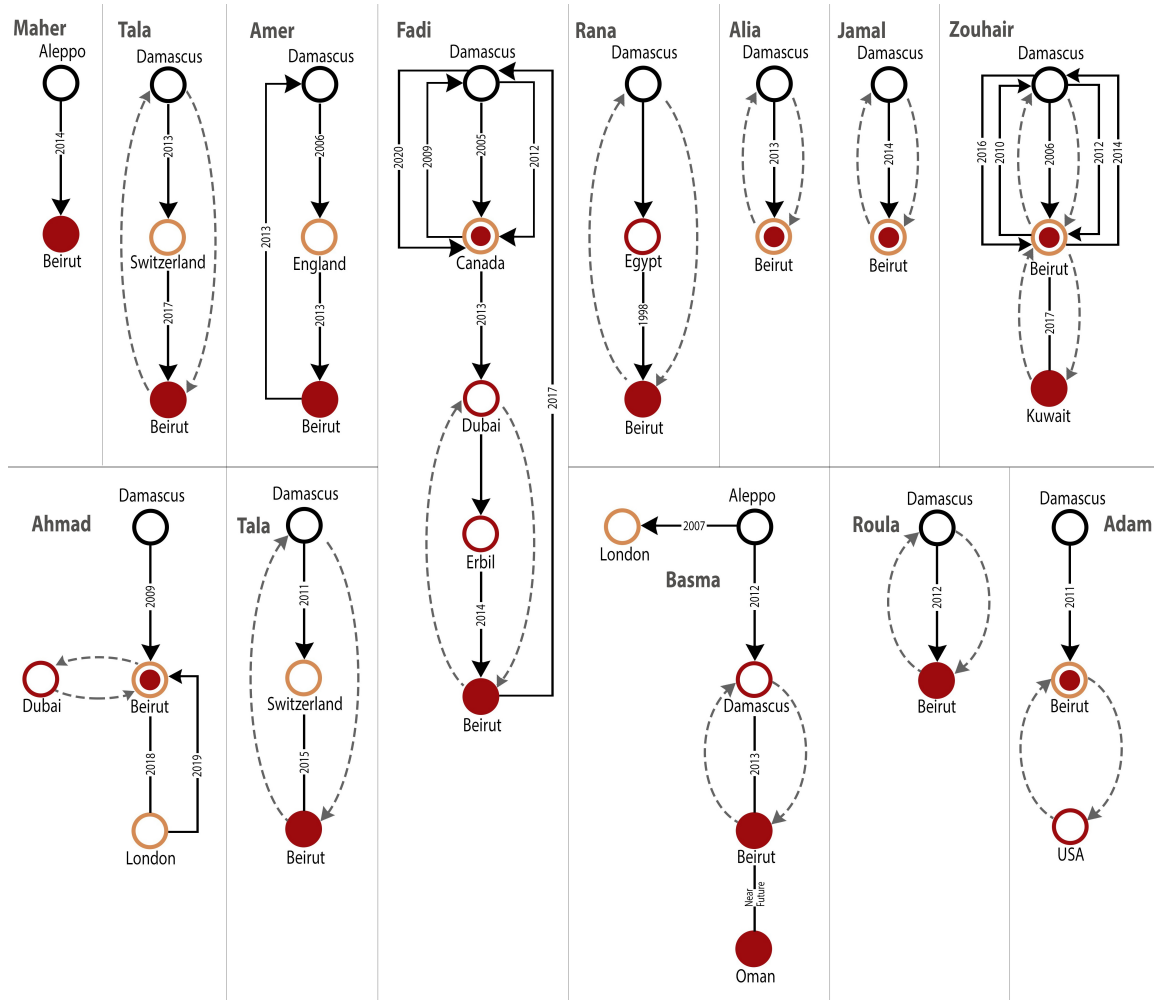
After his graduation from LAU, he went back to Damascus, however when the war started he moved to Beirut in 2012 and stayed for two years. In 2014, he again returned to Damascus and started working remotely on his business in Beirut. Finally, in 2016 when he was ready to launch the business, he returned to Beirut and settled in it. Now, after his marriage, he is based in both Beirut and Kuwait where he established a carton cups factory. Similarly, the two Aleppeans entrepreneurs, Maher and Basma, both had their successful businesses in Aleppo: Maher in the restaurants business and Basma in the marketing agency. When the war erupted in Aleppo, they moved to Beirut determined to reestablishing their businesses here. However, before settling in Beirut in 2013, Basma internally migrated to Damascus for eight months. And now, after seven years of living a successful life in Beirut, her business is deteriorating due to the economic conditions Lebanon is going through, and she is planning to move to a “more economically and politically stable” country, Oman. Whereas Fadi traveled to several countries before settling in Beirut: after his graduation from Montreal, he went back to Damascus, but then the war erupted and he returned to Montreal, then moved to Dubai, then Erbil, and eventually he settled down in Beirut in 2014 when he encountered an opportunity in the real estate business. And during his stay in Beirut, he maintained his monthly travels to Dubai, though he did not share details about the nature of his connection with Dubai. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, he sold his business in 2017 and moved back to Damascus. And in late 2019, he resettled in Montreal where his mother and sisters are, and because he carries the Canadian citizenship. Lastly, Roula moved with her family to Beirut in 2012, mainly because her children’s school closed in Damascus, and her elder son was already studying in AUB. When they moved to Beirut, she and her husband

maintained their travels to Damascus; to visits her family and friends, and her husband to manage his still-operating business there. So, Beirut was the most suitable choice to relocate until the “war would end.”

The analysis of the entrepreneurs’ trajectories reveals that most of the entrepreneurs’ pursued circular rather than linear migration paths (Figure 7). And all of them maintained a “back and forth mobility” (Kawakibi, 2008; Kiwan, 2008) between Beirut and their home city (Damascus or Aleppo). Four out of the 13 entrepreneurs (Amer, Fadi, Basma, and Adam) has left Beirut (Amer and Fadi) and returned back to their home country and now they are planning to resettle in a country where they already have a previous connection with; England or the USA for Amer, and Montreal for Fadi. For Basma and Adam, they are planning their resettling process; Basma is moving to Oman where she knows a friend who would help her settle, and Adam is moving to the USA since he has the American citizenship and regularly travels there. As for Alia and Jamal, though there is still no clear plan to resettle in another country, however it seems that there is an intention to do so; Jamal to continue his PhD Studies, and Alia if she decided to reestablish a new business in Damascus. For the time being, seven entrepreneurs (Maher, Tala, Rana, Zouhair, Ahmad, Sarah, and Roula) are permanently staying in Beirut and have no plans to resettling in the near future to any other country. It is interesting to note, that the businesses of four out of these seven entrepreneurs, are categorized in the next section as “lifestyle” businesses. In sum, the trajectories of most of these entrepreneurs declare that their migration paths are not confined to a bilateral relationship with their home city, but rather are characterized as “circular migration”

which as Harima and Baron (2020) believe, enriches the human and social capital of migrants hence their entrepreneurial activities are positively impacted.

Figure 7: Entrepreneurs' trajectories. Source: Author



2.2. Class resources: High and Diversified

In this section, the class resources, as in work experience, education, and financial capabilities, of the 13 entrepreneurs will be discussed in order to understand how these resources facilitate and influence their entrepreneurial activities, and their economic and social incorporation and urban inclusion in the city. For many scholars have attributed the

success of the immigrant entrepreneurship to their class resources rather than to their ethnic resources (Min & Bozorgmehr 2000, 710; Kloosterman, 2010). While ethnic resources include the dependence on relatives, co-ethnic employees and customers, the use of private loans and rotating credit associations, and the purchase of business from co-ethnic owners, based on Min and Bozorgmehr (2000), class resources are indicated by the migrants' level of education, language fluency, dependence on personal savings for capitalization, and prior business experience. My sample is basically homogenous in terms of class resources, as per the below tables that indicates they all have high education levels, pursued abroad in foreign languages, prior work experience for a few, and high financial capabilities (Table 2, 3). Indeed, all of the 13 entrepreneurs studied abroad (Europe, the UK, and Lebanon), either for bachelor degrees or for graduate degrees, or both. In terms of work experience, three entrepreneurs (Maher, Ahmad, and Basma), have entrepreneurial experience prior to their migration to Beirut. The existing businesses of these three entrepreneurs in Beirut are an extension or continuation of their ventures in their home city. For the rest, these new businesses were their first entrepreneurial experience: Roula was a housewife before moving to Beirut; Amer, Rana, Alia, and Zouhair worked as employees before establishing their businesses; Tala, Fadi, Jamal, Sarah, and Adam established their business as soon as they finished their studies (Table 2). With regards to their financial capabilities, many indicators ought to be taken into consideration, such as their type of residency permit in Lebanon, personal bank accounts, the location of their residency in Beirut, property status (rented or owned apartments), and car ownership (Table 3).

Table 2: Class resources (education and work experience). Source: Author.

		Maher	Tala	Amer	Fadi	Rana	Alia	Jamal	Zouhair	Ahmad	Sarah	Basma	Roula	Adam
Place of Education	B.A.	English Literature Aleppo, Syria	Hospitality & Events Planning Switzerland	Marketing Bristol, England	Business Management Montreal, Canada	Fine Arts Damascus, Syria	Finance & Accounting Beirut, Lebanon	Finance & Accounting Beirut, Lebanon	Banking & Finance Beirut, Lebanon	Business & Marketing Beirut, Lebanon	Communication & Media Switzerland	Communication Engineering Aleppo, Syria	Pharmacy Damascus, Syria	Business Beirut, Lebanon
	M.A.	Hospitality, restaurant management & others France & Switzerland	Culinary Arts Beirut, Lebanon	Finance Bristol, England	—	Cinematography Beirut, Lebanon	—	Finance Beirut, Lebanon	—	International Business London, England	—	Business Administration London,	—	—
Previous Business		Yes- 14 restaurants Aleppo, Syria	No- First Business	No- First Business	No- First Business	No- First Business	No- First Business	No- First Business	No- First Business	Yes- Import & Distribution Company Damascus, Syria	No- First Business	Yes- Marketing Agency Aleppo, Syria	No- First Business	No- First Business

Table 3: Class resources (financial capabilities). Source: Author.

		Maher	Tala	Amer	Fadi	Rana	Alia	Jamal	Zouhair	Ahmad	Sarah	Basma	Roula	Adam
Personal Bank Account		No	Yes	Yes- in the USA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes- in Beirut & in the USA
Type of Residency Permit		Annual/Work Residency	Permanent Residency/ Bank Guarantee	Annual Residency- House Contract	Canadian Citizenship	Acquired Lebanese Citizenship	Student Visa	Student Visa	Permanent Residency/ Bank Guarantee	Student Visa	Permanent Residency/ Bank Guarantee	Permanent Residency/ Bank Guarantee	Acquired Lebanese Citizenship	Permanent Residency/ Bank Guarantee
Apartment	Location	Antelias	Hamra	Hamra	Verdun	Achrafieh	Quraytem	Ayn Mryasse	Hamra	Verdun	Downtown	Beit-Merri	Hamra	Ayn Mryasse & Raouche
	Own		X			X			X		X			X
	Rent	X		X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X
Car Ownership		Yes- One Car	Yes- Two Cars	Yes- One Car	Yes- One Car & One Motorcycle	Yes- One Car	Yes- Two Cars	No	Yes- One Car	Yes- Three Cars	Yes- Three Cars	Yes- One Car	Yes- Three Cars	Yes- Two Cars

As previously indicated in Chapter 2, Syrians can acquire a *permanent* residency permit based on their personal bank accounts (*Kafale Masrafyeh*). This type of residency is granted if the applicant has a fixed monthly income or a personal bank account in one of the banks in Lebanon with a deposit not less than 300 million LBP frozen for more than three months. Therefore, the type of residency permit is an indicator of the

entrepreneurs' class resource, as acquiring one, especially the *Kafale Masrafyeh* type, needs a considerable amount of capital (minimum 300 million LBP). Five out of the 13 entrepreneurs (Tala, Zouhair, Sarah, Basma, and Adam) have a residency based on their Bank Guarantee. For Fadi, who had the option of acquiring a Lebanese residency based on his personal bank account, he chose not to and stuck to his Canadian citizenship. Because, as he stated, he wouldn't deposit all this amount of money and freeze it for more than three months, and at the end it doesn't guarantee him a work permit. He said, "it is funny that you are an owner of a business in the country, but you don't have a residency in it!" Having the Canadian passport granted him two months in Lebanon, which is very suitable for him since he travels every month or so to Dubai. Some other class indicators, such as their localities in their hometown, are discussed in the previous section.

As for their ethnic resources, none of the 13 entrepreneurs' business capital depended on private loans or rotating credit associations; Maher, Ahmad, and Basma used the profit from their previous businesses to establish their businesses in Beirut, and the rest of the entrepreneurs were, to an extent, financially supported by their parents, since it is their first business and they are still young, or by their husbands like Roula and Rana. Some of the entrepreneurs sought managerial help from their family members, like Tala, who owns the home bakery business, her sister helps her in the accounting. Also Sarah, who owns the chocolate and souvenir arrangement business, her mother and sister are her partners in the business and they help managing the business. As for the ethnic customers and employees, though some entrepreneurs have Syrians employees working in their business (Maher, Alia, Ahmad, Sarah, and Adam) however none of the 13

entrepreneurs stated that they deliberately hired Syrians. But because Syrians are more flexible in accepting work conditions and positions that Lebanese generally don't accept (delivery drivers, maintenance and kitchen jobs). Moreover, none of the 19 businesses' target clientele is Syrian specific. Whereas, their products and services do not claim the Syrian nationality of its owners, rather they are of cosmopolitan and trendy characters that aim to attract all kinds of patrons.

2.3. Geographic Locations in Beirut: Fluid rather than Fixed

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, the locations of the high-income Syrians' businesses and residence are not clustered in a specific location in the city, but scattered around different neighborhoods in the city of Beirut (Figure 8 and 9). The choices of locations are determined by a variety of factors, namely: business opportunities, social networks, and business efficiency assessment.

Figure 8: Locations of the entrepreneurs' residences in Beirut. Source: Author.

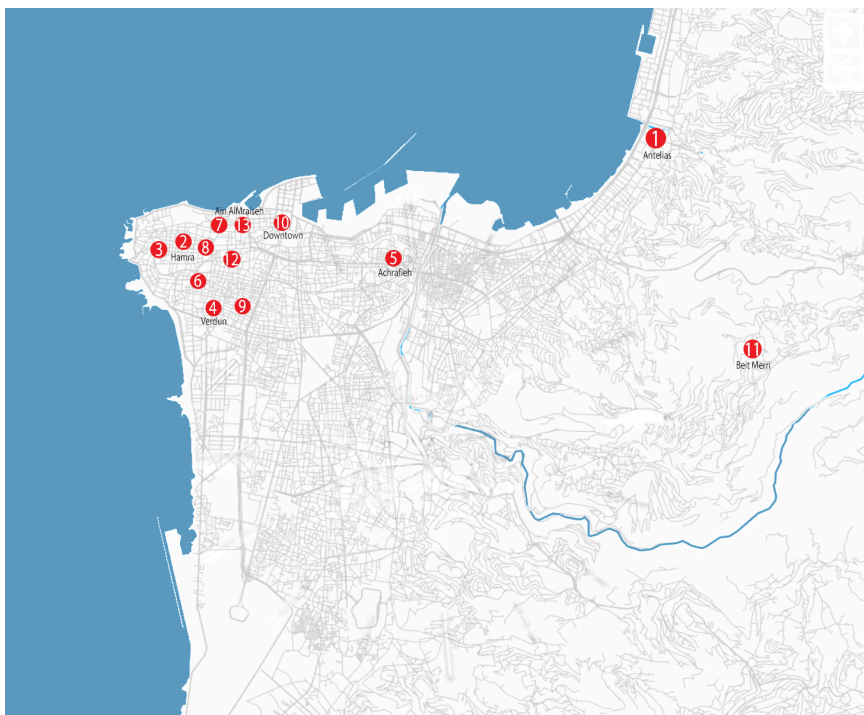
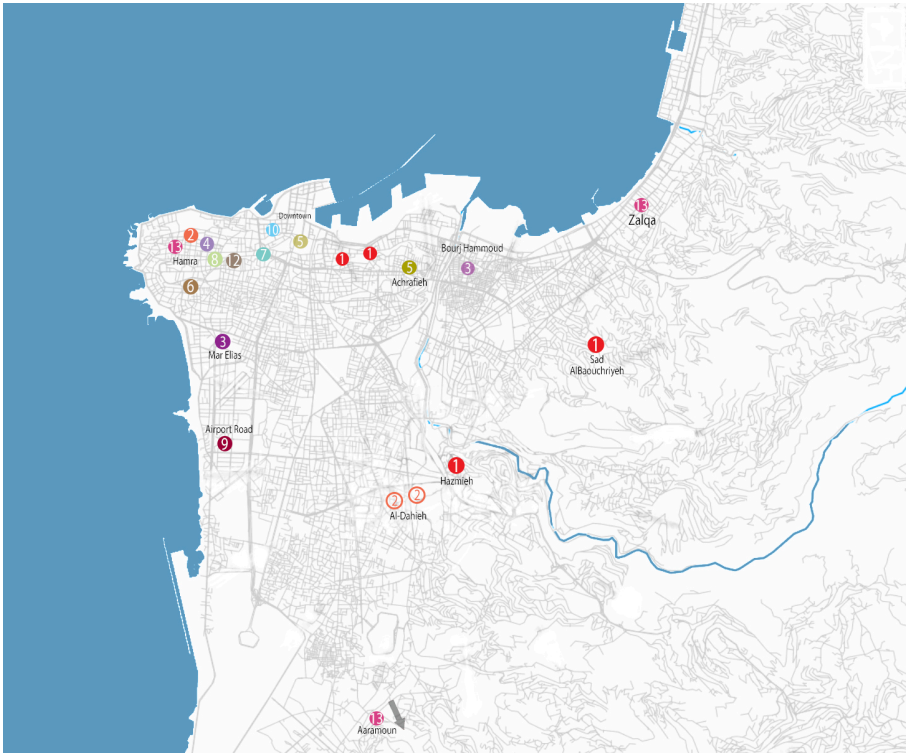


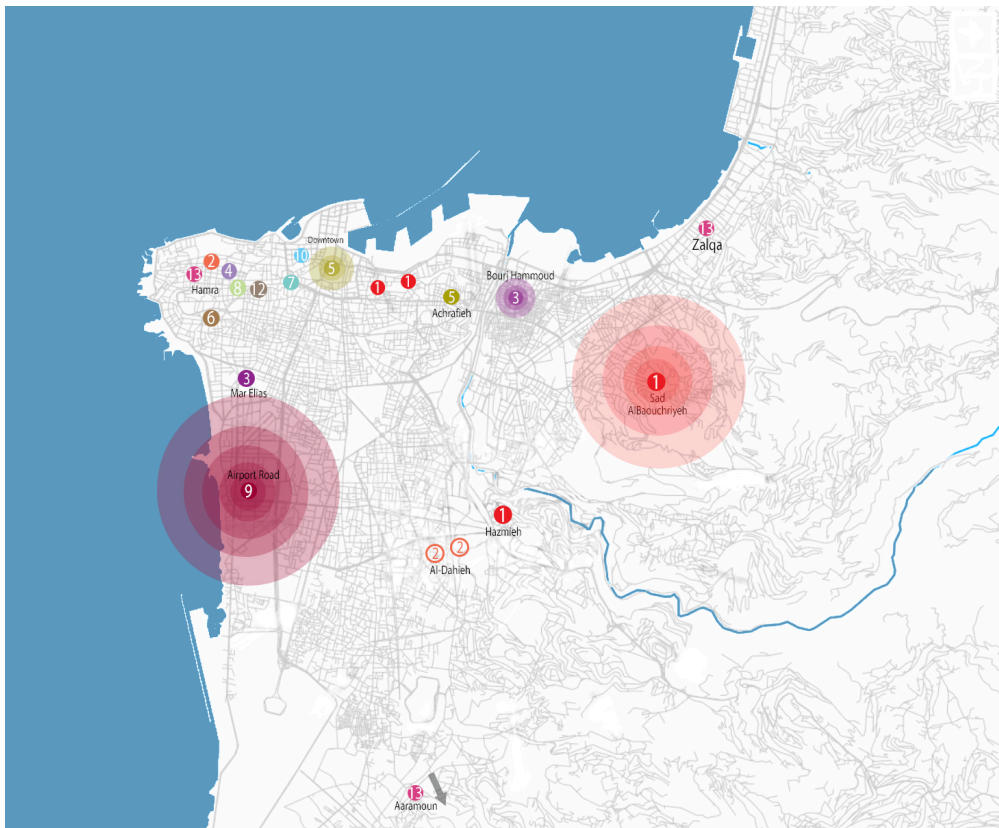
Figure 9: Locations of the entrepreneurs' businesses in Beirut. Source: Author.



Although businesses have offices in a specific neighborhood, some entrepreneurs' businesses' operations are not confined to their locations. Their footprint spreads towards different neighborhoods (Figure 10). For instance, Ahmad's business is an import and distribution company. Even though his business's official office is located on the Airport road, the distribution operation covers all of Beirut and greater Beirut. As for Amer, who used to own a leather bags brand, their official business location was in Mar Elias, but his products were manufactured in Bourj Hammoud and distributed to several shops across various neighborhoods in Beirut and Greater Beirut. In addition, Maher's industrial food factory is located in al-Metn, Bauchiye Industrial zone, and the factory distributes food to over 170 restaurants across Beirut and greater Beirut. While Tala is a home baker

located in Hamra, and her second business (cakes' sprinkles and decorations) uses two factories in al-Hadath and al-Dahiya.

Figure 10: Businesses' geographical locations and beyond. Source: Author.



The business location decisions were related to assessment of business efficiency or to opportunities. Some selected the location out of knowledge and familiarity with the chosen neighborhood, like Sarah who manages the chocolate and souvenir arrangements business. Her office is in a famous commercial building located at a walking distance from her house in downtown. Others have deliberately and intentionally chosen a specific area, mostly in Hamra, for the sake of their businesses' efficiency. For instance, Basma who chose to rent an office in Hamra states: "if I am establishing a business hub, I should

open in the business center of the city.” Similarly, for Fadi and Zouhair, who operate furnished apartments and target students as main clientele, Hamra was also their preferable location. As for Tala, who is managing the home bakery in her house in Hamra, she’s planning in the far future to open a patisserie in Hamra, “because of the huge market, and all types of clientele: kids, elderly, teenagers; there is a lot of diversity in Hamra.” In few other cases, other considerations and factors influenced the choice of businesses’ locations. Jamal was introduced through social media to a “serviced offices” company located in Clemenceau. He and his partners chose to prioritize such kind of services over the geographical location of the business. As for Amer who resides in Hamra and used to have the leather bags brand, he and his partners “didn’t really care about the office’s location”, because it was merely a bureaucratic matter in order for them to officially register the company. Most of their work was in Bourj Hammoud where they used to manufacture their products. Through their social network, they met a woman who wanted to rent out her office in Mar Elias, and she offered a good price. Also, for Maher, his social networks helped: the location of his first restaurant was determined by his partner’s already-rented property. Before Maher and his partner launched the restaurant, his partner was renting it as a bar, but as he faced some problems and closed it off, Maher came into the picture, and they transformed it into the restaurant they currently run. Likewise, Adam’s social networks in Beirut had a strong weight on determining the locations of his businesses. He met the owners of the two restaurants in Zalka and Hamra and the gym in Aaramoun through his social and familial networks. However, he progressively realized that his capital was not invested in the right location, and that his investment in the Aaramoun gym “is not going very well.” He thinks “the problem is the

area...I invested 400,000\$ on equipment and setting up the gym hall...but the socio-economic composition of the area cannot afford such luxury; this was my partner's fault as he is the one who should know the needs of the area better!"

In conclusion, the businesses' and residence geographical locations show that these Syrian entrepreneurs don't follow a certain strategy. For none of the entrepreneurs stated that their choice of their residency location is related to their business location vis a vis, or that the presence of other Syrian businesses in a specific neighborhood has encouraged them to choose it. Their business locations decisions were not based on ethnic, national, sectarian, religious, or political affiliation criteria, but rather other factors determined the locations, namely: business opportunities, social networks, and business efficiency assessment.

2.4. Business Operation and Categories:

The majority of the entrepreneurs (nine out of 13) have partners, either Lebanese or of dual Syrian-Lebanese nationality (Table 4). The only entrepreneur who had exclusively Syrian partners was Amer, the leather bags brand owner. As he stated, along with the banking system challenges and the financial operations difficulties, this was one of the main obstacle he faced that eventually led to closing off the business. Amer asserted the importance of having a Lebanese partner: "I would have preferred to have a Lebanese partner with us...I would have registered the company in his name. It would have been much easier. We made a mistake by registering the company under Syrian names. Too many obstacles."

With regard to the four entrepreneurs who don't have partners, Tala, who runs a home bakery and manufactures cakes decorations, stated that she doesn't need a partner since she is doing this business "out of passion." She added that she doesn't need to legally and officially register her business since it is home-based. Similarly, Rana, who manage the art exhibition business, started out the work as a "hobby" thus said she doesn't hire employees nor needs partners. She said: "I started this business so I would keep my self busy and have something to do." As for Roula, four years after her stay in Beirut, she and her family acquired the Lebanese citizenship, hence she didn't need a Lebanese partner to establish or officially register her import/export company. Basma adopted a different strategy: she was advised that it would be more efficient for her business to register as an "Individual Foundation" rather than a "Limited Liability Company", which helped exempt her from yearly taxes and employees' social insurance requirements.

Some of these 13 entrepreneurs' businesses were short-lived (Fadi, Amer, Alia, and Adam who withdrew from two of his businesses). Fadi faced overwhelming financial expenses while operating and managing the furnished apartment buildings. His monthly running costs and the maintenance expenses exceeded 2,000-3,000\$ monthly, and he complained that the regulations and rules were not helpful. In Alia's case, among other factors such as the withdrawal of her partner from the business, competition was one of the main difficulties in sustaining her delivery service. She was also not fully invested as she was an employee in a private firm and didn't want to "risk quitting [her] permanent job." As mentioned earlier, Amer faced major difficulties related to the banking and financial systems. Most of their business revenue depended on online sales while

Lebanon did not provide access to PayPal, and the banking system was not enabling them to open an account in US dollars, through which they could receive and send money.

Adam also withdrew from the two restaurants he invested in, for personal reasons, and in relation to some problems he encountered with his Syrian partner.

Several entrepreneurs (four out of 13) are doing well in their businesses, and these businesses are either expanding or have promising future plans (Maher, Jamal, Zouhair, and Ahmad). Based on Morris's et al. (2015) criteria, these businesses are qualified as "managed growth" businesses. According to Morris et al. (2015), managed growth businesses have a workable business model, have a plan of stable growth as in steady expansion and new products or services launches into the market, and its owners continuously reinvest in it. Ahmad's import/distribution company "gradually grew" since its establishment in 2016: "with small areas to cover and few agents." When they first launched their company, they didn't have their own "distribution network and means", and they would assign the distribution of their products to other agents. Three years later, their distribution footprint has grown to cover a large scope of the Lebanese territory: the South, the mountains, the Bekaa, the North, Byblos, Jounieh, and Beirut. They also distribute their products transnationally to, Syria, Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, the UAE, and are planning to "still expand." Maher's businesses are also expanding nationally and internationally: he's planning to open two branches of his restaurants in Dbayeh and Broummana, and another two internationally, in Romania and Saudi Arabia. When he first started his first business in the industrial food factory, Maher declared they struggled a lot and lost plenty of money the first two years, "until we found costumers and built a network, and until the market got to know us." Now the factory distributes food to over

170 restaurants across Lebanon. As for Zouhair, he stated that, prior to the turbulence of Lebanon, he and his partner were looking for another loft to rent and invest in. The capital he had generated from his furnished apartment building business in Beirut was remarkably invested in another business in Kuwait, a carton cups factory.

Furthermore, Tala, Rana, Sarah, Roula and Adam’s businesses were driven by “hobby”, “passion” and “free time,” and qualify more as “lifestyle businesses” (Morris, 2015). Based on Morris’s et al. (2015) qualifications, these businesses don’t aspire expansion or substantial growth, and their owners maintain relatively modest investments in their businesses not more than to keep a certain level of competitiveness with the market (Morris et al. 2015, 715). These don’t hold heavy responsibilities, as they rely heavily on their real or virtual social networks. These established businesses also do not generate their primary source of livelihood, as this group of entrepreneurs is supported by their families, whether financially or managerially.

Table 4: Businesses operations. Source: Author.

	Maher	Tala	Amer	Fadi	Rana	Alia	Jamal	Zouhair	Ahmad	Sarah	Basma	Roula	Adam
Partners	Yes- Two Syrians	No	Yes- Two Syrians	Yes- Lebanese- Syrian	No	Yes- Lebanese- Syrian	Yes- One Syrian & Two Lebanese	Yes- Lebanese- Syrian	Yes- Lebanese	Yes- Her Lebanese Sister	No- Individual Foundation	No	Yes- Lebanese
	Yes- Lebanese- Syrian												Yes- Lebanese
	Yes- Lebanese- Syrian & Lebanese	Yes- Two Syrians											
Number of Employees	22	None	None	7	1	4	Project- Based	9	12	2	5	None	16
	51												10
	20	None											8
	15												

3. Spatial and Urban Experience: Resourceful “Urban Knowledge” yet Concentrated

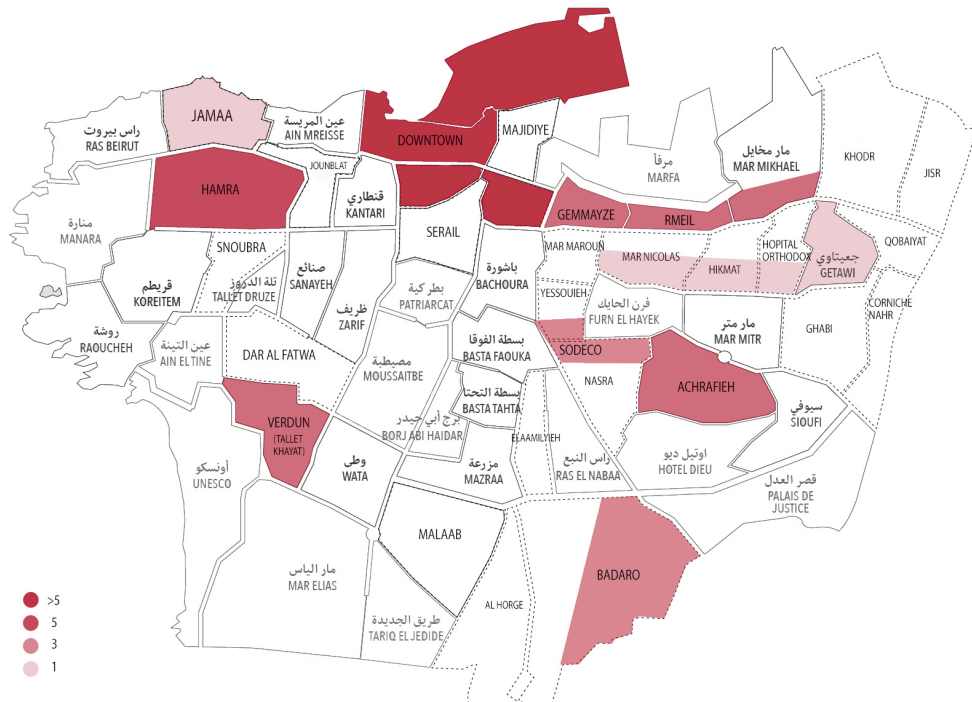
A part of the relation between migrants and cities is their urban inclusion. In order to understand the role that migrants play in the local and global urban restructuring of Beirut, we need to understand their urban experience in the city and to what extent are they “integrated” in the urban realm of the host city. As Buhr (2018) suggests, being integrated in the urban space of the city means being able to navigate it and being aware and able to identify its resources. He also believes that there are many factors that shape migrants’ spatial practices and how they experience the urban realm of the city. City’s users’, whether migrants or natives, “urban knowledge” and the ability to navigate the city stand on the ground of professional and family status, socioeconomic class, the location of residency, and the means of transport that the individual can afford to use (Buhr 2018, 317). Indeed, as indicated in Harb’s et al. (2017) research on the Syrian business-owners in Lebanon⁴, the mobility of the less privileged business-owners from a low-middle class is much less narrow than the mobility of the Comfortable entrepreneurs (the ones with more resources), and their spatial practices and navigation skills are confined to their work locations and home. As indicated earlier in this chapter, my sample of 13 entrepreneurs, all reside in middle-to-high income neighborhoods and work in another. Their residency locations are in different neighborhoods than their businesses’ locations (Figure 8 and 9). Sarah and Zouhair are the only two entrepreneurs who live in the same neighborhood where their businesses are located (Tala, Alia, and Roula are not included since their businesses are home-based). As mentioned earlier, Zouhair

⁴ Harb’s et al. (2017) research on the entrepreneurial activities of Syrians in Lebanon has identified four categories of Syrian business-owners: the successful, the comfortable, the coping, and the struggling. The business-owners of the coping and the struggling businesses belong to the low-middle income classes with minimum capital and access to information.

deliberately chose Hamra as a location for his business because of its mixed-use nature and the type of clientele it hosts, and he already owned a house in there. For Sarah, out of familiarity with her neighborhood, Downtown Beirut, she chose to rent an office in a famous commercial building near her house. As for the others, they commute daily in their cars from their homes to their businesses, or in the case of Jamal, he walks from his house in Ain el-Mreisseh to his office in Clemenceau.

Moreover, the 13 entrepreneurs' urban mobility and experience are not confined to only their business or home locations, as they are all engaged in various leisure and cultural activities that scatter around different neighborhoods inside and outside of Beirut yet concentrated in middle-to-high income neighborhoods and places (Figure 11). Given that these entrepreneurs have been living in Beirut for almost seven years on average, except of Fadi and Amer who left in 2017, they reported that they navigate the city comfortably and are aware of the leisure, cultural, and urban resources of the city.

Figure 11: Entrepreneurs' urban mobility and experience. Source: Fawaz, M., Garbieh, A., Harb, M., & Salamé, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Refugees as city-makers*. American University of Beirut. Edited: Author



After profiling each of the 13 entrepreneurs and examining in details their social, economic, geographical, and urban functioning, hence their relation with the city of Beirut, in the next chapter I will study the mutuality of Beirut and these 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs. I will analyze how these entrepreneurs through their national/local networks and transnational networks, along with the above considerations, impact and play a role in the urban restructuring and global positioning of Beirut, and simultaneously how the opportunity structure of Beirut shaped this role and contribution.

CHAPTER V

MIGRANTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL AND URBAN INTERACTIONS: GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL GROUNDING

Introduction:

This thesis studies the city as a dynamic entity that interacts with its actors, whether natives or migrants. Hence it understands the city as shaped by these actors' contributions, and as simultaneously shaping their contributions. This chapter examines these reciprocal interactions through studying the migrants' entrepreneurial activities, as well as their urban experiences. I focus on analyzing the high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs' mechanisms and dynamics, and how both transnational networks and local/national networks contribute to expanding the host city's local opportunity structures (Schiller & Caglar 2010, 67), and how the host city's opportunity structures shape migrant entrepreneurs' contributions to the city's urban restructuring. I also use Kloosterman and Rath (2001) who emphasized two main points: first, the importance of understanding how each city provides different kind of "openings" in its opportunity structure, and second, how migrants address these openings based on their inner resources (social, cultural, human capital).

Recent studies that tackle the relationship between cities and migrants started to include the transnational dimension in order to reach a nuanced understanding of migrants' roles and agency in the city. Many scholars have stressed the importance of understanding the transnational dimension of migrants in shaping local, as well as global

economic restructuring (Salih & Riccio, 2010; Schiller, 2014; Li & Teixeira, 2007; Faist, 2010). As transnationalism was associated with globalization and both were defined as “multidimensional social processes” (Smith, 2005; 236). Indeed, there is a strong connection between the transnationalism of migrants and their role in changing the dynamic scale of cities and their global positioning. In other words, if we assess this relationship from a world theory perspective, where the world system is composed of a set of redistribution processes and mechanisms of resources from the “periphery” to the “core”, and since the “core” and the “periphery” are not in a fixed status with fixed geographic areas, but rather dynamic and relative to each other (Faist, 2010), we can consider Beirut as a “core” to Syria. Additionally, we can also argue that high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs are playing a significant role in changing the urban scales of Beirut, transforming Beirut’s transnational networks in ways to position it as a “periphery” to other city cores in the Arab region, Europe, and elsewhere, as further developed in this chapter.

1. Multi-Scalar Socio-Economic Networks: Three Groups of Entrepreneurs

In what follows, I analyze the social and economic networks’ dynamics of the high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs I traced in Beirut. Social/economic networks are constituted by national networks as well as transnational networks. National/local networks are an indicator of how deep the entrepreneur is embedded in the national economic and social realms of the host city (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010). Transnational networks represent, as Saxenian (2000) describes: “a catalyst for the evolution of global production networks” between the host city, here Beirut, and the

globe. Some scholars believe that the more an entrepreneur has local social ties, the more the probability to establish transnational networks and enterprises (Portes et al. 2002, 287; Kyle, 1999; Poros, 2001). However, for some entrepreneurs in my sample, local/national networks do not necessarily correlate with transnational networks, or at least not for the time being. This is notable in the instance of Roula and Rana, who have built large national/local social networks in Beirut, but their transnational networks are not wide as their local ones. This can be attributed to their type of business and their motives, which will be discussed further in the chapter.

Along with the previously discussed dimensions in Chapter IV, namely the entrepreneurs' background, class resources (education, pre-migration work experience, and financial capabilities), business motive and operation, and trajectory, the main basis upon which I classified my interlocutors' entrepreneurial nature, are two structures: 1- national networks, i.e. local embeddedness, and 2- transnational networks.

I qualified the entrepreneurs' transnational network as either *firm*, *flexible*, or *soft*, based on its quality rather than merely its extent or scope. My proposition is based on my analysis of the transnational network developed by high-income Syrian entrepreneurs and its impact on the urban restructuring of the host city. The *quality* of this network seems to have more weight than the *number of countries* they established transnational networks with. However, this is not to underestimate the *number of countries* the entrepreneurs have networks with. Due to the conceptual ambiguity that surrounds the concept of "transnationalism" of migrant entrepreneurs in the literature, scholars and policy makers have not yet reached a clear-cut definition that qualifies the nature of the transnational

networks (Harima & Baron 2020, 17). Therefore, I chose to define the *quality* as the type of network that links the entrepreneur with another country, whether it is another business, a virtual connection (online platform), foreign clients and costumers, or supply import/export lines, etc. In other words, the *quality* was assessed on the basis of whether the network is stable and constant or not, in terms of capital and resources inflow/outflow. For instance, having established a business in another country strengthens the impact of the entrepreneur's transnational networks on urban restructuring. For having a business abroad means a stable connection, whether in capital inflow/outflow or travels, etc.. Whereas transnational networks in the form of online platform or clients, it fluctuates depending on the number and amount of the cross-borders orders.

National/local networks, which are part of each city's distinct opportunity structure (Plöger & Becker 2015, 1520), are indicators of the migrant entrepreneurs' social and economic embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). So, I qualified embeddedness as *high*, *moderate* or *low*, based on how mobilizing these networks helped in overcoming obstacles, facilitated the integration in the host's social and economic community, and based on the networks' influence level that these entrepreneurs are connected with.

For instance, some entrepreneurs have networks with people in high senior political positions; some with bank owners and managers; some have networks in the General Security, etc. These types of networks with influential people in such prominent positions, bring to the entrepreneur considerable advantages and facilitations that provide privileges in overstepping obstacles related to the banking, legal, and regulatory systems.

According to this grid of analysis, I identified three groups of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs: I call the first “*Carrying over*”, the second “*Experimenting*”, and the third “*Enjoying Lifestyle*.” These labels are not fixed, for any entrepreneur’s dynamics, and business operation and strategy could change with time. Morris et al. (2015) argue that the entrepreneurial process of ventures is hardly predictable and “what is created is often not what was intended.” As such, Entrepreneurs who are *enjoying lifestyle* business might start investing more in their business and start *experimenting* their skills in larger and more serious business operation, and vice versa, or the ones who are *experimenting* in their skills and abilities, might acquire the needed experience and proficiencies to expand their work and *carry over* these acquired skills into a different context and localities. In the table below, I highlight the main distinctions between the three groups (Table 5).

Table 5: Characteristics of the three groups of entrepreneurs. Source: Author

	<i>Carrying over</i>	<i>Experimenting</i>	<i>Enjoying Lifestyle</i>
Social and Economic Embeddedness	High	Moderate	Low
Transnational Networks	Firm	Flexible	Soft
Relation to Local Opportunity Structure	Creates openings	Molded by the openings	Irrelevant
(Business) Orientation	Business-oriented	Place-driven	Hobby-oriented
Work Experience	Continuation of pre-migration businesses	First entrepreneurial venture	First entrepreneurial venture
Motive	Reestablishing pre-migration businesses	Testing entrepreneurial abilities/skills	Providing a foundation from which to enjoy a particular lifestyle

Financial Gains	Business profit is main source of income	Still partially supported by their families (parents), yet profit is a sign of business success	Profit is neither an obstacle nor a goal
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All of the 13 entrepreneurs have transnational networks, though they vary in the quality of the networks and the quantity of countries they are connected to. Social and familial transnational networks with their hometown (Damascus or Aleppo) exist in all businesses. Since all these entrepreneurs have not left their home country because of life threats, they were able to maintain a strong relationship with their social, or economic, or familial networks there. Moreover, the degree of the Syrian migrants' social and economic embeddedness in the host city considerably varies depending on the entrepreneur's type and nature of business's activities, motive, and drive.

1.1. Carrying over

The first group is the *carrying over*, it includes three entrepreneurs: Maher, Ahmad, and Basma. Why carrying over? Because these entrepreneurs have carried over their social, economic assets as well as their entrepreneurial proficiencies from their hometown in Syria to Beirut. What characterizes these three entrepreneurs is that their pre-migration businesses were in the same field as the new one they established. Hence, their businesses in Beirut are an extension or continuation of their entrepreneurial ventures in Damascus or Aleppo. As these entrepreneurs reestablished the same business they were already operating in their hometown, they are placed at a certain professional and skillful level that qualify them to introduce a different product or service that might

add a new value, create a new need, and thus introduce a new approach to the opportunity structure of the Lebanese market.

Ahmad's family business in Damascus is an import/distribution company of personal care products. As "a natural expansion" of their work in Syria, they launched their business in Beirut in 2016:

"...We are already living here, and it is our domain. We realized there are a lot of opportunities in the Lebanese market for such products, and there is some shortage in it. So, there is a demand and we are filling this demand."

Likewise, Maher used to own 14 restaurants in Aleppo; he lost 13 of them during the war. He moved to Beirut in 2013 determined to reestablish his business "...I had no other choice, I either stay in Aleppo waiting for the war to end, or move to Beirut and start a new business." When he first came to Beirut, he established with two other Syrians an industrial food factory, and now, seven years after, he owns, along with the food factory, three restaurants and is planning to expand. For Basma, moving to Beirut and reestablishing her business was considered as "a challenge" to herself. Before the war started in Aleppo, she established a marketing agency that was going very well. In 2013, she moved to Beirut and reestablished the same business under the same name.

"...I didn't want to move to Europe as a refugee, I didn't want to lose my passport and get banned from coming to my hometown. Plus, it was my dream to work in the marketing field in Lebanon, because it is very open in terms of marketing."

Several scholars stress the importance of the historical, economic, social, and political relations between the "sending" and "hosting" cities in determining the role

migrants play in the urban restructuring of both cities (Portes, 2000; Schiller & Caglar, 2010), hence we should take into consideration the long lasting, tight, and contemporary economic and social relations between Syria and Lebanon. These historical relations contribute to the fluidity of the social networks and economic activities between both cities. These three entrepreneurs' businesses in Syria served as the foundation of their business-related social networks in Beirut and allowed them to build strong connections with influential actors in the Lebanese/local network, which helped them considerably in establishing their businesses in the city, and most importantly in solving and overstepping obstacles related to the banking, legal, and regulatory systems. As Basma's pre-migration business revolved around dealing with international organization and clients, she already had many Lebanese clients. So, when she moved to Beirut to reestablish her business, she sought help and consultation from her previous Lebanese clients. When she officially registered her company, she was advised by a Lebanese friend to register it as an "Individual Foundation", primarily because she doesn't want to include a partner with her, it will also exempt her from yearly taxes, and will allow her to operate several functions through it.

"When I first came to Beirut, I had several clients from here. One of my clients connected me with his friend- the Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in [an area in Ras Beirut], and he advised me to register my company as an "Individual Foundation.""

As for Ahmad, when they first launched their business in Beirut, they started with a small operation and a limited scope and did not have the means to launch their own distribution and operation. But, through their pre-migration business-related social networks in

Beirut, they were able to find agents from Lebanese companies and assign them their products to distribute.

“At first, we didn’t have our own distribution network and means (cars, vans, sales representatives). So we collaborated with several Lebanese companies that we already knew who have their own distribution network to distribute our products.”

Moreover, their social networks in Beirut helped them considerably in overcoming obstacles related to the company registration and the residency. For instance, in order for Ahmad to get a residency in Lebanon, his father used his connections with an influential person in a Lebanese university to register his son in, without the obligation to attend; which allowed him to acquire a student visa.

In Maher’s case, when he first came to Beirut, he founded an industrial food factory with two other Syrians whom he knew with them from his previous business in Aleppo.

“...They are my friends since the Aleppo days. Back then, one of them wanted to invest in one of my restaurants, however something came up with him and he withdrew... when I first came to Beirut, he was one of the first people I contacted.”

As such, these three entrepreneurs are highly embedded in the social and economic realms of the host city. Just like the Senegalese brothers discussed in Salzbrunn (2016) benefited from their connections with specific actors in order for them to build up their needed opportunity structure in the neighborhood of Harlem, in New York, these group of Syrians had the class resources required to build their businesses through their

connections with certain actors in Beirut and make the best of the city's opportunity structures.

Portes et al. (2002) underscore the relation between an entrepreneur's local social connections and the probability to establish transnational networks and enterprise. As discussed previously, this group of entrepreneurs is highly embedded in the host city's social and economic realms. Their businesses are backed up by their connections with the local social network and the influential actors within it. Thus, as Portes et al. show, this group's deep social networks and their high embeddedness allowed them to have more access to the global market and to the actors within it, and to build *firm* transnational networks.

Regarding their transnational networks with their hometown, Maher and Ahmad have maintained their economic, social, and familial connections in it. Whereas, Basma, after she closed off her business in Aleppo, she just maintained her connections with her family who still lives there. Maher has recently reopened one of his restaurants in the down town area of Aleppo, al-Azizieh. He stated that the restaurant is working very well now. However, taking into account the exchange rate of the Syrian Pound to the US dollar, the restaurant's profitability is not remarkable. For him, the main reason behind reopening it is having some business running in Aleppo, in case he decided to return: "...I thought it is better to have some business running in Aleppo. Maybe one day I will return, though it is highly unlikely on the short term." This economic network with his hometown is among other several networks: his parents still live in Aleppo, and he uses

supply chains for certain restaurants products for the sake of better quality. Also, when he launched his restaurant in Aleppo, he imported the furniture from Beirut:

“...Everything is much more expensive in Syria now. I wanted to bring chairs for the restaurants in Aleppo and I couldn’t find ones in good price and quality. So, I brought them from Beirut. Now everything in Syria is double priced.”

As for his transnational networks, Maher has family connections in Canada and the USA where his siblings live. Moreover, his partners in the industrial food factory are based in Dubai, which probably means there must be capital inflow and outflow from Dubai to Beirut, though he did not share details. Additionally, his business is growing and expanding to Romania and Saudi Arabia, where he is planning to open restaurant branches as already discussed.

In Ahmad’s case, they have two different types of import and export lines: the first is importing international companies products and distributing them in Lebanon and other countries, the other is locally manufacturing products under their company’s name and distributing them in Lebanon and the Middle East. Their import transnational networks are considerably large: they include Poland, Germany, Italy, China, and Korea. And their distribution transnational networks are with Syria, Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan, the UAE, and they are “still expanding.”

Basma’s business includes Lebanese and Syrian clients, and is centered around dealing with international organizations and NGOs. Her business success relies primarily on these transnational networks that are mainly, as she stated, with the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, and Canada.

“Lebanon went through many economic recessions, however it didn’t affect my business or income, because all of my income was from the outside; it depends on the international organizations... I didn’t even notice these crises that Lebanon went through. I started to notice when Hariri resigned; the income from outside stopped. Because most of the NGOs that I work with, and most of the NGOs in Lebanon were funded from Qatar, and now Qatar is not very cooperative or supportive anymore.”

1.2. Experimenting

The second group is the ones *experimenting* and includes five entrepreneurs: Amer, Fadi, Jamal, Zouhair, and Alia, whose ages range between 26 and 31. Why *experimenting*? Because these five entrepreneurs’ businesses are their first attempt to enter the business and entrepreneurial world, and their primary motive to establish a business is the desire to *experiment* with their entrepreneurial abilities and skills. When Amer first came to Beirut after his graduation from Bristol, England, he was hired in an oil service private company, but employment was not his “goal”:

“...All my life I have lived in environment where business is not about getting paid at the end of each month, rather about taking risks and starting your own thing. My father established his own business when he was nearly at my age...employment was never a goal in my professional life.”

Similarly, though Alia was not in need of establishing her own business, since she is an employee in a private distribution firm along with a tutoring side job, when she encountered such opportunity she embraced it because, as she stated: “I don’t like to stay

an employee all my life...” Likewise, Jamal and his three partners, all have other businesses or jobs to work in: they established this startups accelerator out of “passion” in the startup business world and because “it might be something promising for the future.” He started working on his business idea at the end of his masters’ studies at AUB:

“I wanted to do something in here [Beirut] and I was waiting for the opportunity that would allow me to get into the business world that is related to my studies and passion... the idea started that each one of us [he and his three partners] is somehow involved in work with startups... so we thought let us set it up in the form of a company instead of working individually on startups.”

As for Zouhair, it was the desire to experiment/indulge in a specific business field he has passion about: hospitality and furnished apartments.

“Since we were in college [himself and his partner], we liked the concept of furnished apartments. In the college years, we used to live in a furnished apartment building... the main idea is that you are investing in real estate market...”

For Fadi, establishing a business in Beirut was pure coincidence. As mentioned earlier, Fadi moved to several countries before settling in Beirut when he encountered a tempting business opportunity in the real estate market: “Basically, Beirut was by coincidence, it wasn’t planned, I was about to move again to Dubai but everything changed.” From the start, he was considering Beirut as a stop station, or a transit place, so he thought about investment in the mean time until going back to Damascus:

“...My plan from the beginning was to come back to Damascus, and what made me decide to return after three years is that my business was going very well and

someone came and bought the whole concept from me...and my family business is already based there [in the real estate business]...and plus, Damascus is home for me.”

So, in 2017, Fadi sold his business (the two furnished apartment buildings along with the two shops on the street level) to a Lebanese man and returned to his “home,” Damascus. Fadi said it was a very good deal, since he sold the Lebanese man the whole concept with its contract, and he got a good return for all the money he had spent on renovating the building.

Taking into consideration Beirut’s market openness and the many “possibilities for entrepreneurial activities” (Schiller & Caglar, 2010, 3) in its opportunity structure, these five entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunity structures the city offers and navigated it as a lab to experiment their skills in, without certainty about the outcomes. Three of them (Amer, Fadi, and Alia) faced unexpected obstacles, and were not able to continue their businesses, hence closed off their enterprise. As each city offers a different opportunity structure, and the migrants’ role and contribution vary accordingly (Räuchle & Schmiz, 2019; Schiller & Caglar, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001), their entrepreneurial activities and contributions to urban restructuring were defined and shaped by Beirut’s specific localities. For instance, when Amer first started planning to establish a business in Beirut, his initial idea was to rent a coffee shop. However, the opportunity structure of the city shifted his business orientation from the service sector to the fashion industry, because he understood that all the means he needs to manufacture were available in Beirut, and especially in Bourj Hammoud.

“...After I quit my job, I was searching for an opportunity to start my own business. At first, I was looking for a coffee shop to open, but I noticed that the rent is very high. So I decided to start with something smaller...through my contacts I met a fashion designer. With her and my friend from high school, we established a fashion brand company...and started manufacturing hand-made leather bags in Bourj Hammoud.”

After investing in this business for two years, he closed it off when he faced serious constraints, mainly because of the banking system and the difficulties in accessing the worldwide market through PayPal, as previously explained.

For Fadi, the idea of investing in the Lebanese real estate market was very tempting, especially in Hamra, which includes universities and an easy-to-please clientele of students and transient populations, that is very fertile for such business.

“When I arrived to Lebanon I didn’t have any plans to start a business, but what made me think of establishing one is the real estate dynamics happening in Beirut, and especially in the furnished apartments and dorms business, since it is related to students: a monthly-based, stable income.”

However, Fadi sold his business after three years, in 2017, because, along with the overwhelming monthly expenses, he realized it is not feasible to invest “in only one building”, for such business to be “worth it” needs “three or four buildings.”

“Staying in Lebanon, for only one building while you are investing time, effort, and money, there will be limits to your income. Assuming that you are renting the apartment for 1,000\$*48 apartments = 48,000\$ that is the limit of your income. You have to invest in more buildings to get more income.”

As for Alia's business in the delivery service, her choice of business was determined by the service structure of Beirut: diners, fast food restaurants, coffee shops, clothing shops, markets, grocery shops, etc. they all depend on delivery service. So, when her friend suggested such a business idea, it was very appealing to her.

“...We were discussing business ideas, he was telling me about his brother's friend who was released from his job in the bank and started a delivery service and delivering stuff from everywhere to everywhere. So, my friend suggested we work on something similar, that we start delivering all kinds of stuff (food, gifts, clothes, papers, etc.)”

However, she found out that establishing such a business in such a field is not that easy facing “the competition” of big companies “like, Totters”, and because of “the lack of support.”

Jamal's idea of establishing his business emerged from the idea that Beirut is a very conducive city for startups, yet the regulations are not supportive:

“When someone wants to do a startup in Lebanon, and when you say a “startup” it means starting with little capital, but the laws don't support small businesses. For example, if foreigners want to start a business and get a residency in it, their share in the company should be almost 100 million LBP. For startups, this number is absurd... so our business model is that you can come and ask for help without paying. Our idea started with the realization that the problem of startups and entrepreneurs is that they don't have the right ecosystem support. So, we thought

it is the same as going to the consulting center about your mental health, you can go and talk with someone about your business health.”

Regarding this group’s national networks and local embeddedness, it ranges between low and moderate. Considering the fact that the businesses of these five entrepreneurs are their first, they haven’t reached a stage where they built their own local social networks. Thus, they exploit either their parents’ already-built local networks in Beirut, or their partners’ networks. For instance, Zouhair, whose family is known as the old Damascene elite, found the loft he invested in, through his father’s social network in Beirut (the owner of the building is his father’s friend). Also, thanks to his father’s connections with a bank owner, Zouhair was able to open a bank account.

“[Bank X] have flexible policies in general. Even though we had to use many “*wastas*” to be able to open an account in it (from our social network, my father knows someone who knows the owner of the bank). It is well known who owns this bank, and they are against the Syrian policies, but they allow Syrians to withdraw and deposit money in their accounts in USD.”

Moreover, when he first moved to Beirut, Zouhair’s residency was based on the bank guarantee (*kafale masrafyeh*). But, when he established his business, he had to change it to a work-based residency. At that time, work-based residency for Syrians was very difficult to acquire, because, as he said, the ministry of Labor was headed by a right-wing political party, the Kataeb, who were not sympathetic to the Syrian presence in Lebanon. But, after the minister changed, through his family’s connections with people in the ministry and with the General Security, he was able to acquire one.

“...So I was able to change it to work-based residency when the ministry got changed and was controlled by someone who “*bimoun 3ala tarafna aktar*”...First, it was very easy to acquire a residency based on the bank guarantee. But, the work-based residency is almost impossible to acquire: you either have to pay someone in General Security 10-15,000\$ to get it, or to have a *wasta* like us.”

Likewise, Amer used his father’s business-related connections in Beirut to strengthen his business’s official status: “All of the legal and accounting issues were managed by Lebanese companies. As for copyrights worldwide, we worked with Talal Abu-Ghazaleh’s company and also for the legal accounting for the government. My father used to work with him.”

As for Fadi, his partnership with his Lebanese friend has helped him considerably in getting access to the local infrastructure and the know-how of the business and getting exposed to the regulatory system of the city.

“When we first started, I didn’t have enough information about who was reliable to recruit and as fast as possible. So, because my partner used to work in the same field (he used to manage his uncle’s hotel in Hamra), he already had a team. So, we hired the manager and the secretary who used to work there for our business...”

In Alia’s case, her business didn’t last enough to exploit efficiently her local networks to her business’s advantage. However, she found her three jobs through her local networks that emerged from her connections at AUB.

The *experimenting* entrepreneurs' transnational networks range between soft and flexible. Only Zouhair has a firm transnational network. In terms of their transnational networks with their hometown, all of them maintained strong connections with Damascus. Their families still live there, they regularly visit, and for Fadi and Amer, family businesses, which they are involved in, is still operating. As for the transnational networks with other countries, as mentioned earlier, the entrepreneurs' transnational networks were qualified based on the quality of networks rather than merely the quantity of the countries they are connected with. Since most of these entrepreneurs have "virtual" transnational networks on online platforms, and these networks are related to the demands of clients who live abroad, thus what characterize the transnational networks of this group is its fluctuation depending on the number and amount of the cross-borders orders. For instance, Fadi after a period of time, realized that his business is seasonal, as it mainly depends on students. As such, for three to four months during summer, his buildings are basically empty. He thus started operating his business in a different way: daily rentals through online websites (Airbnb and Booking.com). Just like Zouhair, whose clients are mostly foreigners that use Booking.com: "it all depends on the season, the month, weekends/weekdays, and so on." Moreover, Amer's business structure was also an online business. Along with their strategy of distributing their products in several shops in Lebanon, Amer and his partners created their own website to market and sell their hand-made leather products abroad and displayed them on American and European online shopping websites. Moreover, when they couldn't connect to PayPal, and faced difficulties in the banking system, they moved their financial operation to the USA, where he was able to create a banking account under his uncle's name, who lives there

and has the American citizenship.

Also, Jamal's online base helps them considerably attracting foreign clients, especially from Dubai.

“...We have some clients who are outside of the Lebanon. For example, recently we had a client from Dubai, but his business is outside of Dubai. They wanted to work with us because if they wanted the same service we offer in our company in Dubai, they would have to pay 10 times more.”

The only entrepreneur in this group who has *firm* transnational networks is Zouhair. After his marriage, he moved to Kuwait and established a business in a carton cups factory with his family's friend and his brother in law. He regularly travels between the two cities, Beirut and Kuwait, to maintain his businesses: “...The profit that I generated from business in Beirut, I invested it in the carton factory in Kuwait...”

Alia's transnational networks were qualified as *soft*, since they were confined to familial and business connections only with her hometown, Damascus. Through her online platform on social media, she used to take orders from there and send them with a taxi company to Damascus. Alia's business was very short-lived, but taking into consideration her background and her large social networks in Syria as well as Lebanon, it could have developed into a promising delivery service company with strong transnational networks, if she had continued in her entrepreneurial venture and further invested in it.

1.3. Enjoying Lifestyle

Last but not least, the third group is those *Enjoying Lifestyle*. It includes five entrepreneurs: Tala, Rana, Sarah, Roula, and Adam. Except for Rana and Roula who are middle-aged women, Tala, Sarah, and Adam are youngsters, between 24 and 27 years old. Why *Enjoying Lifestyle*? Because these entrepreneurs' main purpose of establishing a business is to create a foundation from which to enjoy a particular lifestyle that is tightly related to their social life and networks, and most importantly, their hobbies. These five entrepreneurs manage businesses that hold light responsibilities and they personally enjoy. Adam's lifestyle revolves around social activities and gatherings in cafes and restaurants: this is where his business investments decisions emerged from. When he first came to Beirut in 2011, his initial intention was to continue his studies, however he dropped out of the university and started his first investment in a restaurant: "...I have always liked this field of business; the restaurants business. It is something that I enjoy." And because of his large social networks he was able to successfully advertise the restaurant.

"...I met the owner by coincidence... I went and saw the café and I liked it, but it wasn't working well. So, he suggested to me to invest in the restaurant because I have a lot of friends in Beirut and large social networks: I can bring him a lot of clients. His restaurant boomed because of my social networks, it was on the edge of closing, but the Syrians saved him. He opened five or six branches after that."

Rana, who manages the art exhibition business, also works in a field very much related to her studies: she is trained in fine arts in Damascus and continued later her studies in cinematography in Beirut. Her first attempt at doing art exhibitions was not for doing business, but rather to “honor her teachers” who are very famous painters: “ It has always been my dream to honor my teachers before they pass away...” After her first exhibition, located in a very famous building in downtown Beirut, her work started to thrive. Before becoming familiar with the business world, her business strategy was still one of an amateur:

“...In the beginning, I didn’t rent the halls for the exhibitions; they [Solidere] used to have a share from the profit [30% profit from each sold painting, the rest 70% is for the artist]: 15% for them, 15% for me. Then I started renting the halls for 1,500\$ for 15 days...I didn’t know that I could rent the halls. I am not a businesswoman. I didn’t do such business before. And my purpose was not the money.”

For Sarah and Tala, their business ideas also emerged while they were studying and are related to their “passion” and hobbies. They have online-based businesses, and their families help them considerably in managing the business. Tala did her masters’ studies in Culinary Arts at the Cordon Bleu College in Beirut, and started her online-based home-bakery business. As she stated: “It was part of my studies...so I decided to open such a business, because I really enjoy baking, and I wanted to enhance my skills in cakes’ decorations.” As for Sarah, she studied communication and media, and acquired a minor in studio arts and graphic design in Switzerland. When she moved to Beirut, she also created an online account for her chocolate arrangements and souvenirs business.

Two years ago, she rented an office in a commercial well-known building near her house in the downtown: “I love this kind of work, since I was a child, I loved these kinds of design and chocolate arrangements works.”

As for Roula, a housewife, started an NGO for educating the Syrian refugees when she first came to Beirut, out of compassion and solidarity. Recently, she established an import and export company. She exports damascene products from Damascus to Beirut, and from Beirut to Germany, which is very convenient for her, since she regularly travels to Damascus. This business idea emerged from her networks with the same organization in Germany that funds her NGO, who appreciated a lot the damascene craftworks such as, laurel soap, crochet and Aghabani embroidery tablecloth, Brocades fabrics, Qishani, etc.

In business terms, the definition of enjoying lifestyle businesses are those that do not aspire expansion or substantial growth, for such growth would destroy the lifestyle of the business, and their owners maintain relatively modest investments in their businesses just to keep a certain level of competitiveness with the market (Morris et al. 2015, 715). This corresponds well to our five entrepreneurs’ businesses. None of them is considering any near future plans to expand their businesses, regardless of the economic recession and turbulence that Lebanon is going through. Additionally, since these entrepreneurs are hobby-oriented, these businesses are not their primary livelihood source. As such, money is neither an obstacle nor a goal. Rana explicitly stated: “I started this business so I would keep myself busy...my purpose has never been the profit. It is not my [source of] livelihood. It is my hobby.” Roula’s profit from the import/export company is largely

spent for the NGO. As for Tala, Sarah, and Adam, their enterprises do not make them financially independent, and they are still financially supported by their parents.

This group of entrepreneurs is not necessarily in need of connections with influential Lebanese actors to manage their businesses. Their networks are confined to their personal social networks from college, school, hometown, etc. Thus, Sarah, Tala, and Adam's local embeddedness is *low*. The exceptions are Rana and Roula, who are *highly* embedded in the local community—mostly in its social realm. Given that collecting art pieces is considered a luxury and is only affordable by the privileged elites, Rana's business relies heavily on her already-established personal connections with wealthy Lebanese and Syrians: "It's all about the contacts and the social network!" Roula's high embeddedness in the local community emanates from her husband's business-related social networks in Lebanon. For instance, she and her family were able to acquire the Lebanese citizenship, thanks to her husband's connections with the minister of Interior. Also, when she and her family first moved to Beirut, through her husband's social networks with Lebanese elites, they met with some influential people who volunteered to register her NGO under their names, since Syrians cannot register a company or an NGO by themselves. Their connections with the minister also helped: "back then, it was a very complicated procedure, but the minister of interior signed the legal papers immediately and hence we officially registered it."

Having considered the five entrepreneurs' type of business, motive, and lifestyle orientation, their transnational networks appear mostly *soft*, except for Roula's *flexible*

transnational networks. But, they all have strong familial and social relations with their hometown, Damascus. As mentioned earlier, Roula's connections with her NGO's funding organizations in Germany and France, were the main factor for establishing the import/export company. Thus, her business networks link her to Germany and Damascus. Also, because of the economic turbulences that Lebanon is going through, Roula faced some difficulties in receiving and sending money through her bank account in Lebanon. That is why she is planning to move her financial operation to Amman, Jordan, where they know "a multi- millionaire" who would help them. As for Tala, Sarah, and Rana's transnational network, they depend on their clients' demands and orders. Lastly, Adam's transnational network is confined to his strong connection with the USA: he has the citizenship, regularly travel there, and is planning to open a car wash there in the future.

In conclusion, approaching the study of "migrant entrepreneurship" and "migrants and cities" from an action/interaction lens between the city and its migrants, where the hybridity of migrants' characteristics and resources, and the city's opportunity structure and its openings are all taken into consideration, contribute to our understanding that migrant entrepreneurs do not form a homogenous group who just inhabits the city, as the mainstream literature generally presents. Indeed, as I demonstrated, migrant entrepreneurs interact with the city's opportunity structure variably according to their background, financial capabilities, social, human, and cultural capital, age, professional aspiration, and so on. Accordingly, each contributes to the urban restructuring and global positioning of the city differently.

Using the case of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs in Beirut, I identified three specific types of entrepreneurial activities: the ones *Carrying over*, the ones *Experimenting*, and the ones *Enjoying Lifestyle*. The migrant entrepreneurship literature falls short of presenting the complexity and the different dynamics that produce such different types. Especially, lifestyle entrepreneurship are usually studied in stable and traditional contexts, and not associated to migrant entrepreneurship. Also, it is important to note that these migrants' entrepreneurial activities have not emerged as resilience practices of "survival" (Morris et al. 2015, 714), for none of these entrepreneurial ventures operate on the basis of "hand-to-mouth type of existence."

2. Migrant Entrepreneurs' Impacts on the City: The Local and Global Urban Restructuring of Beirut

As discussed, each of the three groups of migrant entrepreneurs interacts with and impacts the city's localities and opportunity structure according to their distinct economic functioning, which was defined by their local, national and transnational networks (Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). Those with a transnational dimension conducted entrepreneurial activities differently from those with a local dimension. As such, the former were able to reshuffle the scale and global positioning of Beirut, while the latter's activities stayed usually bound to a limited market or geographical scope, hence contributing to a more local restructuring. The transnational aspect of economic functioning is closely related to local social and economic embeddedness, as Portes et al.

(2002; 287) suggest a correlation between the level of local embeddedness and the probability to establish transnational networks and enterprises. This was confirmed among the three types: I identified *High* embeddedness with *Firm* transnational networks among the “*Carrying over*”; *moderate* embeddedness with *Flexible* transnational networks among the “*Experimenting*” group; and *low* embeddedness with *soft* transnational networks among the “*Enjoying lifestyle*” entrepreneurs. Though some entrepreneurs are highly embedded in the local context but with soft transnational network, it is important to note that as long as the entrepreneur is low embedded in the local context, his/her probability to establish transnational networks are also low.

Although I relied on the entrepreneurs’ national/local networks and transnational networks as the two main pillars for my analysis of global urban restructuring, these networks’ dynamics are influenced by many other factors, which were discussed in the previous chapter (such as background, class resources, localities of points of departure, trajectories, and business motive/aspirations). For, as shown, the socioeconomic class and the class resources they are associated with, are in themselves vital dimensions that affect the migrants’ entrepreneurial activities hence affect their impacts on the urban restructuring of the city and its global positioning.

The urban restructuring processes that cities go through occur on multiple simultaneous scales, whereby processes are global in reach, and are locally produced (Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). In other words, the transnational dimension of migrants’ entrepreneurial structure that impacts the scale and global position of Beirut would not

have been achieved if entrepreneurs were not well integrated in the local social and economic fields (local/national networks), and in the urban host city's localities. As Salih and Riccio (2010) state, "...The transnational dimension of migrants' lives affects (and is affected by) not only their insertion in the local yet globalized labor markets and economies but also by their potential to participate within local and community life" (Salih & Riccio 2010, 132).

Therefore, after discussing from an entrepreneurial perspective the migrants' role in urban restructuring and positioning of Beirut at a global scale, I move now to examining their contributions to the local urban dynamics and their participation in Beirut, and how they impact the inner local urban restructuring of the city. In what follows, I discuss the urban incorporations and experience of the 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs in Beirut, tackling two dimensions: national identity, and choice of localities (for business, residence, and leisure), with its associated urban experiences and mobility.

2.1 National Identity:

Many scholars consider the methodological nationalism approach as one of the main shortcomings in analyzing the relation between cities and migrants (Smith, 1983; Schiller & Caglar, 2010; Schiller, 2014; Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). Methodological nationalism is when the city's actors, based on their national cultures, norms, values and identities, are divided into "natives vs. foreigners", and foreigners are perceived and studied through their "exclusion or inclusion" in the social, cultural, and urban realms of

the host city. However, the discussion does not address the factors that lead some city's migrants' nationality to stop being a divisive or discriminatory tool.

Harb's et al. (2017) research on Syrian business-owners identified four categories of business-owners: the successful, the comfortable, the coping, and the struggling. The struggling entrepreneurs, the ones with minimum capital and access to information, expressed a strong sense of insecurity related to their Syrian nationality and experienced acute feelings of discrimination from the Lebanese social and economic community (Harb et al, 2017). This nationality-based discrimination evidently has consequences on how they could restructure the city, and should be taken into account when analyzing their relationship to the host city. For, as Harb et al. (2017) concluded, the struggling entrepreneurs' urban mobility is limited and their urban footprint is confined to their work location and homes, since they try to contain their movements within the city as to avoid risky encounters.

Matters are very different for the high-income entrepreneurs I study, at the level of nationality and discrimination, and at the level of urban experiences and mobility. None of the 13 entrepreneurs I traced mentioned any obstacles related to their nationality, or experiences of discrimination. On the contrary, they all claimed they were treated with "respect" and received "encouragements."

Jamal, the startups accelerator owner, stated when asked if he faces any obstacles related to his Syrian nationality: "No, because in the world of startups... it doesn't matter what is the nationality of the person you are dealing with...this work field is not "traditional", so the types of clients are also not traditional." While Amer, the leather bags brand owner, who engages directly with locals and artisans in Bourj Hammoud,

said: “With money, you can solve all such obstacles, except the ones that are related to the banking system!” Furthermore, Rana, who manages the art exhibition business and lives in a relatively gated community in Achrafiyeh, is very well integrated in the Lebanese society’s as she clearly explains: “Maybe because I am classy, I don’t bother anyone... and yes, it’s true, [the Lebanese] don’t tolerate them [the less privilege Syrians/the refugees], but it’s not the same for the wealthy Syrians.” As for Basma, she also noted:

“No, not at all. I haven’t felt any discrimination whatsoever; not from a landlord, or from the General Security, or from the bank... perhaps because I am a woman, or because I have the money, I don’t know. I was very happy. Even the clients were very supportive and gave very positive feedbacks.”

Alia, who established a delivery service business, adds: “No, maybe because I am a business-owner, they did not look at me with an inferior look.” On the other hand, Adam, who is investing in a gym in Aramoun, has faced discrimination from his fellow Syrian clients-a discrimination related to his political affiliations to the Syrian regime, and they stopped coming to the gym.

Accordingly, it very well seems that class resources trump nationality-based discrimination in the case of Syrian migrant entrepreneurs. Indeed, the Syrian identity of the 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs has ceased to be a divisive or discriminatory marker. Evidently, this helps considerably in the social and economic incorporation.

2.2 Choice of Localities with its associated urban experiences and mobility:

Regarding their choice of localities and their urban experiences and mobility, as indicated earlier and in the previous chapter, all of the entrepreneurs live and work in different neighborhoods, except for Zouhair and Sarah. Their selection of localities for their business and/or residence indicates how they do not follow a noteworthy strategy. None of the entrepreneurs stated that their choice of residency location was related to their business location, or to the presence of other Syrian businesses, or to a specific neighborhood, or to the political/sectarian affiliation of a neighborhood. Thus, ethnic, national, sectarian, religious, or political criteria did not seem to matter. Instead, business localities' decisions were rather based on factors related to business opportunities and business efficiency assessments, as well as to social networks.

Localities used for leisure activities also help qualify the geographies of local incorporation of Syrian migrant entrepreneurs. These geographies are more scattered throughout the middle-to-high-end neighborhoods and districts inside and outside Beirut, yet they are also concentrated in specific clusters and sites associated with posh attitudes and practices, such as downtown Beirut, ABC Verdun, Achrafieh, Hamra's pubs, Mar Mikhail, and Badaro. Depending on age and family status, migrant entrepreneurs are generally very much engaged in consumerist activities: they shop in fancy malls (ABC Achrafieh, ABC Verdun, Beirut Souks), they work out in trendy private gyms, they patronize posh restaurants and cafes, and they enjoy the famous nightclubs, pubs, bars, rooftops and lounges that make up the nightlife of Beirut. Additionally, they indulge in cultural events and intellectual activities, such as going to the theater, to the cinema, to

public talks and events, to art exhibitions, and to book clubs. They are also well-versed in outdoor sports activities, such as hiking, drifting, and skiing.

As Buhr (2015) argues, migrants can acquire the “local” figure, and “becoming local is a skilled practice... [that] is about being aware of what the city has to offer and of the possibilities or impossibilities of reaching out for that offer” (Buhr 2015, 6; 2018).

The 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs I traced appear to have excelled at “becoming local[s]” as they have learned quite well what Beirut has to offer, and have developed noteworthy skills enabling them to “[reach] out for that offer.”

Interestingly, since these entrepreneurs have selected their localities independently from ethnic, national, sectarian, religious, or political affiliation criteria, they are “locals” yet liberated from “local” obligations or constraints. They align more to migrants with high education and resources who are often considered to form the “global elite”, who have been described as “free-floating mobiles that are disembedded from localities and moving outside of the constraints of nation states” (Plöger & Becker 2015, 1520; Hannerz, 1996).

Moreover, admittedly, cities, as Marcuse (2002, 11) states “have always been divided. Possibly they always will be— and possibly they should be.” And the oldest division operates on the basis of the hierarchy of power and wealth, as Plato (c.460 BC/1937, 422) trenchantly said: “For [cities] are each one of them, many cities, not a city, as it goes in the game. There are two at the least at enmity with one another, the city of the rich and the city of the poor, and in each of these there are many.” Marcuse (2002) believes that cities, and hence the spatial and urban practices of its dwellers, are divided

along many possible lines such as socioeconomic class, nationality, ethnicity, or religion, and many more. Therefore, as these 13 entrepreneurs hold high and diversified class resources, navigate the city comfortably, are fully aware of its resources, reside in middle-to-high income neighborhoods, and mostly engage in consumer-based leisure activities, and are free from ethnic, national, religious, political, or sectarian obligations, they play a role as *wealthy independent “locals”* in the internal urban and spatial restructuring of Beirut’s “cities.”

As such, there is a strong relationship between the social and economic class of migrants and their inclusion/exclusion in/from the city. Indeed, the experience of high-income Syrian entrepreneurs in Beirut shows how the higher the migrants’ social class, the more fluid their national identity becomes, and the smoother their social and urban incorporation is. High-income Syrian entrepreneurs are endowed with privileges and financial capabilities that facilitated enormously their incorporation in the social, economic and urban realms of Beirut, and thus their contributions to its local and global urban restructuring.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS⁵

1. Synthesis

With the intention to investigate the impact of the high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs on the urban/global restructuring of the city of Beirut, this thesis has studied their dynamics from multiple simultaneous scales: *locally* produced dynamics, and their *global* reach. In other words, through their inner resources (class resources and social capital), migrants' social, economic, and urban incorporation and embeddedness are produced at *the local level (the city level)*- as in national/local networks, entrepreneurial activities, and urban experience and participation, from which their transnational social and economic networks emerge to reach *globally*, therefore impact the scale and global positioning of Beirut.

The thesis started with an overview of the heterogeneity of the Syrian population in Lebanon, and presented the major obstacles Syrian businessmen/women face while establishing their businesses in Beirut, namely restrictions in the legal and institutional framework, and opening bank accounts. In Chapter 2, I discussed the relationship between migrants and cities through three main concepts: urban restructuring, city scale, and city's localities. I also examined migrants' dynamics in/with the city: class resources, the opportunity structure of the city and its relation to the city's actors, and migrants' transnational networks. In chapter 3, I moved to profiling my sample and indicated several points/characteristics. First, all of the entrepreneurs'

⁵ As I am aware of the political turbulence and the economic and financial collapse that Lebanon is going through nowadays, these policy suggestions and recommendations are based on the hopeful scenario that the country will recover, as it has always done.

point of departure is middle-to-high end neighborhoods, and their trajectories are circular rather than linear. Second, they hold high and diversified class resources. Third, their businesses' operation is not confined to its official location, thus their businesses' footprint and impact is fluid rather than fixed to a specific geographical location. Fourth, in relation to their operations, the entrepreneurs' businesses could be categorized into: managed-growth, short-lived, and lifestyle. And lastly, their "knowledge" in terms of urban and spatial experiences is considered resourceful yet concentrated in certain areas and neighborhoods. In the previous chapter, I analyzed migrants' role in the urban restructuring and global positioning of Beirut from two entry points- entrepreneurial activities and local urban experiences. Based on their local embeddedness and transnational networks I identified three groups of entrepreneurs: the ones *Carrying over*, the ones *Experimenting*, and the one *Enjoying Lifestyle*. I confirmed several scholars' notion of the correlation between the entrepreneurs' local social and economic embeddedness with their ability to establish transnational networks, hence their role in the urban/global restructuring processes. In the second entry point, I discussed the urban incorporation of the 13 migrants from two dimensions: national identity, and choice of localities (for business, residence, and leisure), with its associated urban experiences and mobility. I concluded that these 13 high-income migrant entrepreneurs as *wealthy independent "locals*, are very well incorporated in the urban and social realm of Beirut, hence play a role in the internal/local urban and spatial restructuring of Beirut.

Therefore, the following recommendations intend to capitalize the role of high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs in the urban restructuring and global positioning of Beirut, through facilitating their local embeddedness and encouraging their entrepreneurial and economic

activities, from which their transnational networks emerge. Accordingly, my recommendations incorporate insights from business entrepreneurship as well as from planning and urban studies, in relation to scholarship on migrations and cities.

2. Policy Recommendations and Suggestions:

As indicated throughout the thesis, migration and cities are inseparable. As Portes (2000) argues, "...the most intelligent course of action is to manage the situation with measures that facilitate the incorporation of newcomers" (Portes 2000, 165). These measures should have special importance when the issue of migration is embedded in the reality of the daily life of the people in both countries, like Syria and Lebanon (Cassarino, 2008).

In the previous chapter, I identified three groups of entrepreneurs: The ones *Carrying over*, the ones *Experimenting*, and the ones *Enjoying Lifestyle*. In business terms and definitions, these three groups of entrepreneurial activities fall under Morris's et al. (2015) categorization of "non-high-growth" ventures, which include lifestyle and managed-growth businesses.

Some scholars, like Shane (2009), argue against public policies and regulations that facilitate the establishment of non-high-growth entrepreneurial ventures and startups (such as lifestyle and managed-growth). These ventures, as Shane (2009) believes, do not have a substantial impact on the country's economic growth. Conversely, Morris et al. (2015) advance that these non-HG ventures are "the backbone of the economy" and are the base upon which HG ventures actually rely. Thus, failing to address non-HG ventures can harm the "entrepreneurial eco-system" (Isenberg, 2010; Malecki, 2011), and the

economic growth of a country on the long term. Furthermore, Morris et al. (2015) view the heterogeneity of ventures as an indicator of a vibrant economic eco-system, whereby different types of ventures mutually depend and enforce each other, they say: "...policy makers should instead focus on enlarging and improving the total pool of ventures being launched, and encouraging a level of diversity that maximizes interactions among actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem" (Morris et al. 2015, 722).

As such, introducing policies and measures that facilitate the establishment of non-HG ventures that high-income Syrian migrant entrepreneurs are mostly engaged in, would, on one hand, capitalize the unique role of the Syrian migrant in the local/global urban restructuring of Beirut, and would, on the other hand, enhance the Lebanese economy. For these ventures could have positive impact on the local economy through renting facilities, providing competitive services, introducing new approaches and resources, increasing supply/demand, recruiting Lebanese employees, etc. As such, policy interventions that seek to encourage the role of high-income Syrian migrants in the urban economy of Beirut will also have a direct impact on enriching and diversifying its city life.

There are many reports and studies that have highlighted the best practices and initiatives taken by host countries to facilitate the economic and social integration of its Syrian newcomers. Nevertheless, most of these measures were specifically based on the evaluation of the experiences of the most vulnerable groups of Syrians with the least resources—namely refugees. Thus, very few practices and policies tackled the economic and urban experiences and needs of "migrant entrepreneurs" in the host country.

Therefore, in this chapter I select the most relevant policies, practices and initiatives implemented by public and private organizations and bodies in different countries in order to suggest a set of policy recommendations and strategic measures that focus on three main aspects:

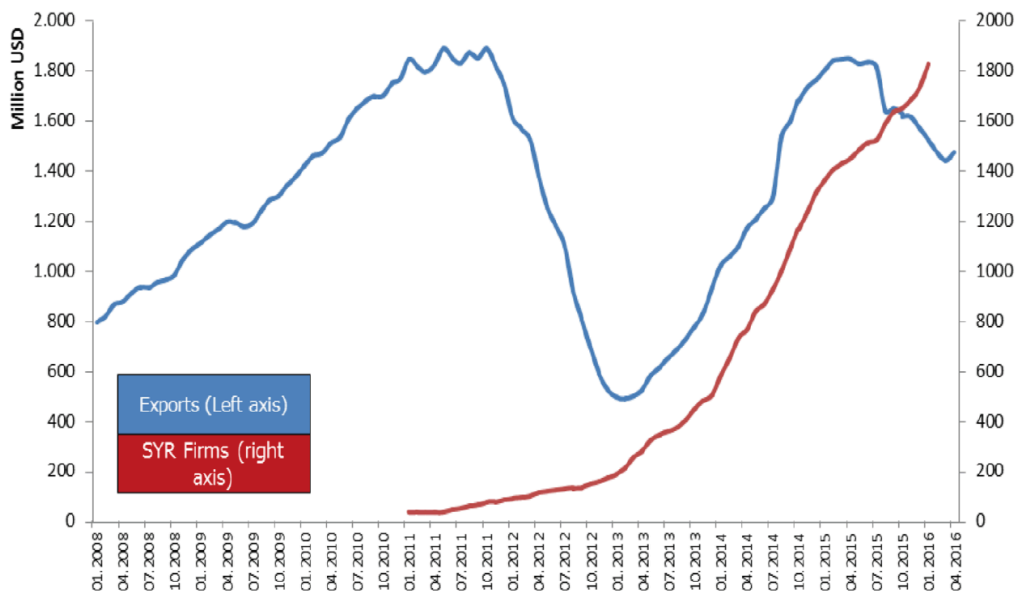
- 1- Policies that would intensify the local embeddedness of migrants, in order to tackle and enhance the transnational dimension of their economic and entrepreneurial activities (Portes et al., 2002; Kyle, 1999; Poros, 2001).
- 2- Policies that would capitalize the role of Syrian migrant entrepreneurs as *independent* (Chap. 5) players in the local urban restructuring of Beirut.
- 3- Policies that would take advantage of the entrepreneurial activities of migrants in order to enhance the role of Beirut so it can “compete on a global terrain” (Schiller & Caglar 2011, 74).

2.1. Recommended Policies for Migrants’ Local Embeddedness and Transnational Networks:

According to The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (TOBB), in 2015, more than 1,600 Syrian companies were established in Turkey, which made up 2.4 percent of the total number of newly established businesses (<https://www.tobb.org.tr>). In 2019, the number of companies with Syrian shares reached 10,000. These firms are mostly concentrated at the border cities with Syria, where they represent 13.1 percent of all new companies in Gaziantep, 15 percent in Mersin, and up to 35 percent in Kilis (ibid). The transnational networks of these Syrian business-owners

with their home country’s market had a serious impact on the export sector of Turkey (Kaymaz & Kadkoy, 2016; Koru & Kadkoy, 2017; Karasapan, 2016). In 2010, before the outburst in Syria, the Turkish exports to Syria peaked at \$1.8 billion, and then in 2012, naturally, it dramatically decreased to \$500 million. However, in 2014, with the steady increase in the number of Syrian firms in Turkey (especially at the border cities like Gaziantep and the province of Hatay), the Turkish exports to Syria reached its pre 2011 rate (Figure 12). Accordingly, the Syria Trade Office reported that more than \$10 billion has flowed from Syria to Turkey.

Figure 12: Turkey’s exports to Syria in comparison to the number of Syrian companies established in Turkey. Source: <https://www.tobb.org.tr>.



In early 2016, in attempt to further nurture the assets of these Syrian firms, the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce formed the “Syria’s Office” that aims to facilitate the exchange of expertise, services, and connections between Syrian companies that are investing in various sectors in Gaziantep (Anadolu Agency, 2016).

When the program director, Guven Sak, of the Economic Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) was asked, “what would the figures be if we facilitated things for the Syrian entrepreneurs [in Turkey]?” he compared the situation to the Silicon Valley, where the foreign start-ups firms compose nearly 40% of the overall number of new established firms (Karasapan, 2016). TEPAV issued several reports regarding the Syrian economic presence in Turkey, suggesting recommendations that mainly tackle the economic and social local embeddedness of the Syrian business-owners (<https://www.tepav.org.tr/en>). For instance, they recommended increasing the involvement of local bodies and public institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Industry so they provide the entrepreneurs with guidance services with regard to the regulatory framework and the Turkish market structure. It also suggests strengthening the role of accelerator and incubator centers, and proposes turning them into “trade facilitation centers” that would not only offer advice, but also assistance in obtaining licenses and work permits. These centers would particularly target “the export-oriented” companies. In 2013, TEPAV launched the GARAJ entrepreneurship center in Ankara at the University of Economics and Technology (TOBB). GARAJ’s principal aim was to nourish the “startup community”, thus the program started off with the narrative that the entrepreneurs’ biggest need, when first establishing a business, is access to “networks” rather than capital (Şahbaz, 2013). The center targets young local entrepreneurs and offers them a six-month program in which they get needed mentorship to develop their start-up ideas and present them, at the end of the semester, to potential local and international investors, in the aim of “get[ting] an investment to cover initial

expenses such as marketing and human resources and attain[ing] high rates of fast business growth...” (Şahbaz, 2013). The center also aims to expand the entrepreneurs’ international networks and connect them with actors in the region’s markets (Egypt, Jordan, Dubai, and Azerbaijan). Though GARAJ targeted local entrepreneurs, TEPAV suggests in its report⁶ to leverage the GARAJ center’s experiment as a prime example for business incubators targeting the Syrian entrepreneurs.

There are also some examples of organizations that work on representing parts of the Syrian business-community outside of Syria on an international level, such as the Syrian International Business Association (SIBA). In 2017, SIBA was launched by Syrian business-owners and entrepreneurs who live in various cities across the world (<https://siba.world>). The board members are all quite successful businessmen/women with high academic degrees, as some of them fill influential and leading positions in their business fields, while the others have established large successful companies in Beirut, Jordan, Egypt, the UAE and the UK. The association works on mobilizing resources in order to facilitate the establishment of Syrian businesses. Its actions revolve around five priorities: regulatory barriers, youth empowerment programs, opportunities for investments and matchmaking, solutions to financial sector challenges, and making strong links between business and philanthropy more systematic (World Bank, 2017). Several members in the association who have successful businesses and startups, especially in Turkey, were advocate of joining SIBA “to benefit from the advantages of being within the largest Syrian commercial bloc in diaspora.”⁷ Such an organization is

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[https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/15668309926.TEPAV and EBRD Syrian Entrepreneurship and Refugee Startups in Turkey Lever....pdf](https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/15668309926.TEPAV_and_EBRD_Syrian_Entrepreneurship_and_Refugee_Startups_in_Turkey_Lever....pdf)

⁷ <http://siba.world/al-muhtar-sweets/>. The words of Mr. Bilal Khalaf, the founder and owner of Al-Muhtar Sweets in Istanbul.

similar to The Hispanic Fund, which was created by the Mexican government. The fund's goal is to support the small and medium-sized Latino businesses by granting loans and stimulate the partnership and investments among the Latin business community in Mexico and the United States (Guarnizo 1998, 205).

In Lebanon, there is a somehow similar agency: The Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) that works on attracting and encouraging local and foreign investments in Lebanon. The agency offers local and foreign investors a range of incentives and business support services, such as “free legal and audit advice, administrative and fiscal incentives, and facilitation services” (<https://investinlebanon.gov.lb>). It also provides the investors with the all needed information about the financial system, and legal and regulatory framework of starting and registering a business in Lebanon. IDAL moreover grants- based on the investments size, sector of operation, and number of job created, two schemes of financial and non-financial incentive to investment projects. There also some accelerator centers like the Beirut Digital District (BDD) that hosts accelerator programs like Speed Lebanon. The accepted startups receive \$30,000 cash injection in return for 10% equity, along with services and mentorship.

Nevertheless, these two examples of agencies and accelerator programs in Lebanon seem to fall short when it comes to supporting traditional businesses and Syrian entrepreneurs. For instance, IDAL mostly focuses its support on large investment projects. According to data presented on its website, the investment size of the projects it

supports is \$5 millions on average⁸. The accelerator program mostly focuses on less-traditional startups (technology, ICT, and digital media), and targets the local entrepreneurs and startups, rather than foreigners. One of the interviewees, namely Amer, declared that he and his partners applied for the program, but their pitch was rejected because they are Syrians, as an insider told them.

A program similar to Turkey's GARAJ operating at both the local and international levels that acknowledges the importance of integrating the foreign business-owners' and their businesses and startups in the local economic and urban structure, would, on one hand, enhance the diversity in the local economy, and on the other, would increase the economic ties among the foreign migrant entrepreneurs and the actors in the local market. As several scholars believe, this would increase the probability of entrepreneurs to establish transnational networks and enterprises with their home country and beyond (Portes et al., 2002; Kyle, 1999; Poros, 2001).

In order to enhance the local embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs and facilitate their economic transnational networks, I suggest the establishment of a similar organization/unit like the "Syria's Office" in Gaziantep at the Lebanese context- possibly titled "The Syrian Commerce Networks." This unit could be either decentralized and operate at the level of municipalities and Chambers of Commerce and Industry, or remain centralized within a sector ministry (e.g. Ministry of Economy and Trade). The suggested unit's framework would focus on local and cross-border networking, and target Syrians

⁸ https://investinlebanon.gov.lb/en/about_us/investments_supported_by_idal/projects

who specifically work in the field of trading and export/import/distribution. Along with providing information on the trading sector and services, it would assist in building economic bridges among Syrian traders who reside or operate their businesses in Beirut, and facilitate the exchange of networks, expertise, and opportunities among them and their counterpart Lebanese. On the international level, it would help the traders in expanding their international trading lines.

Moreover, the Syrian International Business Association (SIBA) should invest more in Lebanon and encourage more Syrian entrepreneurs to register in it. This could be enabled by following the same approach they did in Turkey in establishing a subsidiary chapter of the association, under the name of Siba Turk. The subsidiary scheme needs at least 15 members to conduct activities that are centered on a specific topic or location, namely networking, communication building with local and international actors and organizations, holding seminar and economic fora, promoting local business partnerships, providing information, capacity building and training, improved access to finance, and many others. The association could reach out to influential Syrian businessmen/women, who are already well established in Beirut and well informed about the Lebanese economic context (such as Azhari, Obagy and other families), and encourage them to establish “Siba Beirut.” This would enhance the probability of partnerships and investments between Syrians and Lebanese in Lebanon and around the world.

2.2. Recommended Policies to Capitalize the Role of Syrian Migrant Entrepreneurs as *Independent* Players:

Following the 2nd Annual CMI Peer-to-Peer learning workshop of Mediterranean Host municipalities network in 2017 that took place in Beirut, the municipality of Sarhan, Jordan, took a step towards integrating Syrian investments into its economic environment⁹. The municipality took advantage of land availability in order “to build a crafts area for Jordanian and Syrian small entrepreneurs” (Speakman, 2019). They introduced incentives such as land facilitation and simplified procedures attracting the private sector and Syrian investors. Consequently, three large successful Syrian-led industries were established in Sarhan, and so far, these policy and regulatory types of support were deemed a success, as reported in several articles, as they helped creating a more diversified local economy in terms of sectors and expertise.

Taking the Sarhan experience as an example, and considering my findings on the *independency* and the relative anonymity of the Syrian migrant entrepreneurs in the economic and urban realms of Beirut, the Lebanese state could develop a similar scheme. As in designating areas and neighborhoods in Beirut and/or its peripheries, for Syrian entrepreneurs and investors to establish their businesses in. This could be helpful creating economic development opportunities in these areas and further diversifying the social fabric of the designated areas. These areas could benefit from municipal and/or public tax incentives as well, and could also have temporary special legal provisions that would ease their administrative and financial operations.

2.3. Recommended Policies for the Global Positioning of Beirut:

⁹ For more information: www.cmimarseille.org/blog/photo-story-jobs-changing-lives-refugees-andlocals-sarhan-jordan

A. Economic Citizenship/Residency:

In the last two decades, more and more countries, like Ireland, are redefining their national boundaries and the concept of citizenship to include individuals, who are no longer in residence (Levitt 2001, 204). Countries are introducing new forms of “long-distance nationalism” that grant migrants “special rights, protections, and recognition in the hopes of ensuring their long-term support” (Glick Schiller 2000; Guarnizo 2000). Moreover, OECD countries (the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which consist of 37 countries among them are Greece and Turkey) have entry and residence policies that apply specifically to foreign investors and entrepreneurs who wish to migrate on the basis of establishing or investing in a business, hence contributing to the economic growth of the host country (OECD, 2010). Candidates for such entry or residency should meet certain criteria regarding human and financial capital, business and management experience, and business/project idea and plan (ibid).

In a similar matter, in an attempt to attract innovative entrepreneurs, many G20 countries have adopted a “startup visa program [that] provides a special concession for non-citizens to start a business in a foreign country including a residence permit in addition to various special benefits” (Sak et al. 2018, 10; Aytac & Sahbaz, 2016). The startup visa programs consist of three categories: a) Fast-tracked work visa, b) Entrepreneur visa, and c) Special start up visa programs; each has specific conditions and advantages.

As indicated in Chapter 4, most of the 13 migrant entrepreneurs did not acquire a work-visa residency (and some chose not to because of the long and complicated procedure and its high costs). They either operated unofficially or, in order to establish their business, they had to resort to alternative solutions, such as operating under a Lebanese name or partnership. The qualitative and the quantitative contribution of such Syrian businesses (the ones that are registered as a Lebanese company and the ones that are unofficially unregistered) to the economic growth of the country are thus not officially measured. We know however that, in 2017, Syrians rank as the second largest foreign investors in real estate markets in Lebanon, after Saudis (www.syria-report.com). Accordingly, similar aforementioned frameworks could be developed and adopted in Lebanon, where migrants who fulfill a set of eligible criteria could obtain “economic nationality/citizenship”, a “startup visa”, or “entrepreneur entry/residency.” Such migration policies and frameworks would attract migrants who have certain proficiencies and capital, whether in the form of investors or entrepreneurs, and would encourage a new perception of the role and the potential contribution that an “economic migrant” could play in the host city.

Moreover, such measures would encourage reconsidering the orthodox, traditional conception that relates the value of the individual’s economic productivity exclusively with their residency in their home country. This is especially true in this globalized era, where the exchange of information, culture, and expertise between countries are happening on a much faster rate. It is time for the 21st century world to have a new order

and redraw the lines that define “citizenship” and “nationality”, and the economic rights that come with them.

B. Entry and Exit Costs of a Business Venture:

According to the Doing Business 2020 database, the determinants of the ease in doing business in a country are based on how flexible and conducive is its regulatory framework. The used indicators measure: the number of procedures required to legally register and formally operate the company, the time required to complete the whole procedure (per days), the cost required to complete each procedure (in relation to per capita income), and the paid-in minimum capital. Among 190 countries, Turkey ranked 33 in ease of doing business, while Lebanon ranked 143 (Syria ranked 176) (<https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>). Note that this ranking is based on a standardized business that is 100% locally owned, so starting a foreign-owned business would naturally be, if not harder, then, more complex. As showed in Chapter 2, according to a survey conducted by the World Bank with Syrian investors and business-owners, 30% reported a major obstacle in officially registering their businesses. Moreover, 67% indicated that the main hurdle in terms of financial operations is opening a bank account. This was also noted by the 13 entrepreneurs, who reported alternative solutions to manage their finance. For some have moved their financial operation to banks abroad (the USA and Jordan), some used *wasta* and exploited their acquaintances with influential people to be able to officially open a bank account in USD, and some had to use their

Lebanese partner as a façade for their financial operation in the bank. Evidently, Syrian migrant entrepreneurs are caught up in a complex web of financial and regulative rules that make it harder for them to establish their businesses and startups. However, despite all this hardship and hurdles, many were and still are determined enough to keep or establish their business in Lebanon. Lebanon has several advantages that play in its favor for them: its strategic geographical position in the Middle East, its free open market, its proximity to their home country, its familiar language and culture. Its former role as an economic hub was also a major value added which is now seriously threatened with the ongoing meltdown.

Lebanon can acknowledge, promote, and empower this potential role as an entrepreneurial hub, regionally and globally. It can adopt measures and policies that facilitate the process of establishing businesses for migrant entrepreneurs and investors, and hence “compete on a global terrain”. As Lee et al. (2007) observe, easier procedures of entering and exiting a business increase the number of individuals who are willing to establish a business, thereby positively impacting economic productivity and growth. This means that even if businesses succeeded or failed, or were sustainable or short-lived, either way they would stimulate the economy. Indeed, as Morris et al. (2015) indicated, a major indicator of the strength of an economy is its “venture failure rate” (which is the case in the US economy).

Therefore, if Lebanon can develop a set of simplified policies with less complex and costly procedures, the establishment of migrants’ businesses would be enabled, and

more foreign entrepreneurs/investors from across the globe, or at least the region, could be attracted to the Lebanese market. Thus, based on Faist's (2010) theory, Beirut and other cities and localities could position themselves as "core(s)" of entrepreneurial activities and startups. What is needed is a framework that acknowledges the needs of different types of entrepreneurial activities and economic operations migrant entrepreneurs might establish, and that recognizes the added value of different types of businesses to the Lebanese entrepreneurial ecosystem (Morris et al., 2015).

Despite its small sample, this thesis has explored in-depth the urban and entrepreneurial practices of 13 migrant entrepreneurs. Its intent is to propose new insights for the analysis of the dialectic relationship between city and migrants. It seeks to urge scholars of migrant entrepreneurship to incorporate urban factors in their analysis of migrants' economic activities and to encourage scholars of migration and urban studies to investigate migrants' businesses' impacts on the city's changing spatial production and processes and urban experiences. Further research can additionally investigate the urban and entrepreneurial presence of Syrian migrants in Beirut longitudinally over several years. Such research would examine Portes's et al. (2002) argument that migrants' transnational activities and networks fade away when they are more embedded in the host city. Would the longer duration of migrants' settlement in the host city imply less transnational networks and practices, or would these remain salient? And how does their role in the urban and global restructuring of the host city transform over time? Other research questions could consider investigating the impact of high-income Syrian population's migration on their Syrian sending cities. How did their migration impact the

urban and economic structure of their sending localities? These are some of the issues this thesis seeks to inspire.

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