

# Social networks among return migrants to post-war Lebanon

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# Social Networks Among Return Migrants to Post-War Lebanon

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*“In February 1995, after eleven years of involuntary exile, I found myself back in Beirut. Almost immediately my sense of place was thrown off balance. This was not the Lebanon I had come back to in my mind; not the country I had revisited countless times in my imagination. (...) My desire to return to Lebanon had been strong, but I seemed unable to draw strength from it. The challenge ahead now seemed daunting as I groped for meaning in a realm where memory had taken the place of reality. (...) My life had been subjected to discontinuities and dislocations, to shifts and disruptions, to roles that must be invented again and again.”*

*(Roseanne Khalaf 2004: 59)*

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## Introduction

Over the last few decades, international population movements have become a basic structural feature around the globe. They complement, coupled with the radical changes in technology and development, other flows and exchanges taking place in an increasingly interconnected world (Kritz et al. 1992). In this respect, political policy making systematically focuses on the escalating influx of migrants into the western societies and on government acts that lead to impede immigration. Contemporary academic research however, calls for the conception of migration as continuous circular movements of individuals, who migrate simultaneously in various ways, directions and degrees of permanence. From this perspective, migration is by no means a one-way journey of permanent relocation, but rather a complex and multi-phased procedure that often leads to the migrants' return to their home country.

The overall goal of this study is to contribute towards a better understanding of the dynamics of return migration. In the course of the unfolding globalization process, migration scholars emphasize that communities are no longer a local but rather a delocalized phenomenon, as so called 'new diasporas' of people with multiple allegiances to places emerge. In this thesis it will be argued that the focus on social ties of the emigrants could prove valuable insight into the understanding of return migration processes. Unlike emigrants moving away from their home country, those returning are migrating to a previously known destination called 'home', where they are likely to be continuously embedded in a social network that, through their experience of migration, now stretches from origin to destination and beyond.

Lebanese people are frequently portrayed to have 'inherited a predisposition to migrate'. Various historical as well as socio-economic circumstances have long pushed or pulled the Lebanese to migrate abroad and, in due course, established powerful social and economic networks linking the Lebanese in a transnational environment. Furthermore, the last civil war (1975-1990) forced close to one million people to leave Lebanon and to temporarily or permanently settle abroad. Since 1990, Lebanese society is recovering from the atrocities of the civil war and considerable reconciliation and reconstruction efforts are being made to recreate an environment that could prove favourable for returning migrants.

With this background, the case of return migration to Lebanon after the civil war will be discussed by applying a social network approach. It will be demonstrated that social ties are of specific importance in migration decisions. This study aims to provide insight into the functionality of these personal relationships during the decision-making process of return and reintegration in Lebanon. Thus, the research presented here is conducted along the following question:

***Under what circumstances and how do personal social networks affect the decision-making process of post-war return migration to Lebanon?***

By focusing on the socially embedded decision-making process of return migration to Lebanon, the study pursues a threefold objective: In a first step, existing migration theories shall

be reviewed in order to assess their applicability to study return migration processes. Next, a theoretical framework for the discussion of the functionality of social ties for return migration will be established. Finally, a closer look at the social network compositions of the emigrants will provide some findings to point out avenues of further research to be conducted. A comparative research design was chosen to compare social network compositions of returnees in contrast to Lebanese emigrants who are still living abroad. In-depth interviews were conducted to assess migration-specific resources available in the migrants' social network for the return decision-making process and reintegration in Lebanon.

Within this research framework, migration refers to all movements individuals make in their lives. It includes emigration or out-migration, referring to the process of leaving one's home country with the intention of settling abroad – by whatever motivation the emigrant is driven to depart – as well as any onward or return journey they undertake. From the perspective of this research setting, it is important to understand that a *returnee* is a former emigrant who has returned to Lebanon, whereas a *stayee* is a Lebanese emigrant who has settled abroad and is still living there. The author will not follow the widely applied notion to distinguish between forced and voluntary migration but instead argue, along with Tilly (1997: 266) and Harpviken (1998: 2), that the legal concept of refugee serves little explanatory power in social research. Further concepts applied in migration research are discussed in the review of migration theories in this paper.

The study is structured as follows: With the background of the Lebanese post-war society and migration in its historical and contemporary context, the following chapter provides insight into some patterns of Lebanese return migration that will be appraised later in the analysis. Next, a review of migration literature and social network analysis outlines the existing individual and structural migration theories and applies the findings to the Lebanese case. The application of the social network approach to study the Lebanese return migration is justified and the results of contemporary return migration research are presented. Furthermore, some core assumptions of social network analysis are introduced with a view on the empirical analysis following thereafter. The empirical analysis comprises the core element of this research, as it presents a typology of return migration with a reference to the circumstances as well as the decision-making process of return. In addition, specific functionalities of social ties in return migration are discussed. The paper concludes with the main findings of the data analysis and a critique of the research methods applied throughout this paper.

## The Lebanese Civil War and Migration

### *Lebanese History and the Civil War 1975 - 1990*

Like many other states in the Middle East, Lebanon was established in the 1920's, in the context of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. Strategically located on the Mediterranean coast, Lebanon has long served as a bridge between the Arab and the Western world. Throughout history, patron-client relationships within isolated community structures have determined the organization of the public life in Lebanon (Delury 1990: 655). Lebanon's confessionalism was first institutionalized in the constitution in 1926, which established the representation in government to follow the main confessional lines of Lebanon's six major communities, the Sunni, Shi'a, Druzes, Maronites, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic<sup>1</sup> (Martin 2001: 411). The Republic of Lebanon achieved independence in 1943, when Sunni and Maronite elites reached an understanding referred to as the 'National Pact', an unwritten agreement that, with the support of the former French mandate powers, institutionalized Christian domination in the political decision making process. This agreement was essential for the operation of the political system from 1943 until the civil war (ibid: 412).

The last civil war in Lebanon broke out in 1975 and lasted up until 1990. It killed or injured at least half a million people and drove almost one million people leave the country (Martin 2001: 412). According to various analysts, the war was the result of rapidly growing socioeconomic injustices as well as an out-balanced formula of sectarian representation. During the war, political parties turned into militias that controlled specific areas of the country along with foreign forces. This fragmentation was by no means a simple Christian-Muslim rift but included the various sects within each of the two religions. Following the involvement of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon, Syrian troops intervened in Lebanon in 1976, while Israel invaded the country in 1982 (Delury 1999: 651).

### *Post-War Lebanon*

By the end of the civil war, Lebanon's economy was severely damaged and the public infrastructure destroyed. Not only was the country's sovereignty in question and its government institutions paralysed, but the civil war had also deepened the hatred between the numerous religious sects and communities. The Ta'if Agreement officially brought the civil war to an end in 1989. It called for the abolition of political confessionalism and asked for the redeployment of Syrian troops to specific areas, as well as for the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Despite efforts being made to demilitarize the armed sectarian groups, some former militias like the Hizbullah have kept arms to this day. Israel withdrew in 2000, and Syria pulled out its military forces due to mounting international pressure following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005. To this day, the country remains extremely vulnerable to outside

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<sup>1</sup> The six major religious communities are again divided into a total of 17 recognized religious sects.

influences (BfF 2000: 34) and a series of assassinations is shaking the country's stability to the extent that an international fact-finding commission under the auspices of the United Nations was established in 2005.

Despite the end of the civil war and the understanding that was reached with the Ta'if Agreement, many of the religiously based compromises still paralyze the country's political system. In the post-war period, traditional leaders continue to dominate Lebanese politics and the sectarian political identities are reinforced (Delury 1999: 651). The weak centralized Lebanese government has proven incapable of revising its traditional system of patronage, which constitutes a serious obstacle to the modernization and reconciliation of the country. Unsurprisingly, ending patronage is not practicable as former militia leaders today resume their political functions in government following incarceration for the crimes they have committed during the civil war. Therefore political parties play a small part in Lebanese elections because sectarian leaders dominate the list making and campaigning (ibid: 652).

Lately, Lebanon's massive public debt rose to over \$25 billion (Martin 2001: 413) and structural reforms and privatization are key priorities of government policies. However, the reconstruction program to rebuild Lebanon after the civil war is far behind schedule (Euromonitor International: 252). More than one third of all families today live in poverty. The outlook of the economy is unpromising and the unemployment rate reaches 18.5% (BfF 2000: 15). The country strives to continuously follow the path of reconstruction and national conciliation. However, the society remains deeply divided over many of the very central aspects of its communal life.

### *Lebanese Migration in its Historical and Contemporary Context*

Due to the unremitting migratory currents stretching beyond Lebanon's territorially demarcated state border, Lebanese society depicts what has recently been termed a *new diaspora* meaning a population dispersed in a worldwide social network of people with multiple allegiances to place (Van Hear 1998). Lebanon has become a country whose social fabric is not reflected in geographic proximity, but whose dimensions encompass virtually all continents around the globe. Scholars commonly portray the sustained Lebanese migration as a result of the Phoenician heritage and tradition of maritime seafaring that predispose the Lebanese to constantly 'cross the waters' (Hooglund 1987). Particular socioeconomic, political and historical circumstances such as financial hardship through the restructuring of the Lebanese economy in the 19th and 20th century and the religious and political persecution are found to have either pushed or pulled the Lebanese to emigrate (Khalaf 1987: 17). Since the nineteenth century, the outward-looking Lebanese economy has brought local merchants and financiers to create organizations that established Lebanon as the centre of international trade in the Middle East (Gates 1998: 137). Together with the Anglo-French occupation and the emerging networks of international trade, finance and services, the migratory movements have created powerful social networks linking the Lebanese people in a transnational environment.

In an extensive historical study, Khater (2001) gains insight into the Lebanese out- and return-migration as well as its impact on the developing Lebanese middle class at the turning of 19th into 20th century. Khater finds that the large emigrant population continuously participated in the society back home by maintaining contacts, sending remittances, and eventually by returning. In the context of the dynamics of the outward looking Lebanese economy, returnees played an important role in modernizing the country by powering the economic developments through their newly acquired wealth, and thus virtually created the new Lebanese middle class from abroad. Furthermore, Khalaf (1987: 32), analyzing the Lebanese migration to the United States before World War I, emphasizes that “[...] returning emigrants, with tales and tangible evidence of their swift economic success, created a psychological disposition favourable to emigration”, which was followed by waves of renewed exodus. People left Lebanon, dreaming of achieving great wealth in a short period of time, in order to return home and rebuild a better life. In doing so, they displayed their accomplishments to those who had stayed behind and created their mindset for emigration.

### *Lebanese Population and Migration Figures*

The author believes that it is not possible to give more than a very rough estimate of Lebanese population figures or population movements within or across its state borders over the last centuries. However, population figures are important because the political posts in the Lebanese government are still distributed along sectarian lines (Delury 1999: 650). Due to Lebanon’s ethno-religious tensions, a census has not been conducted since 1936 in the interest of political stability (Maaouia 1992: 653). Since then, governments have considered the sectarian distribution of the population a state secret. The Christian establishment avoided conducting a new census because it did not want to confirm the fact that Muslims now form the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese population. In this respect, the question of whether to include Lebanese emigrants in the census is particularly sensitive, as case studies show that the majority of emigrants were of Christian descent, due to socio-political and cultural influence that predisposed Christian groups over Muslims (Khater 2001; Khalaf 1987: 21; Labaki 1992: 623; Hourani et al. 1992: 4).

Up to date estimates find the Lebanese emigrants to outnumber Lebanon’s inhabitants by far. Around six million people of Lebanese origin are spread around the world (Expert interview, September 28th 2004); the local Lebanese population being close to 3.5 millions only (Euromonitor International 2002: 253). In the course of the last Lebanese Civil War, close to one million Lebanese left the country, and up to 810’000 people were internally displaced, which is in fact almost half of the population, including all segments of society (El-Akl 2004; Nasr 1990: 1, Zahar 2002: 431). It is estimated that another 600’000 people left Lebanon in the post-war period between 1992 and 2000 due to economic hardship.

The Lebanese government does not follow any official statistics on return migration. However, according to a sociological research conducted by the Lebanese authorities (Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et des Emigrés, El-Akl 2004), a surprisingly high number of emigrants of

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close to half a million people returned to Lebanon during or after the civil war. This drastically contradicts the public opinion and the view of various scholars, who found that return migration to Lebanon had been extremely low. In addition, many of those who returned are said to have re-emigrated after a period of unsuccessful reintegration efforts, which might explain some of the uncertainty in the data available. To this day, the Lebanese government has not provided any reintegration or repatriation facilities for returnees. Furthermore, during the author's field research in Lebanon, no access to any information on the socio-economic profile of returning migrants was found. During the interview conducted, government representative El-Akl solely emphasized that he found a high percentage of returnees to be families. Yet no further details or data sources were accessible to specify this information.

## A Review of Theories and Research

To this day, the theoretical base for understanding the strength and coherence of the underlying forces of migration remain weak<sup>2</sup>. There is no single, consistent theory or approach to delineate domestic or transnational migration flows but only fragments dealing with the phenomenon in an isolated but often overlapping way. The major problem facing the study of migration lies in the different levels on which it operates. It can be analyzed from a structural or an individual perspective, both of which interact in complex, case specific settings (Massey et al. 1993: 431; Gardner 1995: 3).

Scholars agree that return migration is among the subjects largely, even systematically overlooked in migration research (Owen 1992: 34; Khater 2001: 56; Koser et al. 1999). While migration scholars have produced respectable insight into several dynamics of out-migration, it has to be emphasized that a theoretical outline for modelling any onward or return journey of the emigrant is practically nonexistent. The myriad of case studies analyzing return migration (Khater 2001; Juergensen 2000; Koser et al. 1999; Stepputat 1999; Allen et al. 1994; Kamphoevner 1991), predominantly apply anthropological or historical conceptual approaches and portray specific return migration cases in a comprehensive, although often isolated and unsystematic way. Firstly, with a view on providing some methodological insight on return migration dynamics, reference to existing migration theories will be made in this thesis. In a second step, the Lebanese return migration after the civil war within the theoretical findings will be situated and the assumptions of social network theory along which this study will be conducted will be justified.

### *Individual and Structural Theories of Migration*

Classical theories of migration focus on the individual agency of the migrant. Research on the causes of migration has predominantly been seeking to describe the factors influencing the individual's decision to migrate as well as the predispositions determining the direction of migration by referring to *disparities* between places of origin and destination. Applied economic theory explained economic disparities (i.e. wage differentials, employment or inequalities in standards of living) to be the key determinants for migration (Massey 1993: 433). In addition, political disparities in terms of relative human and environmental security have been studied as migratory predictors. Likewise, social disparities such as the individual's status, education or cultural factors were considered a motivation for people to move. Additional individual attributes such as the specific characteristic of the migration force (e.g. ethnical variations, age-specific migration, marital status, family size) or distance between origin and destination were systematically tested in migration studies (Ritchey 1976).

Emerging from these disparity studies, the widely applied *push-pull-framework* elucidates the positive as well as negative factors at sending and receiving areas either pushing or pulling

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<sup>2</sup> I am most grateful for the support of Kristian Berg Harpviken, who provided valuable insight into the contemporary migration research, much of which is reflected in this chapter.

migrants to move (Lee 1966). According to Ritchey (1976: 375) one factor related within this framework is classified as the presence of relatives and friends. The argument suggests that the presence of relatives and friends close to the individual's community of residence would deter migration, because the individual seeks to remain close to them. In contrast, if they reside elsewhere, out-migration is more probable and directed towards their location. It is assumed that emotional factors pull the migrant to seek assistance in the environment of his close relatives. Ritchey's extended model of the push-pull-framework derived three hypotheses to relate kinship and friendship relations among migrants (Ritchey 1976: 389):

1. *Affinity Hypothesis*: The presence of family and friends constrains migration, as economic and familial attachment deter migration opportunities to be seized.
2. *Information Hypothesis*: Migration is directed by information available to the individual through family and friends at distant locations, as awareness of migration and reintegration conditions are provided.
3. *Facilitating Hypothesis*: Distant location of family and friends encourages and directs migration as well as facilitates integration at the destination through the availability of aid and social support.

These hypotheses are subject to further research applying the perspective of social network theory to migration. They also provide the base for the assumptions of the empirical investigation in this study (discussed in later in this paper).

In its simplest version, migration along social ties is widely known as the *chain migration process* (Choldin 1973): A number of friends or family members who moved to a certain destination provides, once settled, information and support for other relatives to again enable their relocation to the same destination. The migrant's chain increases the likelihood of migration as it lowers the costs and risks of moving while simultaneously increasing the odds for social and professional integration at the new location.

In recent migration research, further emphasis is given on structural determinants of migration. In this perspective, migrants are viewed to merely follow structural determinants rather than self-made and individualistic action and have little agency for decision-making themselves. The so-called *migration regime approach* encompasses the national and international body of law, regulations, institutions and policies directing and shaping migrant flows by controlling movements (Van Hear 1998: 16). Furthermore, the *world systems theory* seeks to explain migration as a consequence of the incorporation of peripheral, non-capital societies into the worldwide system of capitalism. Thus, the unfolding globalization process directly affects labour markets and creates a mobile population inclined to migrate accordingly (Massey 1993; Wallerstein 1990; Kritz et al. 1992).

### *Social Networks in Migration*

Social network analysis proceeds from the assumption that interpersonal relationships rather than individual attributes are the core material for the analysis of social agency and

behaviour. The social network perspective has proved fruitful in a variety of contexts of social sciences, as it is said to have the capacity to establish the missing link between individual or group agency and structure (Kritz et al. 1992: 6). Recently, scholarship on the dynamics of international migration has come to equally emphasize the importance of socially embedded, group-sustained collectivist strategies and social ties in understanding migratory currents by applying the social network perspective. Introducing the social network perspective to migration studies, Van Hear (1998) along with Massey et al. (1997), Gurak and Caces (1992), Kritz et al. (1992), Tilly (1990), Boyd (1989), Fawcett (1989), Taylor (1986) and Hugo (1981) argue that individual migrants are members of numerous formal and informal networks that affect migration outcomes. In this regard, migrants of today are participants in social networks that encompass places of origin, transit and destination through social interaction among actors related to one another not just through close family ties but by a variety of characteristics. These characteristics can be tradition, religion, extended family, friendship, acquaintance, political ideology, gender, age, ethnicity, tribe, neighbourhood or work experience (Tilly 1990). Such networks thus provide a coherent structure for the movement of migrant populations (Gurak 1992: 150). Opportunities and constraints as well as the form, volume and direction of the movements are determined within the social network of the migrants. While networks at origin can restrain or encourage an individual to migrate, networks at destination can facilitate or discourage adaptation and integration. Likewise, networks between origin and destination can play critical roles in channelling information, migrants, remittances, and norms.

Given the aforementioned assumption of migration along chains, the *institutional migration theory* portrays social networks in migration to follow an inherently perpetuating feature. Once migration is initiated, additional movement is more likely and the social network spreads over time and space as interpersonal webs connect former, current and potential migrants across multiple localities. Given these considerations, a migrant's network is tied together not just by the links of family and friends, but by more or less institutionalized relationships, including formal migrant's organizations. Massey et al. argue, that while the institutionalized population flows are sustained, migration perpetuates entirely independent of the causes that initiated it in the first place. Initial migration generated a process known as *cumulative causation*, referring to the fact that "each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely" (Massey et al. 1993: 451).

In a widely cited empirical study, which appears to be the only quantitative study conducted in this research field, on Mexican-US migration, Massey and Espinosa (1997) three models were tested to discern the factors involved in migration decisions during the initiation of migration, the perpetuation of migration and the return migration. They do so by linking individual acts of migration to 41 theoretically defined individual-, household-, community- and macroeconomic-level determinants, using data gathered in 25 Mexican communities and in the United States. As for the return migration model, they found three basic predictors dominating the decision-making process that are noteworthy in the context of this research (ibid: 983):

1. *The quantity of migration-specific human capital.* This factor refers to the amount of time an individual spent in the United States. In general, the probability of a migrant returning to Mexico dropped over time.
2. *The amount of migration-specific social capital,* referring to a migrant's ties to children, family and friends. Usually, migrants were less likely to return to Mexico if other members of their families had also begun migrating. Furthermore, return dropped with the number of children in a migrant family.
3. *Physical capital,* in particular land ownership, correlated positively to return. Migrants who owned land in Mexico were much more likely to go home than those who did not.

Overall results of all three models tested by Massey and Espinosa suggest that, "Although indicators of general social capital continue to be significant in the predicting later trips, a more powerful role is played by migration-specific social capital – ties developed in the course of migration itself." (Massey and Espinosa 1997: 988). Migration-specific social capital in this context refers to the emigrants' relations to other people having migratory experience, in contrast to general social capital, referring to any kind of relationships the individual migrant is interacting with. 'Later trips', meaning any onward- or return movement of the migrant, is therefore embedded in a social network of ties relating to other emigrants or social contacts established through the migration process.

A few case studies give evidence that the social network perspective could provide valuable insight to study the return of people to their home countries. Case studies commonly acknowledge that the flow of people is not a unidirectional, one-step transplantation, but consists of diverse moves back and forth of longer or shorter duration and distance with various underlying motives. Within this research collective, evidence of the multidirectional flow of population is given (Morawska 1991: 278, Van Hear 1997, Haug 2000). They doubt that the journey of the migrant is coming to a definite end once people return home, calling for a more circular conceptualization of migratory movements (Koser 1999). In the qualitative case studies consulted, the social network aspect is emphasized, however rarely studied. Specific analysis of social ties in return migration processes has been conducted in a qualitative study by Hanafi (2003). He analyzed the transnational social kinship networks both inside and outside of Palestine and their impact on the eventual return dynamics of the refugees. He concludes several scenarios for the return of Palestinian refugees by identifying the social and economic capital potential in various Palestinian communities abroad and in Palestine.

### *Migration Theories and Research applied to the Lebanese Return Migration*

Although the majority of theoretical assumptions presented above do not particularly focus on the migrants' return to their home country, some aspects might be applicable to model return migration. The Lebanese return migration within the theoretical concepts outlined above will be situated:

Once settled abroad, it is expected that the emigrants are equally exposed to several factors that either push or pull them to migrate to another place or to return home. In this respect, the author claims that it is neither an imperative condition for the emigrant to *permanently* settle abroad, as is a tacit implication of classical migration theories, nor can automatically be assumed that the emigrant will always find his life-conditions to have *improved* by his emigration. On the contrary, the emigrant might take further moves into consideration, as he continuously evaluates the disparities between his place of residency and other locations. Furthermore, it is understood that, during the emigrant's years abroad, he might encounter a new setting of life-conditions that imposes further moves due to changing structural or individual push and pull factors affecting his preference for residency.

In the specific case of return migration to the emigrants' home country it is assumed that Ritchey's (1976) hypothesis on kin- and friendship relations becomes particularly interesting. The author argues that it has to be taken into consideration that the returnees move back to a place they are closely linked to through their past. They return to a place they are already familiar with, they speak the language, have a practical life experience accumulated prior to their emigration and may own property there. Furthermore, it is assumed that the emigrants have emotional attachment or resentments directed to their home country, depending on the setting that led to their emigration. Yet, above all, the author emphasizes that the emigrants are likely to have close family members or extended social ties to friends, relatives or acquaintances still residing in their home country. Through their emigration and return, the emigrants' social ties span from their country of origin to the country of transit or destination and beyond. As was proposed by Ritchey, these personal social relations of the migrants influence migration decisions in general and hence are likely to be considered by the emigrants in their decision-making process for return.

The parallel movements of out- and return migration over many decades in Lebanon have created social networks linking the Lebanese people around the world. Coupled with the departure and return of a high percentage of the Lebanese population during the last civil war, today virtually every Lebanese has close or distant relatives, friends or acquaintances, who reside abroad or have returned to Lebanon. The author argues that migration decisions in this context are dominated by the wider social structure of the individuals' personal contacts and that emigrant's movements are undoubtedly linked to onward- or return movements of other migrants. As Khalaf (1987) and Khater (2001) outlined, return migration has had specific impact on various developments in Lebanese society, as returnees encouraged people who had stayed behind to equally search their future perspectives in the 'new world'. The atmosphere returnees created has triggered further emigration and could therefore itself be construed as a factor pulling people to countries abroad in the push-pull-framework.

As for post-war return migration, the impact of the war cannot be denied. People leaving war shattered countries are likely to have suffered from their war experience and their individual emigration setting must be taken into consideration. As outlined in Harpviken (1998), social ties in a war shattered society gain specific importance. Espinoza (1999: 150) argues that the maintenance and employment of social relations as a form of 'survival strategy' is most crucial in

times when the state and economy fail to provide the necessary resources, especially during war or in situations of extreme poverty. In this case, friends and relatives become more or less institutionalized arrangements, as people are forced to transform their social ties into economic resources. In case of utmost danger, it was found that social networks either have the tendency to disintegrate through distrust and egoistic behaviour for self-benefit, or else integrate through strengthened solidarity and unity (Kreps 1984). It is assumed that strong emotional ties are of primary relevance in times of extreme hardship, when trusting the extended social network is risky.

In conclusion, the author argues that there is good reason to analyze the Lebanese return migration after the civil war with an emphasis on the social ties of the emigrants as one factor affecting their decision-making process of return. Thus, social ties and the functionality of social networks as outlined in the next chapter will be focused upon.

## Empirical Investigation

As was demonstrated, the social network perspective has the potential to explain migration outcomes beyond simply portraying the factors that push or pull the migrants to move. Yet, what the theories outlined above do not address is the circumstances in which these personal ties affect the migrant's decision to return and what functionality these ties hold within the return migration process. Given the theoretical and country-specific setting of this research, the empirical investigation shall be led by the following question:

***Under what circumstances and how do personal social networks affect the decision-making process of post-war return migration to Lebanon?***

In a first step, specific reasons and circumstances in which the Lebanese emigrants took their decision to return will be portrayed. This preliminary analysis aims to provide insight into the applicability of aforementioned assumptions of push- and pull-factors operating in return migration decisions in analogy to the factors pushing or pulling migrants in the out-migration process. Hence, the following assumption will lead through the first part of the empirical analysis:

*Assumption 1: Social ties of the emigrants operate as a factor pushing or pulling the emigrants to return to their home country.*

This analysis will provide the framework for the discussion of the functionality of social ties in return migration, which follows as a second step. In order to establish the latter, a deeper look into a number of core assumptions of social network analysis is needed as outlined in the following paragraphs.

### *Measurement of Social Networks*

The literature on social networks in migration presented above describes the basic lines along which social research can be conducted in this domain. However, it gives virtually no indication on how to empirically measure the concept of a social network, its impact on migration outcomes, or its functionality. Hence, some of the core assumptions provided by social network analysis that emerged from other fields of social science to study socially embedded return migration decisions will be employed.

In recent literature, social networks are commonly measured by identifying the social capital as a resource that is embedded in the structure of the network. "Social capital can be defined as resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin et al. 2001: 12). The concept of social capital has been popularly used in a variety of ways in contemporary social science and a myriad of literature applying the concept is available. Coleman (1988) is usually seen to have introduced the notion of social capital and implemented it in a theoretical framework. Putnam (1993; 1995) made use of the concept when searching for overcoming dilemmas of collective action, referring to the concept on a society level with a view on participial behaviour. "Social capital here refers to features of social

organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.” (Putnam 1993:167). Within the framework of the social network, physical and human capital (such as material or non-material resources) but also social capital (Bourdieu 1985) such as access to necessary information and emotional support is transferred.

In the context of migration networks, social capital can be used as a migration-specific resource, which is accessible through the migrants’ integration into their social network established in the course of their migration experience. Positive effects of social capital were first combined with migratory networks by Massey (1987). Personal contacts with family, friends, and fellow citizens would help immigrants in various ways; e.g. with an outlook on accommodation, employment, financial aid or immigration procedures. In doing so, the migrants’ networks reduce the economic costs of immigration while invoking useful social relationships. Consecutive migration will then facilitate further migration.

With a view on the empirical analysis following in this paper, two additional assumptions of social network analysis to measure the impact of social networks on the return migration decision will be employed.

As outlined above, Ritchey (1976) assumes that the emigrant’s social ties channel various resources such as information, financial and emotional support between origin and destination. One tangible concept to measure social networks is that the nature of the social ties between elements in networks varies in the strength of the connection (Granovetter 1973; 1985). Strong ties or primary relationships within a social network are usually linked to those connections of important and frequent interaction that provide sustainable emotional support. Weak ties or secondary relationships, however, consist of particular connections that often serve as bridges, uniting different networks by the mere fact of interaction between members of various networks. In his widely cited argument on the Strength of Weak Ties (1973), Granovetter found that it is the weak chains that were most significant to access useful information about job opportunities and hence provide access to important social capital for the individual to access the labour market. Hence, it is assumed that various return migration specific resources are accessed through the emigrants’ strong and weak ties of their social network.

*Assumption 2: The returnee’s social network consists of strong as well as weak ties that provide access to specific resources such as information, emotional and financial support necessary to effect the return migration decision.*

Furthermore, Granovetter (1985) introduced the so-called embeddedness approach, suggesting that the extent to which an individual establishes personal ties within networks has an impact on building of trust, the existence of expectations and strength of norms and hence on the availability of resources such as social capital. He termed the interaction of individuals in a social network ‘transactions’; and their level of integration or ‘embeddedness’ into the social network determines the extent to which the individuals can access these resources. While it is believed that all emigrants are considering onward- or return migration to a certain extent, their access to resources within a social network may mediate some of the forces operating as push or

pull factors in return migration. Thus, the author assumes that the decision to return is influenced by the emigrants' level of embeddedness in a social network.

*Assumption 3: The returnees are embedded in a network of strong and weak social ties that mediate the factors pushing or pulling them to return. The emigrants' level of embeddedness in their social network determines their access to return-migration specific resources and thus influences their decision to return.*

### *Empirical Inquiry and Methods*

For the empirical investigation of this research, a comparative research methodology was employed, aiming to analyze the impact of specific social network compositions in which *returnees* took the decision to return as compared to *stayees* who are still staying on abroad. The two sub-samples were collected through snowball sampling, but filtered through the following criteria: the interviewee was born in Lebanon and left the country in the context of the last civil war (1975 – 1990), settled abroad for a minimum of five years and then either returned to Lebanon at least three years ago being a so-called returnee; or is still living abroad today which is so called stayee. Altogether, 28 interviews were conducted; using semi-standardized questionnaires (see Appendix II). The questionnaires were composed of four parts for both sub-samples:

1. *The decision to return / the decision to stay:* All migrants were asked to describe the circumstances for their emigration from Lebanon and their living conditions abroad. For the returnee sample, the conditions that led to their return and their considerations for re-emigration from Lebanon were collected. Stayees were asked for their plans to stay or return and the reasons that prevent them from returning. All interviewees were invited to narrate freely, followed by specific questions to clarify their narratives. Within the theoretical framework, this part of the questionnaire focuses on collecting the factors that pushed or pulled the emigrants to return or stay.
2. *Social ties and embeddedness:* This part of the questionnaire focused on the measurement of the social capital available to the migrant in his or her social network. Interviewees were asked to give detailed information on the location of their family members and friends, the frequency and means of communication, the quality of the contacts, as well as their visits to each other abroad and to Lebanon. Furthermore, return migration specific questions were asked to find how the emigrants used their social ties for information, financial and emotional support in the decision-making process of return and for integration back in Lebanon.
3. *Formal embeddedness:* This part of the questionnaire aimed to measure the emigrants' participation in associations and voluntary organizations both in their home and host country and how the integration into these so-called formal networks influenced the migrants' emigration and their decision to return or stay abroad.
4. *General participation and trust:* The migrants were asked to give information about their habits to follow politics (discussion, newspapers), religion and their general attitude in trusting people who are part of their close and extended social ties.

Statistical data was collected concerning their age, marital status, children, religious belief, employment position, financial situation, education and nationality. Furthermore, they were asked to specify their properties (housing, land) both back in Lebanon and abroad. In addition, some observational remarks were noted during the interviews (housing, phone calls received, language used etc.).

During the face-to-face interviews, detailed notes were taken by the researcher and the questionnaires were filled either on paper or electronically when the interview setting permitted the use of the laptop. No verbatim interview transcripts were used. The data set was then structured along a number of keywords that were filtered during the interviews along the methods of content analysis (counting of keywords and linking data to various categories) as shown in the following paragraphs.

### *Sample Overview*

The fieldwork was carried out in Zürich and Beirut between June and November 2004. 17 returnees were interviewed in Beirut in person. The interviews usually lasted between one and three hours. 11 stayees could be reached for an interview either in Switzerland in June 2004, during their summer holidays in Lebanon or while staying abroad via Internet (MSN Messenger). Interviews via MSN Messenger could not be conducted in a fully satisfactory manner, as the written conversations only revealed the core information after a comparatively long duration of the interview and tired the informants quickly. Interviews were conducted in English, French and German or with translation from Arabic to English. One Lebanese emigrant residing in Switzerland, who was in the process of moving back home to Beirut at the time, was interviewed numerous times during his return migration. He provided valuable and detailed insight into the conditions of his return. Due to the snowball sampling method applied, the sample consists of a wide variety of age classes, family structures, religious beliefs, professional backgrounds and countries of temporary residency. For the most important features, it is composed as follows:

	<b>Returnees</b>	<b>Stayees</b>
Single male	3	1
Single female	3	1
Family	11	9
<b>Host Country</b>		
Europe	9	7
North America	5	2
Africa	1	0
Asia	1	0
Gulf Countries	1	2
<b>Religious Belief</b>		
Christian	6	6
Sunni	9	4
Shia'	2	1
<b>Total Number Interviews</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>

*Table 1: Sample Overview*

- *Country of Residency and Time Abroad:* Most of the returnees as well as stayees in the sample lived abroad between thirteen and eighteen years. Only two returnees returned to Lebanon after comparatively short periods of six or eight years. As a consequence, the informants are all over 30 years old, most of them in their 40's. All interviewees emigrated within the context of the last civil war in Lebanon in 1975/76 or around 1982. However, it is impossible to assess whether the reason for emigration was 'forced' or 'voluntarily', a notion widely applied in migration research. Only one informant had unsuccessfully applied for refugee status abroad. None of the informants had temporarily returned for longer than a two month holiday, hence there are no re-emigrants represented in this sample. This might be problematic, as a high number of returnees to Lebanon are said to have left the country again. All of the stayees remained in the country of their first residency, whereas three of the returnees in this sample continuously moved from one country to another, mostly due to the employment conditions. The majority of the returnees in the sample returned between 1990 and 1995.
- *Status in Host Country:* All returnees and stayees in this sample had, after many years abroad, acquired a residency permit or citizenship in their host country, be it through marriage or naturalization. None of the informants were expelled from their host country.
- *Formal Embeddedness and General Participation:* In general, all the interviewees in this sample were either truly abstinent from any affiliation to religious, political or voluntary activities within a formal organization or else reluctant to give detailed information about it. None of the informants are officially a member of a political party, and only one returnee had been involved in a political organization at the time of his departure from Lebanon. Among stayees, very few mentioned their participation in a parent's association or sports club, while most of the returnees remained absent from any formal involvement abroad as well as in Lebanon. With respect to religious communities, most of the emigrants were to some extent following religious services abroad. However, none of the informants were actively involved in the organization of these gatherings. It is striking that in both sub-samples, people rarely follow the news at all. Political discussions exist only within the closest family circles, as returnees and stayees equally resent the difficulties to trust anyone in the extended social network. Only one stayee and two returnees regularly read newspapers and search for specific Middle Eastern or world news.
- *Physical Capital* in terms of houses, land or apartments in Lebanon that the emigrants kept during their stay abroad does not show any noteworthy differences within the two sub-samples. Most of the returnees as well as stayees had equal access to their family houses; some stayees have kept apartments that they currently rent out in Lebanon. Contradicting Massey et al's findings (1997), the property of land or houses does not seem to be of major importance in the decision-making process.

## Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of the data is structured as follows: In a first step, the circumstances and reasons that led the Lebanese emigrants to return to their home country will be presented. In a second step, three underlying patterns for the decision-making process of return will be depicted. They emerge from the data collected among the returnees in the sample and give detailed account on the functionality of the social ties in return migration along this typology. To conclude, comparisons of some specific social network compositions and embeddedness of stayee families as compared to returnee families will be made.

### *Circumstances and Reasons of Return*

It is important to note that the decision to stay abroad or return to Lebanon was usually taken by a combination of several factors that are not mutually exclusive but interwoven in complex ways. Nevertheless, some key elements can be filtered as follows:

### *Financial Situation and Social Security*

“Nous ne serons jamais rentrés sans projet professionnel.” (Interview 26th October 2004)

The economic circumstances are among the most frequently mentioned issues considered by emigrants in their return setting. Some returnees had specifically inquired into employment in Lebanon and returned when they were offered a suitable position. Others managed to set up their own Lebanon-based business from their host country abroad prior to their return. Sometimes, unemployment abroad provoked a desperate ‘return attempt’ when there was financial hardship and a lack of perspectives in the host country. Around 1994, the belief in the Lebanese boom and in Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri to ‘bring the country back on track’ with his billions-of-dollar-investments raised hopes in some emigrants to return. Among the younger single emigrants, some ‘naturally’ returned after finishing their education when a job opportunity became available in Lebanon, stating that “Je suis patriote, nationaliste. Le Liban me manquait. Quand il y’avait la possibilité de travailler chez mon père dans l’usine, je suis tout de suite rentré.” (Interview 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004).

As for stayees with a stable, long-term employment position abroad, the security this employment provides is often given as the main reason that prevents them from returning to Lebanon. A stable income along with social security and unemployment funding by the government is available abroad only. “Without enormous financial resources you can’t live in Lebanon. If you are rich, you can have a good life there. But if you are just a normal worker and you have a family to feed, it’s impossible to survive.” (Interview 16<sup>th</sup> June 2004). In Lebanon, basic health care or insurance is often provided at horrendous prices only. After experiencing the benefits of the social security system of western governments, stayees fear the hardship they could be exposed to in the case of an emergency in Lebanon. They emphasize that the solid financial background acquired abroad at least enables frequent family visits to Lebanon.

Some stayees also mentioned that their specific educational qualification acquired abroad would not secure long-term employment in Lebanon, as there is virtually no market for their profession (e.g. interpreters, specialized industrial workers). In the context of employment opportunities, many stayees also fear that their advanced age would not allow them to move back to Lebanon and reintegrate into the labour market. They believe that they are not as flexible as they used to be when they were young; along with their age came an intensified longing for security and financial stability that would prevent them from taking the risk for a necessary transition period of social and employment reintegration in Lebanon.

### *Children*

“We want to give our children a sense of identity and belonging in order for them not to be caught in between later” (Interview 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004).

The data analysis shows that the birth of children in a family drastically changes the setting in which return decisions take place. Within this sample, returnee and stayee families followed distinct patterns for the choice of their place of residency as opposed to single males or females. In various ways, it was expressed that “bringing up the children in an environment where there is law and order, organization, respect and future perspectives” (Interview 26<sup>th</sup> October 2004) was an equal requirement among returnees and stayees. In general, along with the aforementioned financial concerns, educational and religious issues dominated their considerations to return or to stay abroad.

With regard to education and future perspectives, providing the children with access to education and at a later stage with employment opportunities are among the concerns of all returnee families. Some of them insisted to have their children educated in private schools, which are considered to be too expensive abroad but somehow affordable in Lebanon. Especially Islamic schools for Muslim family’s children in the West were considered to be difficult to find or to finance. In general, returnee parents emphasized that they found more space for ‘moulding their own children’ in Lebanon. They appreciate the direct influence they can exert on their children’s education and upbringing, resenting that governments in western countries replace many functions that are still provided by the family in Lebanon. In addition, all of the returnee parents interviewed for this research insisted that the language and culture of Lebanon would be passed on to their children, as it is considered to be part of their identity. “I want my children to speak Arabic fluently. I wish they will understand their cultural background and family roots” (Interview 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004).

Stayees mentioned that they consider the educational system in western countries of good quality and job opportunities for their children available abroad, fearing the high unemployment rate and the discouraging outlook of the Lebanese economy. Stayees also found that their daughters have better chances to be integrated in a professional life abroad than in Lebanon, due to cultural dispositions they resent. For them, good quality education in Lebanon was stated to require high private investment compared to government funded schools in the West.

However, as for the children's perspective, it is interesting to note that the children themselves often complete their parent's information in a significantly different way, sometimes fundamentally questioning the reasons their parents gave for their return to Lebanon. "I don't know what my parents told you... but did they mention that they are drinkers and that alcohol is unaffordable in Saudi Arabia?" (Interview 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004). Young female returnees in Muslim families, to whose benefit the parents took the decision to return, resent the protection and social control to which they are suddenly exposed by returning to a strong family network representing conservative values they are unfamiliar with. While returning to Lebanon is a move back to the roots for parents, their children follow the inverse process of emplacement as many of them were born abroad and have barely known Lebanon to be anything else than a holiday destination. Return is uprooting them from their 'home country' abroad (Interview November 9<sup>th</sup> 2004).

### *Religion*

"We came here for our daughter. There is no other reason. We didn't want her to grow up in an unhealthy society. Here the family and Islam protect her." (Interview 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004)

Among Muslim migrants, it seems a strong request to embed their children, especially daughters, in a religious Islamic environment and to provide them with Islamic education. Passing on religious heritage and values to children through shared and lived experience in a strong family network within the Muslim community is a dominant reason for returning to Lebanon. Returnees often disapprove of the 'societies of lost values' in the West, resenting the mentality abroad, stating that the community ties in Lebanon are much stronger and provide a sense of security, stability and moral standards. Furthermore, returnees mentioned that the events of September 11th have negatively affected their religious freedom abroad; they saw themselves and their children vulnerable to be exposed to religious resentments against Islam in western societies. In a few cases, returnees mentioned that they wish their daughters to wear the hijab (headscarf) and their children to get married within the same religious sect; the chances of which can be increased by returning to Lebanon only. Religious considerations apply to both emigrants who settled in western countries, where they found societies to be too liberal, and to emigrants settled in other Arab countries, where societies would be evaluated to be too restrictive and the religious conventions as compared to Lebanon termed too strict and 'unhealthy'.

Independent of the existence of children, Muslim emigrants mentioned religion to be a strong part of one's identity. The requirement to freely practice their religion was predominantly mentioned by Muslim woman who feel less opposition to veil in Lebanon. In general, Muslim migrants long to feel free to practice their religion without restrictions applying in the west, e.g. following daily prayers, Ramadan and other religious holidays. Neither Christian nor Muslim stayees in this sample even mentioned any religious considerations that would pull them to Lebanon or push them away from their host country. Unsurprisingly, specific questions during the interviews revealed that Christian emigrants in western countries felt at ease with the religious values and practices lived abroad. Among those Christians with strong attachment to religion, the integration into local churches abroad was sought or the creation of religious services emerging

from the Lebanese exile community was initiated. As for Muslim emigrants staying in western countries, they generally show less attachment to religion than Muslim returnees in this sample. There are no Christian migrants who emigrated to other Arab countries represented in this sample.

### *Family Assistance*

“I can’t handle three children all alone, so we came back to be close to my family” (Interview October 28<sup>th</sup> 2004).

Almost all of the returnees interviewed mentioned that, along with other reasons for return, they were longing to come closer to families and friends still residing in Lebanon. In a period of enduring financial or emotional hardship abroad, some emigrants specifically gave as a reason to return that they were seeking assistance of beloved relatives and friends back home in Lebanon. Family ties in Lebanon could then serve to reintegrate the emigrant into a basic working environment and social net of support. Especially, returnees were seeking help in the broader family network in Lebanon to bring up small children. Often, they confessed problems that had occurred in their families along with a lack of integration in the host society, depression, alcoholism or a physically or emotionally absent father or mother. Looking for broader family network was considered a solution to end continuous emotional despair and paralysis as well as the resulting financial problems while bringing up small children. In these cases, the nuclear family ties pushed the emigrants away from the host society into the wider family networks back in Lebanon. In three cases of returnees in the sample, returning to Lebanon was directly triggered by emotional conditions related to their close social relations. Extreme ‘chagrin d’amour’ abroad led one emigrant to return to Lebanon to seek relief within the family back home in a period of extreme emotional stress. “Le Liban, c’était mon hôpital, une maison de repos pour moi. Il fallait me retrouver après cette expérience douloureuse.” (Interview 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004). For another returnee, the loss of his father led him to come back to complete the family and to take care of them. Returning home to get married was mentioned to be a reason where the family had previously arranged the engagement.

### *Security and Political Stability*

For one returnee who had been politically active during the civil war, the positive development of political circumstances in Lebanon triggered his return. However, families generally mention that the continuous simmering Middle Eastern politics negatively affects their decision to return. They are concerned with the long-term stability of the region, fearing an American intervention in Syria that would shake the political balance in Lebanon or the Israeli occupation in Palestine that could destabilize the region altogether. Many emigrants mentioned the fear that their children would have to live through the same traumatic experience of a civil war, which caused the departure of the parents in the first place.

### *Identity and Belonging*

“I came home and I knew I have to restart my life, to rebuild myself and my personality. How could I find back to myself? The only way was to go back to the source.” (Interview September 15<sup>th</sup> 2004).

Almost all of the interviewees were or still are longing to return to their home country and were, in general, unhappy with the society abroad. “We will always be strangers here, even though we have the Swiss passport.” (Interview 16<sup>th</sup> June 2004). The interviews show that many of them are continuously torn in contradicting notions between the country they left decades ago but still refer to as home, and the place they currently reside but refuse to integrate as part of their present or future perspectives. Among returnees, many found that the persistent idealization of Lebanon from abroad shattered quickly upon return, as they recognized that the ‘home’ they returned to had changed during their years abroad and had become a strange place. “Beirut has changed a lot, it is strange to me now.” (Interview 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2004) and “I am always longing for Lebanon, but when I go back for a holiday, I see that life there is difficult and that the advantages I see from abroad are not much more than fantasy or nostalgia (Interview 27<sup>th</sup> September 2004).

### *Conclusion I*

Generally speaking, the factors related in the push-pull-framework referring to out-migration, equally apply to the emigrants in the samples when return migration to Lebanon was taken into consideration. The literature on the push-pull-framework assumes that the presence of relatives and friends is a key determinant for the migration decision and influences the choice of the emigrants’ destination area. As for return migration, a similar notion holds. Through their return, the migrants could considerably increase their psychic benefits. In addition, many returnees felt increasing emotional attachment to their families and friends in Lebanon over the years abroad, which eventually motivated them to search for employment back home. In this respect, most of the returnees and stayees emphasized their financial background to be a part of their return migration setting. Clearly, the prospect for better education, various economic incentives as well as employment opportunities, equally pushed the returnees to move away from abroad or pulled the stayees to remain in their host country. The prospect of assimilation for minority groups related in the push-pull-framework applies to Muslim families who chose to live in western countries for temporary residency. The lack of freedom to practice their religion along with the resentments for liberal values in the West pushed them away from their host societies back to Lebanon.

In conclusion, the main factors for return in this sample are depicted as follows in the graph below.

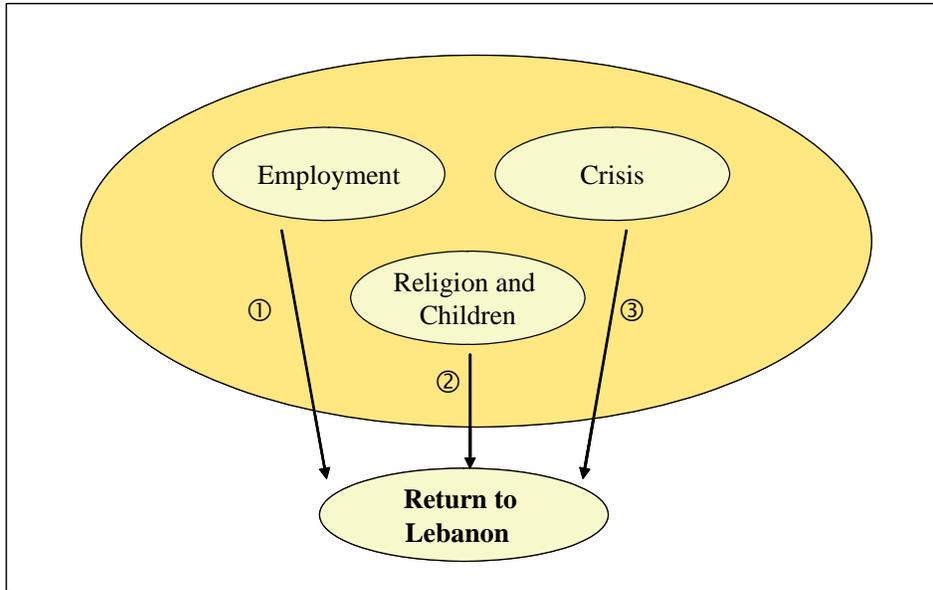


Table 2: Conditions for Return Migration

Continuous emotional attachment to social ties in Lebanon and the longing for identity alone may only rarely lead to any serious reflection on return. However, it seems to compose the background against which virtually all considerations to return were discussed in this sample. Along with this emotional attachment and the presence of close family members and friends in Lebanon, three conditions for return were filtered from the data collected:

① *Employment*: Although most of the returnees in this sample acknowledged the importance of financial resources for their return to Lebanon, they emphasized the fact that they were looking for employment in Lebanon mainly as a reaction to feeling homesick or desperate abroad. None of the interviewees has returned solely for financial reasons or a lucrative employment position. However, in all cases of continuous strong emotional attachment to Lebanon, the existence of a job opportunity back home triggered the return. It is assumed that it is this desire for belonging and emplacement in the family environment that drove the returnees to overcome the obstacles of ‘hard factors’ like employment in Lebanon.

② *Religion and Children*: Given a strong family network in Lebanon, the birth of children is a strong condition to return for Muslim emigrants who have a strong attachment to Islam. Strong social ties to an extended family network provided the conditions to embed the returnees’ children in the religious community. Furthermore, the analysis of this sample shows that the birth of children required some emigrant families to seek assistance in wider family network. The presence of family members in Lebanon provided the returnee with the necessary support to bring up children.

③ *Crisis*: Clearly, in this sample some returns were triggered by emotional hardship in the country abroad. Given the strong emotional attachment to Lebanon, return was then seen as a solution and the crisis a sufficient reason to return. Logically, the presence of close social ties in Lebanon is then a necessary condition for return in this sample.

It is interesting to note that stayees and returnees frequently emphasize the very same factors that would push them away from their host-country or pull them back to Lebanon. Mostly, the interviewees in the two samples agree on the difficulties they encounter abroad and the challenges they fear when returning to Lebanon. However, obviously the migration outcomes are opposite for the two samples. Hence, the factors operating as pushing or pulling forces for return cannot explain migration outcomes alone. The analysis of the push and pull factors for return leads to the assumption that returnees and stayees balance the underlying operating forces in different ways. Given the fact that the presence of relatives and friends was found an important factor in the push-pull-framework for out-migration as well as a necessary condition for return migration in all above mentioned cases, it is assumed that the access to social capital in social networks and the composition of the social network of the emigrants are among the factors influencing their decision to return or to stay abroad. Within the framework of this research, I assume that the emigrants negotiate the factors pushing or pulling them for migration through their access to social capital available as well as their embeddedness within their social network. This shall be subject to further analysis in the following chapters.

### *Decision-making Process and Use of Social Ties in Return Migration*

The analysis of the data collected in this sample shows that in all cases, the decision to return is strongly coupled with a profound process of personal change abroad. Broken relationships, job loss and extreme financial hardship, the death of close family members back home or the change of the family setting through the birth of children mark milestones in emigrants' lives that change the living conditions and arouse considerations for return. In many cases, return migration was seen as a solution, as a reaction to the problems faced abroad. Coming back was then taken as a chance to rebuild and stabilize their life conditions.

As previously illustrated, the decision to return mostly consists of a combination of several factors and various circumstances. However, it is striking that very personal, emotional factors dominate return migration decisions over 'hard factors' like financial or employment issues. This implies that the emotional ties provide substantial resources for the returnees that are essential for return migration decisions. It was previously assumed that the decision to return would always take place following an intense period of reflection, in-depth discussion with close family members and friends, and practical organization. However, in some cases the decision to return seems to have been taken very emotionally and spontaneously.

From the data collected, three types of returnees according to their decision-making process can be distinguished. They will be described with a view to relate the findings to the reasons and circumstances for return as well as to the functionality of their social ties. Depending on the return migration setting, social ties were used in specific ways, as shall be discussed. Furthermore, the decision-making process and the aforementioned reasons for return follow distinct patterns for families as compared to single male or female returnees.

### *The Decision to Return: Long-term Planning*

“Life is taking you in so many directions, and you have to bend. Once you have a family... When my husband found this job advertisement in the newspaper, we started to make plans. He came back to Lebanon for a year, and later I followed with the children.” (Interview 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004).

The majority of the returnees in this sample followed a long process of return decision-making that sometimes stretched over several years. Within this process, the relevant return migration issues were solved step by step. The returnees continuously reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of return, and intense discussions with close family members abroad and back in Lebanon took place. In this sample, all of the united family returnees are represented. At the time of their return, most of them had between three and five small children who were born abroad. They all had close family members still residing in Lebanon. However, most of them were well integrated in their host country and said that they had ‘a good life to lose’ abroad. They often sent one parent to come back to Lebanon to prepare housing facilities and inquire about employment and schooling opportunities. That parent would live in Lebanon for a certain period while the rest of the family remained abroad. Once settled, the rest of the family would then sell the properties and follow. During this period ‘between two homes’, the returnees employed their social ties in Lebanon and in their host country in various ways in order to ensure a reasonably smooth reintegration in Lebanon. Among these families, about half are couples of different nationalities. Usually the husband is of Lebanese origin and married abroad during his emigration period. As a consequence, in most cases both of the parents have double nationalities and the comparatively simple access to resettle abroad.

For family returnees, close family relations were most frequently found to have had an influence on the decision-making process and reintegration in Lebanon. All of the family returnees in this sample had, at the time of return, some close family members (mother, father, brothers or sisters) who had stayed behind. They had visited Lebanon many times during their years abroad and had sometimes maintained their family houses or apartments where they had originally lived. Most of these returnees had continuously maintained intense contacts through telephone calls, emails and letters during their years abroad. It is in this sample that returnees state their main consideration for return to be of financial, familial, religious or security nature. During their return migration process, they have accessed social capital in their social networks as follows:

With regard to *employment and financial resources*, in particular, *information* was passed on to the returnee families in their return migration process through their social network stretching from Lebanon to their host-countries and beyond. The analysis shows that returnees accessed considerable return-migration relevant social capital through their social networks in regard to employment considerations in Lebanon. The return-migration specific information mainly concerned the availability of job opportunities or market analysis. The returnees accessed social capital through their *strong ties* in those cases when close family members in Lebanon were directly sent to inquire about job opportunities available and organized a suitable employment position for them before or upon return. One returnee started to work in the family run business in Lebanon, and one directly followed his father’s employment position as a taxi driver for a big

hotel in Beirut. However, in this sample, the *weak ties* were the most important in providing employment for returnees. One returnee managed to set up his own company through international business contacts he had established during his stay abroad and another found employment within the same company he had worked for in France. In one case, a returnee was informed during the Sunday Service in his church about a teaching position available in a catholic college nearby. One physician inquired about job opportunities available at the University where he had studied previous to his emigration from Lebanon and was appointed a position through his former professor. In some cases, people found advertisements in Lebanese newspapers that circulated in their diaspora community abroad.

To a lesser extent, returnees accessed direct financial resources through their Lebanon-based social network. Frequently, returnees mentioned that “No one can help you in Lebanon. You cannot trust anyone, not your family, not even yourself.” (Interview 19<sup>th</sup> October 2004). However, detailed questions about their return showed that the narratives do not necessarily correspond to the actual assistance returnees received. Returnee families usually emphasize that financial support was of reciprocal nature, if not an inverse process altogether: Often, they had sent remittances from abroad during their years in the west and could not count on widely available funding in Lebanon. Instead they were asked to continuously support the family members even after their return. In this sample, strong ties could only rarely provide financial resources. During times of financial hardship, the returnees’ strong social ties seem to have held emotional rather than financial support and weight is given to the comforting back-up function the social network can hold. “At least here I am with my family. We will help each other when worst comes to worst.” (Interview 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004). Along with the close family ties, it was mentioned that weak ties or indirect contacts established were of high importance to find access to funding. Often, ‘wasta’, the colloquial Arabic word for ‘connecting’, was mentioned, referring to any personal contacts a person can access to local patrons, politicians or religious leaders in the community that can facilitate the process or provide access to the resources needed.

It is interesting to note that in regard to employment opportunities, the returnees’ social network oriented to Lebanon was crucial for their reintegration into the Lebanese labour market, as they could take immediate action and establish contacts to employers located in Lebanon. In addition, the returnees’ belonging to a religious community or an extended family that has established contacts to political leaders or local authorities seems to determine the access to employment positions upon return. However, transnational and or host-country based contacts available through the emigrants’ social network were equally important. Transnational business contacts were accessible within the emigrant’s extension of this social network through his emigration experience. Hence, it is a migration-specific social capital accessible through social ties that were themselves established in the process of emigration. Furthermore, the availability of information about job opportunities circulating in the host country reflects the fact that the returnee had been integrated into a Lebanese diaspora community that could spread this return-migration specific information among its members.

As for security and political stability, access to *information* as social capital within a returnees’ social network was of further importance when returnee families were trying to evaluate the

security and political stability of the region. Relatives or friends could provide first hand information of any events happening in Lebanon and, upon return, give advice on how to deal with continuous inter-confessional distrust or administrative processes. Returnees unanimously agreed that, due to a general lack of trust in society, they would only consult the closest family members, i.e. their *strong ties*, to share information about political developments. The wider social network did not provide this resource, as the information is not considered reliable. Even more, returnees mentioned that they would not even trust the information provided on television or through newspapers, as it is believed to be censored or modified in favour of government politics.

*Emotional support* was a key resource for returnee families who had experienced emotional distress abroad. They returned to the structure of an extended family network where they found empathy, understanding and advice in times of emotional hardship. In those cases, it was mostly the *strong ties* within the close family like the mother or the father who could comfort and stabilize the returnee and his family. Likewise, among returnees with children, the emotional basis the wider family networks provided was of crucial importance. Strong ties provided primarily emotional but also practical support by reintegrating the returnee's and their children into the family network and significantly facilitating the assimilation of the returnee's children. The close family ties could then provide basic orientation in the schooling system, help with the Arabic language or religious education that returnee children were unfamiliar with. Furthermore, many returnees sent their children to the same schools their brother's or cousin's children attend. In this context, the weak ties or 'wasta' available in the wider family network was mentioned to be helpful. Mostly, students in private educational institutions are admitted through personal contacts only and the embeddedness into a network providing these contacts is necessary in order to enrol the children in the preferred institution. Among returnees' children, they were found to establish strong ties among themselves and form a group apart of those who had stayed behind during the war.

However, it is in regard to the religious concerns that the returnee families' strong as well as weak ties show a particularly crucial importance in the return setting. Usually, the more formally established religious social network stretched from Lebanon to the former host country of the returnee. Abroad, the religious community often served as an agent for assimilation and integration. Many Lebanese said to have established strong emotional ties during their years abroad through their participation in religious activities, as it unites its members and lives solidarity values. Upon return, the religious community provided a variety of resources available to the returnees. Some returnees reported that through their integration into a specific religious sect, the platform to meet other returnees or to establish important social contacts within Lebanese society was provided once they had returned. The religious community in Lebanon passed on financial resources, for example through collections during Ramadan, Christmas or for special hardship cases in the community. In one case, specific employment information was passed on during a church activity.

Furthermore, the presence of the community at the Mosque or Church provided emotional support through the experience of shared religious practices and beliefs. In addition, the

community presents a strong background for security and morality, a social capital available through a deep embeddedness into the religious network only. It is within this context that returnees frequently mention that they feel their identity is construed by the feeling of belonging to an extended social network and through sharing the same values and life experiences.

It is also through these social ties that information about religious procedures, values and norms are passed on to the younger generation. As for the strong family ties, returnees were specifically searching to reintegrate in the wider family network to bring up their children or to experience the living of shared Islamic practices and values. Religious embeddedness of the returnees' children was given as a main reason for return, as had been shown in the preceding chapter. In this context, the returnees' children were often brought to study the Koran with uncles or cousins in the returnees' family. Furthermore, the extended family network provides the social control and moral values as a social environment to educate the returnees' children.

In general, this applies to Christian and Muslim religious networks alike. However, the analysis of the data collected shows that the shared experience of lived religious values was of higher importance for Muslim returnees than it was for Christians. The Islamic community in the West usually represents a minority of the population and was said to be of high importance to provide resources for integration. The individual's need for embeddedness in the Islamic community emerges from the social ties in the extended family network and provides the social acceptance and support to freely practice the religion abroad. Christian emigrants were usually found to assimilate more easily with the wider social norms of the society in the West. It is assumed that this very fact explains the fact that Christian emigrants were usually less strongly embedded in a formal religious network abroad.

The detailed account of the use of social ties shows that, for returnees following a long-term decision-making process for return, social capital was available in a variety of ways. Returnees in this sample employed their social ties with a view on the obstacle that had to be overcome for return. Personal ties do not seem to operate directly as push- or pull factors, but mainly to provide necessary resources to effect the emigrants' decision to return.

### *The Decision to Stay*

"I came back to Lebanon for a holiday with my children. One morning I got up in my house in the mountains. I looked down over the sea; it was calm and beautiful. And suddenly I knew clearly: I would stay. I called my husband and I started to search for a school for our children." (Interview November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004).

Surprisingly, three returnees in this sample never really took the decision to return, they took the decision to stay, spontaneously and without previous long-term planning and reflection, when nostalgia took over during a holiday in Lebanon. None of them had ever fully settled abroad, but were continuously on the move from one country to another, following available job opportunities. A decision to stay was taken mostly by the mother in the family, whose husband would be physically or emotionally absent and the decision was taken independently of his location. The mother would then move back to Lebanon with her children to seek assistance and help in the family, while the husband continuously worked abroad. These returns were linked to

the wish to start to make a stable life by going back to the roots where one belongs. The need for assistance of close family members and questions of identity were given as the main reasons to stay in Lebanon among the returnees in this sample.

It might also be valid to call those returnees the ones 'who never really left'. Spontaneous returns took place only when the emigrant kept strong ties to family members who stayed behind in Lebanon. These were also the ones who regularly returned to Lebanon for holidays and kept property, even though they officially stayed abroad most of the time during the year. The author found that those returnees who stayed spontaneously in Lebanon kept a strong emotional attachment to Lebanon and were very clear in their notion of where 'home' is. Emigrants in this group show, due to their continuous moves from one country to another, little integration into their host societies. They mentioned preoccupation and worries of their children being uprooted and emphasized strong discomfort with the host countries they used to live in.

In these cases, the nuclear family ties were mostly part of the problem abroad. Coming closer to the extended family was then part of the solution. The use of their *strong social ties* mainly consisted of the *emotional support* provided within the family network. Financial resources and information were equally provided, however centred on the close family network of strong social ties. These returnees seemed to almost fully rely on their parental family ties. Employment or educational considerations followed only after return, but were not part of the decision-making process. The social ties then mainly provided resources for reintegration as a necessary service for the returnee. Weak ties were not reported to have been of any significant influence among these returnees. However, it can be assumed that the extended social network of weak ties supported part of the reintegration in Lebanon, even if the returnees would not emphasize or even mention any such notion.

In general, the author assumes that such a spontaneous move is only possible when a strong network of close personal ties encourages the returnee by unconditionally providing some basic facilities for their reintegration, and finally by emotionally supporting the decision to stay. Their social network is clearly Lebanon-oriented, and accordingly their embeddedness abroad is limited.

### *The Sudden Return*

"Of course I had been thinking about returning before. But one day I suddenly knew I would go back. It was like an electric shock. (Interview 8<sup>th</sup> November 2004).

Some returnees in this sample returned when events in their life stroke and they found no more perspective to continue their life abroad. Most of them gave a reason to return as previously discussed to be emotional moves triggered by broken relationships or the loss of family members. They had no time to reflect profoundly and they did not inquire about the living conditions, job opportunities or housing facilities they would find in Lebanon. One could be tempted to term them 'forced returnees' in analogy to the conception widely applied for out-migration refugees: a return took place in a situation where no other way was feasible to stay abroad and return came as a last resort. All of these returnees were single males.

As applies to the aforementioned ‘spontaneous holiday stay-overs’, these returnees did not mention any weak ties of their extended social network that were part of their decision-making process neither in the host country nor in Lebanon. They mainly relied on the strong family ties, and reintegration efforts were made only after the return had taken place. However, during the reintegration period, the weak ties in their social network are likely to have provided assistance for settling back in Lebanon, even if the returnees did not consider them during the interviews.

The return migration in this sample was triggered by personal ties, which either operated as push factors abroad or as pull factors from Lebanon. It seems that these returnees were not strategically employing their social ties and were not mastering their moves, but had a small space for agency in their return. Most of them lacked extended social ties to their host countries during their stay abroad and had not yet stabilized themselves abroad. Even though most of them had not maintained extended contacts to Lebanon, they still felt emotionally close to their home country and maintained contacts to close family members.

## Conclusion II

The analysis shows that the circumstances and reasons for return are linked to distinct decision-making processes. The framework presented below allows deeper insight into the specific functionality of social ties in return migration of the three categories. The following table depicts the combinations of the reasons for return with the decision-making processes returnees followed:

	Decision-making Process	Reasons for Return	Sample Characteristics	Functionality of Social Ties
1	<b>The Long-term Decision to Return</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial considerations</li> <li>Employment</li> <li>Children</li> <li>Religion</li> <li>Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families with children</li> <li>Muslims</li> </ul>	<b>Returnees <i>employed</i> their personal ties</b>
2	<b>The Decision to Stay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistance, help</li> <li>Making a stable life</li> <li>Identity and belonging</li> <li>Strong family ties as reason for return</li> <li>Shattered relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holiday factor</li> <li>Those who never really left</li> <li>Women with children</li> <li>Unhappy abroad, moving from one place to the next, no stable life conditions</li> </ul>	<b>Return <i>allowed</i> by personal ties</b>  <b>Personal ties as push or pull factor</b>
3	<b>The Sudden Return</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crisis: broken relationship, death of family member</li> <li>Identity and belonging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single males</li> <li>Little integration abroad</li> </ul>	<b>Return <i>triggered</i> by personal ties</b>  <b>Personal ties as push or pull factor</b>

Table 3: Typology: Return Decisions, Reasons and Functionality of Social Ties

A first analysis of the data and the aforementioned typology suggests the following assumptions:

Emigrants who were well settled abroad and followed a long-term decision-making process for return (Type 1) employed their social ties in a comparatively strategic way. Most of these returnees were families. They had access to basic return-migration specific information and resources like housing, employment or financial support through their embeddedness in their social network in Lebanon and through the use of their strong and weak ties stretching from Lebanon to their host country. At the same time, it is assumed that their close social ties in their host society balanced some of the economic or emotional hardship they encountered while staying abroad and allowed a planned and organized return movement. The author concludes that the composition of their social ties and their embeddedness in their social networks permitted a fairly rational decision-making process for return. In this respect, within the structure of their social network, they had room for specific agency to negotiate the factors that would push or pull them to return.

Emigrants who spontaneously decided to stay on in Lebanon during a holiday or returned suddenly (Type 2 and 3) seemed to be less integrated into their host societies abroad while maintaining strong emotional attachment and close family ties to Lebanon. The composition of their social network must have supported a spontaneous return, as return-specific resources were instantly available. Compared to the long-term planned returnees, their social ties in Lebanon provided less informational or financial resources, but seemed to hold a strong emotional support. Their extended social network was not part of the decision-making process of return but only mattered for reintegration efforts. Close relations either pushed or pulled the returnee to move, and migrants acted with little agency to employ their social ties. Their social networks show a tendency of orientation towards Lebanon, meaning that during their years abroad, these emigrants found little stability through social ties in the place of residency but maintained close contacts to family members in Lebanon. The composition of their social network triggered or allowed their return by pushing the migrant away from abroad where no emotional support was available, or else by pulling them back to Lebanon, where this emotional support was available. Only single males and mothers with children are represented in these two types of returnees.

The typology suggests rational agency for long-term planned returnees (Type 1) only, but structural reasons with little agency for spontaneous returns (Type 2 and 3). However, social network theory claims to establish the missing link between structure and agency, and a deeper analysis of the use of social ties, the emigrants' embeddedness and the composition of their social networks is required.

The sample presented here is very diverse as far as countries of residency, employment positions or sociological categories (families with children as compared to singles) are concerned. However, these variables may influence the return setting in a significant way. At this point, it is necessary to narrow the sample to specific criteria in order to control for these terms, or to increase the number of cases studied through further data collection. As further data collection is out of reach at this stage of the research process. The author narrowed the sample to describe the

specific embeddedness and social network composition of families, as taking the biggest share in both sub-samples and followed distinctly long-term decision-making processes for return. The spontaneous return settings of mostly single emigrants probably presents some special cases in return migration, which could be subject to further analysis through structured data collection. However, these cases were disregarded in order to allow the analysis to focus on a more comparative analysis of returnee family networks as compared to family stayees.

### *Social Networks in Family Return Migration*

The analysis of the data presented above shows that families follow distinct decision-making processes for return and give specific reasons that affect the decision to stay or to return as compared to single male and female migrants. As discussed before, religion and marriage but especially children seem to fundamentally change the setting in which return decision take place. Not only do different factors push or pull the emigrants to stay or return, but it is assumed that the families' access to social capital varies due to a structurally different position in their social networks that might affect the decision-making process of return. It is interesting to note that returnee families had considerable access to return migration specific resources that they employed during their decision-making process and reintegration in Lebanon as was shown before. The returnee families' embeddedness in and composition of their social networks compared to stayees could provide some information in explaining the opposing migration outcomes for the two sub-samples. For the following analysis, seven cases for returnees remain to be considered to belong to type 1 returnee group. The comparative sample consists of nine cases of stayee families.

### *Embeddedness in Social Networks among Families*

The data analysis shows that children often serve as bridges through which contacts to teachers, school friends, parents and formal associations are established and thus the weak social ties are extended. With the birth of children, emigrants mention that new issues about how to deal with religious conflicts at school, language problems or social norms occur. It is assumed that through these conflicts, the emigrant's social ties to the host country are intensified. Through children, emigrant families often start to socialize with other emigrant families (e.g. through Islamic schools), a process during which the diaspora network in the host country widens (weak ties) and deepens (strong ties) at the same time. Furthermore, the data analysis suggests that being a parent moves the emigrant from the periphery closer to the centre of a social network for both the returnee and stayee samples. In general, stable life conditions give more room for voluntary activities among families, the emigrants position in their social network moves from being a 'receiver' of information, financial or emotional assistance to being a provider of the same resources for their own children, their partners, their friends and other migrants living in the host country. During this process, the emigrants' level of embeddedness in their social network increases. The focus of the emotional support is centred on close family members rather than on other emigrant's friends and extended contacts. However at the same time emigrant parents

become more embedded into an extended social network. Some emigrant parents served as 'brokers' in their host country to help other Lebanese family members or friends to settle abroad. A few times, the arrangement of marriages between Lebanese people who have settled abroad and people staying behind were mentioned to be of strong importance.

### *Orientation of Social Network among Families*

In both the returnee and the stayee samples, the data collected shows that marriage and children deepen the strong ties of the emigrants' social network at their place of residency. The analysis suggests that, in general, children move the emigrant's social ties away from a home country- towards a host country oriented social network. "I have all my family here, my children and my husband. What else do I need?" (Interview June 16<sup>th</sup> 2004). Many stayees mentioned that, having a family, they are less free to travel and holidays in their home country became more expensive and often a lack of energy prevents them from continuously uphold extended ties to Lebanon. Often, over the years, the contact to the extended family network abroad was reduced, and sometimes the emigrants' close family members back home equally started to emigrate. This shift in the focus of the social network towards the place of residency abroad is also reflected in the fact that children often more easily integrate into their host society, speaking the language fluently and sometimes serve as translators for their parents. By doing so, they naturally transfer some of the social capital available for integration into the host country to their parents. Often, the children have little attachment to Lebanon and refer to their country of residency as their home. Parents then are scared of uprooting their children by bringing them back to Lebanon. At the same time the analysis unsurprisingly shows that, in general, weak ties are less likely to be maintained to the home country than strong ties are. They are relatively easily replaced by social contacts maintained in the host country. However, as the analysis of the social capital available for returnee's shows, numerous weak ties were also easily re-activated upon return.

The integration into the Lebanese diaspora abroad was difficult to assess for both stayees and returnees samples. Mostly, the interviewer was assured that during their stay abroad, they have or had virtually no social ties to other Lebanese emigrants. However, the author's observation of phone calls and visits during the interviews or the stories the interviewees were telling as side notes suggest not quite the same. Detailed questions revealed that most returnees as well as stayees usually maintained frequent social exchange within the Lebanese diaspora in their host country that were of considerable importance in managing practical daily life matters, such as babysitting, introducing Arabic language schools for children, dealing with government officials or passing on employment opportunities; or else simply to continuously exchange news, culture and emotions about Lebanon.

### *Dispersed Families*

Just as with out-migration, return migration does not always bring the nuclear family together, but often tears it apart. Sometimes, the emigrant's children stay abroad while the parents move back to Lebanon. By returning, the social environment left behind in the host

country imposes an inverse way of maintaining strong ties. The close ties that hold emotional support then move away from the emigrants living abroad by returning. A surprisingly high number of returnee families in this sample (four cases) did not move together, but chose what could be called a ‘dispersed family model’: A Lebanese husband stayed abroad earning money or having access to unemployment funds in western countries, while the foreign wife returned with the children to be close to the husband’s family in Lebanon. In these cases, the returnees mainly follow financial after family union considerations for their decision to return. Since the Lebanese labour market rarely provides job opportunities for returnees, the financial situation does not allow the family to move together. By moving back to Lebanon with the children, life expenses can be considerably cut. Through this model, more travelling is possible since there is access to funds abroad. In Europe, emigrants find higher chances to settle in a good employment environment providing good money – Lebanon with its family ties is then only a backup for the worst-case scenario. “If it doesn’t work in Europe, he can still come back to Lebanon and we will find a way, since there is family network here, some brothers earning good money abroad. However, we don’t want to rely on this if it is not absolutely necessary.” (Interview 30<sup>th</sup> October 2004). From the technical perspective of this research, such a migrant should be termed stayee, as he undoubtedly is a Lebanese emigrant living abroad, while his wife clearly is of foreign origin and can therefore hardly be termed ‘returnee’ since she has never left Lebanon in the first place. However, having his wife and small children, i.e. the very nuclear family, living back in Lebanon, he should still be termed returnee (see methodological critique in the following chapter for further discussion on this point).

### *Social Networks of Family Stayees as Compared to Returnees*

Within the two samples of family returnees and stayees, no significant discrepancy of the social networks’ orientation could be filtered. Simply, the data does not allow any conclusion on this issue. The data analysis does not show any significant difference in the intensity of strong or the quantity of weak ties mentioned, nor in the level of embeddedness or the orientation of the social networks for returnees as compared to stayees. Surprisingly, returnee families tend to show an equal or sometimes even deeper embeddedness into their social network in their country of residency than stayee families. They more frequently participate in voluntary activities or sports association. Furthermore, returnees often have some close family ties like parents or brothers and sisters who moved with them abroad. In these cases, moving back to Lebanon is a move away from supportive social ties, contrary to what would be expected within the assumptions leading through this research. Furthermore, returnee families have equally settled their legal status as have stayee families.

In this sample, Muslim family stayees show less attachment to Islam than returnee families. Only two of the stayees stated to be practicing Muslims, one of them agreed with his wife that she move back to Lebanon with their children for religious reasons while he continues to work abroad, and the other one being in a process of strong reflection to return home following the birth of his second child. Their extended social network in Lebanon is clearly much stronger than abroad, a fact that is in line with the assumption that this longing for embeddedness could be

affecting the return migration decision. However, for the Christian stayees, many of them integrated into local Lebanese churches and show strong religious attachment, but feel less discrepancy between their own and the Christian values lived abroad. Their religious social network does not show any tendency to be oriented to Lebanon.

I had assumed that probably one strong factor for return or stay is the marriage to a national citizen in host country, as it clearly facilitates the integration and functionality of social ties in Lebanon can be replaced in host country. However, emotional attachment seems equally deep and in this sample, many Lebanese couples stay abroad while double nationality couples returned to Lebanon. However, there is considerably more travel involved in returnee families of double nationality than in families where both partners are Lebanese. In accordance, their close family ties stretch beyond Lebanon to the country of temporary residency.

### *Conclusion III*

Reviewing the social networks of returnee and stayee families, it must be acknowledged that the data collected is not sufficient to allow any comprehensive analysis nor to filter systematic discrepancies that might affect migration outcomes. Returnee and stayee families seem to be equally embedded in a social network stretching from Lebanon to third countries as well as their host countries through the maintenance of strong and weak ties. Stayees and returnees have equally built close ties to family members and friends living in the same host country, they all have access to social capital relevant for migration decisions provided through the weaker ties of their social network. Likewise, they all maintained strong ties to family members or friends who stayed behind in Lebanon. The formal integration into organizations is equally low but exists to some extent for returnee families as well as stayee families. In all cases, emotional support was mainly provided by close family members, whether they stayed back home in Lebanon or abroad in the same host country or a third country of residency. The emigrants seem to practice what has been termed a 'delocalized community', referring to the fact that they continuously show strong emotional attachment to members of their social network, disregarding of their place of residency.

## Conclusion

### *Return Migration in the Push-Pull Framework*

The theoretical review in the first part of this study depicts various factors pushing or pulling the emigrants to return to their home country Lebanon. The widely applied push-pull framework, modelling out-migration processes along disparity considerations of the migrants, equally presents insight into return migration decisions. In particular, the factor relating the presence of family and friends pushing or pulling the migrants to move holds specific importance for return migration. In the data presented, close family members in Lebanon have pulled the migrants to return mainly by providing emotional support in times of hardship. In this respect, it has to be emphasized that the longing for identity and emotional attachment to a wider community network constitutes the background against which almost all decisions to return were taken. The decision to return was mostly influenced by a combination of several factors; however, emotional factors seem to have dominated the emigrants' decision to return in most of the cases studied for this research. Thus, the first assumption leading through this research is confirmed. Surprisingly, the interviews revealed that religious beliefs strongly influenced the decision to return especially among Muslim families in regard to the upbringing of their children. This factor goes unnoticed in all migration theories previously reviewed and deserves further scrutiny in future research to be conducted.

### *Social Capital in Return Migration*

Interestingly, in most cases the decision to return was strongly coupled with a profound process of personal change abroad. In a time when the settings of the emigrants' lives fundamentally changed, return migration was taken into consideration as a solution to rebuild their life and improve the prospects for the future. In this respect, three types of decision-making processes were filtered. While in most cases return migration was a long-term and well planned undertaking, some emigrants returned spontaneously and without any previous return considerations. The data analysis suggests that only long-term planned returnees had specific agency to strategically employ their personal ties in their return migration, they also had access to considerable social capital within their social networks that could be used for the organization and reintegration back in Lebanon. In contrast, the data analysis shows that spontaneous returns were directly triggered by the emigrants' social ties either pushing or pulling them to return. The returnees thus relied on the unconditional support of their social networks holding considerable emotional support.

### *Composition of Social Networks in Return Migration*

The data shows that all family returnees followed a long-term decision-making process. Their social network compositions show a tendency of orientation to their host country, as their

embeddedness into a host country-based social network deepened with the birth of children abroad. This fact might help to explain their specific long-term decision-making processes as compared to single male or female returnees who mostly returned in a spontaneous way. In line with the second assumption, the returning migrants, especially families, accessed various resources available in social networks such as information, emotional and financial support.

The data collected for the analysis of social network compositions of returnee families as compared to stayee families does not reveal any noteworthy differences between the two samples. With the data collected, it is not possible to present any conclusions referring to the third assumption suggesting that the composition of the social network mediates the factors pushing or pulling to return. There was no evidence showing that the returnees' embeddedness into their social networks significantly differed from the stayees' network compositions. In conclusion, it has to be assumed that the concept of social network does not reveal the expected significance in return migration. While it still holds that the composition of a social network may mediate certain factors in the emigrants' decision-making process of return, the third assumption along this research was conducted is probably overestimating the importance of the social network.

### *Methodological Critique*

The research presented here suffers from severe methodological problems that could not be eliminated in the course of the data collection. The sample collected is extremely diverse in terms of gender and age class, places of residency, families as opposed to single emigrants, religious beliefs, reasons for leaving the country and time spent abroad. In order to reach valuable conclusions for the comparison of returnee and stayee sample, it would be imperative to narrow the sampling method applied to specific criteria and, as a second step, to increase the cases studied of the two samples.

In addition, the terminology along which this research was conducted would have to be reviewed in respect to the notion of returnees compared to stayees: In the process of the empirical data collection, it was found that the distinction between 'returnees' and 'stayees' does not hold any solid analysis. People emigrate to unknown countries but keep houses back home and frequently return over many years. Emigrants return but instantly make plans for re-emigration to a third country. Some return to their home country but keep citizenship, business matters and the members of their nuclear family abroad. For example, it is unclear how to classify emigrants living in a 'dispersed family model', as was discussed above. While the Lebanese husband is staying abroad, his wife of foreign origin is living in Lebanon with their children. Following the definition applied in this research, he would be termed 'stayee', however, his close and extended social network is mainly oriented to Lebanon where he has his nuclear family living and intense social contacts are maintained through frequent travels back and forth between the two countries. Furthermore, the static concepts of out-migration as opposed to return migration do not correspond to the migrant's own conceptions. Returnees often refer to their host country as home country: "Un jour on va rentrer au Canada. C'est mon pays. Ma base est là." (Interview

27th October 2004). Others insist, "... Nothing is permanent. If I can give my children anywhere between five and seven years in one place, I would have gained so much." (Interview. 28th October 2004). Many of the interviewees would not agree that their emigration was of any permanent nature, nor is their return.

Another problem facing the analysis of the data collected was that the information given by the interviewees was not specific enough to be used for a satisfactory analysis. The quality of the data is insufficient, mainly because during the interviews, reports of the data provided on social ties were not carried out in a detailed manner. However, it has to be emphasized that information about personal social relations is very intimate and private information, in many cases even subject of deep emotional distress.

Furthermore, the research presented here focuses on the individual migrant and his personal social network, i.e. '*ego-network*', but lacks to portray the interactions of the member of one social network in a comprehensive way. In this respect, it is even questionable if the term social network has really served any analytical purpose. Mainly, the analysis focused on the relations of one returnee to other people. However, no interaction among other members of his social network could be portrayed. Hence the focus on the individual migrant lacks to cover the dynamics of a social network that could give deeper insight into migration outcomes. For further research, it could be suggested to study either one immigrant group in different local settings in their host countries to find various degrees of embeddedness abroad, or else to select one exile community residing in one country and study the dynamic processes return of decision-making within this community in a more comprehensive study of a high number of members belonging to the same social network.

In conclusion, the author still supports the initial assumption stating that social ties can provide valuable insight into return migration dynamics. The author believes the social network perspective could prove fruitful for the analysis of return migration, especially if the dynamics and the interactions of the members of one social network could be measured in a more comprehensive way. The data analysis presented some evidence for the functionality of social ties in return migration and suggests that there are various levels of access to social capital in social networks. The author still claims that the embeddedness into and orientation of the social networks determines the emigrants' access to social capital and hence can contribute to explain migration outcomes, even if the data collected in the course of this research lacks to give clear evidence for such assumption. After all, this research has clearly demonstrated that return migration is not following an isolated individual assessment of disparity considerations, but is a socially embedded process during which the migrants interact with other migrants as well as people residing in their home and host countries in numerous ways.

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## Appendix I: List of Expert Interviews

Name	Position	Date
Dr. Jihad El-Akl	Chef de Service des Emigrés et de l'Emigration, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et des Emigrés	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2004
Dr. Diane King	Professor Anthropology AUB, (Migration)	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2004
Dr. Samir Khalaf	Professor AUB, Director Centre for Behavioral Research, Lebanese Returnee	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2004
Dr. Roseanne Khalaf	Professor AUB (Literature), Lebanese Returnee	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2004

## Appendix II: Interview Questionnaires

Questionnaire Returnees	
<b>A</b>	<b>EXILE AND RETURN</b>
A1	When did you return to Lebanon / Number of years since return
A2	When did you leave Lebanon and under what circumstances?
A3	Have you temporarily returned to Lebanon and left again? Frequency and length of Holidays?
A4	Years spent abroad in total:
A5	Where did you spend your time abroad (countries) and what status do (did) you have abroad?
A6	Can you briefly describe your living situation abroad in (country)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and Contacts</li> <li>• Visa/Immigration Matters</li> <li>• Employment/Financial Matters</li> <li>• Possibly Emotional Matters</li> </ul>
A7	Could you briefly state the main reasons why you came back to Lebanon?
A8	When you left (country), did you leave with a serious intention of permanent residency in Lebanon?
A9	Were you before or are you, at his stage, planning re-emigration from Lebanon?
<b>B</b>	<b>SOCIAL NETWORK IN EXILE AND RETURN</b>
B1	Has anyone of your close family / friends left Lebanon during the war too? When? Where to? Where are they now?
B2	How frequently were you in touch with them and how?
B3	During exile, how frequently were you in contact with your family/friends in Lebanon and with whom?
B4	Please describe your contacts with other people while abroad? Frequency? Lebanese?
B5	Who did you discuss your return decision with? Who did you consult?
B6	Did anyone specifically help you resolve bureaucratic steps and travel arrangements for returning to Lebanon? Any formal organisation / government involved?
B7	Can you briefly describe your <b>first main concerns</b> once you arrived back here in Lebanon? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Legal Matters /Political Problems</li> <li>• Emotional Matters</li> </ul>
B8	Who were the people most important to you during this period of return and how did they support you?
B9	Who could have helped you with employment back in Lebanon in case you needed?
B9	Who could have helped you with housing back in Lebanon in case you needed?
B10	Who could have helped you with financial matters back in Lebanon in case you needed?
B11	Who helped you with legal matters back in Lebanon and how in case you needed?
B12	Can you briefly describe your life now here in Lebanon? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you married?</li> <li>• Do you have children?</li> <li>• Employment?</li> <li>• Housing?</li> <li>• Satisfaction?</li> </ul>
B13	Now that you are back in Lebanon, how and how frequently are you in touch with your close family/friends abroad?
<b>C</b>	<b>FORMAL EMBEDDEDNESS</b>
C1	Were or are you involved in any formal organisation? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 80%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Political Party</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Labour Union</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Religious Organisation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students Association</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Organisations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sports Club</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents' Association,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Music/Theatre/Dance/Culture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Association</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peace Movement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Charity Organisation,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Self Help Group,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scouts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li> </ul> </div> </div>
C2	From when to when were you involved?
C3	What is your personal level of involvement in the organisation? How do you participate in its activities?
C4	How much time do/did you personally spend for this organisation?
C5	Does anyone among your close friends/family participate in the same organisation, too?
C6	Did or does your organisation support you financially/materially?
C7	Does your organisation provide official funding programs?
C8	How was your organisation involved in your leaving the country and staying abroad?
C9	Was your organisation in any way helpful or harmful to you when coming back to Lebanon?
<b>D</b>	<b>GENERAL PARTICIPATION AND TRUST</b>
D1	In your daily life, how important is politics in general?

D2	How often do you discuss politics with other people?	
D3	Where do you get your information about politics? How often do you read the politics section in the Newspaper, watch TV or radio news, internet?	
D4	What do you inquire about most?	
D5	In your daily life, how important is religion?	
D6	In your daily life, do you officially participate in volunteer activities? Do you support other people on private basis?	
D7	Do you generally believe the people are trustworthy:	
	• in your family?	
	• among your friends?	
	• at work?	
	• in daily life, strangers?	
<b>E PERSONAL DATA</b>		
E1	Your date of birth?	Year
E2	Your marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/> single <input type="checkbox"/> married <input type="checkbox"/> divorced
E3	How many children do you have? Number / Age	
E4	Your religious belief?	<input type="checkbox"/> Shiite <input type="checkbox"/> Sunnite <input type="checkbox"/> Druse <input type="checkbox"/> Maronite <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox <input type="checkbox"/> Greek-Catholic <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E5	Your main activity in daily life?	<input type="checkbox"/> Education & Training <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Housewife <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E6	Your employment position today in Lebanon?	<input type="checkbox"/> self employed <input type="checkbox"/> employed <input type="checkbox"/> unemployed
E7	How many people work in your family?	
E8	How many people depend on your salary?	
E9	How many people fully live from your salary?	
E10	Today in Lebanon, do you own ...?	<input type="checkbox"/> land <input type="checkbox"/> house <input type="checkbox"/> apartment
E11	How many years did you go to school for?	Number:
E12	Your highest educational degree?	<input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> MD <input type="checkbox"/> BC <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E13	Your nationality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese and other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> other
E14	Your partner's nationality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese and other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> other
<b>F INTERVIEWERS NOTES</b>		
F1	Date of Interview	
F2	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
F3	Interview Language	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> German <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic Translation
F4	Observation Financial Situation: Area of Living	
F5	Observation Financial Situation: Housing (Books, TV, Car etc.)	
<b>Interviewer's Personal Remarks</b>		

Questionnaire Stayees	
<b>A</b>	<b>EXILE</b>
A1	When did you leave Lebanon?
A2	Have you temporarily returned to Lebanon and left again? Frequency and length of holidays?
A3	Number of years spent abroad in total?
A4	Where did you spend your time abroad (countries) and what status do (did) you have abroad?
A5	Can you briefly describe your living situation abroad in (country)?
	• Family and Contacts
	• Visa/Immigration Matters
	• Employment/Financial Matters
	• Possibly Emotional Matters
A6	Have you ever considered returning to Lebanon?
A7	Could you briefly state the main reasons that keep you from returning back to Lebanon/staying in.....?
<b>B</b>	<b>SOCIAL NETWORK IN EXILE AND RETURN</b>
B1	Has anyone of your close family / friends left Lebanon during the war too? When? Where to? Where are they now?
B2	How frequent were you in touch with them and how?
B3	How frequently are you in contact with your family/friends in Lebanon and with whom?

B4	Please describe your contacts with other people while abroad? Frequency? Lebanese?	
B5	Who is helping you most abroad? Who do you consult?	
B6	Can you briefly describe your <b>main concerns</b> while living abroad?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Legal Matters/ Political Problems</li> <li>• Emotional Matters</li> </ul>	
B7	Who are the people most important to you and how do they support you?	
B8	Who helps you with employment in case you needed?	
B9	Who helps you with housing in case you needed?	
B9	Who helps you with financial matters in case you needed?	
B10	Who helps you with legal matters and how in case you needed?	
B11	Can you briefly describe your life now here in .....?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you married?</li> <li>• Do you have children?</li> <li>• Employment?</li> <li>• Housing?</li> <li>• Satisfaction?</li> </ul>	
<b>C</b>	<b>FORMAL EMBEDDEDNESS</b>	
C1	Were or are you involved in any formal organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Political Party <input type="checkbox"/> Labour Union <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Students Association <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Club <input type="checkbox"/> Parents' Association, <input type="checkbox"/> Music/Theatre/Dance/Culture <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Association <input type="checkbox"/> Peace Movement <input type="checkbox"/> Charity Organisation, <input type="checkbox"/> Self Help Group, <input type="checkbox"/> Scouts <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
C2	From when to when were you involved?	
C3	What is your personal level of involvement in the organisation? How do you participate in its activities?	
C4	How much time do/did you personally spend for this organisation?	
C5	Does anyone among your close friends/family participate in the same organisation, too?	
C6	Did or does your organisation support you financially/materially?	
C7	Does your organisation provide official funding programs?	
C8	How was your organisation involved in your leaving the country and staying abroad?	
<b>D</b>	<b>GENERAL PARTICIPATION AND TRUST</b>	
D1	In your daily life, how important is politics in general?	
D2	How often do you discuss politics with other people?	
D3	Where do you get your information about politics? How often do you read the politics section in the Newspaper, watch TV or radio news, internet?	
D4	What do you inquire about most?	
D5	In your daily life, how important is religion?	
D6	In your daily life, do you officially participate in volunteer activities? Do you support other people on private basis?	
D7	Do you generally believe the people are trustworthy:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in your family?</li> <li>• among your friends?</li> <li>• at work?</li> <li>• in daily life, strangers?</li> </ul>	
<b>E</b>	<b>PERSONAL DATA</b>	
E1	Your date of birth?	Year
E2	Your marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/> single <input type="checkbox"/> married <input type="checkbox"/> divorced
E3	How many children do you have? Number / Age	
E4	Your religious belief?	<input type="checkbox"/> Shiite <input type="checkbox"/> Sunnite <input type="checkbox"/> Druse <input type="checkbox"/> Maronite <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox <input type="checkbox"/> Greek-Catholic <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E5	Your main activity in daily life?	<input type="checkbox"/> Education & Training <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Housewife <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E6	Your employment position today in Lebanon?	<input type="checkbox"/> self employed <input type="checkbox"/> employed <input type="checkbox"/> unemployed
E7	How many people work in your family?	
E8	How many people depend on your salary?	
E9	How many people fully live from your salary?	
E10	Today in Lebanon, do you own ...?	<input type="checkbox"/> land

		<input type="checkbox"/> house
		<input type="checkbox"/> apartment
E11	How many years did you go to school for?	Number:
E12	Your highest educational degree?	<input type="checkbox"/> PhD
		<input type="checkbox"/> MD
		<input type="checkbox"/> BC
		<input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship
		<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
E13	Your nationality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese
		<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese and other: _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> other
E14	Your partner's nationality?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese
		<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese and other: _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> other
<b>F</b>	<b>INTERVIEWERS NOTES</b>	
F1	Date of Interview	
F2	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
F3	Interview Language	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> German
		<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic Translation
F4	Observation Financial Situation: Area of Living	
F5	Observation Financial Situation: Housing (Books, TV, Car etc.)	
<b>Interviewer's Personal Remarks</b>		