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## LEBANESE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AN AGENCY FOR INTEGRATION AND UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

By  
Dr. ELSA EL HACHEM KIRBY

LERC-RPS 1/2015  
March 2015



LERC Research Paper Series (LERC-RPS)  
The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Notre Dame University-Louaizé, Lebanon hosts LERC research paper series (LERC-RPS) for academics and other researchers. The series is concerned with publishing research on migration from, to and through Lebanon from a comparative international perspective including, but not limited to, studies on emigration, immigration, refugees, asylum seekers, labor relations, trafficking, clandestine and seasonal migration, “entertainment migration”, circular migration, lifestyle migration, and return migration.

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No ISSN: 2221-3333

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## Acknowledgement

I wish to personally thank Dr. Elie Menassa, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU), for taking the time to review and provide valuable comments and suggestions on this article. I am grateful to the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre ( LERC) for publishing this article and to Dr. Guitta Hourani, Director of LERC, for her excellent work in promoting the Center's research opportunities. I am also indebted to the many people who provided support, talked things over, read, wrote, offered comments, during my research in Brazil.

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## Citation

Elsa El Hachem Kirby, "Lebanese Entrepreneurship: An Agency for Integration and Upward Social Mobility in São Paulo, Brazil", LERC Migration Research Paper Series No.1/2015 [ISSN 2221-3333], The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC), Faculty of Law and Political Science, Notre Dame University-Louaizé, Lebanon, February 2015, [[http://www.ndu.edu.lb/Lerc/researchpaperseries/lebanese\\_entrepreneurship.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu.lb/Lerc/researchpaperseries/lebanese_entrepreneurship.pdf)].

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## Abstract

# LEBANESE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AN AGENCY FOR INTEGRATION AND UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

By  
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*Contemporary sociological research is taking a strong interest in cultural processes linked to globalization. This interest is reflected in a renewed interest in the processes of hybridization and syncretism, both of which are important elements of globalization. In both cases, the study of flows of people and cultural forms has become a highly visible feature of contemporary sociology. Brazil has absorbed the largest contingent of Japanese immigrants in the world; it has taken in millions of Arabs. Today Brazil has become a stable democracy with room for further improvement, an emerging political power on both the regional and international scenes, a stabilised and growing economic power and a country with a rich but fragile environment. Despite the persistence of immense social inequality, Brazil is a country where merit represents a basic principle. It is a country with large national institutions working to apply this principle in a meaningful way to the reality of its inhabitants. These institutions combine their efforts with schools and universities to enhance the opportunities of disadvantaged groups and to promote upward social mobility. President Lula's (2003-11) personal life course is an eloquent illustration of the possibilities of social elevation. He was born into a very modest family and was elected president. It is through the same institutions that Brazil is intent on facilitating the integration of immigrants and their descendants into mainstream society. Their successful integration requires commitment from both government institutions and individuals.*

*Since the outcome of the integration process results from the interaction of two parties – government institutions and individuals - that takes place at different levels, the outcome cannot be expected to be uniform. Comparative studies of the integration process of different immigrant groups in the same institutional and policy context show that immigrant groups follow different patterns of integration. Similarly, the integration process of immigrants of the same origin in different national contexts also leads to very diverse patterns.*

*Immigrants to Brazil arrived in a country that experienced high rates of economic growth and social mobility. A large proportion of them were able to rise rapidly through society's ranks and occupy important positions in the middle class thanks to the values, skills and knowledge they brought from their countries of origin. Brazil perceives the social ascension of immigrants as a positive factor and a mark of personal accomplishment. This is so because Brazilian culture and its syncretistic understanding of integration favour innovation and openness. The Lebanese constitute one of these immigrant groups.*

*Integration is linked, inter alia, to social, cultural, political and identity registers. This article focuses principally on the economic dimension, which enabled the integration Lebanese entrepreneurs in São Paulo into the larger society. Based on findings from an in-depth doctoral research study on this group in São Paulo and their upward social mobility, it explores how they ascended from a status of intermediary minority to become fully integrated into Brazilian society, through their economic and entrepreneurial success.*

*The first part of the paper addresses the scope of integration as a concept within a sociological framework and how the specific notion of 'Brazilian' style integration allowed the group to retain its specificity while still becoming part of the global society. The second deals with the factors that were external to the group and those that were inherent to it. It traces changes that operated over the course of the process to the advantage of the group, in three key areas: education and training, profession and family. The third section broadly identifies indicators of this integration that are henceforth assumed to be common to all other areas and sectors of social life. The pattern varies depending on the individual and is a dynamic and multidimensional process. This paper will focus on what was observed during the field work and through the prism of entrepreneurship.*



## Acronyms

ABIB :	Associação Beneficente Islâmica do Brasil
ACSP :	Associação Comercial de São Paulo
ANBE :	Agence de Noticias Árabe-Brasil) et une chaîne de télévision - Câmara Árabe TV.
ASPA :	América do Sul-Países Árabes
AUB :	American University of Beyrouth
BADESP :	Banco de Desenvolvimento do Estado de São Paulo
BibliASPA :	Biblioteca/Centro de Pesquisa América do Sul - Países Árabes
CACEX :	Banque du Brésil
CAML :	Clube Atletico Monte Libano
CCAB :	Camara de comércio Árabe-Brasileira
CCAB :	Câmara de Comércio Árabe-Brasileira
CCBF :	Chambre de Commerce Brésil-France
CCBL :	Câmara de Comércio Brasil-Libano
CCFB :	Chambre de Commerce France-Brésil
CECAL :	Centre des études et cultures de l'Amérique latine de l'Université du Saint-Esprit Kaslik
CET :	Compagnie municipale d'ingénierie du trafic
CIESP :	Centro das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo
CONFELIBRA :	Confederação Nacional das Entidades Líbano Brasileiras
FACESP :	Fédération des Associations Commerciales de l'Etat de São Paulo
FAMBRÁS :	Federação das Associações Muçulmanas do Brasil
FEARAB :	Brasil - Federação das Entidades Arabes – Brésil
FIABCI:	Federação Internacional das Profissões Imobiliárias
FIESP:	Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo
GTAraabe :	Grupo de Trabalho Árabe
HSL :	Hospital Sírio-Libanês
IBGE :	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas
IBOPE :	Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística
ICArabe :	Instituto da Cultura Árabe
JUCESP:	Junta Comercial do Estado de São Paulo
LAOSP:	Liceu de Artes e Ofícios de São Paulo
LBC :	Lebanese Broadcasting Channel
LERC :	Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University
LIBC :	The Lebanese International Business Council
MERCOSUL :	Mercado Comum do Sul
NDU :	Notre Dame University
ONU :	Organisations des nations unies
SBM :	Sociedade Beneficente Muçulmana no Brasil
SEADE :	Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados
SEBRAE :	Agência de Apoio ao Empreendedor e Pequeno Empresário, ou Agence d'Appui à l'Entrepreneur
SECOVI :	Sindicato das Empresas de Compra, Venda, Locação e Administração de Imóveis Residenciais e Comerciais de São Paulo
SMB :	Sociedade Maronita de Beneficência
UCLM :	Union Culturelle Libanaise Mondiale
USEK :	Université du Saint-Esprit Kaslik
USJ :	Université Saint-Joseph
PRB :	Partido Republicano Brasileiro
PT :	Partido Trabalhista
PMDB :	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro
PSDB :	Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira
PPS :	Partido Popular Socialista
PDT :	Partido Democrático Trabalhista



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## INTRODUCTION

### Sociological background

A vast amount of literature has focused on topics of migration, intermediary minorities and ethnic entrepreneurship. Within this body of literature, there are many studies on the Lebanese migration to São Paulo and to Brazil but they are mainly biographies or family stories or in other cases, they are strongly inspired by oral history. Nonetheless, some scholars have carried out sociological analyses (Knowlton, 1960 Lesser, 1996 Truzzi, 1997 Karam, 2007 Hilu da Rocha Pinto, 2010) and a few studies of a more synthetic type (Khatlab, 1999 Hajjar Fahd, 1985) have been carried out<sup>1</sup>.

The primary concerns of this paper are the waves of Lebanese immigration to Brazil, the degree to which they integrated into the host society over time, and their upward social mobility within the São Paulo context. Before pursuing, an understanding of what integration implies is called for.

Integration is a process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. This definition is broad and was left open because the particular requirements for an individual to be accepted vary broadly from country to country. Migrants, interchangeably referred to as immigrants, third-country nationals, and foreign born and ethnic minorities, are generally labelled as forming a vulnerable or disadvantaged group requiring assistance.

Schnapper (2007) described the term “integration” as useful to “guide sociological research”<sup>2</sup>. Durkheim (1967) preferred the term “social solidarity” to “integration”, describing it as primarily a moral term, which, by itself, does not allow for either precise observation or quantification<sup>3</sup>. Manifestly integration is difficult to identify. If, however, integration is taken as dynamic, and not static, Schnapper’s remark that “no-one can be totally “integrated” takes a useful and functional meaning. In its dynamic sense integration can take on diverse forms and degrees, and hence, cannot be described in a binary manner.

It is difficult to draw up an exhaustive list of the social registers in existence on which integration occurs, but some would include social, economic, political, and demographic, among others. This difficulty has led researchers such as Landecker (1951) to take more of an interest in the integration process per se based on empirical analysis rather than on the definition of the term itself. The reading of integration from his perspective evolves in relation to each subject under study and of his context. According to him, measuring the degree of integration of a group or individual is more significant than how to define the term. His research distinguished four dimensions of integration: cultural - meaning the concordance between cultural norms; normative - meaning conforming to those norms; communicative - meaning the exchange of meanings and understandings within the group; functional - meaning the interdependence due to the exchange of services.

Despite the difficulty in defining integration, empirical investigations have been useful in bringing to light the perception of people who appear as “less integrated” such as marginalised persons and groups, including criminals. Schnapper (2007) explains that it is through the analysis of phenomena of exclusion and marginalization that contributions to the understanding of the processes and methods of integration have been possible”<sup>5</sup>. The question such research brings to the fore is the understanding of how such individuals fit into society at large and their degree of marginalisation can be used as a yardstick to measure other elements of society as “integrated”. Nonetheless, as indicated by Boudon and Lazarsfeld (1965), the existence of Landecker’s distinctions does not alleviate the difficulty of developing indicators for these different dimensions<sup>6</sup>.

The use of indicators for the integration of immigrants and refugees is somewhat recent and lags behind other policy areas such as economic and human development.

For the purpose of this study, the indicators of immigrant integration - as elaborated by the European Union - to develop policy areas include employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship will be used to establish the degree of integration into Brazilian society of the subject group<sup>7</sup>.

- 1 KHATLAB Roberto, Mahjar - *Saga libanesa no Brasil*, Zalka, Mokhtarat, coll. sociologia iconográfica, 2002; KNOWLTON Clark S., *Sírios e Libaneses: Mobilidadesocial eespacial*, São Paulo : Anhambi, 1960; TRUZZI Oswaldo, *De mascates a doutores: Sírios e libaneses em São Paulo*, São Paulo, Ed. Sumaré, 1992; HAJJAR FAHD Claude, *Imigração árabe - cemanos de reflexão*, São Paulo, Icone, 1985
- 2 SCHNAPPER Dominique, *Qu'est-ce que l'intégration ?*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007, p. 28
- 3 DURKHEIM Emile, *De la division du travail social*, Paris, PUF, 1967 (1st ed. 1897), p. 28
- 4 LANDECKER Werner S., “Types of integration and their measurement”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 56, 1951, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 332
- 5 SCHNAPPER Dominique, *Qu'est-ce que l'intégration ?*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007, p. 28
- 6 BOUDON Raymond et LAZARSFELD Paul, *Le vocabulaire des sciences sociales*, Paris, La Haye, Mouton, 1965, p. 10
- 7 EUROSTAT - *Indicators of immigration integration - A pilot study*, p. 10.



## Methodology

The methodology underpinning this research involved extensive field work lasting 19 months in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The tools employed were participative observation and a series of interviews totalling 82 one-on-one semi-directive interviews of over an hour each with Lebanese entrepreneurs, who ranged from immigrants to descendants of several generations. Interviews were conducted with 15 key actors and representatives of a variety of institutions linked to the Lebanese population and over 135 informal but in-depth discussions were organised with members of the Lebanese community or people associated with it. For reasons of confidentiality a choice of reported speech has been made when referring to the interviewees and their voices are not quoted directly.

Given the purpose of this research and the need for in-depth detailed information, a qualitative ethnographic method was chosen. An empirical investigation was the most appropriate in that it enabled the investigation of the major relational dynamics, trends, courses, and paths, which are highlighted among the research subjects. Participative observation was, therefore, privileged, and accompanied by a series of individual and collective interviews, adequately elaborated and administered. Participative observation also mitigated the possible weaknesses in the information gathered from the interviews.

The highest layers of the vast entrepreneurial population under study were difficult to access and observe given their discretion on the way they function. Moreover, the research subjects span across the vast megalopolis of São Paulo. To overcome such barriers, a prolonged presence on the ground was necessary; it lasted 19 months.

The life of the Lebanese community in which the entrepreneurs participate were observed in a variety of places such as stores, restaurants and cafes, churches and mosques, halls, clubs, private homes, Lebanese and Brazilian institutions, all in different neighbourhoods. It was, therefore, necessary to get close to all these formal and informal places of socialisation and regularly participate in a variety of events organised by, and for, the community, as well as events outside the Lebanese population.

Group interviews were mostly unstructured, whereas most one-on-one interviews were semi-structured, and a set of questions was used. Those covered three main themes: 1) the interviewee's personal identity, 2) his firm and its setup, and 3) his/her relationship with the Lebanese population in São Paulo, more generally in Brazil and in Lebanon.

The set of questions was mainly addressed to entrepreneurs, including merchants, manufacturers, restaurant owners, and building constructors. Commerce and the restaurant business are two types of activity which are easy to access, especially for a newly arrived immigrant who does not speak the local language and has not much professional training which could be valued on the local labour market. Over time and with savings, some immigrants open restaurants. Others chose, instead, semi-industrial or industrial production hence the choice was made to include these three types of activity. As for construction, this is one area in which the descendants of immigrants who work in it are affiliated to other entrepreneurial groups, especially the wealthiest ones, with whom they collaborate on construction projects.

To gain a varied perspective on the targeted population, it was also important to meet key informants: Religious leaders, employees of Lebanese-Brazilian and Arab-Brazilian institutions, university professors, members of think-tanks, as well as individuals related to the Lebanese population and its networks without them 'belonging' to it or being of Lebanese origin. University professors, doctors, and high-ranking officials were not included in this study but served as key informants. The one-on-one interviews were generally semi-structured. As for the unstructured interviews, these were often carried out in groups, usually of entrepreneurs or key informants.

One-on-one and group interviews were held in public and/or private places, including institutions (Clube Atletico Monte Libano (CAML), Câmara de Comércio Brasil-Líbano (CCBL), religious spaces), workplaces, private residences, beach houses, cafes and restaurants.

## Research field parameters

The Lebanese presence in Brazil covers almost the entire territory, but it is in São Paulo that the highest concentration can be found, and even more so in certain neighbourhoods where the Lebanese work, do business or live on a massive scale. These neighbourhoods include: Mooca, Vila Mariana, Jardins, Pinheiros, Itaim Bibi, Moema, Morumbi, Santa Efigênia, Brás and Sé, as well as 25 de Março, which are all part of the extended centre of São Paulo. It is around this area that most of the research was concentrated.

## The sample

The sample on which this study is based is not statistically representative. Given the lack of accurate census of the parent population, the sample that was used is indicative. It was randomly constructed and covers a variety of sectors. It provides significant information about the different paths followed in each sector.

The 82 respondents are spread over four generations. Immigrants accounted for 51% of the sample; 27% are descendants of the second generation, 20% of the third and 2% of the fourth. The age of the respondents varies between twenty and eighty years of age, with 23% of them aged between 20 and 39, 45% between 40 and 59 and 32% between 60 and 80. The sample was 95% male.

Regarding the level of income, a typology inspired by that of the Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (IBOPE) was used. It includes four different income levels. Each is assigned a letter, from the highest to the lowest: A+, A, B+ and B. These letters are distributed as follows: A+ (the highest) for 17% of respondents, A for 39%, B+ for 38%, while class B gathers 6% of respondents.

Respondents were predominantly engaged in commerce (50%), particularly in the textile industry. Construction represents 10% of the entrepreneurial activity and 11% of the respondents work in the restaurant business. Some traders are also manufacturers who operate a vertical integration of the production chain. As for the rest of the sample, the sectors vary from food production to large industrial gas distribution.



While 34% of the sample consists of large business owners, 14% have medium-sized companies, 18% have small firms and 12% of the companies are micro-enterprises. Self-employed entrepreneurs represent 15% of respondents and 7% have no formal active company but have had one in the past.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Lebanese emigration

Towards the end of the 19th century, Lebanon was governed by the Ottoman Empire. The latter was in conflict with some of the European powers who wished for its collapse. This confrontation resulted in so-called collateral damage, with massacres at the local level between antagonist religious communities, sometimes led by local groups. The Lebanese economy, at the time, heavily relied on silk production. Competition from the Far East began to undermine the sector, significantly weakening it and causing financial insecurity for a large fraction of the population. In 1911, a fifth of the population working in this sector had already fled Lebanon because of difficult economic conditions (Labaki, 1984)<sup>8</sup>. Between 1890 and the beginning of the First World War, a third of the Lebanese population living in mountain regions (Khater, 2001)<sup>9</sup> had emigrated to the four corners of the world in search of a better future. A third of them came to Brazil.

### Context upon arrival

A turning point in Brazil's history was characterized by a vast migratory movement from a variety of European countries, including Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, as well as Japan and Lebanon to Brazil. This was the context prevailing when the Lebanese population began to arrive there around the second half the 19th century.

In the early 19th century, the total Brazilian population was estimated at 3,250,000 inhabitants, whereas today it is 195,423,000. The population has multiplied by sixty since the early 19th century. Such magnitude is indicative of the profound upheaval, which Brazil underwent over the course of the past two centuries, at the demographic, economic, and social levels, and in which the Lebanese population took an active part. The development of new industries and regions, resulting from the rubber and coffee economic cycles, which marked Brazil, offered entrepreneurial opportunities for Lebanese immigrants who preferred to seize them rather than to work in agriculture. Few Lebanese immigrants worked in the coffee or rubber plantations.

Their original migration plan was to save as much capital as possible before returning to Lebanon.

By 2010, industrialised and urbanised São Paulo had become the fifth largest agglomeration in the world, with over 41,262,199 inhabitants in the state of São Paulo in 2010, and 11,253,503 inhabitants in the municipality, with a population density of 7387.69 inhabitants per square kilometre. São Paulo was particularly strong at adapting to different periods of economic transformation, which marked Brazil throughout the 20th century. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that Lebanese migrants seeking prosperity took particular interest in this city, which aggregates the highest number of Lebanese and their descendants.

The Lebanese immigrants arrived independently. They were not bound to an employer or to a particular region and were free to move about and seek the most appealing prospects. Thus, mobility enabled them to invest in peddling (mascates) before settling in São Paulo.

### Integration and the driving factors which permit it

In many European countries, the integration of migrants means their assimilation to a pre-existing unified social order, with a homogeneous culture and set of values. Integration is perceived as a one-way process, placing the onus for change solely on the migrant. This model, prevalent in France, had worked up until the early 1980s, when it began to cause problems within French society. These problems forced a redefinition of the concept. In pluralist democracies, integration is perceived as a two-way process that will bring change, on not only the migrant's perspective and way of life but will also affect structural change within the society. Brazil adopted a model of integration

8 LABAKI Boutros, Introduction à l'histoire économique de Liban - soie et commerce extérieur en fin de période ottomane (1840-1914), thèse de Doctorat en Economie, Publications de l'Université libanaise, Beyrouth, Librairie orientale, 1984.

9 KHATER Akram F., *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, available on line: <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft9d5nb66k/>



based on syncretism. The difference with France in this regard is probably linked to the history of both countries. France has long been a colonial metropolis, while Brazil was a colony until the early 19th century. Independent Brazil appealed for immigrants to come to populate and develop its vast territory. France, whose official existence is much older, did not issue the same type of call for immigration. Although vested and expected roles for these immigrants differed significantly between the two countries, in both cases the newcomers had to meet a need for labour.

## Syncretism - integration Brazilian style

Syncretism is a process whereby two or more independent cultural systems conjoin to form a new and distinct system as they come into sustained contact, no matter what their level of sophistication may be. Syncretism as understood by Bastide<sup>10</sup>, namely that "Cultural traits are syncretising. .. [ and ] each trait has its specific meaning [ . . . ]. Bastide (1998) believed that syncretism cannot be defined by the simple addition of cultures coming into contact with each other. It is an activity of men united in divergent or solidarity groups<sup>11</sup>. Bastide's views on the social dimensions of acculturation processes can also provide an interesting starting point for a more comprehensive view of contemporary processes of hybridization. These are often interpreted as free-floating devices associated with the aesthetics of the global vs. the local. Not only is hybridism socially produced, but it also reflects the unequal distribution of power between distinct social groups and, most importantly, some of its outcomes - such as syncretic religious cults - are essential in the production of new social configurations.

An illustration of how this operates in the context of Brazil today is how the Lebanese adopt Italian or Brazilian cultural traits, especially in the area of food where exchanges are reciprocal. For example, many residential complexes in São Paulo also have common spaces for kitchens and many are equipped with pizza ovens. In addition, the annual samba school parades during Carnival offer symbols of syncretism through the themes selected for the floats. This choice is usually associated with individuals or groups of individuals who have left their mark on the country. On the evening of March 5, 2011, the São Paulo Sambadrome schools' parade, the Rosas de Ouro school chose the theme "Open Sesame, Lucky Password." This was evocative of the ancient Arab world, and also reminiscent of the syncretism of Brazilian culture that integrates different elements of the various components of the population.

These populations have had several generations to assert themselves and be "accepted", but one of the factors that has played in favour of these immigrant groups is the perception of their skin colour. As Skidmore (1974) has demonstrated, Brazilian elites influenced by racist ideologies imparted to them their own particular interpretations. Whereas European racists believed that miscegenation in Brazil would lead to the deterioration and racial degeneration of society as a whole, the Brazilian ideology of whitening supposes that racial mixing would entail not the loss of White qualities rather their acquisition by the Black elements of the population, who would take on the features of the 'virtuous' race and lose those of the 'inferior' one.

European immigrant communities were identified as white in Brazil, which also responded to the "whitening" campaign for the Brazilian general population. The regent power of the time considered that the size of the indigenous population (indigenous Indians, and descendants of African slaves) was too big and decided that their number should be offset by increasing the numbers of "White" people. Contrary to prevailing thought in the United States, where racial mix imposed the colour categorisation of "Black", in Brazil racially mixed individuals are considered "White." The style of racism peculiar to Brazil would thus consist of the ideology of whitening, whereby blacks, through racial mixing, would become a part of the white world. This ideology, dominant in Brazil, would gain expression in the greater value placed upon the "whiter" offspring of Afro-Brazilian families, and would be a specific development of modern European racism of the late 19th century<sup>12</sup>.

As Skidmore (1974) described, the arrival of "White" European immigrants to Brazil was perceived as beneficial and positive. According to a 2010 estimate, 43% of the Brazilian population was composed of "metis."<sup>13</sup> Nowadays, in speeches, statements and the press, Brazilian politicians pay tribute to the diversity of society and what they call the Brazilian miscegenation and cosmopolitanism. The speech made on June 13, 2012, at the Chamber of Commerce Brazil-France by the Secretary of International Relations focused on community diversity in São Paulo. It recounted that the largest Japanese and Lebanese *comunidades*<sup>14</sup> outside Japan and Lebanon were in São Paulo. He also noted that the significant Italian presence at the beginning of the century made up 30% of the population of São Paulo.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, negative comments about a more recent wave of immigrants - this time from Bolivia - are often heard in São Paulo today. This population generally holds hard and low-wage jobs. Their country of origin is poorer than Brazil, and Bolivians migrate to escape poverty. The image they portray is of a less educated and less equipped group, unable to provide added value to the new "look" of a triumphant Brazil. Their negative image can also be linked to the fact that Brazilians feel they are "economic parasites" who come to siphon off money or take jobs from poorer Brazilians.

Initially, Lebanese immigrants were also stigmatised, as reflected in the term "turcos." Brazilian elites in the early 20th century accused them of having a capacity to harm Brazilian society. From around the mid-20th century, it was through their economic success that they managed to claim a full role and to enjoy a more positive image within Brazilian society. Their economic success and social mobility are the reasons for their improved social image.

Since the 1990s, Brazilian politicians have refrained from criticising immigrants and their descendants, especially those who are long-established and have had the opportunity to "prove themselves." This may be linked to the multifaceted interpenetration that some immigrant groups have experienced as some of their members now occupy powerful positions within the upper echelons of the State. Official speeches and the press regularly pay tribute to the contributions made by groups of different origins that participated in the formation of Brazilian society and, notably, the economic hub of São Paulo. In 2010, for example, Globo (a key Brazilian television network) aired a 30-second commercial entitled "A Tribute to 130 Years of Lebanese Immigration."<sup>16</sup> Such initiatives also relate to other groups such as Italians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Japanese. The reopening of the main public library in São Paulo in January, 2011, was accompanied by a series of weekly lectures on the history and contributions of various immigrant groups, including the "Arabs" who began to arrive in São Paulo as of the early 20th century.

10 BASTIDE Roger, *Les Religions africaines au Brésil*, P. U.F., (1ère ed. 1960), 1998, p. 470

11 KARAM John Toufic, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2007 p. 48

12 Skidmore, T. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

13 The definition of the racial mix was not explicit, making it difficult to know the type of racial mix it implied.

14 *Comunidades* means "communities". Brazilians use the term randomly to designate the different origins of nationalities that compose the population.

15 DIEGUES Manual, "Do grupos étnicos - culturais no Brasil: italianos e", *Sírio libaneses - Revista de Imigração e Colonização*, 13:2 (2nd semester 1952), p. 137.

16 DOVALO MORINI Fernando, "Comercial em Homenagem aos 130 anos da Imigração Libanesa", TV Chanel Globo Online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOsqs2stM4>.



There are strong indicators pointing to the full integration of the Lebanese in São Paulo and, more broadly, in Brazilian society. The process is well under way on many registers. Multiple factors, sometimes independent, converged to bring this about. These factors can be divided into two categories: External to, and inherent in, the Lebanese community.

## FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY

The Lebanese first came to Brazil in the late 19th century. At that time the country's economic system was mainly agrarian, but the first signs of transition to a more industrial economy were already apparent. In the State of São Paulo, the rail network was highly developed, because it transported the coffee production. The regional economy depended on it for transporting its produce, as well as on the port of Santos for exports. This network enabled the Lebanese "mascates" to get around. But this alone would not have sufficed had other developments not facilitated the emergence of a new economy which Lebanese entrepreneurs took advantage of.

### Lebanese and the development of Brazil

Before the proclamation of the First Republic (1889), Brazilian oligarchs did not see the country as an autonomous entity. The Brazilian economy was based primarily on the extraction and exportation of raw materials. Lebanese proposed a secondary economic model, based on the transformation of raw materials into manufactured goods. Lebanese emigration was "spontaneous" insofar as it was not organized by the government, as was the case for other groups such as the Japanese and Italians. This implied that Lebanese immigrants did not enjoy the security and conditions of other groups since they did not receive State support or subsidies. Ironically, this proved to be an advantage because it gave them more freedom to undertake other initiatives. Brazil was in need of development on all levels, with infrastructure of all types needing to be built. This period offered many opportunities to ambitious entrepreneurs, including the Lebanese.

Various historical events enabled Brazil to resist foreign pressure to invest in its own development. Although Brazilian production and industrialization were disenfranchised, external variables such as the two World Wars accelerated the industrialization process. For example, the Great War interrupted the importation of European products into Brazil; thus, motivating Brazilian entrepreneurs to assume investment in the local production of products that were lacking. Western countries were occupied on other fronts. Brazil had the freedom to develop sectors of the economy, which were still dependent on the primary sector at that time. Using previously accumulated capital, the Lebanese Jafet family, and others such as the Italian Matarazzo family, invested in industry as well as in other sectors of the economy and diversified their activities.

A descendent of the original Jafet family said that the First World War provided an opportunity for the economic and industrial development of Brazil.<sup>17</sup> The country could not have seized this opportunity had the economic agents in place not been ready and able to invest. Among those who did were Lebanese who had accumulated capital thanks to commerce. Their natural propensity in this area, coupled with the budding Brazilian economy, enticed the Lebanese who had the greatest capacity to invest. They were able to step into privileged positions as the economy expanded and industrialised.

The Great War also curbed the flow of immigrants into Brazil and, for immigrants present in the country, dashed any plans to return to their country of origin; they were now likely to stay in Brazil until the war ended. This period lasted four years, during which time they became accustomed to their environment and invested locally in entrepreneurial projects that proved lucrative. Over time and with increased capital, the traders began to invest in industrial sectors of the economy; this brought about a vertical integration of the production chain. Hence, the immigrant gradually laid down roots in his new environment, with his investments bearing fruit, increasingly encouraging him to settle permanently in a place where he had become successful. Gradually, through interaction with the local community, other members of his community and entrepreneurial investment, the immigrant concentrated his social network in his new environment and links became organic and natural.

This expansion of activity inevitably increased the need for labour, as well as the demand for produced goods. Lebanese entrepreneurs preferred to employ the local inexpensive workforce for transforming materials into products and for store duties, but they called upon Lebanese peddlers, in whom they had greater trust, to sell a large portion of their merchandise. This preference had a knock-on effect of encouraging Lebanese candidates for immigration to take the plunge, especially those from the same region. Immigration was organized within family networks. Typically, this often resulted in the original Lebanese social structure being reconstituted along the lines of the regional village of origin, but in the host society. Once this structure was established in the new environment, the community organized itself by forming associations and clubs. Also, the immigrant felt less isolated and his need to return to his country of origin lessened, especially at a time when opportunities remained relatively limited and when the political, economic, and social environment remained unstable. The crisis of 1929, also known as the Great Depression, also indirectly contributed to the process of implantation. The global economic meltdown had a significant impact on Brazil, where the coffee sector, for example, suffered the full force of the collapse of the United States economy, the latter being the industry's best customer. Coffee prices had plummeted so much that tons of grain were burned to artificially increase its scarcity and price. This economic shock caused harm to many entrepreneurs who had lost everything and who could not return to Lebanon. At the same time, the social environment in Lebanon was evolving. Just after independence and the formal establishment of the Lebanese State, waves of emigration from Lebanon fell sharply.

The Great Depression led to the rise of nationalist ideologies, which in turn led to the outbreak of the Second World War. This war stemmed the flow of migration between Brazil and Lebanon, and the Lebanese saw their future in Brazil in more permanent terms. They invested locally and "temporarily" withheld investments in their projects back home. By the end of the war, against the backdrop of a deteriorating situation in the Middle East (as a result of the creation of the State of Israel) and the economic situation of Brazil (with its newly launched industrialisation programmes in full swing), the temporary gradually became permanent.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with the author on February 10, 2011.



## The Lebanese and their role in the industrialization of Brazil

Lebanese entrepreneurial enthusiasm was instrumental in developing the economic infrastructure of the country and Presidents Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954) and Juscelino Kubitschek (1902-76) greatly benefitted from it. Subsequently, the relationships, which this sector of the population developed with both presidents, enabled the Lebanese to enjoy privileged access to the media. This was the case of Mitri Moufarrej - a recently arrived building contractor at that time - who initially began working in the field of commerce and who was the first to establish a refrigeration industry in Brasília<sup>18</sup> just after the new capital was inaugurated. His success could be attributed inter alia to his positive relationship with Kubitschek.

Major programmes initiated by the State from 1930-40 contributed to the development of the internal market by providing new opportunities and other emerging sectors of economic activity. Whether involved in trade, industry, or construction, contractors were able to take advantage of these investment incentives to increase their wealth and also to move into new areas of business. This was particularly true for Lebanese entrepreneurs whose labour was seen by the government as an essential element in the emergence of an urban middle-class and a modern industrialised Brazil.<sup>19</sup> Moufarrej, for example, took advantage of these opportunities to also build shopping malls in Brasília.<sup>20</sup>

Under the period of dictatorship (1964-85), Brazil was rapidly afflicted with a huge public deficit and a purchasing power crisis that impacted on economic growth,<sup>21</sup> with exponential inflation, reaching 79% in 1977).<sup>22</sup> The global economic players, enjoying the status of creditor, put increasing pressure on Brazilian society.<sup>23</sup> This led to many industrialists going bankrupt, leaving the field open for new players to come on the scene. Bankrupt Lebanese entrepreneurs were forced to postpone indefinitely any plans to return, while their collapse incited others to build on their ruins. Two of the study's interviewees - Bivik and Sawary - are among those who seized these new opportunities.

At the fall of the dictatorship in 1985, it only took a few years for Brazil to reopen its domestic market to the global economy. The opening took shape in 1990. This process led Brazilian companies to make improvements in terms of technological developments, product quality and reduced prices, all of which greatly benefitted the consumer, and which were backed up with the promulgation of a law protecting the consumer in 1992. These considerable improvements have enabled Brazil to assert its place in the international economy and to gradually carve out an economically attractive area by establishing a durable consumer market, which had been held up through of decades of military dictatorship. The catch-up effect that followed is still being felt today. The country, despite the weight of the "Brazil cost," has displayed annual growth rates that whet appetites and whose primary beneficiaries are contractors already on site and who are eligible for strategic support, as well as those holding assets whose value has benefitted from the influx of wealth. In this context, the gap had widened between the improving material well-being Brazil had to offer and the tough economic conditions prevailing in Lebanon.

Historically, the fact that they found themselves in the right place at the right time could account, to some extent, for the situational opportunities experienced by Lebanese entrepreneurs during these industrial bonanzas. In 1891, exchange rate policies were introduced and taxes were levied on imported products to encourage the creation of local industry. At the beginning of the 20th century, Jafet developed the area of Ipiranga, an industrial zone devoted entirely to textile manufacturing. It encompassed over 100,000 square meters and hosted several factories and 320 buildings housing some 4,500 employees. Recently, one member of the Jafet family had sold land on which he had an old factory. As the Brazilian economy emerged, capital earned from commerce enabled investment in politically programmed projects. When Vargas took over leadership in 1930, the government began to encourage the development of industry; after the Second World War, it sought to stimulate the production of substitutes for finished products that ceased to be imported when protectionist measures were implemented. Karam (2004) notes that under Vargas, economic policies focused on small industries, some held by the Lebanese. These small industries and businesses were seen as essential for the growth of Brazil. The abundance of capital available to the Lebanese entrepreneur via his network facilitated further investment in industry and construction.

18 An article about this was published by Menezes Leilan: "Mitri Moufarrege montou a primeira fábrica em Brasília", Brasília, *Correio Braziliense*, 11 September 2010.

19 KARAM John T., *Distinguishing Arabesques: The Politics and Pleasures of Being Arab in Neoliberal Brazil*, Ph.D. Thesis, Syracuse University, 2004, p. 69, quoted in PITTS Montie Bryan Jr., *ibid*, 2006, pp. 23-24.

20 From a telephone conversation with Mr. Metri (prime informant) on 12 January 2011.

21 SEVERO Sallès, *Dictature et lutte pour la démocratie au Brésil* (1964-85), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, p. 73.

22 IVAN Angelo, *110 anos de industrialização, 1880-1990*, São Paulo, História do Brasil, 1992, p. 218.

23 SEVERO Salles, *ibid.*, 2005, p. 72.

24 Personal interview conducted in the office of Tony K. at the headquarters of Bivik Bras, 10 January 2011.

25 The "Brazil cost" corresponds to additional production costs caused by the absence of infrastructure and a complex bureaucracy. This impacts on increased prices in many sectors of the economy (cf. Oualalou Lamia, *Brazil, History, Society and Culture* [in French], Paris, La Découverte, 2009, p. 79).

26 MIDORI DEAECTO Marisa, *Comercio e vida urbana na Cidade de São Paulo (1889-1930)*, SP, Senac, 2001, p. 64.

27 Personal interview with C. Jafet in his office located in Itaim Bibi on 07 March 2012.

28 KARAM John T. op. cit., 2006, p. 24.

29 SMITH Adam, 1776, Chap. IV, quoted by Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Society*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2010 (1st ed. 1887), p. 63.



## Commerce and community orientation

In the words of Adam Smith, a dealer is not necessarily a citizen of any particular country and trade turns every man into a merchant. In an urban context, the immigrant who becomes a trader can gradually free himself of the constraints of community life to devote himself to his own business. Many comments received during the field survey from traders and newcomers in particular indicated that they preferred not to work with Lebanese professionals and to keep professional relations clean and simple. An example of this was found in the area of Brás, where traders said that most of their business was with non-Lebanese-Brazilians. A majority of their suppliers and buyers have no links with the Lebanese community. A small percentage of them are of Lebanese origin, but this is due to the Lebanese market presence and not a voluntary and emotional choice on the part of the entrepreneurs in Brás. It is true that Lebanese entrepreneurs do help their relatives to settle in Brazil by allowing them to benefit from their experience; they also support their endeavours to learn the local language and business culture so that they can set themselves up independently. That does not mean, however, that the Lebanese trader feels constrained to do so by the community. It seems that, as the new arrival learns the trade and sets himself up, he has less need for the support of the community. He becomes more independent and is in a position to decide his orientation according to his own personal preferences. Nowadays, solidarity among the Lebanese does not necessarily take the form of subsistence aid, but aid to help advancement and progress, and to seize opportunities, which, throughout the 19th century, went beyond simple trade and commerce and extended into the industrial and real estate sectors as well.

Given that Brazil is geographically a great distance from Lebanon, when a family member joins his relatives there, they commit, to a degree, to take responsibility for the future of this member and to accompany him for an extended period. This stems from the way that Lebanese immigrants organize their journey, i.e. through family and emotional networks. The situation is different for the Lebanese in Europe, Africa, or the Gulf countries today for they are within three to seven hours flying time from Lebanon.

This appetite for effort and economic success becomes translated into ambition, which is carried over into their solidarity networks as they too materialize almost exclusively into professional interests. According to Greiber,<sup>30</sup> an example of this was to be found in the Jafet factories where there were doctors and a Lebanese foreman. Thanks to his friendship with the son of the family, the foreman progressed within the group. This illustrated how the context encourages the development of a disposition or “habitus” to aim higher.

Finally, yet importantly, are two highly significant external factors that propelled the community to open up to Brazilian society. They are civil marriage and compulsory education.

## Marriage

For a marriage to be valid, it must first be enacted in a civil ceremony. This procedure thereby renders a religious marriage optional. A civil marriage offers an escape hatch from the grip of the community. It makes it possible for a member of the community to marry somebody who is not derived from it, without necessarily obtaining the approval of their parents. Civil marriage is an important exogamous element, which became increasingly common. Exogamy was also facilitated through meeting other components of the host society through the agency of school and university.

## Compulsory education

In Brazil, education is compulsory, and it is through the agency of the education system that children of immigrants become nationals. Education plays the role of an integration vector for individuals from disadvantaged and marginalized sectors of the population and for immigrants who often are only equipped with their culture and language of origin. The school system provides ensuing generations with a key to integrate and succeed. It also allows school children to convey Brazilian values back into the home and, therefore, the community.

Such are the external factors that favoured the implantation of Lebanese entrepreneurs in São Paulo and their subsequent integration into society at large. Factors, inherent in the Lebanese entrepreneurial community, which contributed and continue to contribute to its incorporation into the São Paulo society, will now be broached.

## INHERENT FACTORS IN THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY

### Success in business

What springs to mind in evoking the inherent factors specific to the community’s implantation in the country is the economic success of the first migratory waves. As previously said, Lebanese peddlers managed to take advantage of an emerging economy by embedding their itinerant trade in the rural, and subsequently urban, commercial landscape.

The entrepreneurs interviewed in this study evoked ease of geographical mobility to more suitable poles of economic activity as having contributed to their economic and social advancement. Moreover, among the respondents, many were born and grew up within the São Paulo region before coming to the city. This mobility was necessary to avail of university education or to seize other entrepreneurial opportunities such as opening new branches of business, often entrusted to a family member who had completed his studies.<sup>31</sup> This spatial mobility was paramount in Brazil as a means for individual social mobility after the abolition of slavery.<sup>32</sup>

30 GREIBER Betty, MALUF Lina, MATTAR Vera, *Memórias da Imigração : Libaneses, sírios em São Paulo*, São Paulo Discurso Editorial, 1998.

31 GREIBER Betty, MALUF Lina, MATTAR Vera, *ibid.*, 1998, p. 563.

32 BROGGIO Céline et DROULERS Martine, « Démocratisation et territoire au Brésil », *Géocarrefour*, volume 81/3, Paris, 2006, p. 224.



The urban implantation of the Lebanese contributed largely to their economic success. São Paulo set the pace for the economic development of the country and attracted the interests of national and foreign capital. Thus, the Lebanese who had earlier acquired properties and land were then able to benefit from its increased value and reinvest in other projects or industrial property types.

## Higher education

Despite a propensity for ambitious projects and a solid social network, these business prospects would not have been possible without high levels of training and education. The Lebanese make it a point of honour to encourage their children to pursue high-level education and training, particularly in the liberal professions such as medicine, engineering, and law, even though their children would subsequently take control of a family business. Often heard throughout the study interviews was the importance of a qualification in times of hardship, entrepreneurial failure, or a need to emigrate. One of the respondents reported that his father told him to study, because knowledge was wealth that nobody could take away from you. This point was made repeatedly during individual interviews, informal discussions, and participant observation. It is a common value shared by all and transcends all generations. The pursuit of lengthy and expensive studies made possible by a successful family often leads to a lucrative career, which goes hand in hand with the development of the Brazilian economy.

For centuries, the Christian missions in the region of Lebanon had emphasized the importance of education and many families living in Brazil sent their children, girls and boys alike, to the best private schools there.<sup>33</sup> Levantine students had tended to focus their choice of study subjects on business and management, but, as of the 1930s, they began to enter the faculties of medicine, law, and engineering, aligning with the Brazilian upper class where this trend was predominant. This is still observed today.

Professional knowledge acquired in Brazil would not necessarily be relevant in Lebanon, since that country's development is different. It does not have the same resources, size, population, or policy. This knowledge is often new to newcomers, who also benefit from the education of their children in relation to new career horizons to explore. Studies also offer opportunities to meet a life partner, beyond the community, and widen the parameters of social frequentation to include non-Lebanese.

## Exogamy and future children

From the early 20th century, the Lebanese community practised exogamy. There were many marriages between Italians and descendant of Italians. This mostly concerned Lebanese males who were among the first wave of immigrants to Brazil. During migratory waves in the 19th century, Lebanese and Italians embarked on the same ships bound for Brazil. They held a similar status within Brazilian society and both groups were Christian migrants. Their common attachment to the Vatican made it easy for the Maronites. For Orthodox Christians, the cleavage was not insurmountable either, especially since the absence of Orthodox churches close to the vicinity of their homes encouraged Lebanese Orthodox Christians to pray in the local Catholic churches. This is what happened when people had to move around in order to remain close to the economic growth sectors. Proximity of different communities encouraged exogamy; exogamy over time diluted the symbolism of a purely Lebanese lineage with Lebanon as the "country of origin" and weakened the idea of a hypothetical return.

From the 1970s onwards, with the Lebanese War (1975-90) followed by the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, which lasted until 2005, the future of Lebanon blackened while that of Brazil brightened. Moreover, Hilu da Rocha Pinto (2010) notes that, fearing that the persistence of xenophobia could present an obstacle for the integration of their children, newly arrived immigrants refrained from teaching their children the Arabic language and showed a preference for western-sounding names over Arabic ones.<sup>34</sup> By teaching their children only Portuguese, parents believed that this would constitute a first step to becoming fully Brazilian.<sup>35</sup> Hanifi (1997), in her studies of Palestinians in the US, draws a parallel with this occurrence.<sup>36</sup> This faith in the opportunity to prosper in Brazil was reflected in their readiness to take entrepreneurial risks.

## An ideal and accessible reference model

Of course, not all Lebanese entrepreneurs have succeeded in the same way or to the same degree. Some have experienced impressive social, economic, and political ascent, while others have experienced failure. Nonetheless, in general, the image they project is that of a successful group: An image they have earned and enjoyed throughout the 20th century. They started off in trade and textiles, developed other areas of activity, and invested their increased capital in different sectors of the economy. They focused on the education of their children, encouraged them to be ambitious and they, in turn, are continuing along the path of economic and professional advancement. Thus, these children and their descendants are present in different sectors of the economy, even in the highest political circles. Although this description does not necessarily apply to all members of the community, the Lebanese have become historical actors in the sectors of trade and construction. They have invested in the economic sectors that hold significant weight in the industrial and financial capital of the country, in the national economy, and that of the South American continent. The construction sector, for example, fuels many other sectors of the economy and the Lebanese, thereby, contribute directly to the overall growth of the national economy.

It goes without saying that those who have the monopoly over certain sectors of the economy inevitably, over time, gain power and influence through official events, inaugurations, projects, and official and personal meetings. It is equally probable that they would also receive certain benefits or informal privileges as a result of their contacts. These benefits, thus, would encourage dominant operators to the disadvantage of new contractors trying to break into the arena. If, on the other hand, a new contractor is associated with one or several dominant operators in a given market who are willing to help him, he will not be excluded, quite the contrary. The success of a group or a

33 KARAM John T, *ibid.* p.73.

34 PITTS Montie Bryan Jr., "Forging ethnic identity through faith: religion and the Syrian-Lebanese community in São Paulo" (dissertation - Etudes d'Amérique latine), Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, Nashville Tennessee, August, p. 16.

35 HILU DA ROCHA PINTO Paulo Gabriel, *Árabes no Rio de Janeiro – uma identidade plural*, Rio de Janeiro, Cidade Viva e pelo Instituto Light, p. 271.

36 HANAFI Sari, *Entre deux mondes : les hommes d'affaires palestiniens de la diaspora et la construction de l'entité palestinienne*, Le Caire, CEDEJ, 1997, p. 24.



community member in a sector can facilitate the success of other members in other sectors of the economy. Let us take the example of a trader to illustrate this dynamic. Supposing he opens several stores in the area of Brás and accumulates capital to reinvest, preferably in another sector. He could team up with other trustworthy entrepreneurs to build a real estate project such as a building or a residential complex hotelier.<sup>37</sup> If he himself does not have the technical know-how to implement his project, he could associate himself with knowledgeable acquaintances, i.e. people he met through his attendance at institutions such as the CAML.<sup>38</sup> This increases the community's access to different activities and perspectives.

In a parallel fashion, through the professional advancement of entrepreneurs, the community members adopt other aspects of behaviour stemming from cultural mixing. If the Lebanese entrepreneurs have adopted Brazil, their full integration would require, in return, that Brazilian society accepts them as full-fledged citizens. This acceptance has been facilitated by the structural changes that have marked the subject of this study. The social integration of the group concerned is now posed as an ongoing process. They are noted and analysed in the three specific areas that have been affected by this change, i.e. education and training, profession and family.

## INTEGRATION OF THE GROUP AND CHANGES IN BASIC SOCIAL AREAS

### Areas of education and training: A focus on business

Newcomers place a great deal of importance on quality education for their children. Though they themselves may not have benefitted from quality education, they try to send their children to the best schools and universities in São Paulo, which are among the best in Brazil. They hope to widen their future prospects as much as possible. As many respondents often repeated, knowledge acquired at school is inalienable, hence, its importance. It is also an opportunity to meet others under the banner of shared national values transmitted by school and university - an arena where barriers between individuals can be broken down. Academic training creates a synergy that comes about through the contribution of technical knowledge, and academic culture by getting to know others whose life experiences are mutually enriching.

Studies represent an investment cost for the family in that they prolong the period of financial dependency. Studies can only be envisaged when the family reaches a certain level of income. Thus, the pursuit of long-term studies was probably not an option for the early immigrants, most of whom had not pursued their education extensively. Brazil, during its first appeal for immigration, was a new territory promising but uncertain. It attracted a population of migrants who often were leaving behind difficulties in their country of origin. Modern Brazil is still a land of economic promise, but it has since become a symbol of wealth and development, attracting a new kind of candidate for immigration.

The initial motivations for starting a business are different among newcomers who are trained and those who are not. The following example evokes other considerations related to the types of activities and collaboration that may exist. Here, the two newcomers have received a university education; they specialize in new technologies. On arrival in Brazil, they use their training and competences by opening a business in their area of expertise. Their contribution to the Brazilian economy would be different from that of the first-generation Lebanese prototype. The TMT sector (technology, media, telephony) in Brazil is a relatively new sector not in competition with the textile industry, and it offers many business opportunities. Partnership in this type of activity would be based more on the specific skills of a particular type of collaborator that a brother or a cousin would not necessarily have. This leads to broadening the range of potential partners and redefining the company. The company would be formalized as it needs to establish clear and strict rules with its partners to ensure optimal collaboration. The concept of the company would evolve as a function of different variables, including the level of education, in particular, and the prevailing economic environment.

The children benefit from their parents' and community networks, and also those of other students and their university. All these possibilities can sometimes be converged in more than a single professional project, allowing cross-collaboration and exploration of new areas for these potential partners originating from different worlds and contexts.

### Profession

The first Lebanese entrepreneurs set themselves up in commerce and trade, the development of which impacted on how business was organised and impacted on the community itself. This can be illustrated in the way professional projects have an impact on the integration of Lebanese entrepreneurs in Brazilian society. There are different types of entrepreneur within the Lebanese community. This article focuses on traders, industrialists, and real estate developers and builders, the reason being that many entrepreneurs tend to invest in these sectors simultaneously. Many of the respondents had initially started their careers in pure trading and later turned to industry and real estate without abandoning their initial sector. Financial speculation motivated their interest in diversifying their investments. Typically the investment is gradual and runs parallel with the initial success of their original line of business and the growing financial prosperity of the contractor.

The level, degree, and intensity of the Lebanese entrepreneurial endeavours in the Brazilian economy affects the level and degree of their integration in the society. Thus, the trend that can be observed is that, whether they are first-generation immigrants or their descendants, the level of diversification of professions and fields of investment is a clear indicator of integration. Whether it be through the building of factories or residential complexes, or by

<sup>37</sup> This analysis is drawn from information stemming from different conversations with manufacturers of Lebanese origin and entrepreneurs in Brás. This includes a personal interview on October 19, 2010, with Tony K. (who has several clothes shops, a shopping mall, and a hotel in Brás). Individual interviews with manufacturers, including Ricardo Y. in his office at Paraíso on February 26, 2011; Romeo C. in his office in São Paulo on February 5, 2011; and Mr. Paul in his office in São Paulo on September 7, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> This is the case of Tony Y. An individual interview was held in his office at Gardens on November 11, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview conducted near his office on Paulista, October 5, 2010, with the co-founder of a TMT company. This respondent is newly-arrived and university educated in Lebanon; he founded the company with a descendant of a Lebanese immigrant.



pursuing expensive and extensive professional studies, their success becomes visible in the eyes of the population. They are perceived as participating in the development of the society's structures, whether on the physical, psychological, cultural, or organizational level.

Hanafi (1997) noted that the economic success of the Palestinians living in the United States was derived from their need to self-assert.<sup>40</sup> A parallel with her observation could be made in relation to the Lebanese in Brazil. But the Palestinians did not invest the capital they earned there in the US economy, nurturing instead the hope of return to the occupied territories. This trend is not the case for the Lebanese-Brazilians who, instead, developed projects on a greater scale, requiring more time and involvement in Brazil. This attitude leverages historical factors described above and which have guided the development of the country.

An analysis of the changes that occurred along the successful, cross-generational entrepreneurial path of the Lebanese allows a better understanding of their social mobility. This has propelled some of them to the highest strata of São Paulo society in particular and, on a broader scale, the Brazilian society at large; it has also given rise to many exclusive international elites.

The three above-mentioned types of entrepreneur vary across different generations. While retailers and manufacturers tend to be newcomers or sometimes descendants of Lebanese immigrants, builders are generally descendants. Unlike most Lebanese newcomers, the latter had the opportunity to pursue engineering and acquired the technical skills necessary for this area of investment; they also had access to a network of specialised professionals.

## Commerce: A launching pad

How Lebanese businesses were organised has been explained earlier in this study, when analyzing business clusters. The Lebanese gradually emerged from being an intermediary minority with their ethnic trading outlets to cater for a more cosmopolitan clientele.<sup>41</sup> Over and above the importance of how commercial success determines the growth and diversification of entrepreneurial investment, the propensity of Lebanese entrepreneurs not to work with other Lebanese with whom they have no direct emotional connection leads to the recruitment of local people and plays an important role in the integration of these entrepreneurs.

On the active but invisible level, their businesses pay taxes; this represents a significant contribution to the financing of Brazilian society. On the visible level, they create jobs.

As is the case for respondents Bivik and Sawary and the Marabraz furniture stores, some businesses become chains. At this point, the group can no longer be regarded as an intermediary minority: Their impact and scope on the business landscape is so great and the companies concerned are so well known that this concept no longer applies.<sup>42</sup> Rightly or wrongly, ownership of a business group is generally equated with success and it is particularly true in the aforementioned case.

Another link in this chain would be the manufacturer who develops and implements real estate projects. According to the respondents in the study, unlike other entrepreneurial endeavours, investment in real estate projects is advantageous insofar as it does not require much effort on the part of the investors except for the financial outlay. The minimum requirement to invest in projects is primarily to have sufficient financial liquidity, which, in the case of many respondents, comes through the diversification of their commercial activities, business sectors, and sources of income. An example of this could be a successful businessperson who may have accumulated spare capital to invest in construction projects. He is likely to be the owner of a large store or chain of stores, which ensures him a high enough income to reinvest profits in new entrepreneurial ventures, whether in business or in real estate.

Industry, however, is the sector most frequently chosen for investors, after commercial success has been achieved.

## Industry: Integration through the professional sector

The State of São Paulo is a major industrial power base, particularly in the processing sector. Its territory is host to 40% of Brazil's steel industry, 50% of the engineering industry, 40% of the electrical equipment industry, 60% of the chemical industry, and 70% of the pharmaceutical industry. It also has more than 150 commercial banks and 15 development banks. São Paulo handles 68% of all financial transactions in Brazil and is where capital influx first enters the country.

Moreover, the industrial leadership of the State is enhanced by the presence on its territory of two centres of excellence, one in the automobile and the other in the aviation sector. Located in São Jose dos Campos, Embraer (along with Canada's Bombardier) today ranks third worldwide in the aircraft manufacturing industry and holds about 46% of the global market for 30- to 120-seater jets. Under the leadership of the company, several Brazilian manufacturers have become competitive in the global market by producing quality equipment, even though the country is a big importer of aeronautical spare parts.<sup>43</sup> It is in this context that Lebanese industrialists in São Paulo play a big role.

Moving into the industrial sector is easier when it is concomitant with an already established business that is linked to it, since the risk assessment is more refined and the experience in the area is similar. Whether in the past - as was the case with the Jafet textile factories in the Ipiranga neighbourhood early in the 20th century - or in the present, the study confirmed that this trend persists.<sup>44</sup> With the vast majority of Lebanese entrepreneurs starting out

40 HANAFI, S., *ibid*, 1997, pp. 24-76.

41 RAULIN Anne, "Minorité urbaines : des mutations conceptuelles en anthropologie", *Revue Européenne des migrations internationales*, Paris, 2009/3 (Vol. 25), pp. 33-51.

42 RAULIN Anne, *ibid*, 2009/3, pp. 33-51.

43 Parliamentary Proceedings of the French Senate.

44 See [http://www.ipiranganews.com.br/suplementos/ipiranga\\_2003/suple013.htm](http://www.ipiranganews.com.br/suplementos/ipiranga_2003/suple013.htm).



in the textile sector, it comes as no surprise to find them also in many industries, large and small, which have a direct relationship with clothing.

The development of companies such as Bivik, Sawary, and Gangster<sup>45</sup> that produce and market jeans on a large scale is a good example of the vertical integration of the production chain that ensued from commercial success. In order to control costs, the quality of their products and their independence, they took over the manufacturing and production process and integrated it into their companies.

Although the above-mentioned examples relate to the jeans manufacturing sector, they are not confined to this area alone. Respondents in the industrial sector are also present in various other fields. To name but a few, large industrial holdings include: Bedding (Zelo 49 stores);<sup>46</sup> the production of oil, eggs, and soap; soft drinks; halal meat production and processing;<sup>48</sup> gas distribution (Consegaz);<sup>49</sup> and furniture manufacturing and store outlets (Marabraz 120 stores).<sup>50</sup> Industry represents the primary indicator of integration for the entrepreneur, because it is an investment in the production system. Here again, at this point, the “middleman minorities” theory no longer applies in this context, since the entrepreneur no longer occupies an intermediate position in society.

Even opening a small textile factory is already the first step into the clothing industry and its complex processing and production steps. Those who invest plan to integrate and fit in like full-fledged Brazilians; for them, any plans to return to Lebanon might never take shape. At this level, between the capital they invest, the equipment and infrastructure, their resources are no longer accessible and flexible as it is in commerce.

Diversifying business in other activities involves different time cycles. The return on investment in commerce is almost instantaneous, but this market is more fragmented. When there is more competition, profit margins are narrower. Today, the industrial sector is more likely to generate large wealth. Whatever the scale, scope, or diversity of the industry concerned - from small to multinational - and in a multitude of sectors, it still requires the long-term involvement of the contractor.

## Construction: Integration of another kind

Unlike industry, the real estate sector was not the direct result of contractors’ previous business activities. Investment in this sector stemmed from interest in a speculative investment property plan to rent or sell. The professional or building constructor chiefly involved second-generation immigrants as it requires a range of competencies: Mastery of language, appropriate technical training, knowledge of relevant legislation, and the constitution of wealth, as well as connections acquired through studies and family. Financing of real estate requires the support of wealthy investors, who are often industrialists. However, the difference in this sector is the choice of partners involved in the creation of the company. Choices are based on criteria of professional competence and not on criteria of common ethnic origin.

Commercial structures such as shopping malls, then hotels, and private apartment blocks represent the ideal choice of construction types. Buildings in São Paulo are often built in affluent neighbourhoods such as Tivoli Gardens, Paulista, and Maksoud. These buildings may serve, incidentally, as showcases to demonstrate the competence of the construction company.

45 Individual interviews were conducted with the CEO of Bivik and Gangster at the headquarters of their enterprises at Brás on January 10, 2011, and March 1, 2011, respectively.

46 Interviews with three individual shareholders (Mansour M., Pierre M., and George A. Abd ) of a large family business based in São Paulo and in several diverse industries, including these three. Partners are members of the same family in question. Two interviews were held in the offices of two partners located in Moema and near Brás on January 16, 2009, and November 20, 2009. The third meeting took place in Coffee Ofner - attended by many Lebanese newcomers - as well as some descendants Garden, on December 5, 2011.

47 Telephone conversation with Mr. Mitri on January 12, 2011.

48 Personal interview with Mohammad Z. on November 29, 2011, at the headquarters of his company.

49 Personal interview with Mr. Counc on October 7, 2010, in his office in Barueri.

50 CEO met during my participant observation at a reception organized by the CAML UCLM in honor of the visit of the new President of the Union on November 16, 2011.



## THE IGUATEMI SHOPPING MALL, SÃO PAULO

The massive scale of the Iguatemi shopping mall in São Paulo illustrates the huge upfront costs involved. Such costs would be very difficult to be borne by a single person or entity. For construction projects of such a grand scale, the Lebanese community network can help to raise funds and establish links with industrialists, as mentioned above.

Appeals for capital investment in these instances are not originated in the same mode as for the acquisition of a business outlet. The amounts involved being much higher, the question of ethnic solidarity is not relevant, even if the relational network has an important role. It is rather the expected return on investment that is the important issue here.

More often than not, the capital investment is not long-term, as is customary in real estate investment. Property on this scale is not seen as an investment generating regular income. Obviously, there are also situations where a more conventional entrepreneur decides to diversify his revenue on a recurring basis and will be part of the real estate industry as a leaseholder. He may rent commercial property, sometimes one of his own shops, when it is not possible to find a successor within the family.

The developer-builder begins by gathering investors around a draft building plan, with a detailed schedule of operations, key dates of construction, and cumulative costs amounting to 100%.

At each stage in the project, there is a call for funds corresponding to a percentage of the final value of the property. Investors subscribing to the transaction agree to pay the costs if they remain participants in the project until completion. This speculative dimension makes sense when considering that bank loans may be taken out; the duration of construction of property lasts at least two years, as of the approval of the project (when the promoter is sure that costs will be covered) and its inauguration; and that the ownership of property is a future commodity that can be resold. For investors, the success of the operation lies in the upward trend of property prices in the interim period. Given this context, it is clear that risk is involved, hence, the importance of seeking the support of individuals, who are capable of making sound decisions and who are financially solvent. This is quite feasible during a growth cycle, especially since "they tend to have strategies of exploring opportunities to diversify sources of income by systematically engaging in speculative, profitable and short-term financial investments in real-estate."<sup>52</sup>

Here again, the key importance of the ethnic and family network, especially concerning the initiation into the real estate development business, is evident. These links enable actors to find investors willing to take a financial "beating"; they also facilitate the participation, as primary investors or second-hand buyers, of wealthy entrepreneurs willing and able to participate in risky ventures.

The entrepreneur's aim is to achieve a circle of excellence in economic growth, inciting a beneficial "snowball" effect in the associated commercial/textile sector and the construction sector. As we have seen above, the builder who has good relations with politicians linked to the community will be better placed to win public tenders.

Through integration and meeting people outside the groups at university, social clubs, and associations, community members become part of other groups and settings. By partnering with these new associates, their network expands, particularly in the construction sector with its multiple ramifications within the larger society. The choice of a partner of the same group is not systematic in the construction sector. For descendants, it depends on the project. Some projects are designed to avail of the specific advantageous position of each partner (information access, knowledge of opportunities, etc.) and the environment in which they may be more familiar. This is not easily accessible to newcomers, and goes against an ethnic preference in ethnic organisation that Ma Mung highlights in his study of Asian entrepreneurial communities.<sup>52</sup> Although some families (Zarzur, Jafet) still manage to combine family cohesion and professional structuring of a large group, the sphere of professional influence goes beyond the Lebanese group to a wider one.

In the Lebanese community in São Paulo, community dynamics being such, and the shared idea of success being primarily economic, these successful entrepreneurs represent a role model for its members. Nonetheless, the interests of community members do deviate from the ethnic sphere and extend into corporatism.

The extent of Lebanese entrepreneurs' interests outside the community can be observed in all the areas mentioned above, and through their strong presence in different trade federations such as the CPHA AloBrás (FIESP) for



*Iguatemi, the luxury shopping mall, which lies between the financial district and the Jardim Itaim Bibi.*

© Elsa El Hachem

51 HANAFI Sari, op. cit., 1997, p. 26.

52 MA MUNG Emmanuel, « La nouvelle géographie de la diaspora chinoise », *Accueillir, Débat : Les moteurs de l'émigration et les communautés de migrants*, No. 249-250, mars-juin 2009, Paris p. 135.



industry, and for real estate the Sindicato das Empresas de Compra, Venda, Locação e Administração de Imóveis Residenciais e Comerciais de São Paulo (SECOVI). Over many years, the Lebanese have organised themselves collectively to defend their interests and this practice precedes its members' integration in the larger society. Lebanese clubs and institutions that had been created in the early 20th century still exist today. They are quasi-official actors in the life of the community. They include the Maronite Benevolent Society (Sociedade Maronita de Beneficência, SMB), the Chamber of Commerce Brazil-Lebanon (CCBL) and the elitist Athletic Club of Mount Lebanon (CAML), all of which were founded so as to enable members to meet, help each other and to succeed together.

These associations are the direct result of the original community's will to safeguard its identity. Although they still fulfil that function today, they now play a role that goes beyond maintaining solidarity between the various Lebanese generations. One example is the community churches that were built and funded by wealthy families. They subsequently founded philanthropic organizations and it was quite incidental that these actions helped to establish their status as community leaders. The SBM was the first of these charitable organizations and was created in 1897.<sup>53</sup> Through this example, under the guise of defending collective interests, initiatives may have been used to promote personal ambition. This is not necessarily all bad. In entrepreneurship, successful conquests for power can trickle down eventually to the community as a whole, as the involvement of entrepreneurs in these interest groups is not exclusively ethnic.

The significant investment in key sectors of the economy allowed the community over time to earn the community respect as citizens demonstrating their positive contribution to the growth of the Brazilian economy, and to the development of the all realms of society. Added to this was their loyalty to Brazilian institutions such as local associations and trade unions. They did not participate in these institutions as "Lebanese" but as professionals, there to defend the interests of their counterparts in the region.

The sectors of trade, industry and construction were extremely successful. There were many Lebanese in these three sectors, many of whom had formed unions and associations to defend their interests. The significant investment of Lebanese entrepreneurs in these sectors brought about the presence of an equal number of Lebanese whose over-representation enabled them to take over the leadership of the organizations representing the sectors. This had a collateral effect of gradually changing the aspect of defending the interests of an ethnic group to defending class interests and those of professional lobbies. This was not detrimental to the maintenance of the Lebanese network.

The first professional group to be organised was an association of local shop owners in the area of 25 de Março (UNIVINCO) and in Brás (ALOBRRÁS). This was followed by the Federação das Industrias do Estado de São Paulo (FIESP),<sup>54</sup> the SECOVI Federation (home construction), and the Commercial Association of São Paulo (CPHA). As of the beginning of the 20th century, Lebanese entrepreneurs faced problems with the Brazilian workforce. This meant that these entrepreneurs were exposed early on to the realities of society beyond their community.

The first major event entrepreneurs of the time had to face occurred in 1919 when a general workers' strike paralyzed the industrial activities of São Paulo. Nami Jafet represented the association of employers in São Paulo, and negotiated a settlement. Jafet linked up with the Commercial Association of São Paulo (CPSA), which played a conciliatory role in solving the problem of the strike. A large-scale meeting was held to resolve the problem. Representatives of 37 institutions attended and one name, which is specifically Lebanese, was prominent: Said Gebara and Brothers. In the records of the CPSA, only company names appear under the list of participants at the meeting. This makes it difficult to establish the origin of the contractor, except for those who call their business by their family name. By identifying at least one Lebanese entrepreneur participating in the meeting, it is quite possible to imagine that there were other Lebanese participants, including the Jafet family, who had already invested heavily in industry in the area of Ipiranga.

53 Safady Jorge S., *A Imigração árabe no Brasil (1880-1971)*, PhD thesis, Universidade São Paulo, 1972, pp. 140-286.

54 Industrial Federation of the State of São Paulo.

The notable presence of the Lebanese is still valid today. The Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo (FIESP), which includes industries in São Paulo, has been chaired since 2007 by Paulo Skaf, a Lebanese descendant. Given how the networks in the community are organized, one can hypothesize that the Lebanese have a significant representation in this powerful federation. The hypothesis is confirmed by the Lebanese-sounding names of members of the management. There is a notable presence of Lebanese in the construction sector. One of the main unions in this sector - the SECOVI - is chaired by a man called Yazbek; he is a third-generation Lebanese descendant who grew up near São Paulo. His father, a doctor, and his daughter, a lawyer, both assist him in his business.<sup>55</sup> Among Lebanese members of the union are entrepreneurs such as Chap-Chap who was also President of the Union,<sup>56</sup> as are the descendants of the Jreissati family who run the large Jorge Group that builds shopping centres;<sup>57</sup> a member of the Jafet family; the Germanos brothers who run an engineering construction firm;<sup>58</sup> the Atui family,<sup>59</sup> (five brothers and sisters from the Polytechnic School of the University of São Paulo who founded a construction company); and the EZTEC Group for which many descendants of Lebanese work after graduation. This non-exhaustive list gives an overview of the involvement of Lebanese interests in the construction sector.

All of these organizations are lobby groups, whose aim is to steer society in the direction of their own interests, without it being, again, necessarily a matter of pure self-interest. Drawing a parallel with the example of the SBM, requests from some of these associations can vary widely, from urban regeneration projects, sanitation, and infrastructure construction to applications for tax reform. To be part of such associations enables privileged access to seats of power. Requests emanating from such important economic players cannot be overlooked and this simultaneously creates acknowledgement in the eyes of civil society of them being both Brazilian and professionally qualified.

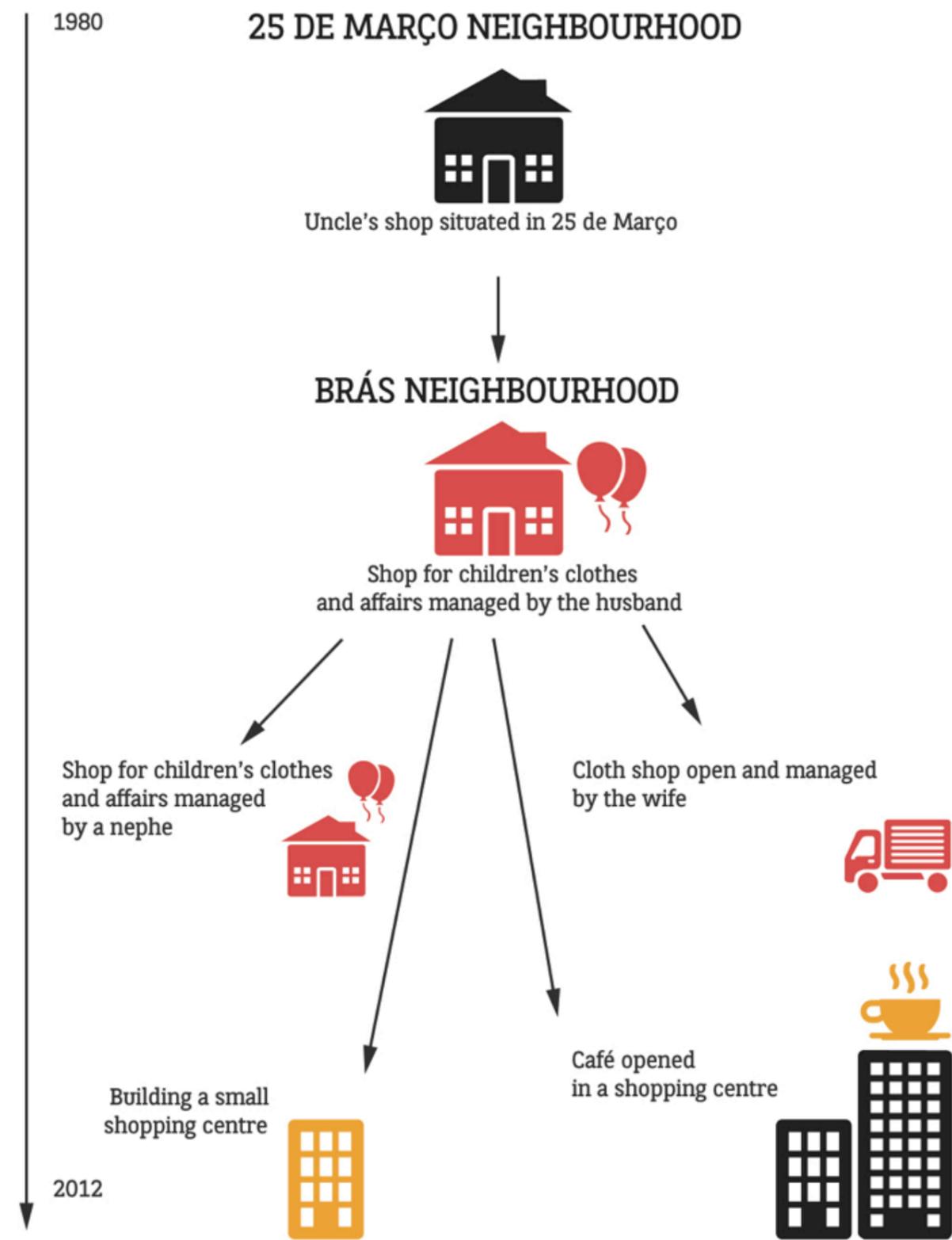
From these influential positions,<sup>60</sup> Lebanese entrepreneurs radiate their ideas. In other words, they are individuals who ensure the integration of the various groups in maintaining relations between their members and the values that bind them to each other. They make their ideas heard through their funding structures, associations and events, and through Brazilian society with the creation and participation in professional associations over which they sometimes preside. The discourse of the member of the ethnic group is not inconsistent with that of the unionized Brazilian professional. It is only a superposition of different hats and platforms that entrepreneurs use according to the desired objective. They work in parallel, consolidating their position in the Lebanese community through involvement in charities and clubs, while integrating into Brazilian society through the promotion and extension of their wealth and through the modification of their urban and social environment.

Source: Figure prepared by the author from individual interviews with two contractors.

55 Personal interview with Yazbek in his office in Paraíso on March 15.  
 56 Personal interview with Chap-Chap in his office located on Paulista on March 8, 2011.  
 57 Personal interview with Jorge in his Ibirapuera office on November 7, 2009.  
 58 Interviews with two of Germanos brothers in their office in Gardens and at one of their residences located in the same neighbourhood in December, 2010.  
 59 Personal interview with brothers and sisters, at a restaurant in Gardens, November 15, 2010.  
 60 Maurice Halbwachs, *Outline of a psychology class*, Paris, A. Colin, 1955, pp. 37; 41; 53-54, cited in Dominique Schnapper, op. cit., 2007, pp. 38-39.



## Diagram on the diversification of a married couple's entrepreneurial activity



Note: This diagram shows different trends in training and career paths over time and between industries. Apart from trade, the three sectors that appear in the chart are not exclusive choices, of course, but they seem to have been among the most popular for the second generation.

For these Lebanese, ambition for success does not stop at integration into civil society alone. During the field surveys, respondents noted that to chair, or be a prominent member of a recognized institution, earns invitations not only to community events but also to other events held by the larger Brazilian society. This allows one to mix with other groups and networks while gaining recognition from "one's own" group and that of "others." One example of this was a dinner organised on March 21, 2011, by CAML in tribute to the outgoing President Lula.<sup>61</sup> It was an opportunity for the President of the Federação das Associações Muçulmanas do Brasil (FAMBRÁS) and the President of the CCAB (Chamber of Commerce Brazil-Arab) - two institutions sponsoring this event<sup>62</sup> - to deliver speeches,<sup>63</sup> play the role of "Masters of Ceremony" and to be in the limelight. The audience was made up essentially of members of the Lebanese community (all faiths) along with some Brazilian politicians, including the outgoing President Lula. This event, and the opportunity it afforded the presidents of both associations, concurs with the observation that all these institutions - ethnic and professional - are springboards that facilitate breaking into the political spheres of influence.

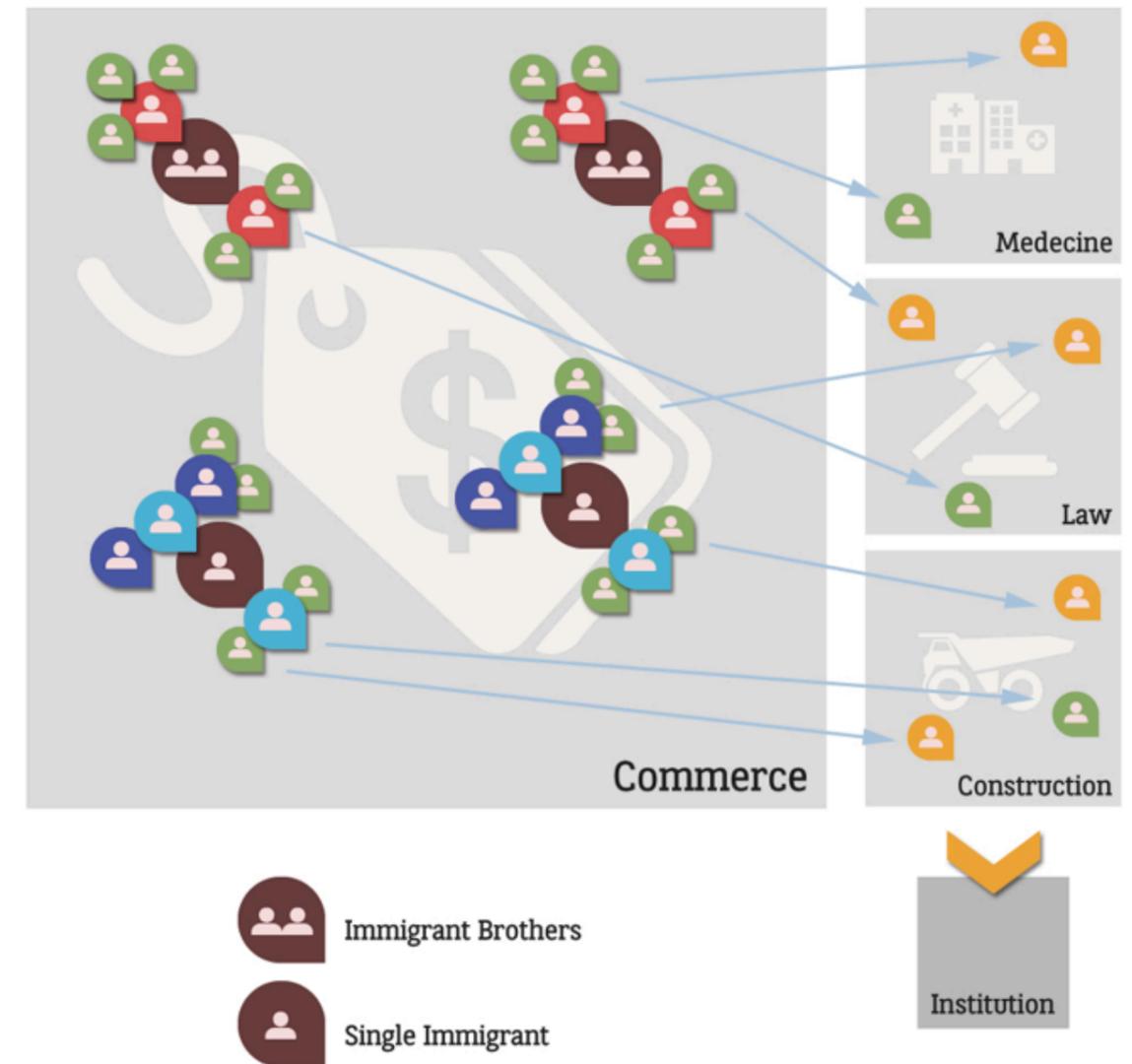
Source: Author.

61 The following observations were taken from my participation in the event in question.

62 Companies belonging to members of the Lebanese community also sponsored the event, but it is the representatives of the institutions of the community who gave speeches and sat at the same table as the outgoing President Lula. The corporate sponsorship of the Lebanese is reflected in the journal *Chams* published shortly after the event and in which I found many advertisements by these companies, more than usual. It was, thus, an opportunity for these companies to enhance the Lebanese community and subscribe to *Chams*, among which there are many members of the CAML.

63 Both presidents are very successful business leaders; the first is Muslim and the second is Christian.

## Integrating into the Social and Economic Paulista Fabric



Immigrant sets up a shop, gets married and has children

Nephew joins immigrant and sets up a shop

Brother joins nephew and sets up a shop

Son/Daughter sets up a shop

Grandson/Granddaughter sets up a shop



## THE FAMILY

If there is one area where evident and irreversible change has affected the Lebanese, it is undoubtedly that of the family. This is especially true as more and more households are claiming to be part of this ethnic group. How the family and - by extension - the ethnic base could be the first step in the ascent of Lebanese entrepreneurs, has already been described. Increasingly, through exogamous intermarriage, the question of the ethnically exclusive nature of this community comes into question. This could be seen as an indication of the Lebanese and their community opening up to other Brazilians. As Immanuel Todd noted in his studies on ethnic integration among immigrants, the readiness to undertake an exogamous marriage is one of the key criteria in measuring integration.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, the majority persists in attempting to transmit Lebanese culture to their children,<sup>65</sup> even if the result is not always what they had hoped, either at the level of language proficiency or knowledge of Lebanon. One interviewee said that by creating the CAML, members of the Jafet family intermarried with each other to preserve the unity of the family.<sup>66</sup> The CAML members also share this desire to remain among themselves. One of the purposes of the club was to enable their children of the same ilk to meet.

Their desire to continue to transmit an intangible heritage does not call into question their commitment to the openness to the host society.

## Matrimonial strategies

Reminiscent of an almost tribal mentality, endogamous marriage was the deliberate choice of large, affluent families who saw it as a way to keep money within the family. Endogamous marriages persist today, although in the early 20th century the Lebanese entrepreneurial community tended to prefer exogamous marriages. This was not only an indication of the Lebanese people's will to integrate into their new society but also a sign of mutual acceptance of members of other ethnic groups. The positive perception Brazilians had of the Lebanese community may have been facilitated by their collective success. This image is not only present at the popular level, as evidenced by the fact that, in the 1940s, the State Governor agreed that his daughter marry the son of a Lebanese businessman. This marked a change when compared to the original image of the Lebanese immigrants to Brazil as peddlers and hawkers. Such a marital union would have been unlikely in the early 20th century, before the Lebanese entrepreneurs had had time to prove themselves.

At that time, some of the emigrants were married men in search of better opportunities for their families back in Lebanon. They already had a home waiting for them back there. Their plan was either to stay abroad long enough to make sufficient capital and to return home, or for their families to join them in Brazil once they had settled and set up a business. Nonetheless, the vast majority were single males. Reportedly, many Lebanese asked their families to send them a bride, or returned to Lebanon to find one and bring her with them to Brazil to start a family. The endogamous marriage market was perhaps not sufficiently catered for in numerical terms, so exogamous marriage became an option to be envisaged. Such unions were not necessarily a sign of voluntary integration, although they may have offered benefits in terms of social mobility based on the status of their partner.

A reoccurring comment throughout the interviews is that Brazilian women are uncomplicated when choosing a husband. Simão E. deplored the fact that in Lebanon, "Lebanese girls won't even look at you if you don't have a car while here, even if her father is wealthy it would not be a problem for her to go out with you, even if you are not rich. Ma fi tefri ' mede."<sup>67</sup> One notes here the frustration of some newcomers in the face of what they see as the materialistic values of "Lebanese" women. However, if materialistic preferences do exist in some families, a generalised statement would not be appropriate. Lebanese immigrants who express this frustration often omit to make the comparison between their own social position in Lebanon and that of São Paulo. They usually came from small villages in the Lebanese mountains. They emigrated to Brazil, because they had no job opportunities or economic prospects there, and they had relatives who could accommodate and help them on arrival. This means that before emigrating from a society where the main financial responsibility rests on the shoulders of the male, they were not in a position to take charge of a hypothetical family they would have had with a Lebanese woman.

These men arrive in Brazil, generally in São Paulo, where their appeal, in the eyes of the local Brazilian female population, is enhanced by the good reputation the Lebanese have built up over several generations as being economically successful. In the eyes of the Brazilian population, Lebanese succeed in what they do. They have economic power, are well placed within Brazilian society and business runs 'no sangue'.<sup>68</sup> This is not to imply that the Brazilians are fortune-hunters, but it is to illustrate the social position of the Lebanese, even for newly arrived ones, in Brazil, as perceived by the Brazilian population.

In addition to a new status more likely to generate interest, single Lebanese men arrived in São Paulo in a society whose codes governing sexual mores seemed freer than those of "their Lebanon," where relations are kept discreet. Young single Lebanese men know they cannot have the same degree of sexual freedom with Lebanese girls from within the community to which they are bound, out of respect for families. This is not to imply that the sexual mores of Brazilians are freer than those of the Lebanese. The cultural references of Lebanese newcomers are different, and they do not necessarily interpret these codes in the same manner as if they had grown up in Brazil. In addition to the desire to enjoy this new "freedom" is their need to maintain good relations with members of the community in São Paulo.<sup>69</sup>

Single Lebanese men, therefore, take a liking to their perceived new sexual freedom. Their romantic experimentation, allowing proximity to a partner outside the community, creates links and attachments that can lead to a more serious commitment, like marriage. Those who, nevertheless, decide to marry a Lebanese partner will look towards Lebanon. They will have more in common with Lebanese from Lebanon than with Lebanese from Brazil who would have grown up in a different environment. Exogamous marriage for newcomers in this context could be understood as reflecting the desire to discover what the host society has to offer is different. Conversely, endogamous marriage can often be understood as the mark of a desire to remain attached to traditional values.

67 Personal interview conducted in the office of trade Simão E. Brás, on 12/01/12. 292. This type of comment was heard from several young respondents, in particular, traders in the area of Brás, all religions.

68 'No sangue' means *in their blood*.

69 These analyzes are derived from a cross between field observations recorded during individual interviews or grouped with Lebanese newcomers of different ages, but also with Brazilians, descendants of Lebanese.



## Ethnic and family solidarity

Over time and resulting from a different life experience, descendants of Lebanese no longer have the same relationship with the newly arrived migrants that had been maintained during the first wave. Their references are different, and even if they share a common sensitivity about their ethnic ancestry, their sense of community diminishes in the face of what is perceived as differences in values and social class. Distinctions between newcomers in the CAML, for example, who lived in Lebanon and descendants of distinguished Lebanese families in Brazil often see newcomers as nouveau-riche, lacking manners and gentility, and to this end, citing examples of some men's bad table manners and lack of courteous behaviour to women.<sup>70</sup> Dissension is evident at this level on the issue of mutual ethnic solidarity.

It is advisable to bear in mind that such differences of opinion, arise from the contexts in which individuals develop. Before their arrival on Brazilian soil, many newcomers had previously grown up in small urban areas in Lebanon. In such settings, relations are much easier to maintain and are more direct, because of geographical proximity and a certain promiscuity or permanent interconnection of personal relationships. The settings are different in São Paulo. The changing lifestyle and availability of individuals, greater distances make physical encounters require more "effort" of movement. "Spontaneous" solidarity does not happen the same way it would in a village. Lebanese entrepreneurs in São Paulo are absorbed by their work and businesses. They are less available to those they do not know. In this context, it is easier to be available to help someone you know than someone you do not. In addition, the nostalgic and static image descendants of Lebanese in Brazil have from their parents does not correspond to the today's society in Lebanon, which has naturally undergone change in the interim period. All societies change over time.

Descendants do not suffer from the feeling of nostalgia as would new arrivals in Brazil; neither do they seek to restore the lost world of their origins. They have grown up as Brazilians and in a local social network since birth, and would not have the same affinities with newcomers. Strong links can be forged only through common experiences that descendants and newcomers do not always share. The support is still there, as can be seen throughout this study across the various professional agencies described, but in proportions that may seem insufficient to some newcomers.

## CONCLUSION

Brazil's approach to integration had no strict paradigms. Integration takes place differentially in different sectors of society. The Lebanese entering it proved their ability to contribute on all levels to the development of the country. It was a society receptive to immigrants. It needed them to populate its territory and to develop its economy. Initially, peddling allowed Lebanese immigrants to accumulate sufficient financial capital in order to seize the opportunities that the industrialisation policy initiated by G. Vargas (1930) had to offer.

The original immigrants of Lebanese mescates had not benefitted from the pre-planned policies afforded to other immigrant groups to Brazil (Japanese and Italians). Ironically, this cloud had a silver lining, and they were, thereby, freed of the constraints of entering sectors that had been pre-ordained for them. By being deprived of such facilities, and obliged to pave their own way into areas of economic activity, the experience they gained from entrepreneurship allowed them to benefit and take advantage of the economic and industrialisation process Brazil subsequently underwent. They started in commerce for several reasons, including the lack of other opportunities, the fact that they did not speak the local language upon arrival, and because it allowed them to accumulate capital relatively quickly in order to return to Lebanon.

The improving financial conditions of the original mescates and the financial credit facilities between suppliers and peddlers allowed them to open small sedentary outlets and help newcomers from their extended families. They also enabled them to accumulate enough financial and human capital to start up new businesses and develop collaborative networks of co-operation. This productive cycle took off and bore fruit. Unlike employment, entrepreneurship offered unlimited perspectives for economic ascent.

The important value this group placed on the education of their children for whom they had ambition and continued in the second generation to push for economic and professional advancement in key sectors, impacting on the industrial and the financial capital of the country, on the national economy, and also across the South American subcontinent.

Historically finding themselves in 'the right place at the right time' to some extent provided situational opportunities to Lebanese entrepreneurs during the industrial bonanzas to generate wealth and further invest in industry and construction. But this would not have sufficed if the cultural capital and entrepreneurship accumulated over time and the experience, flexibility, and ability to diversify had not become the 'habitus' of these people, which worked to their advantage then and now.

They did not all succeed in the same way. Some experienced impressive social, economic and political ascent, while others experienced failure. Nonetheless, throughout the 20th century, this group and their descendants in São Paulo projected a positive image of themselves.

Exogamous marital unions with persons from other groups prevented them from remaining closed within their ethnic boundaries, and their children carried the torch of success through the values the group placed on education and training and to diversify their activities to include not only trade and commerce, but also the liberal professions. The current exogamous trend on the part of both men and women is now widespread. Differentiation is no longer occurring in terms of ancestry, and the form it now takes is at the level social status. The interests of ethnic groups have been replaced over time by the interests of class.

The upward social mobility of their experience led them in the highest spheres of political governance and they have scored high on the scale of active citizenship.

<sup>70</sup> Remarks found during fieldwork over various informal discussions with respondents - descendants of Lebanese and members of the CAML.



The successful integration of immigrants into a new society is based on their achievement and attainment on several registers. Integration builds on the receptiveness of societies to people with other backgrounds as well as the society's capacity to advance solidarity and engage all residents in the promotion of the well being of all. It also builds on the motivation, aspiration, and capacity of immigrants; their drive to improve their life and to match their skills with opportunities, their protection and social needs, and their capacity to change and adapt to new circumstances. Brazil offered this possibility to the Lebanese. The extent of their successful integration into Brazilian society, as measured against the instruments of economic success, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship is incontestable.

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