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Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks, and Transnational Practices

Mohamed Kamel Dorai

Abstract

Palestinians in Lebanon are one of the most important communities living in the Middle East, with nearly 350,000 refugees according to UNRWA figures. Since the 1980s about 100,000 Palestinians have emigrated from Lebanon to the Gulf countries and northern Europe, mainly Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. The Palestinian case leads us to reconsider the classical distinction between forced and voluntary migration. Migration has to be considered not only as forced, but also as the result of new forms of transnational solidarity between the different scattered Palestinian communities. This paper aims to demonstrate how refugee communities, like Palestinians, but also Kurds or Eritreans, use their social capital (i.e., solidarity networks) in order to adapt to new situations with strong constraints and to develop new forms of transnational solidarities.

Résumé

Les Palestiniens vivant au Liban constituent l'une des plus importantes communautés au Moyen Orient. Selon les chiffres de l'UNRWA, leur nombre s'élèverait à 350 000 réfugiés. Depuis les années 80, environ 100 000 Palestiniens ont émigré du Liban vers les pays du Golfe et vers le nord de l'Europe, principalement en Allemagne, en Suède et au Danemark. Le cas des Palestiniens permet de remettre en question la distinction traditionnelle entre migration forcée et migration volontaire. La migration doit être considérée non seulement comme étant forcée, mais aussi comme étant l'expression d'un nouveau type de solidarité transnationale entre les différentes communautés palesti-

niennes dispersées dans le monde. Cet article vise à démontrer comment les communautés de réfugiés, comme par ex. les Palestiniens – ainsi que les Kurdes ou les Erythréens – utilisent leur capital social (c.à-d. leurs réseaux de solidarité) afin de s'adapter à de nouvelles circonstances comportant de fortes contraintes, et développent ainsi de nouvelles formes de solidarités transnationales.

Palestinians in Lebanon are one of the most important Palestinian communities in the Middle East, with nearly 350,000 refugees according to the 2001 statistics given by the United Nation Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Most of them arrived in 1948, and more than half of them still live in one of the thirteen refugee camps administrated by the UNRWA, whilst a substantial number live in informal gatherings. The Palestinian community has faced several difficulties since its arrival in Lebanon. First, there have been legal restrictions concerning obtaining work permits, owning land or constructing housing, movement across borders, and accessibility to social welfare and education. Second, refugees have suffered from the insecurities of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1991) and the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982.¹ Since the 1980s about 100,000 Palestinians have emigrated from Lebanon to the Gulf countries and northern Europe, mainly Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. Migration has to be considered not only as forced, but also as the result of new forms of transnational solidarity between the different scattered Palestinian communities. This paper aims to demonstrate how refugee communities, such as the Palestinians, but also the Kurds or the Eritreans,² use their social capital (i.e., solidarity networks) in order to adapt to new situations despite

great constraints, and succeed in developing new forms of transnational solidarity.

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, I will examine the different stages of Palestinian emigration from Lebanon to Europe from the 1970s to the present day. Secondly, I will explore the mechanisms that sustain this mobility, based on the setting up of migratory networks between the two areas. Thirdly, I will stress the importance of the camps and the gatherings in the structuring of a transnational migratory field. This work is primarily based on fieldwork studies in Lebanon between 1997 and 1999, specifically in South Lebanon and in Sweden, and on interviews with Palestinian refugees in these two areas.

1. The Four Main Stages of Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon

1.1 The Analytical Framework

Seteney Shami³ notes that in the Middle East the distinction between *forced migration* and *voluntary migration* is not always relevant. The author suggests that “*displacement often leads to labour migration as a coping strategy.*” Palestinian emigration is a good illustration of this. Firstly, they are considered as refugees in Lebanon because they had been expelled from their homeland in 1948. Then civil war, economic difficulties, and legal discrimination have led them to emigrate from Lebanon to find work, asylum, and a stable juridical status as in Europe. Gil Loescher⁴ notes that “in practice, the question of who exactly is a refugee is a major point of contention. . . . In today’s interdependent world, more people are migrating for a wide variety of reasons”.

This assumption is also developed by Anthony H. Richmond,⁵ who stresses that

the distinction between movements of population that are voluntary and involuntary, or forced and free, is of doubtful validity. There is a convergence of these two forms, and differences depend on relationships to the state.

In the case of the Palestinians, three kinds of mobility can be distinguished: (1) labour migration in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, (2) asylum seekers looking for safety in a third country, which took place between the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the War of the Camps (1985–87), and (3) illegal “refugee-migrants” to Europe seeking both asylum and a better economic situation, which began in the early 1990s.

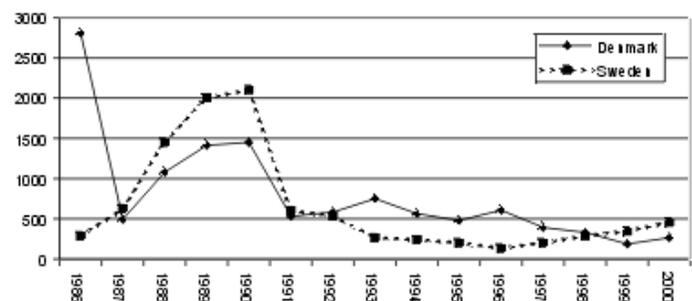
1.2 From Lebanon to Europe: The Development of Emigration

Palestinian emigration from Lebanon to Europe occurred in four main stages. During the first stage a few dozen Palesti-

nian students from Lebanon, as well as from Syria and Jordan, came to Sweden to complete their professional training. This mobility resulted from a co-operation between UNRWA and Swedish companies such as Volvo. Some of them stayed in Sweden, while the rest returned home.⁶ In the 1970s, a large number of Palestinians could not find work in Lebanon, due to legal restrictions in the Lebanese labour market. Hence, a group of refugees entered western Europe, via East Berlin, and asked for asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany. Most of them obtained asylum and were able to settle in West Germany. They were not considered as political refugees, but as *de facto* refugees, a legal status created during the eighties.⁷

The mass arrival of asylum seekers into northern Europe occurred during the 1980s (see Figure 1). The Israeli invasion (1982) and the War of the Camps (1985–87) displaced thousands of Palestinians inside Lebanon, and some of them searched for asylum abroad. During this period Sweden and Denmark opened their boundaries to a large proportion of them. Today, about fifteen thousand Palestinians live in Sweden, and nearly twenty thousand have settled in Denmark.⁸

Figure 1: Arrivals of Palestinian Asylum Seekers in Sweden and Denmark (1986–2000)



Sources:

Sweden: Migrationsverket, 2000

Denmark: Eurostat (1994), Danish Immigration Service, 2001.

The 1990s brought the development of illegal migration. Towards the end of the 1980s the European countries closed their boundaries to asylum seekers.⁹ Nevertheless, a large number of Palestinians from Lebanon still wished to emigrate. Four main reasons led to the development of illegal migration: (1) the end of the civil war in Lebanon increased the discrimination against the Palestinian community at the political and economic levels, (2) the Oslo agreement did not give any solution, nor any perspective, to the 1948 refugees,¹⁰ (3) the economic situation in Lebanon was getting worse by 1993, and (4) Palestinians were competing with Syrian and Egyptian workers in the labour

market. In the absence of the implementation of their “right of return,” Palestinians from Lebanon searched for a better economic situation, a recognized legal status, and a country where they could build a “normal” life for their children. Europe was considered by most of them as a good alternative.

2. *Migratory Networks and Transnational Solidarity Networks: The Resources Used by Palestinian Refugees*

Compared to the high rate of migration in the Palestinian community from Jordan, those living in Lebanon were less mobile until the 1980s. Nowadays, more than a quarter of the Palestinians from Lebanon live abroad. What are the mechanisms that lead to this mass emigration? Thomas Faist¹¹ proposes an interesting theoretical framework, using network analysis and the use of transnational resources, in order to understand how migration takes place. Two levels of analysis must be taken into consideration, the macro-level (economic, political, and legal environments in the departure and host countries) and the meso-level (the migrants’ networks). The key question is: how do local networks set up by Palestinians in Lebanon develop in a transnational space through migration?

For Palestinians are refugees, and their transnational activities are strongly determined by their departure and destination countries’ attitudes.

It can be argued that the social relations of refugees create a transnational community not bound by the geographical borders of either the countries of origin or the countries of settlement. [...] However, there are some significant differences between ordinary migrants and refugees in the form and content of the transnational social relations. It can be argued that refugees have a distinctive relationship with both the country they have been forced to flee from and the country in which they have involuntarily settled.¹²

The family solidarity networks play a significant role in the organization and the development of the migrations of the Palestinians, in both the country of departure as well as in the host country. Their action is determined by various stages of a migratory process: (1) they permit the mobilization of the funds necessary to pay for the trip, (2) they provide information on the country of destination circulated through the network and spread to the potential migrants, (3) they facilitate the adaptation of the newcomer in the host country, (4) they also have a function in the selection of the migrant from the departure country to fit the specific needs of host country, (5) they help to circumvent the legal constraints in the host countries, and (6) they influence the destination location of the migrants.¹³ I will

first analyze the emergence of the migratory networks between Lebanon and Europe. I will then examine the structuring role of the family and village gatherings in the country of departure. And I will indicate how the migratory field set up by Palestinians between Lebanon and Europe is constructed around family and village networks.

Transnational migratory networks set up by Palestinian refugees, based on family and village solidarity, are built on the same logic that the networks of sociability developed on a local scale in the refugee camps and Palestinian gatherings. It is their geographical extension which has spread out, from a local to a transnational field. The Palestinians who were settled in Europe since the sixties were used as a spearhead for the migratory networks, which developed in the eighties. This migratory strategy has been developed to circumvent the legal border closures in Europe.

2.1 From the Refugee Camps to Europe: The Development of Transnational Practices

A multitude of resources are developed in the refugee camps and the Palestinian gatherings by their inhabitants to improve their living conditions. Thomas Faist notes that:

social capital denotes the transactions between individuals and groups that facilitate social action, and the benefits derived from these mechanisms. It is primarily a local asset and can be transferred cross-nationally only under specific conditions.¹⁴

The author also notes that resources like solidarity, information flow, and social capital first develop locally. The development of migratory networks permits the transfer of these resources from a local field (e.g., a refugee camp) to a transnational one, such as a migratory field. Resources can then be potentially used by the migrants. A transnational social field emerges in which migration – i.e., migrant workers or refugees – generates an exchange between the country of departure and the country of arrival. This circulation includes migrants, but also goods, information, money, and cultural practices.

The author observes that the analysis of migrations in terms of migratory networks suffers from two deficiencies: first, it does not explain the relative immobility of the major part of the potential migrants, and second, it does not tackle the question of the emergence of the migratory networks. He considers that initially social capital is a factor which limits mobility; then when the migratory networks develop, it becomes a driving force in the emigration. This framework of analysis is relevant for the comprehension of the Palestinian migratory dynamics from Lebanon to Europe. Until 1982, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were not very mobile because of the strength of the solidarity networks

and mutual aid, based on family and/or village networks, which developed in the camps and the gatherings. The destruction of these camps during the Israeli invasion of 1982 led to the departure of many refugees towards northern Europe. New forms of solidarity then developed in a transnational migratory field, which supported and accelerated the emigration. Also, Thomas Faist notes that the installation of earlier migrants is a central element that permits the development of migratory networks because they condense the social capital. The migration develops when the social capital does not function only on a local scale, but also as a *transnational transmission belt*.

The factors that led to the setting up and the development of these transnational migratory networks are the following. Until the beginning of the eighties, the restrictive legal context that touched the Palestinians in Lebanon was counterbalanced by the strong presence of the PLO. The Palestinian institution provided work and welfare to the most underprivileged Palestinians. The Palestinian national movement, then strongly structured, also proposed a political solution to the refugees by making "right of return" the spearhead of its combat. The dismantling of the PLO and its geographical dispersion in 1982, and nowadays the Oslo peace process, which relegates the problem of the refugees to future negotiations, reduced the effectiveness of the networks of solidarity at a local level. Emigration became an objective for many refugees, because it made possible an escape from a situation perceived as insoluble by most refugees. Emigrating to Europe was then considered by refugees as an alternative solution to an increasingly improbable return to their homeland, or to a durable settlement in Lebanon in an increasingly hostile context.

Efficiency and permanence of transnational networks are based on a shared identity, common to all Palestinian migrants. The overwhelming need to belong to the same group is related to three factors, namely: the shared and transmitted experience of the *Nakba*, an Arabic term that means catastrophe, used by the Palestinians to designate the 1948 exodus; living in the camps that are considered as a symbol of the exodus; and the gatherings based on village origin, making it possible to recreate the geography of Palestine in exile. All these elements, with strong symbolic contents, structure the Palestinian solidarity networks at a local level as well as at a transnational one.

2.2 The Origin of the Migratory Networks: The First Palestinians in Northern Europe

The first Palestinians from Lebanon arrived in northern Europe, primarily in Germany and Sweden, in the sixties and seventies. They decided to emigrate, because they could not manage to find work in their host country in the Middle East

due to their refugee status. A few hundreds stayed in Sweden and a few thousand in Germany. Their presence, however, played an important role in the organization of the migratory networks which were set up in the eighties and developed in the nineties. Several refugees who arrived in the eighties, or later, explain their choice of destination by the presence of one or more members of their family, their camp, or their gathering of origin in the host country.

The first Palestinian migrants, often young male graduates, benefited from a favourable reception in northern Europe and quickly obtained residency rights, even the nationality of their host country, as well as work. The majority of the refugees whom I met were married to German or Swedish wives. Their good knowledge of their host society has facilitated the arrival of new migrants. One must note the importance of the *weak ties* – e.g., diffuse relations with the host society – in the operation of the networks, which permits the construction of *bridges* between the migrant community and its host society.¹⁵ In Germany, for example, several individuals of Palestinian origin are now lawyers. They give assistance to the Palestinians who ask for the regularization of their situation in Germany. In Sweden, several Palestinian refugees I met in Göteborg and Stockholm work as social workers, as translators, or in non-government organizations. Their knowledge of the Swedish legal system facilitates the arrival of new Palestinian refugees.

The adaptation of the newcomers is also facilitated by the presence of Arab or Palestinian employers, such as the case in Berlin. The Palestinians easily find work in restaurants, in small businesses, or on construction sites, where the presence of foreign manpower is large and is easily accessible to undocumented migrants. Considerable numbers of Palestinians without paperwork fit this segment of the black market for labour. I also noticed during the interviews with migrants returning to Lebanon after a stay in Germany, the development, certainly marginally, of illicit activities such as the traffic of narcotics, which were strongly remunerative. With the money received from these illicit incomes the people I met were involved in the black-market Western clothing trade in Lebanon.

3. *The Role of the Camps and the Gatherings in the Structuring of a Transnational Migratory Field*

The family and village migratory networks are the main supports for the emigration from Lebanon towards northern Europe. They play a significant role in four principal fields: (1) collection of the funds necessary to emigrate, (2) the "family reunification" migratory strategy, (3) infor-

mation flow between country of destination and country of departure, and (4) the adaptation of the newcomers.

3.1 Transnational Migratory Networks and Collection of the Funds Necessary to Emigrate

The sums invested in the trip, and the remuneration of the intermediaries, lie between \$4,000 and \$7,000 (in U.S. dollars), depending on the destinations. Some families I met in South Lebanon invested more than \$15,000 in certain cases, and lost this money for those who failed to emigrate. Several families I met, especially in Borj Shemali refugee camp, the most underprivileged of the Tyre area, sold all their goods, including their dwellings and their furniture, to leave. A failure to emigrate put them in a very difficult socio-economic situation. It should be recalled that the major part of the Palestinian refugees do not have fixed incomes, since they work as daily workers. They earn around \$200 per month. Very few refugees can thus pay alone the price needed for emigration, taking into consideration their monthly income. The people who wish to emigrate generally borrow the money from their family and village networks. Khalil,¹⁶ a Palestinian refugee met in Tyre, explains the way he collected the money necessary to emigrate: "I have borrowed the money from my sister, my parents and other relatives who live here in the camps. My brother who lives in Germany for five years now also sent me money."

The collection of the funds from close relatives represents several advantages. First of all, in the majority of the cases, the potential migrants are insolvent, so no financial organization would lend them money. It is thus necessary to find alternative solutions. The sums concerned are significant, since they represent several thousands of dollars for each individual. The extended family, even the members of the same village of origin, must get together to gather the necessary amount. It is rare that one or two people have this sum. It is a collective loan. Once he has gathered the money, the debtor migrates and lives abroad. Only membership of the migrant in a family or community network, strongly structured and identified, guarantees to the creditors the refunding of the lent sum. It is a matter of trust. Arriving at his destination, the migrant repays his debt by sending money back to his creditors. Generally, the money is sent with a relative or a friend visiting from Lebanon. The importance of the relationship between the sending community and the expatriate group is of prime importance in the operation of this system of financial solidarity.

This mechanism is very efficient when the basis of the network is family. The broader the basis is, the less is the effectiveness. The case most commonly observed is the following: the father leaves to work in Germany; then, when his income allows, his elder son comes, followed by the

others sons (or brothers); and then the rest of the family comes, i.e., the spouse (or mother) and the daughters (or sisters).

3.2 Migratory Networks, Marriage and Gender Inequalities

The financial resources, even if they cover the cost of migration, do not give a right of legal residence in Europe. It is useful to recall that since the end of the eighties, it has been very difficult for Palestinians to obtain refugee status in Europe. Most of the Palestinian refugees thus try to enter Europe clandestinely, hoping to be regularized thereafter. The family or village migratory networks became a very significant resource for the migrants who want to obtain legal residency in Europe.

Certain Palestinians who arrived in the sixties, but more especially during the seventies, founded a family in their host country. Most of the parents I met preferred that their daughters marry Moslems, preferably Palestinians originating from the same camp or gathering in Lebanon. This kind of marriage is facilitated by the fact that the daughters carry German, Swedish, or Danish nationality. During a summer visit to Lebanon, they marry. Then their husband returns with them to settle in Europe. A young Palestinian woman responsible for the union of women in the gathering of Chabriha explains the way in which these marriages take place:

Young Palestinian refugees living here manage to emigrate by marrying Palestinian women living in Europe who carry European citizenship. They choose a husband, and then he obtains a residency permit. Every year you have such weddings. The parents prefer to marry their daughters here rather than within European society.

Questioned on the nature of the marriages, her answer is without ambiguity, that they are effective marriages, and not unconsummated marriages. The goal of getting correct papers is only one of the advantages of this type of union, and it is not the only goal:

They are true marriages, how could it be different? People who live here are all distantly related, it is not conceivable to make a unconsummated marriage. The girl comes and chooses a husband, she cannot leave him over there. Unconsummated marriages exist, but that has never occurred here at Chabriha. This situation creates problems for the girls who live here in South Lebanon. For they do not find husband, they must work. Because of the economic situation young male prefer to marry with a girl who lives abroad.

Zoubeir, a young refugee of Al Buss camp, testifies as to the way he left Lebanon to settle in Germany:

I was born in 1972. I lived here in the Al Buss camp until I married my cousin who has German nationality. She was born in Germany. Her family lived there for 22 years. She came here each summer. I married her, then I went to live in Germany in 1994. I have obtained a residence permit for one year renewable, and I obtained the right to work.

His experience, however, was a failure. His wife left him and took their daughter. He could not obtain the renewal of his residence permit. He had to leave Germany in March 1999 and return to Lebanon, where he resided before. This shows the legal precariousness of the newcomers. However, the cases of divorce remain rare, according to Dima Abdulrahim.¹⁷ In Sweden, I met young Palestinians forced to make an unconsummated marriage to obtain papers. It seems, however, that this practice is not usual.

The local effects of emigration on the country of departure are significant. Emigrants are often young men. Therefore, in south Lebanon there are more young women than men of same marriageable age. Thus, many young Palestinian women do not get married. They remain in their parents' house and work as agricultural workers. Hence, transnational practices tend to increase gender inequalities in poor Palestinian areas.

3.3 Migratory Networks and Information Flow

The links created and maintained between migrants and their community of origin are connected by two main aspects. First, migration is often the result of a communal or family strategy to increase their income or to minimize risk of fluctuation of their incomes. Thus, the need for strong bilateral contacts between migrants and non-migrants is necessary to ensure the control of the migrant and the sending of an income home. Second, the execution of such goals requires a constant flow of resources, information, and migrants, to ensure the operation and the continuity of the system.¹⁸

In the case of the Palestinians from Lebanon living in Europe, these two aspects can be verified. In the economic crisis which strikes the Palestinian refugees, the emigration of one or more members of the family makes it possible to ensure the sending of funds in a more regular way. Thus, according to my observations, old people who remained in south Lebanon and have relatives abroad manage to have a monthly average income ranging between \$100 and \$200. Palestinian communities in Europe can also provide more significant funds in case of a specific expenditure such as a surgical operation. Thus, in Jall Al Bahr, a family succeeded

in collecting in less than one week the funds necessary for a surgical operation for one of their family members, equivalent to \$2,500. They received about \$2,000 from Germany and Denmark, where more than half of the family lives. The use of the telephone permits fast circulation of information. The money is sent by bank transfer or by specialized private organizations.

The information flow generally passes by immaterial channels (i.e., fax, e-mail, telephone) and by people holding European citizenship or residence permits who are able to travel freely. Palestinians settled for many years in Europe with correct papers traditionally make annual visits home. E-mail is now frequently used as a tool of communication, as it is less expensive than the telephone, and more reliable and rapid than the traditional post office. In one of the refugee camps near Tyre, where the installation of a telephone line is prohibited by the Lebanese authorities, a grocer secreted a telephone line from outside the camp and connected a computer to the Internet in order to send and receive e-mail. The inhabitants of the camp could thus send e-mail to their family in Europe for 1,500 Lebanese pounds (approximately \$1.00), which is only 500 LP more expensive than the price of a local call.

The networks of solidarity between the Palestinians of Europe and those remaining in Lebanon are still steadfast since the most significant arrivals took place in the eighties, and are thus relatively recent. The Palestinians born in Europe are, however, increasing. Until the present time, and according to the interviews which I carried out with this category of the population in Stockholm and with those returning to Lebanon for holidays, they still attach a great deal of importance to the maintenance of the relationship with their camps or gatherings of origin. It is, however, difficult to foresee the modes of solidarity that will develop in the future, if they manage to exist at all. The development of clandestine emigration represents a great obstacle to the circulation of information and people. During my interviews with clandestine migrants, the relationship with the country of origin (i.e., Lebanon) is weak, or non-existent, until the migrant obtains a residency permit. However, it is important to emphasize the intense need of Palestinian young people living legally in Europe to be connected with the home base and to guard against losing the "right of return" on the creation of a Palestinian State.

3.4 Migratory Networks and Adaptation of the Migrants in the Host Country

The success of adaptation of the migrants was often measured by the ability of the migrant to activate his/her family and/or community networks in the host country. The importance of the role of these networks in the country of

departure must also be emphasized. One of the uses of the network is in the reduction in the “cost of migration,” in all the senses of the term.¹⁹

In the country of arrival, the close relations maintained by people of the same village of origin in Palestine or the same refugee camp in Lebanon play a significant role in the success of the adaptation of the newcomers. I have observed such relations in Sweden. These networks help the newcomers to find employment or housing on their arrival. The adaptation aspect comes out as a very important factor in the interviews with those who wish to emigrate. Most of the potential migrants benefit in Lebanon from family and village solidarity networks which enable them to overcome the daily difficulties and guard against economic risks. Migration is seen as a viable solution by potential migrants because it does not question the advantages already developed from this system of solidarity. Once arrived in Europe, they find the same kind of mutual assistance. It takes the form of free accommodation with members of the family or people originating from the same camp, as well as loans of money and assistance in searching for employment.

On the one hand solidarity networks play a major role in the adaptation of migrants due to the multiplicity of weak ties developed between the migrants already installed and the host society. On the other hand, the solidarity networks cannot deal with all the problems faced by the newcomers, especially legal restrictions. As they are stateless refugees, obtaining a stable and recognized legal status or nationality of their host country is one of the conditions necessary to enhance their adaptation. Only a recognized legal status enables them to find employment, housing, and the right to circulate freely.

3.5 The Evolution of a Transnational Migratory Field: The Case of the Palestinians from Al Buss Camp

The migratory networks set up in response to the asylum policies in Europe have an influence on the geographical distribution of the migrants. Migratory flows thus move in a preferential way towards particular regions, where long term previous migrants live. In the Palestinian case, it is legal status constraints which govern the “choice” of the country of destination. It is thus the combination of legal factors, depending on State policies, and also socio-spatial factors, which makes it possible to understand how the Palestinian migratory field is structured from Lebanon towards Europe, and its current geographical reconstruction.

I will take the example of the Al Buss camp, which clearly illustrates migratory dynamics developed by Palestinian refugees and their recent change. In the seventies, a group of Palestinian graduates decided to leave Lebanon. They had three principal objectives: (1) to find work, which was

difficult in Lebanon because of the legal constraints, (2) to obtain an internationally recognized legal status, and (3) to flee the civil war that had started in Lebanon. West Germany seemed to them a favourable place because of its favourable asylum policy and because entry via East Berlin did not require a visa. Settling in West Germany was helped both by a flexible asylum policy and by good opportunities for employment.²⁰ These Palestinians found work easily and were able to spread into several towns of West Germany. Once their legal situation became stable, many settled in West Berlin. They concentrated on working in the catering and the construction sectors. They still, however, maintained close connections with their country of departure by sending money to their families remaining in Lebanon. When they acquired German citizenship or valid residence permits they were able to visit their families in Lebanon. Afterwards, as their savings grew, they were able to facilitate the arrival of close relatives (e.g., brother, parent, sister). In many cases, their integration into German society was further enhanced by marriage with Germans.

In the eighties, following the Israeli invasion, the migratory field of the Palestinians from Al Buss was totally changed. The camp was destroyed by the Israeli shelling and refugees were forced to move inside Lebanon. Some of the refugees, in particular those who were injured or whose dwellings were completely destroyed, sought to leave Lebanon indefinitely. Connection between internal migration and international migration was effected at that time. Denmark and Sweden agreed to accept these refugees. Germany too continued to receive some of them. The migratory field thus extended to new countries further north, whilst Germany, the previous principal recipient country, now became primarily a country of transit towards Scandinavia. Whereas in the seventies, the networks set up by the migrants determined the geographical extension of the migratory field, in the first half of the eighties it was the asylum policies of the European countries which determined the main countries of destination.

Thereafter, the economic and political situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon was eroded further, and the rate of emigration increased. The European countries changed their policies of asylum in the second half of the eighties in a more restrictive way. Migration became more clandestine, or took the form of tighter family reunification. The Palestinian communities already installed in Europe played a significant role in the maintenance of migratory flows. Flows of information, money, and weak ties, were still the principal elements which allowed the arrival of new refugees. A transnational field emerged with the circulation of information, and, to a lesser extent, of people, between the Palestinians still residing in Al Buss and those of Europe.

The migratory field was then strongly structured and effective, and it made it possible to circumvent to some extent the legal and financial constraints which challenged potential migrants.

In the nineties, the migratory field of the Al Buss Palestinians underwent yet another change. The European borders were becoming increasingly difficult to cross. Moreover the economic situation in Europe worsened. The Taëf Agreements (1989) marginalized the Palestinian community even further, and the Oslo peace process did not offer any long-term solutions to the 1948 refugees. The economy of Lebanon also plummeted at this time. Palestinians sought to migrate to a third country to obtain a recognized legal status and a right of access to basic social services. Many tried to emigrate towards Europe. The communities already installed there were used as a conduit for the new migrants, disseminating information on the countries likely to take in Palestinians. The geographical extension of the migratory field widened and touched countries such as the United Kingdom and Belgium. The three principal host countries (Germany, Sweden, and Denmark) continued to play a central role in this migratory system, but increasingly as transit countries.

Similar geographical extension of the migratory field of the Palestinians was also observed in other regions of Lebanon. The place occupied by remittances and information flow was dominant compared to the movement of individuals. The migratory field of the Palestinians was structured in an unusual way since it combined elements related to their refugee status and dynamics generated by the Palestinian networks of solidarity. Two important factors shape Palestinian migratory dynamics:

1. The political, economic, and legal context in Lebanon and in the Middle East Asylum policies of the receiving European countries
2. Palestinian solidarity networks, developed in a transnational space

Conclusion

Palestinian refugees' emigration from Lebanon must be analyzed at the macro-level in order to understand the factors that determine migratory flows. Special attention must be given to war, legal status, destruction of houses, and internal displacement. All those elements are often cited by refugees in the interviews to explain why they left Lebanon. Destination countries have not been "chosen" by refugees. The attitude of those countries toward asylum seekers, and especially Palestinian refugees, is a determinant factor in the "choice" of country of residence. For instance, Palestinians "easily" found refuge in Sweden and Denmark from 1982 to 1987.

Although the 1982 Israeli invasion set off Palestinian emigration from Lebanon, this cannot explain its duration or its amplitude. How can Palestinian refugees, deprived of passports and financial resources, manage to leave their country of residence and enter western Europe? One of the key answers could be the following: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have reconstructed, in the refugee camps and in the informal gatherings, systems of solidarity based on village and family networks. These networks, developed at a local level, have now been turned into transnational networks of solidarity by migrant communities, building bridges between Palestinians in Lebanon and migrants abroad. Resources such as social capital, money, and information on the destination country, legal constraints, and opportunities circulates through these networks, linking potential migrants to Palestinians settled in Europe. This facilitates their mobility, in a context of high legal constraints in Europe and lack of financial resources in Lebanon.

In a context where the policies of asylum and immigration are increasingly restrictive in Europe, the development of transnational networks is becoming more difficult. A growing number of Palestinians reside in Europe with precarious and provisional status which marginalizes them. As noted by Richard Black:²¹

Focusing on the role played by refugees in transnational activities could help to dispel some of the more idealistic notions of transnationalism from below as a people-led process, which take advantage of processes of globalization and ease of travel in the modern world.

Even if Palestinians develop transnational practices in order to adapt to a new environment in Lebanon and Europe, they are still refugees and/or asylum seekers, their choices strongly determined by the political context in the Middle East and asylum policies in Europe.

Notes

1. See Souheil Al-Natour, "The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no. 3 (1997): 360–77; and Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994).
2. Those two communities have been studied respectively by Östen Wahlbeck, "The Concept of Diaspora as an Analytical Tool in the Study of Refugee Communities," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 221–38; and Khalid Koser, "From Refugees to Transnational Communities?" in *New Approaches to Migration: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, ed. Nadje Al Ali and Khalid Koser (London: Routledge, 2001).

3. Seteney Shami, "The Social Implications of Population Displacement and Resettlement: An Overview with a Focus on the Arab Middle East," *International Migration Review* 101 (1993): 4–33.
4. Gil Loescher, *Beyond Charity: International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
5. Anthony H. Richmond, *Global Apartheid: Refugees, Racism, and the New World Order* (Toronto, New York, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
6. See Selma Assar, "The Palestinian Refugees: Analysis and Comparison of Two Recipient Countries' Behaviour, Sweden and Jordan, 1948–1991," (Vaxjö, Sweden: University of Vaxjö, Institute of Social Sciences, 1995; unpublished).
7. Johan Cels, "Responses of European states to *de facto* refugees," in *Refugees in International Relations*, ed. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
8. See Mohamed Kamel Dorai, "Les parcours migratoires des réfugiés vers la Suède et l'Europe du Nord," *Revue d'études palestiniennes* No. 23, nouvelle série (2000): 38–52; Brian MacGuire, "Lebanese Asylum Applicants in Denmark, 1985–1988: Political Refugees or War Emigrants," in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, ed. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1992); and Mahmoud Issa, *Palestinians from Luby in Denmark: Dreams and Realities* (Copenhagen: Danish Refugee Council, 1995).
9. See François Crépeau, *Droit d'asile: De l'hospitalité aux contrôles migratoires* (Bruxelles: Editions Bruylant & Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1995); Anita Böcker and Tetty Haviga, *Asylum Migration to the European Union: Patterns of Origin and Destination* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997).
10. See Nasser H. Aruri, ed., *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).
11. Thomas Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).
12. Östen Wahlbeck, *supra* note 2.
13. See Douglas T. Gurak and Fe Caces, "Migration Networks and the Shaping of Migration Systems," in *International Migration Systems. A Global Approach*, ed. Mary M. Kritz *et al.*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Monica Boyd, "Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas," *International Migration Review* 23, no. 87 (1989): 638–69; Ivan Light *et al.*, "Migration Networks and Immigrant Entrepreneurship," in *Immigration and Entrepreneurship: Culture, Capital and Ethnic Networks*, ed. Ivan Light *et al.*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993).
14. Thomas Faist, *supra* note 11.
15. See Gurak and Caces, *supra* note 13; and Monica Boyd, *supra* note 13.
16. All the names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
17. Dima Abdulrahim, "Defining Gender in a Second Exile: Palestinian Women in West Berlin," in *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*, ed. Gina Buijs (Oxford: Berg, 1993).
18. Gurak and Caces, *supra* note 13.
19. Gurak and Caces, *supra* note 13; and Monica Boyd, *supra* note 13.
20. See Johan Cels, *supra* note 7; and Gil Loescher, *supra* note 4.
21. Richard Black, "Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: From Theory to Policy," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001): 57–78.

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