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HIGHLY-SKILLED RETURN MIGRANTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE?

THE CASE OF LEBANON

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Abstract

This thesis examines highly-skilled returnees in Lebanon and their potential impact on development and social change processes in their home country, through assessing if returnees are intentionally acting for change. The study uses Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory, and in specific, his concepts of agency and structure as a theoretical framework for analysis. The data collection method was qualitative in style and has been conducted by the author in December 2010 in Beirut, Lebanon and February through March 2011 in Germany. All in all, 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted with returnees. The findings for this study show that only a minor number of interviewed returnees can be identified as agents of change, and that the majority of interviewed returnees miss a feeling of responsibility to contribute to changes. Thus, it is implied from this minor study, that the interviewed returnees might only provide a limited contribution to development processes in Lebanon.

Keywords: Return migration, Lebanon, development, structuration theory

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Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LTA	Lebanese Transparency Organization
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US	United States

1 Introduction: Migration and Development

The linkage between migration and development and its positive or negative effects is part of an ongoing scientific debate (Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen 2003a; Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen 2003b). Migration has been either condemned as a reinforcement of centre-periphery relations and a major cause for maintaining underdevelopment, or hailed as being a solution for development for providing advantages for the sending and receiving country.

From the 1950's until 1973, the debate has been characterised by developmentalist optimism. According to the development theories of the time, it was assumed that the capital and knowledge management transfers that accompany migration will contribute to the needed take-off. The potential development capacity of the migration process is however seen as strongly dependent on the return of the migrant. The migration debate in the 1970's until the 1990's represents the common neo-Marxist pessimism, according to which brain drain and its implication pose a serious problem for the sending country. In the 2000s optimism gained upper hand again. Brain drain was turned into brain gain and remittances in particular came into focus. A potential positive aspect of migration which is decoupled from return and the inclusion of the diaspora in the development of the home country through remittances is thus stressed (de Haas 2010:230).

Remittances are sometimes portrayed as being the new panacea for development. In spite of this, several studies question the positive development impact of remittances. In many cases remittances are not used for investment, which could induce development, but rather consumption (Hermele 1997; Massey et al. 1998; Thomas-Hope 1985, cited in Tiemoko 2004).

Also, programs which involve the diaspora in the development in the home country through short-term return of a few weeks or months - like Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) program, which has been implemented in several countries - lack a clear empirical evidence of their positive or negative outcome so far (see for Lebanon Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury, and Perrin 2010; Labaki 2006; Tabar 2009; UNDP 2005).

This thesis argues that besides the unclear impact of remittances and diaspora involvement, even a total success of both of these tools, would not be enough for holistic development. That means, that even in the case that remittances were used for investments, and professionals from the diaspora would involve their skills and knowledge in projects in the home country, an important aspect of development would be neglected, as both of these tools focus on an economic understanding of development.

This thesis follows a holistic understanding of development, which includes social and political development. It argues that social and political development is not a necessary byproduct of economic development, but needs to be spurred too from an overall development. The underlying question is if return migration could spur an overall development such as this.

Several studies already do exist on return migration, focusing on intentions for return (see for example Dustmann and Weiss 2007 on the UK; Gibson and McKenzie 2011 on Pacific Countries; Güngör and Tansel 2008 on students in Turkey; Harvey 2009 on British and Indian scientist in the US). Of special importance are those which focus on highly-skilled return and its development potential of return migration (see for example Carling 2004 on Cap Verde; Diatta and Mbow 1999 on Senegal; IOM 2010; IOM 2002; IOM 2001; Klagge and Klein-Hitpaß 2010 on Poland). The debate however, whether there exists a positive link between return migration and development is still not settled due to contradicting empirical evidence (King 2000). There are two reasons for the contradicting evidence. First, the relation between migration and development is dependent on its special socio-economic and political context. Thus, studies on different countries differ in their assessment. Second, not all empirical studies so far have differentiated between highly skilled migrants and unskilled migrants; their respective influence on development does differ though (Ammassari 2004:133).

Studies from the 1970's and 1980's mostly claim that returnees have little to none positive influence on development in their home countries. Famous is Cerases' study of Italian return migrants from the United States (US), which grouped returnees in four categories with only one category having development potential (Cerese 1974). Studies showed that returnees do not invest the capital they brought with them, but rather spent it on ordinary or conspicuous consumption (Gmelch 1980; King 1986). As migrants, they only rarely acquired new skills and knowledge. If they did acquire new skills, often they were not useful once they returned to different contexts compared to their emigration life. Nonetheless, these studies are concerned with unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Gmelch 1987), and thus do not serve to draw any conclusions on the possible impact of highly skilled returnees.

There are also early studies that see a positive impact of returnees as Saloutos (1956) study on Greek returnees, and Suttons and Makiesky (1975) on returnees in Barbados (cited in Ammassari 2004:134). Both studies show that returnees brought with them, beside their capital, new ideas, values and beliefs on issues as democracy and politics in general. Other recent studies also prove a positive influence of returnees. Thomas-Hope (1999) shows the important leadership roles returnees take over in Jamaica, Iredale et al. (2002) observed a strong influence of returnees on business

climate and social transformation in China and Taiwan (however less strong in Bangladesh and Vietnam); while Ammassari (2004) shows the structuring role of two generations of highly-skilled returnees in Ghana and in Côte d'Ivoire on the process of nation building and as entrepreneurs.

Also some studies have already been conducted in the Lebanese context: whether on migration intention (Akl et al 2008; Akl et al. 2007) or return to Lebanon (Malhamé 2006; Stamm 2006).

1.1 Research Problem and Research Question

This thesis assumes that migration provides the opportunity to acquire new skills and experiences which might be useful in the development context within the specific home country. These are not only limited to entrepreneurial or business skills, but also include the attainment of new beliefs and values; a whole set of experiences which can be called social remittances (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Among the many forms of returnees, highly-skilled and well-educated returnees are of special importance as their initial migration is often seen as a loss for the sending country in the first instance, the so-called brain drain (Commander, Kangasniemi and Winters 2004).

Lebanon has faced a high number of emigration during the Civil War of 1975 to 1990, as well as in the concurrent years up to now. A substantial number of these emigrants are professionals or young graduates, highlighting the importance of high-skilled migration in the Lebanese context. Even if only reluctantly, migrants have also returned during the years, especially in the times of higher political stability and security (Labaki 2006).

The purpose of this study is to explore if these highly-skilled returnees pose a development potential which can be used to induce changes in their home country Lebanon. In specific, the study investigates whether returnees do feel a responsibility to contribute to development beyond their own individual well-being, and if they undertake actions to this end. To determine this, the intention of pursuing transformative actions, upon using the experiences, skills, values and beliefs a returnee acquired abroad, is explored. Even though this thesis is placed within the wider framework of the migration-development debate, it does not deal with migration per se, but with how returnees use their specific experience in order to spur development. Specifically, it tries to assess to what extent returnees intent to transform Lebanese society. Thus, the research question is:

- *Are return migrants agents of change and potential drivers for development?*

This explorative study will contribute to the existing body of literature on the development impact of highly-skilled returnees and in specific to the existing literature on return in Lebanon.

12 Structure of the Thesis

In the following chapter I will explain the concepts used in this thesis. Furthermore, I present Giddens' Theory of Structuration and its concepts of agency and structure will be presented. The third chapter provides a background on the overall situation in Lebanon and migration in Lebanon. It provides the backdrop for certain issues in the fourth chapter on methodology and the succeeding analysis which would be hard to understand without minor knowledge. The methodology chapter provides the research design and data collection methods linked to the research question of this thesis. In the fifth chapter I analyse the data firstly on differences between the host country and Lebanon, and personal change. . The second part analyses the intentionality of agents to act by using data on needed change areas, means of change as identified by the interviewees, and feeling of personal responsibility. The findings are then explained and applied to the Theory of Structuration. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the applicability of Giddens' theory on the topic of this thesis. In the conclusion I provide policy implications and ideas for further studies.

2 Concepts and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Return Migration

Within literature the concept of return migration is understood in different ways. Here, some definitions of return migration are provided, and from those I develop the meaning return migration has in this research. Before that, it has to be noted that the terms used for the process of return differ in the literature. Among some of them, back migration, counter current, counter flow, re-emigration, reflux migration, remigration, return flow, second time migration, repatriation (Bovenkerk 1974:4) are used. I will use the term return migration in this thesis as it is the most widely used one in the literature.

One of the first sociologists to provide a theoretical overview on return migration is Bovenkerk. In his seminal essay, published in 1974, he defines return migration as a one-time, to and fro movement between two places only (Bovenkerk 1974:5). King broadly defines return migrations as “the process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region” (King 2008:8). Ghosh does however note that the processes of emigration and return are not isolated processes, rather they constitute inter-locking parts of an open ended and enduring process of global mobility (Ghosh 2000:182). Cassarino also mentions that due to the emergence of the theory of transnationalism and social network theory, return migration is not seen anymore as the final stage within a migration cycle, much more it is one of the many stages within an on-going migration process (Cassarino 2004:268).

Acclaiming Bovenkerk’s seminal work, his definition is clearly not suitable anymore for current circumstances. Migration phenomena have changed due to better and cheaper opportunities to travel and improved means of communication through internet. In this regard, his definition is restrictive in its understanding as a one-time movement. King’s definition is much more flexible in this regard, as it holds the opportunity for a new emigration. For this study, it is nonetheless narrowed down by excluding internal migration, as the scope of the research is on international migration. Thus, in this thesis return migration is understood ***as the process in which people return to their home country after they have spend a considerable period of time abroad; return is not seen as coming back for good but still includes the possibility of emigrating again, therefore it is one event in an enduring migration process.***

Being a returnee is not only understood as an arbitrary category, a property several people might share, but as a salient feature of an individual. Returnees are former migrants who have gone through an intense migration experience and acquired different sets of skills, values and beliefs.

These remain a part of the individual. Thus, the length of time passed since the return took place does not affect that the individual is among other roles also a returnee.

2.2 Development and Social Change

To provide a definition for social change is difficult, simply because in a sense all things are changing throughout time (Giddens 2006:43). Therefore, a definition needs to specify exactly what it is that is changing. Within the social sciences and in specific theoretical schools, different definitions exist. A sociological definition characterizes social change as the “alteration of social mechanisms within social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems” (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011). Giddens includes a time-factor by saying that in order to identify significant changes, it has to be shown how alterations in the underlying structure of situations or objects change within a certain timeframe. To really demonstrate change it is needed to demonstrate what remains in stability, that is, providing a baseline against which any change can be measured (Giddens 2006:45).

Change is normally associated with progress, however it can also mean decline. What is defined as decline or progress depends on each individual, therefore the qualities of these two terms cannot be examined on a scientific basis alone, as they are also based on normative evaluations and value judgments (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011).

Explanations of social change have two forms. One is to demonstrate causal connections between two or more processes. However, this point of view is deterministic and reductionist in a particular manner, as it explains social change by reducing it to a one-for-all determining and autonomous process of causality. Hence, a more vigilant assumption is one in which a single process, beside other processes, has a relative causal priority, but is neither wholly determining nor autonomous (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011).

So far, no grand theories in social sciences do exist which can sufficiently explain social change (Giddens 2006:45). Nonetheless, a range of factors for explanation exist. Cultural factors, physical environment and political organizations have been identified as three main factors which have influenced social change in a significant manner (ibid:46-48). Within these fields, factors as demographic processes, technological innovations, economic processes, social movements, political processes, and/or ideas are working.

The idea of planning or institutionalizing change comes closest to the idea of development as a process. Development in this sense means to plan certain processes of social change in an intended

direction by a central authority (Cypher and Dietz 2009). Even though most large-scale and long-term social changes so far have been unplanned, there are also examples of institutionalized actions as the introduction of social security systems, which have transformed underlying structures and are thus to be considered social change.

This thesis uses a holistic understanding of development, not solely focusing on economic development, but also taking into account social, political and cultural development. It fits with the following understanding of development: “Progressive and effective development represents change that is intended to lead to the betterment of people and places around the globe” (Potter et al. 2008:6). I assume that a development process means change of the society through transforming its underlying structures which are whether a major constrain to development or pose a development problem in itself.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Structuration Theory

Theories of migration have dealt with return and returnees, mainly focusing on intentions and reasons for return and re-adjustment processes¹. However, in my thesis I do not aim to explore return migration but if returnees with their specific experience might contribute to development. As I mentioned above, development in this thesis is understood as a process which transforms underlying structures of the society through actions. In that respect it is important to what extent human beings are creators of the social world, or to what extent they are created by it. How action is conceptualized has obviously normative implications about social change and the responsibility of the individual in it (Loyal 2003:51). Therefore, I decided to use Giddens’ Theory of Structuration, which places emphasis equally on the agent and structure, within reproduction or transformation of societies. The aim of Structuration Theory is roughly said to provide a conceptual framework for an analysis of how society is produced, reproduced or transformed, therefore it suits my specific research aim.

Giddens’ Theory of Structuration is described as “the most systemic, interesting and sustained attempt so far found to develop an approach to social theory that transcends the dichotomies of determinism and voluntarism, society and the individual, and object and subject” (Urry 1986:435). For his theory Giddens has received as much praise as harsh critique. Even twenty-five years later his theory and its use in different sociological areas of inquiry are still hotly debated (see for example

¹ It is acknowledged that also within those theories frameworks have been developed to assess links to development as Cassarino’s revised conceptual approach (2004) focusing on preparedness and resource mobilization of the returnee. However, the focus of this thesis is on the intention with which returnees actually act to transform society.

Bakewell 2010 on Structuration Theory in migration). This shows that his theory is still relevant in the current academic world.

Giddens' Structuration Theory is not composed in a single volume: he has been working on the theory for several years, clarifying his concepts and answering to critics in a vivid process of discussion in various publications (see for example Bryant and Jary 1991; Clark, Mogdil and Mogdil 1990; Held and Thompson 1989). Giddens began to outline his Theory of Structuration already in the mid-seventies in *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976a), *Functionalism: après la lutte* (1976b) and *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979). His main account of it is his 1984 work *The Constitution of Society – Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Giddens presents his theory as a strong critique of - and opposed to - the leading Parsonian functionalism of the time.

The term structuration contains the following meaning: "The structuring of social relations across time and space in virtue of the duality of structure" (Giddens 1984:376). The duality of structure can certainly be called the main concept of Giddens' theory. It bridges the divide between structure and human agency by assuming that social structures are both, medium and outcome of human agency. With his duality of structure Giddens takes a counter position to the dualism of agency and structure. The theory includes a wide range of concepts. Due to the limited extent and specific focus of this thesis, I focus on agency and structure with the intention of applying them later in the analysis.

2.3.1 Agent and Agency

Giddens defines an agent as a rational, intentional and purposive human being who is acting on behalf of what he knows or believes what the outcome of his action will be. The individual agent holds a causal power which he might use to intervene into events (Giddens 1976:75). Giddens stresses this capability of an actor to make a difference through his way of acting. Every moment of action contains the potential of transformation as the human agent has the possibility to act in a different way. In Giddens' theory constraints are not seen as 'forces of nature', but have an enabling property for the agent (Giddens 1984:173). He developed a model of the agent which he calls the stratification model (Giddens 1984:5).

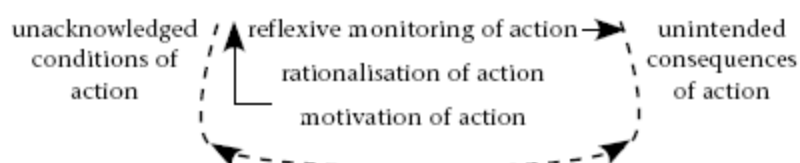


Fig. 1: Stratification model (source: Giddens 1984:5)

In this model the agent is described on three levels of action: reflexive monitoring of action, rationalization of action and motivation of action. Reflexivity of actions means that each individual agent reflects, monitors and modifies his actions in a continuous process (Giddens 1984:3). Rationalization of action refers to the routine process by which agents “maintain a continuing ‘theoretical understanding’ of the grounds of their activity” (ibid:5). Motivation of action refers to the wants which prompt an action (ibid:6).

Even though the agent is seen as rational, purposive and intentional in his actions, these actions might not produce the desired outcome. According to Giddens, intentionality is “characterizing an act which its perpetrator knows, or believes, will have a particular quality or outcome and where such knowledge is utilized by the author of the act to achieve this quality or outcome” (Giddens 1984:10). However, an intentional act still possesses the possibility to generate consequences which were not intended by the agent. These unintended consequences, in form of homeostatic loops, in combination with unacknowledged conditions influence future actions (ibid:10). Feedback through reflexive self-regulation also complements to system reproduction (ibid:28).

This stratification model can be linked to Giddens’ three levels of consciousness as seen in figure 2.

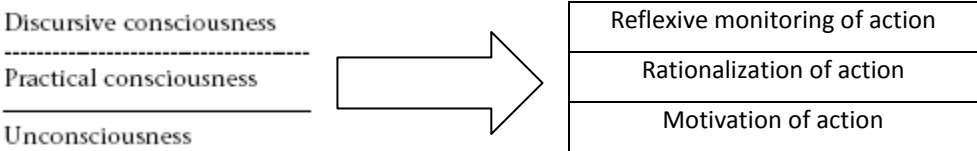


Fig. 2: Levels of consciousness (source: Giddens 1984:7; combined with figure by the author)

Giddens distinguishes between discursive consciousness, practical consciousness and unconsciousness². Each of them is linked to one level within the stratification model, respectively reflexive monitoring of action, rationalization of action and motivation of action. An actor can always report discursively about the intentions and specific reasons for his action. The ability to do so refers to the discursive consciousness. The practical consciousness, is fundamental within structuration theory. It is not immediately accessible to discursive consciousness awareness of the agent as it is made of tacit knowledge which is used in the conducting of actions by the agent. As figure 2 shows, there is only a dotted bar between discursive and practical consciousness, which indicates that the difference between these two concepts is that of the difference between what is said and what is done by an actor. However, the agent cannot necessarily explain the motivations of his actions as they are settled in the unconsciousness (ibid: 1984:6). The motivations can nevertheless reappear in

² Giddens draws upon the Freudian distinction of id, ego and superego in his levels of consciousness.

a refracted manner within the practical and discursive consciousness. The unconsciousness is separated by a bar, indicating that the barriers between the unconsciousness and discursive consciousness are mainly due to repression (ibid:7).

This ability of the agent to report about his actions refers to what Giddens calls the core of Structuration Theory: the knowledgeability of the agent. Knowledgeability means “everything which actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others, drawn upon in the production and reproduction of that action, including tacit as well as discursively available knowledge” (Giddens 1984:376). Thus, knowledgeability refers to the discursive and practical consciousness.

2.3.2 Structure

Giddens has a different understanding of structure than in functionalist and structuralist theories. He breaks with the notion of structure as a form of patterning of social relations and phenomena, as understood in functionalism, and likewise with the notion of structure as presence and absence, as understood in structuralism. Nonetheless, he recognizes that these ideas pose significant aspects of the structuring of social relations, and grasps them by introducing a difference between system and structure in Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984:16f.).

Social systems are understood as situated activities of human beings, they are patterned social relations that possess structural properties. Giddens defines structure as referring to “the structuring properties allowing the ‘binding’ of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them ‘systemic’ form” (Giddens 1984:17). Structure refers to rules and resources, which members of the system use in the production and reproduction of social systems (ibid:23). Rules exist in two forms: constitutive and regulative rules, and relate to the constitution of meaning and to the sanctioning of the modes of social conduct (ibid:19). Rules are however not to be understood as routine practices. Rather, they constitute procedures of action which are applied in the production and reproduction of social practices. The awareness of the specific rules is expressed in the knowledgeability of the agent. The knowledgeability does however not provide for all specific situations possible, rather it constitutes a certain capacity of the actor to react upon an indefinite array of social situations. Thus, rules can be followed without being able to be uttered, they do provide a tool for the agent in the day-to-day life to simply ‘go on’ (ibid:22). Giddens puts rules into specific types, made of four dichotomist pairs: intensive/shallow, tacit/discursive, informal/formalized, and weakly sanctioned/strongly sanctioned as illustrated in figure 3.

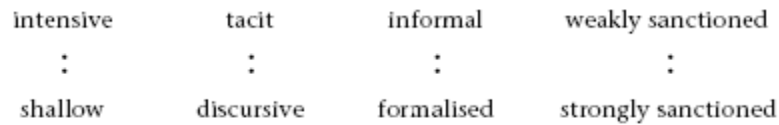


Fig. 3: Types of rules (source: Giddens 1984:22)

Intensive rules are rules that are constantly used in the day-to-day activities, and differ from shallow rules which have a less deep impact on those day-to-day activities. Tacit rules refer to the majority of rules and the fact that they are only known in a practical sense, the knowledge of actors how to 'go on', which is mentioned above. Discursive rules on the contrary mean a formulation of a rule, which already contains an interpretation of it. Formalized rules refer to those rules which are, besides being discursively formulated, also codified as laws. Formalized rules are those who are among the most strongly sanctioned rules (Giddens 1984:22f.). However, those simple rules, which constitute the day-to-day activities, have the most significant effect. Therefore Giddens considers intensive, tacit, informal and weakly sanctioned rules as more influential than shallow, discursive, formalized and strongly sanctioned rules (Loyal 2003:80).

Resources constitute structures of domination and also exist in two types: authoritative and allocative resources. Authoritative resources are based on subject-subject relations and refer to the capabilities an agent holds to generate command over other agents. Allocative resources are embodied in subject-object relations and refer to the capabilities an agent has to generate command over material phenomena or objects (Giddens 1984:376).

Taken together, rules and resources are the means of production and reproduction of the social action and the means of system reproduction. Thus they contribute to the duality of structure (Giddens 1984:24). The following figure 4 provides an overview of the main elements of Structuration Theory which were presented above.

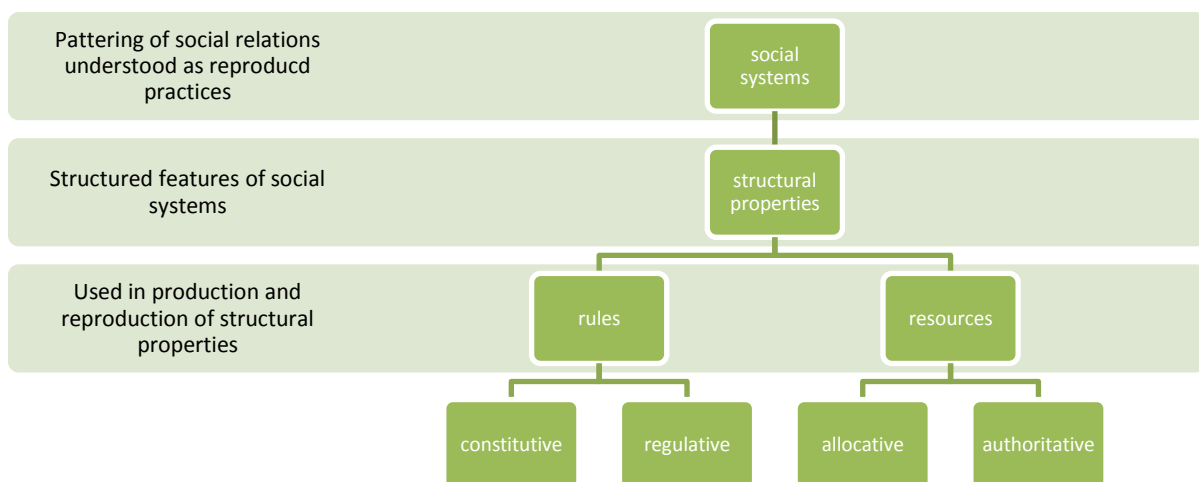


Fig. 4: Elements of Structuration Theory (figure by the author)

2.4 Framing the research

The overall assumption is that returnees through their migration have an experience of living in another system with structural properties different than those in Lebanon. Through the returnee rules and resources of that system might find their way into Lebanon.

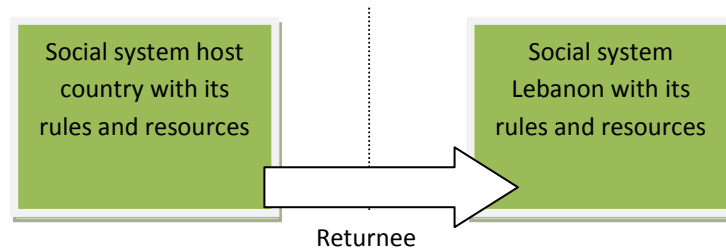


Fig. 5: Transfer of rules and resources (figure by the author)

They might find their way through the agent drawing upon his previous experience abroad, in order to use parts of this experience when he acts with the intention to change certain structural properties.

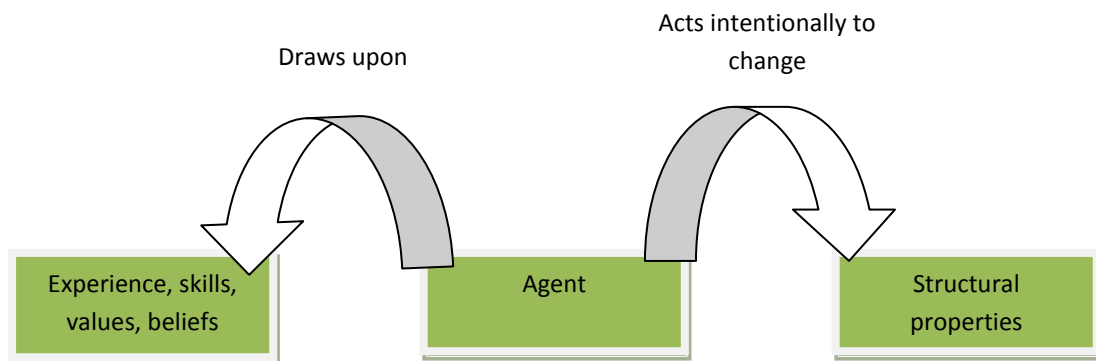


Fig. 6: Acting agent using his acquired experience from abroad (figure by the author)

As Giddens says, an actor has always the opportunity to act different. That means, he could always decide if he acts in a way which (assumed by the actor) reproduces or transforms structure.

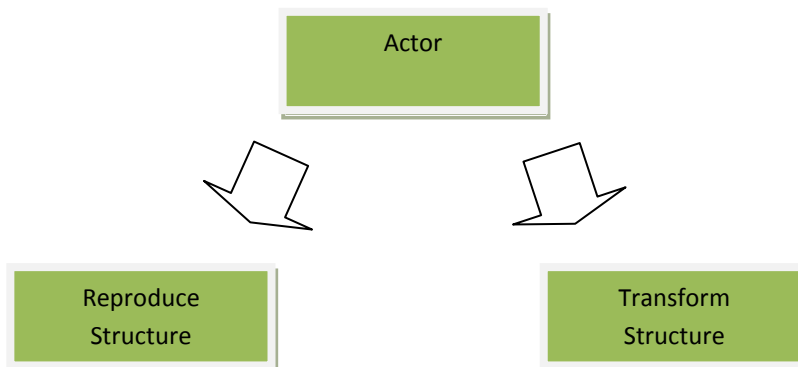


Fig. 7: Choice of the actor (figure by the author)

As Giddens shows, actions can have other outcomes than intended. Thus, I cannot make any assumptions about the outcome of a specific action, whether intended or unintended, if it really

transforms or reproduces structure. Hence, I take the discursive intention of agents into focus, that means I assess if they act intentionally in a way to do otherwise and induce a change, Referring back to the research question, if return migrants are agents of change: the intentional actions believed to induce change *could* actually do so, and thus hold a transformative capacity. The assumption is that an intentional agent is a possible agent of change, which could be used in institutionalized social change processes, i.e. development.

3 Background

3.1 Recent History of Lebanon and its Current State of Affairs

I present the recent history and its (immediate) precedings for the purpose of concentrating on the timeframe that is experienced and lived in by my interviewees.

Lebanon is a former French colony, territory of Greater Syria. The territory which is nowadays Lebanon got separated in 1920 by the French administration. On the 22nd of November 1943 Lebanon gained its independence from France with the administrative power handed over to the Christian population in Lebanon (CIA 2011).

In the early 1970's it came to an influx of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) adherents who started constructing a state within the state. Fights broke out between those armed forces and Christian-Maronite militia, a Civil War erupted in 1975. In 1976 Syrian forces joined the fights, in 1978 Israel forces intervened. Historians still dispute what exactly triggered the Civil War, but its outcomes are quite horrendous. An estimated 130.000 to 250.000 civilians died and an estimated one million left the country during the war (Labaki 1992:600). With the Ta'if agreement of 1989 the war came finally to an end in 1990. The Ta'if agreement was meant to act as a blueprint for the Lebanese reconciliation after the war. Its aim was to hand over more political power to the Muslims in the country (who by now according to some estimations, are the majority in the country) by introducing a more equitable political system which institutionalizes sectarian division in the government (CIA 2011). However, the Ta'if accords have never been fully implemented, especially those dealing with the de-confessionalization of the parliament. Instead, Ta'if lead to a deepening of the sectarian divisions in Lebanon and empowering traditional sectarian leaders. The outcome is that the relation of Lebanese citizens to their state is mediated through religious belonging (UNDP 2009:44).

In 2005 the Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri was murdered in a ferocious suicide attack which killed 22 people. This incident still influences Lebanese current policies. Upon the assassination people started protesting, forcing the Syrian army to withdrawal. This incident became famous as the Cedar Revolution, however its outcomings are doubtful, leaving Lebanon still under Syrian pressure (Shields 2008:485).

In summer 2006 a 43-days armed conflict with Israel erupted which left parts of the infrastructure devastated (CIA 2011). Since then the country has been characterized by periods of political stability changing with phases of political vacuums. In early 2011 the national unity government, lead by the son of the slain Prime Minister al-Hariri, was forced to resign due to one third of the Ministers resigning. The country nowadays struggles with its sectarian division and its political implications

which are very well visible in the tribunal to the Hariri murder. However, recently inspired by the uprisings in the Arab World, Lebanese people started going out on the street too, their fight is nevertheless for secularism (BBC 2011).³

The recent history of Lebanon shows that Lebanon's situation is on the edge of being precarious. The war and the post-war years have left their imprint in the Lebanese society. Lebanon by now is a corrupt state, with nepotism, patronage, bribery and vote-buying in all sectors of society and government. The post-war structure is among others clearly a cause for that (LTA 2011).

3.2 History of Emigration

3.2.1 Problem of Assessing Emigration and Return

In the following paragraphs I will provide an overview of the emigration in Lebanon. It is however difficult to make final statements on emigration in Lebanon due to missing data. Different authors mention the problem of obtaining valid data (Kasparian 2005:175; Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury and Perrin 2010:1; Tabar 2009:8). No official census was conducted since 1932 (Tabar mentions the year 1943 for the last census, Tabar 2009:8) and the little data that is existent is mostly not accessible due to political reasons (Kasparian 2005:175). Generally there is a historical controversy over the size of the Lebanese population, due to the effects it might have in the politically sectarian organized country (Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury and Perrin 2010:1). The possibility to obtain data through the receiving countries also does not provide valid data as only a few countries have adequate data. It gets especially hard to track the Lebanese emigrants when they have acquired the citizenship of the respective receiving country (Kasparian 2005:175). Therefore, the data most prevalent in literature are estimations of given limited data.

3.2.2 Early History of Emigration

Lebanon is said to be the Arab country with the longest history of emigration (Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury and Perrin 2010:1). Since migration processes started, they have played an important role in the socio-economic development of Lebanon. Emigration was linked to the growing cultural, political and economic influence of Western, mainly European, countries in the Arab region. A restricted number of emigrants already left Lebanon in the 17th century to the destinations of Egypt and Italy, for commercial and study purposes respectively (Labaki 2006:3). Modern migration started already before the establishment of the Lebanese National State in the 19th century and since then

³ Some of my interviews were conducted during the time of the Arab uprisings, however by then the Secularist Lebanese Movement was only starting.

occurred in successive waves. The first wave of migration emerged from the Mount Lebanon Area⁴ from the 1870's to the 1920's (Tabar 2009:3) ranging from 3000 rising to 15000 per year (Labaki and Abu Rjaili 2005:59, cited in Tabar 2009:3). It mainly affected Christians and was a result of Christian-Moslem communal conflicts and an economic crisis in the area. This emigration was mainly directed towards the Latin Americas and less to Europe and the US. (Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury and Perrin 2010:1). This emigration wave already had some impact on the local economic development in form of remittances and the saved capital of the returnees. One third of the emigrants returned and have been instrumental in forming the development of the local tertiary sector. More important, they contributed to the formation of a vibrant middle class. The returnees brought the needed cultural and economic capital, which spread the features of middle class culture, like individualism and the right to education and work for females. This Christian middle class became a driving force for the building of the Lebanese state (Tabar 2009:5).

Due to the world economic crisis emigration was receding between the World Wars (Labaki 1992:165) but rose again to 10.000 per year until 1975 resulting from a demand for labor in the Arab Gulf States (Labaki 2005:91; cited in Tabar 2009:6).

3.2.3 Emigration during the Civil War from 1975-1990 and Onwards

Numbers on how many Lebanese left the country during the Civil War are differing, Tabar provides an estimation of 990.000, which accounts for 40% of the population (Tabar 2009:7), whereas Kasparian gives an estimation of 600.000 to 900.000 for the period from 1975 until 2001 (Kasparian 2005:177). During that time, emigrants composed of all members of the Lebanese society from all religious groups and different socio-economic backgrounds (Tabar 2009:7). The countries of destination gradually shifted towards Western Europe, US, Canada and Australia (Labaki 1992:603). The economic situation was deteriorating during the Civil War, with the unemployment rate rising to 21% in 1985 and the per head income dropping from \$280 to \$27 in the period from 1983 to 1987 (ibid:606). Accordingly the main reason for emigration in the period from 1975-2001 was finding work, followed by family reunion (Kasparian 2005:177). It is estimated that 7% of the migrants who have been abroad for more than six months in the period from 1975-2001 also returned within the same period, the majority of them however after the end of the war. This temporary migration was more frequented when the receiving countries were the Arab States (ibid:176).

⁴ Mount Lebanon was an autonomous administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire. The area included Byblos and Jounieh and excluded Beirut (Tabar 2009:3).

After 1990 mostly skilled migrants have left Lebanon. It was mainly people with an academic background or business professionals who emigrated mainly to Western Europe, North America and the Arab Gulf States. These emigration waves were more frequently driven by family reunions and resulted more often in a permanent settlement in the receiving country (Tabar 2009:14).

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The epistemological position used in my research is interpretivist, which assumes that the human world is a creation of the subjects within it and with each subject subscribing its own meaning to the world (Bryman 2008: 15). Interpretivism is reflected in my methodology in the decision to collect qualitative data based on interviews. My ontological stance is constructivism, according to which social phenomena are results of the perceptions and actions of the social actors which are under constant revision (ibid:18).

Upon my epistemological and ontological point of view I decided that the best research design to investigate return and its impact for development is one which puts subjects in the center of investigation. As Ragin notes (Ragin 1994:42) to really capture the essence of my research topic it needs to be based on the view of the people who experienced it. That means that the phenomenon needs to be seen through their eyes. I am using qualitative methods since I want to understand return and returnees in a complex and detailed way in their actual context (Tavallaei and Abu Talib 2010:570).

As I already mentioned, the purpose of the thesis is also to contribute to the current research on the topic. I apply a deductive approach, testing Giddens' Theory of Structuration to retrieve whether returnees are potential agents of change. The study is exploratory in its character and by no means representative, the findings made have to be complemented by further research on the topic.

4.2 Sampling

Sampling should be based on the goals of my research, that means, I have to select participants which will provide me with the necessary information which enable me to answer my research question (Bryman 2008:375). According to my research topic research participants must be well-educated, i.e. have an academic background or be business professionals. The minimal timeframe for migration was set at 18 months to provide for a sufficient long enough migration experience (King 2000) but open at the other end of the scale. A timeframe for time passed since return was not specified as, according to the definition presented, return stays a feature of each individual.

The sample approach taken is a purposive sample to ensure the selection of participants in a strategic way which are relevant to my research question (Bryman 2008:415). Initially I assumed that I could collect research participants through snowball sampling, however this only provided me with a low number of further contacts. Thus, I had to gather the majority of contacts on my own. I

contacted various professionals from a wide range of backgrounds through email or phone asking for their interest in participation. Upon the first contact with those who responded I made sure that they fit my sample criteria, only then an appointment was made for an interview.

The sampling approach provided me with a mixed sample including various professions and academic backgrounds, countries of migration and a wide age range. What unifies all interviewees though is the property of being a returnee. The resulting sample is non-random and not statistically representative, however this is not an aim in qualitative research (Bryman 2006:333). The sample size and the end of data collection are based on my perception of when I reached the point of saturation.

4.3 Interviews

Even though I wanted the research participants to talk as openly and freely as possible about their individual experience, I had a set of questions which guided my interviews in order to gather the same information from each one (see Appendix B – Interview Guide). The interview guide consisted of three parts, questions to the migration, return and being back. As my questions would also influence the construction of knowledge during the research process I had to be careful about the wording (Mason 2002:226). 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a duration from 25 to 60 minutes. Three preliminary interviews were conducted to test the interview guide, upon that the focus of the questions was more clearly changed to the experience since being back. Since the point of saturation was not reached while I was still in Lebanon, due to not being able to obtain enough contacts through snowball sampling, I had to conduct some interviews over phone or internet. If possible these interviews were conducted with a webcam to create a more intimate and trustful atmosphere and more importantly as a trade-off to the shortcoming of not leading the interviews in person. Mason mentions that mimic and gesture of the interviewees are equally valuable resources to assess the feelings and thoughts of the interviewees. Mimic and gesture provide the opportunity to pursue questions into a direction which seems to be of importance for the interviewee or to stop questioning at a point where the questions obviously get unpleasant for the interviewee (Mason 2002:238). These resources were not amenable to me.

In most cases I had no influence on the setting of the interview as the interviews were conducted at the places and times most suitable for the interviewees. The settings have been workplaces, home and cafes. This led to minor interruptions through phone calls or people entering the room but these did not significantly influence the course of the interview.

Mason points out (2002:227) that the outcome of an interview is however not only dependent on the effort of the researcher. Instead, the knowledge gained through the interview is influenced by the combined effort of the interviewer and the research participant. Two interviews in particular were hard to conduct and posed a special challenge and thus did not provide as much useful data as other interviews.

Interviews as a main source of data provide a rich account on the studied topic but are also criticized. The critique on interviews is concerned with the vagueness of everyone's memory and the selectivity of the memories presented (Mason 2002: 236). This is of special importance for the interviews with participants whose return is already several years ago. Additionally, the individual perception and judgement on the process of returning might change over time. I attempted to counter this by asking if the participants ever felt different upon their return.

4.4 Processing of Data

All interviewees were asked for their consent to record the interview. Two interviewees preferred to not have the interview recorded, in that case notes have been taken. During two interviews the recording software failed upon which notes were taken immediately after the interview. All interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. Kvale mentions (Kvale 1996: 165) that oral and written language each have an own set of rules. Accordingly, transcription is already a form of interpretivist construction. Transcripts display a limitation of the original interview; they are an abstraction as they decontextualize the interview from its natural setting. Transcripts do not include information on body language, visual information, setting, social atmosphere or personal interaction (Kvale 1996: 161).⁵ For this reason I took notes after every interview, describing in detail the impressions on the issues just mentioned. These notes I used in conjunction with the interview transcripts.

Kvale (1996: 166) points out that there is nothing like an objective transcription, instead there are various form and decisions which have to be made during the transcription. Depending on the purpose of my further analysis I decided to do a word-by-word transcription of the interviews. I included all repetitions but excluded tone of voice and other expressions like laughter and sighing. I conducted the transcription by myself due to my limited resources but also because I am more sensitive to the detail I want to capture with transcription (ibid:169).

⁵ Of course this is only relevant for the interviews I conducted in person. In phone interviews I did not have these information.

To analyze the data all interview transcripts were organized in matrix displays (Mikkelsen2005:183). The research questions and subtopics were set in the column heads and the respondents of each interviewee in the rows.

4.5 Quality Criteria

Quality criteria used are those of trustworthiness and authenticity developed by Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Guba and Lincoln 1984; cited in Bryman 2008: 377). Authenticity contains the further sub-criteria of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity which are all concerned with a broader set of topics on the political impact of my conducted research (ibid:379f.). Trustworthiness contains the four sub-criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In executing my data collection and further use of data upon the rules of good research practice I tried to achieve credibility of my research. Transferability requires a thorough description (ibid:378) of the researched phenomenon. During my interviews I already ensured that I will later be able to provide a thorough description by asking the interviewees for detailed and specific descriptions of their experiences. During the research process I was carefully noting each step I have taken. While conducting the interviews, I was always very aware of not influencing the answers of the research participants in order to avoid attaining biased data.

4.6 Ethics

Before starting the interview I explained each interviewee the aim and purpose of the study, method of data collection and the further use of the data. Each research participant was asked for oral consent. The interview was only recorded if the research participant agreed to do so. To protect the interviewees' identity no names are used in the study,

The research topic turned out to be a very political issue, combined with the fact that politics is often linked to religion in Lebanon. After the interview, two research participants felt that they mentioned their political opinion and point of view to open and seemed to be uneasy about the information they just provided me. In these two cases, I asked again for their consent after the interview was already conducted, both allowed me to use the whole interview.

5 Analysis

In the following chapter I will analyse my empirical data, refer it to previous literature and research findings on the topic, and frame my own findings within Giddens' Theory of Structuration. The chapter is organized in two parts, firstly I will refer back to figure 5 (transfer of rules and resources) and figure 6 (acting agent using his acquired experience abroad) from page 17 in order to set the basis for the second part. In the second part I will present the needed areas of change within Lebanon, possible means of change/environment for change, as identified by the respondents, and their personal feeling of responsibility. The rationale behind that presentation is that in order to take action, first a problem and a possible mean of solving it need to be identified. Upon that a classification of agents of change respectively agents of stability is made. Referring to the overall research question if returnees are potential agents of change, the findings are subsequently applied to Giddens' Theory of Structuration and discusses if returnees act with an intention of change and thus potentially transform structures within Lebanon or if they reproduce structural patterns through their behavior

5.1 Country Differences and Personal Change

5.1.1 Comparison of the Host Country to Lebanon

In figure 5 (transfer of rules and resources, p.17) I portray that the social system of the host country is different from the social system of Lebanon and that specific rules and resources from the host country might find their way to Lebanon through the returnee. The assumption of a difference between the host country and Lebanon is verified by all interviewees. The identified difference between the countries varies according to the host country of each respective interviewee, mainly upon political issues, work life and social life.

Returnees from Europe, US and Canada stress especially issues concerning democracy, citizenship and the well-functioning of public institutions. Since some interviewees (I1, I2, I3, I8, I12, I14, I17, I20) possess two citizenships, they can compare Lebanon and their host country through their lived experience as citizens in two countries. *"We are a democratic country but how much we are exercising democracy, I don't know, it's not 100%, /.../ in Canada it's 100%, before in Lebanon you have nothing to say, they decide and you say ok, they decide for you, now it's changing, it's improving and still it's no democracy"* (I2, 09.12.2010).

Returnees from the Gulf Countries mainly stress the differences in the work life, especially concerning work discipline and work atmosphere. Generally the work discipline is understood to be more strict abroad, which is seen as a positive factor. Also, some felt treated better and more

respected abroad in their work life. *"In Lebanon maybe the Lebanese work for 4, 5 hours and halas, /.../, but in Saudi-Arabia its totally different. The culture at the company in Saudi Arabia is better from here, yani, they act good, the owner of the company likes you and treats you good"* (I16, 06.03.2011).

A positive comparison between Lebanon and the host countries is mainly focused on the social life. The host country, whether it were Gulf States or Western Countries were described as missing the verve and the lightness of the Lebanese lifestyle. *"Living in the Emirates was dull, I only went to work and that's it, but here I can go out and meet people every day"* (I23, 14.03.2011). When asked to describe positive sides of Lebanon interviewees mainly referred to the beauty of the country Lebanon itself rather than to other attributes. *"Lebanon is a nice country, you will see, the nature is very nice, most of the people come from all over the world to see Lebanon, the trees, the nature, everything is nice here"* (I21, 14.03.2011).

The findings show that the returnees perceive a difference between their host country and Lebanon. Although it is acknowledged that some emigrants live in closed Lebanese communities while being abroad, the findings illustrate that the interviewees are aware of having lived in different social systems with distinct rules.

5.1.2 Personal change

In figure 6 (agent using his acquired experience from abroad, p. 17) it is illustrated that returnees might draw on their experience abroad and the new skills, values and beliefs they have acquired in order to act and transform structure. The returnees stress that the experience abroad was fruitful for them and that they actually have attained new traits, whether it is skills or a change in thinking. *"When you are going to live abroad, especially in more than one country, you are going to see the differences and it's gonna make an impression on you"* (I8, 01.03.2011). However, some do also admit that the experience abroad has its negative effects on their identity as they feel uprooted, loosing stability and not having a place of belonging: *"When you travel, when you live abroad, it destroys you, unfortunately /.../ you start to search for the best which is very bad for you"* (I4, 13.12.2010).

Those interviewees who have worked abroad stress the business competencies they have got which are different from those they could have attained in Lebanon: *"Should I have stayed in Lebanon and went through my live in Lebanon etc. I would probably be relatively within the same payment level but not with the same know-how, I have larger portfolio now from working abroad"* (I15, 09.03.2011).

"It's also a training of the mind if you are working outside because things are done in a certain way outside, very professional" (I12, 14.03.2011).

Many interviewees say that having lived abroad made them more tolerant, open-minded, and critical towards certain issues. Living abroad provided them with a new understanding and a possibility to compare to.

"Now I can see things different /.../the way you think now is different, you've seen different things, different cultures, you met different people, so your judgment is different now" (I2, 09.12.2010).

"It was a very rich experience, I learn many things about how to be open-minded and to be diplomatic and to accept other cultures, and don't be attached to the same way or tradition of our culture. I get an open mind and I'm able to put myself in other peoples shoes" (I6, 15.12.2010).

These findings show that returnees did indeed acquire new skills, values and beliefs while being abroad which could provide a capacity to draw on in transforming structures in Lebanon.

5.2 Problems and Possible Changes

The following table 1 contains the answers of each interviewee on identified areas of needed change, the potential means for change and a feeling of personal responsibility.

I #	Identified problem areas/ needed change	Means of change	Feeling of responsibility
1	Democracy; Lacking implementation of rules; Sectarianism, nepotism in politics; Low salaries and high cost of livings	Outside political influence on Lebanese domestic policies	No personal responsibility
2	Democracy; Lacking implementation of rules; Sectarianism in politics; Instability, Insecurity	Change will happen by itself	No personal responsibility
3	Democracy	Change will happen by itself	Passive, no personal responsibility
4	Instability, insecurity; Low salaries and high cost of living; Lacking implementation of rules	Change will happen by itself	Passive, no personal responsibility
5	Sectarianism, corruption in politics; Lacking public services	No way for change	Passive, no personal responsibility
6	Low salaries and high cost of living; Lacking jobs for young people; Instability, insecurity; Sectarianism in politics; Lacking public services; Lacking implementation of rules	Change only to the worse	No personal responsibility <i>anymore</i>

I #	Identified problem areas/ needed change	Means of change	Feeling of responsibility
7	Lacking implementation of rules; Missing professionalism in work life; Lacking public services; Low salaries and high cost of living; Nepotism and hierarchies in career life	Change only through influential persons within the system but <i>not</i> through the government; through young people	Passive, change is the task of the next generation
8	Lacking Civil Rights; Missing feeling of unity; Nepotism, corruption in politics; Lacking public services	Change through influential persons within the system but <i>not</i> through the government; through the people themselves	Passive, if a movement <i>would</i> be established he <i>would</i> join
9	Sectarianism, corruption in politics; Instability, insecurity; Low salaries and high cost of living	No way for change; rather adjust to the system; outside political influence on Lebanese domestic policies	Passive, no personal responsibility
10	Lacking public services; Sectarianism, corruption, nepotism in politics; Instability, insecurity; Weak state	Outside political influence on Lebanese domestic policies; <i>not</i> through demonstrations	Passive, no personal responsibility
11	Sectarianism, nepotism in politics; Missing feeling of unity; Instability, insecurity;	Change only through influential persons within the system; <i>not</i> through demonstrations	No personal responsibility <i>anymore</i>
12	Lacking public services; Lacking implementation of rules; Missing professionalism in work life; Sectarianism, nepotism in politics; Instability, Insecurity; Low salaries and high cost of living	Through the government pushed by its citizens; through social movements; special role for returnees and their ideas from outside	Active, using her business skills and social skills acquired abroad
13	Lacking implementation of rules; Unaccountable government; Lacking Civil Rights; Missing feeling of unity; Instability, insecurity; Lacking jobs for young people	Outside political influence on Lebanese domestic policies; no way for change; <i>not</i> through demonstrations	Passive, aware of her skills but cannot use them
14	Low salaries and high cost of living; Lacking implementation of rules; Lacking jobs for young people; Missing feeling of unity; Sectarianism, nepotism in politics	Through the government pushed by its citizens; <i>not</i> through demonstrations; through the people themselves	Active, using her business skills and social skills acquired abroad
15	Low salaries and high cost of living; Instability, insecurity; Lacking public services	Special role for returnees and their ideas from outside; through the government pushed by its citizens	Using her business skills acquired abroad but not in a feeling of responsibility
16	Low salaries and high cost of living; Instability, insecurity; Missing professionalism in work life	<i>Not</i> through the government	Passive, no personal responsibility

I #	Identified problem areas/ needed change	Means of change	Feeling of responsibility
17	Lacking implementation of rules; Missing feeling of unity; Sectarianism, nepotism in politics; Unaccountable government; Missing professionalism in work life	Through young people; special role for returnees and their ideas from outside; through the private sector; <i>not</i> through the government	Active, using his business skills acquired abroad
18	Instability, insecurity; Sectarianism in politics; Weak state	Special role for returnees and their ideas from outside	Using his experience of return; using his business skills acquired abroad but not in a feeling of responsibility
19	Instability, insecurity; Lacking jobs for young people; Missing feeling of unity	Special role for returnees and their ideas from outside	Using his business skills acquired abroad but not in a feeling of responsibility; if a movement <i>would</i> be established he <i>would</i> join
20	Lacking provision of public services; Lacking jobs for young people; Corruption, nepotism in politics	Through young people; social movements	Active, using his social skills acquired abroad
21	Unaccountable Government; Lacking public services; Sectarianism in politics	No way for change; rather adjust to the system	Passive, no personal responsibility
22	Lacking public services; Low salaries and high cost of living; Corruption in politics	Change will happen by itself	Passive, no personal responsibility
23	Lacking jobs for young people; Low salaries and high cost of living; Corruption in politics	No way for change	Passive, no personal responsibility

Table 1: Areas of change, means of change and personal responsibility for each interviewee

5.2.1 Identified Areas of Needed Change

Through directly asking the interviewees and an analysis of the overall interviews I identified several areas of change, which the returnees consider as insufficient or decayed and in which there obviously exists a desired need for change. Answers were manifold, therefore I coded answers according to themes that unfolded in the data and examined the frequency of each theme. Therefore, I present in the following chapter the ones which were mentioned by the majority of my respondents.

Needed areas of change within the economy

Interviewees mentioned that the Lebanese job market was and is in a very bad condition. Not only are in general only a few jobs available but also the entry for fresh graduates is really difficult. Generally career opportunities for young people are very limited. Furthermore, many interviewees perceive that it is very difficult to proceed within their careers due to strict hierarchies and the need to have connections to achieve higher positions. All in all, job recruitment is perceived as unfair, based on nepotism, social connections, hierarchies and religious belief. Furthermore, those with working experience from abroad mention a lack of professionalism and discipline in the workplace.

Also, within their work people feel limited as political tensions make their way even into the workplace and the range of what is possible. One interviewee mentions how creativity, which is of major importance in her profession is narrowed *“As a designer, I cannot use this color or that color in a logo because it will mean the company supports this group”* (I12, 14.03.2011).

Also, it was mentioned that Lebanon lacks workers rights and workers protection from sudden layoff and too long working days. The bad situation on the job market comes with very low salaries and high costs of living.

Needed areas of change within politics and the political life

Nearly all respondents identified the political situation and the political culture in Lebanon as the main problem. All interviewees lack trust in the government, political parties or the administration due to corruption and nepotism. Interviewees mentioned that only those people who are somehow related to a person that is already in power get political positions. An ordinary person without sufficient connections could not make its way into a higher political position.

“There is always going to be people buying their way in, it’s always going to be an issue of money and family and nepotism. Our prime minister, or our now ex-Prime Minister, he is the son of the slayed Prime Minister and that’s just one example of nepotism. Just because my father was Prime Minister that automatically gives me the CV or the resumee to become Prime Minister, it’s things like this that need change” (I8, 01.03.2011).

Furthermore, the organization of the political life along religious lines is criticized by the interviewees. The granting of seats in the parliament and positions in the government according to a quota system for each religion is the main point of criticism. In this regard, interviewees also see the lack of political alternatives as a problem. Elections are seen as not being of any importance or influence as they only provide for opportunities within the established system but do not offer any new prospects.

The ongoing instability and political unrest and the felt insecurity that comes with it are mentioned by many interviewees. Some do actually expect a new war soon. The feeling of insecurity hinders people in conducting their everyday life as one interviewee states:

“The security, you do not know if there is a bomb here or there, because you do not know if there will be a war tomorrow, you cannot plan /.../ you cannot plan for yourself and choose your future” (I4, 13.12.2010).

Furthermore, interviewees miss the provision or well-functioning of public services as electricity, water, transportation and fast internet connections. Also, provision of social services as health insurance is lacking.

Needed areas of change within society and public life

Despite its diversity Lebanon is perceived as a closed society, in which people lack personal freedom in general and also in day to day interaction with others. Many interviewees feel that people meet each other with a general feeling of distrust on the one hand and close observation of one's own behavior on the other hand. As one Interviewee put it *"So here you have to be careful, you cannot say everything, you cannot say what you think, you cannot say all you want. There is always a prejudice"* (I6, 15.12.2010).

Also, comparing to their experiences with living outside and meeting Lebanese abroad, interviewees feel that religion matters too much in personal relations. As they describe, it did not matter what ones religion is when they were outside, people met and saw each other as Lebanese. In Lebanon however, people are eager to deduct religion through name or place of origin. What is lacking according to the interviewees is a feeling of unity and being Lebanese, apart from religion.

Many responses identified the (missing) rules of conduct and everyday life as a problem. Traffic and the way of driving as well as simple things like waiting in a line are mentioned by them as examples.

5.2.2 Means of Change

Many interviewees were very eager on pointing out different areas within Lebanon that are seen as a problem by them. Asking them however how these problems realistically could be solved, many were searching for an answer. The topic of change in Lebanon is widely discussed and according to my respondents an everyday issue in conversations. However, I asked them for real possibilities instead of populist or simple commonplaces which dominate those everyday discussions. Interestingly, instead of having ideas through what actions change could be induced most of them answered through what common actions change cannot be induced in Lebanon. Therefore, I will present options here of what is possible and what is not possible.

No possibilities for change

Many interviewees doubted the possibility of change in Lebanon at all or could rather only imagine a worsening situation. They have a strongly passive attitude and see change as something that is out of their reach. *"I cannot dare to hope to have a better Lebanon"* (I6, 15.12.2010). They consider problems as too big and their own position and power as too low. Only someone who is in power could change things according to them, but unfortunately those are only interested in keeping the status quo.

Furthermore, many interviewees do not think that their individual personal effort could result in anything. Several rather unspecified and anonymous bodies, like the government, international politics or industry are identified as being more powerful and cutting back peoples individual

influence. As one interviewee put it *“Here in Lebanon we laugh. What? Your personal effort? What it’s going to do in front of industry?”* (I7, 20.12.2010).

Also, Lebanon’s position in the world political factor is mentioned. According to some interviewees what is happening in Lebanon is also influenced by foreign powers like the US and European Union (EU). They seemingly want to keep Lebanon in the state it is now. Thus, Lebanese would need outside support and backing to successfully implement change.

I conducted the main part of my interviews during the uprisings in the Arab world at a point in time when a first success of these movements could already be seen in Tunisia. Many interviewees referred to the mass demonstrations and stated that something similar could never happen in Lebanon. People are missing a feeling of belonging and being one people, that could unify them to fight together for one cause. Some interviewees referred to the Cedar Revolution in 2005 which was successful in its initially pursued goal of ending the Syrian occupation, but were disappointed with the further political developments since then and now do not believe in civil political action anymore. Thus, estimations for a timeframe when an eventual change will happen and an outcome will be visible range to taking 35 years or two generations.

Possibilities for change

Interviewees who do see possibilities for change assess that the Lebanese environment and its people are open for changes from outside. Not only are people very prone to take on new ideas, but they are actually asking for it. *“People come to you and ask you because they know you have kind of a fresh point of view /.../ people value your judgment because they know you were outside”* (I17, 17.03.2011).

One of the identified problem areas is the political sphere, mainly its nepotism and corruption in the government and in the administration. However, according to some of the interviewees it is not the politicians who have to change but *“It is about the people who put the politicians in power”* (I8, 01.03.2011). Commonly, the interviewees do not expect anything from the government, so they also do not expect that any positive change will happen through governmental channels. Nonetheless, mostly all interviewees consider themselves apolitical and do not want to get involved in politics. They call for a higher political consciousness of the Lebanese citizens to not put the same people into power again. However, they are also aware of, that according to their opinion, there is no alternative so far. Therefore many of them do not take their polls in the elections, and request from others to do the same, until there are real alternatives from which to chose. However, no one mentioned the founding of a new party or the like. Even joining a political movement driven by the people is only possible under certain preconditions: *“I am not into politics, /.../ but there are now people who are*

forming new parties to promote such an idea [secularism], and of course I will support this party in my own way and as much as I can. But I am not a political man myself, I do not like getting involved in politics, but I will support it /.../ I will [play a role] but not actively, because I am not a political man myself but I will be supporting parties that will advocate such a secular program” (I19, 09.03.2011).

The described circumstances are comparable to a standoff-situation. The interviewees see a change of the people as the more promising way than a change of the politicians. However, they do miss some kind of activism. They do know that it is the people who have to change but miss a strategy on how to do that.

Many interviewees mention though that things are quite easier outside the political field. They clearly see a role for returnees in changing the country. Some of them do stress that no conscious effort is needed to bring any change to Lebanon. By the nature of their experience returnees will bring new ideas from outside, adjust and successfully implement them in the Lebanese context. *“When people come back they come back for a position or for whatever. Whatever they do, they automatically and without really feeling it, they will contribute to the upbringing of the economy of the country because their know-how is an added value, anybody’s know-how from the guy that cleans the street to any chairman or president of a company, anybody back is added value and added resources” (I15, 09.03.2011).*

5.2.3 Feeling of Responsibility

I asked about the feeling of personal responsibility to act in order to tackle the issues the interviewees mentioned, if given through the means of change they identified. Those 11 respondents who did not see any opportunity for change or felt that Lebanon is too much pressured by outside political influences expressed no feelings of responsibility. They expressed a certain passivity, also based on the self-understanding as being too ‘small’ to address these ‘big’ problems. *“Everything will change one day like everywhere, you know. I just wait and see” (I3, 10.12.2010).* Those respondents, who identified certain areas of problems, combined with identified meanings of change seemed to be very promising in regard to a change potential. From identifying a problem, and knowing how it might be to tackle, to act intentionally to solve this problem it is however still a long way. Some (3 of 10) of those who identified possible meanings of change did not feel a responsibility to act directly and actively on these problems. Some of them also showed a certain degree of passivity as they would only under certain conditions act in one of the potential means they identified.

Seven respondents showed and articulated a feeling of responsibility. This includes also the thought of having come back and to stay (not necessarily for good) for this purpose: *“If everyone like me leaves, who are we leaving the country to” (I17, 17.03.2011).* Another interviewee put it like this: *“I*

have to be one of the people who will help to change things, I hope. /.../ I mean, you wanna do something for your country, to help revive your country” (I14, 24.02.2011).

Some of them referred in particular to the experience they made abroad and that it is useful for them in acting as they wish: *“The experience I got living abroad expanded my horizons and inspires me to do projects here /.../ I feel like bringing back things here. I believe I came back at the right time to be part of the changing generation” (I12, 14.03.2011).*

Some respondents even see a special responsibility for returnee for any progress in Lebanon as they have been abroad and acquired new skills and experiences. *“They [returnees] bring with them fresh ideas and modern ideas and helpful ideas, they are the main factor behind the progress that’s going on in Lebanon” (I19, 09.03. 2011).*

Two respondents are different from the ones presented so far in that they had a feeling of responsibility and pursued some intentional actions and failed. The experience however disillusioned them in a great deal. One interviewee is planning to re-emigrate while the other one already has her re-emigration fixed. *“I obliged myself to be like them, without showing my real face or my real interest” (I6, 15.12.2010). “I felt that I come back and maybe try to change something but I realized that I cannot” (I11, 17.03.2011).*

5.3 Agents of Change or Agents of Stability?

Based on the findings from the last section I categorized the interviewees into three categories, which can be found in table 2. The categories are: agent of change, agent of stability, and failed agent of change. Upon their accounts I identified four agents of change and two failed agents of change. Who was not identified for this category became automatically an agent of stability.

I use the term agent of change, referring to their intention to act in order to change. However it has to be clear, that an agent of stability does not necessarily act with the intention to keep stability. It is out of the reach of my data to make any assumptions on the real impact of their actions. In this respect, some of the identified agents of stability might introduce changes through a specific action, however, I was interested in the intentionality of the action.

Interviewee #	Agent of change	Agent of stability	Failed agent of change
1		x	
2		x	
3		x	
4		x	
5		x	
6			x
7		x	
8		x	
9		x	
10		x	
11			x
12	x		
13		x	
14	x		
15		x	
16		x	
17	x		
18		x	
19		x	
20	x		
21		x	
22		x	
23		x	
Sum	4 agents of change	17 agents of stability	2 failed agents of change

Table 2: Agents of change and agents of stability

The identified characteristics for an agent of change are that he/she is aware of his/her personal change through the migration experience which provided him/her with new skills, values, patterns of thought he/she did not possess before and that he/she intentionally acts to put his/her new ideas into practice in order to change circumstances in his/her chosen field of action.

An agent of stability might perceive that he/she has changed while being abroad but he/she assumes his/her acquired skills, ideas and experiences to be not applicable in the Lebanese context and therefore falls back in his/her pre-migration style of action or follows the current patterns of action.

A failed agent of change is a former agent of change, whose attempts were unsuccessful. This category confirms that intentional action also not necessarily leads to the desired outcome.

5.3.1 Change Activities

I will briefly point out the intentions and actions taken upon that intention by the agents of change. Within economics and work life one interviewee addresses the problem of young people to enter the job market by consciously only hiring fresh graduates in her own enterprise (I14). Two young interviewees decided to start their own business or work as free-lancers in order to resolve that

problem (I12, I17). This decision was also driven by discontent with the work atmosphere and work discipline in the work places. Three interviewees (I12, I17, I20) started small projects and campaigns, using social media and networks for awareness rising. These campaigns addressed topics as climate change, waste management, and women's rights. However, no campaign addressed clear political issues which made a huge part of the identified problems. None of the interviewees has the intention to pursue any activity in order to address identified problems within the political sphere.

5.4 Theoretical Discussion

In the following section I link my findings and discuss them in the light of Structuration Theory. I firstly present the findings from chapter 5.1 and 5.2 in the context of Structuration Theory and then continue with sections on the agents of change and agents of stability. Finally I will provide for the applicability of the theory and its limitations in the given context of this thesis.

The findings from chapter 5.1 on country comparisons and personal change show that the interviewees do perceive the host country and Lebanon to be differently. They constitute different social systems with different rules and resources which apply in the production and reproduction of the respective system. The interviewees stress that they had to make use of the rules and resources in the system of the host country, in order to function within that system. The applied rules became a stock of their knowledge. Even though they could not mention discursively all rules used, they are now to be found within each interviewees knowledgeability. That means that in any given situation in Lebanon the agent can equally also draw back on the rules used in the host country. These findings provide the basis for my further discussion as they verify that returnees do in fact have the opportunity to use certain capacities which are not given to Lebanese who have stayed. The difference between returnees and stayers is, that returnees have made a specific experience abroad which entails them with alternative modes of possible actions. Though returnees' perception of problems in Lebanon might not necessarily be different from stayers' perception, their action upon that identified problems might be different as they have those additional capacities which they might draw on in their actions.

In section 5.2 I presented the findings of problems, means of change and responsibility. The interviewees show that they are very well aware of the social system Lebanon constitutes and the different problems it has, which match problems I have mentioned in the background to Lebanon in chapter 3. They know the rules and resources which are used for system reproduction, also by other agents. Referring back to figure 1 on page 15 on the stratification model of the agent, through the reflexive monitoring of action the agents are aware of in what social context they move, and monitor

not only their actions but also those of other agents within the system. Accordingly, through the rationalization of action they could provide for how they do pursue or do not pursue certain actions.

From the identified problems it got clear that the majority of the interviewees wish for an increase and stronger implementation of formalized and strongly sanctioned rules (whether new rules or already given ones) within system production and reproduction. This refers to the lacking implementation of already given rules in everyday activities i.e traffic, nepotism and corruption in politics and the enforcement of democracy and Civil Rights. These fields are considered by now to be handled in informal manners and thus non-compliance with formalized rules is perceived to be only weakly sanctioned.

All in all the identified problems and the wish of these problems to resolve show that returnees actually wish for a transformation of the social system. However, coming back to figure 7 on page 18 and the choices an agent has on whether to transform or reproduce structure, in my given sample the majority of interviewees reproduce structure, only four agents can finally be identified as agents of change.

Giddens refers to agents as being rational, intentional and purposive, acting on what they think the outcome of the action will be. These four agents of change thus acted intentionally in order to transform structure. The four identified agents of change all show a key feature of creativity and risk-taking. Giddens stresses that every action leaves the agent with the notion that he could have also acted in a different way, that means an alternative, which basically opens the way for a transformation rather than reproduction. I argue, based on my data, that agents of change possess a higher level of creativity and risk-taking behavior. Three agents of change are working in creative professions and one is a human resource consultant. The task of a consultant basically is to find new ideas and change old patterns of action. Thus, the four agents might be better equipped in terms of creativity to identify action alternatives which hold the potential of change upon their belief. Through their experience in their job life these returnees are more prone to take an alternative action which could transform structure. Additionally, they take the risk, upon personal economic or reputation loss, to act with an intention in a supposedly changing manner. Three of the agents of stability also show a behavior of risk-taking by whether starting their own enterprises or work individually on a free-lance basis.⁶ The reason for this is also that they wanted to avoid strict hierarchies within Lebanese companies. In Giddens' terms this can be referred to authoritative resources. They felt that other actors hold too much domination and command over them. In their work life the respective

⁶ Besides the agents of change also other interviewees have founded their own enterprise, the difference is however that their business in itself is located outside of Lebanon, thus they do not fear to be affected by any political instabilities in Lebanon which might influence their business negatively.

senior would have too many capabilities to control them, in a way different than they are used to from working abroad. They escaped this dominion exactly by choosing to leave workplaces and work on their own. Being the head of an enterprise the agents of stability thus are actually capable of commanding authoritative resources over other agent, i.e. their subordinates. Thus within their work life they can introduce new rules which eventually might hold a transformative potential. Concerning agents of stability and referring back to the stratification model in figure 1, through the rationalization of action agents are very well aware of that they contribute to system reproduction, however not all of them do it intentionally. Only a few mentioned that they intentionally adjust their actions to contribute to system reproduction in order to have a good outcome of these actions for their own well-being. However, some interviewees stated that they tried or thought about reproducing their experience from abroad in the Lebanese context, but they considered the structure as unchangeable, also as there are too many other agents who act in a way in order to reproduce structure. This is especially true for intensive and tacit rules which can be found in everyday activities. The simple example of traffic rules might illustrate that. After some time some interviewees adjusted to the traffic rules in Lebanon, also by actually remembering this kind of rules from the past, before they left for abroad.

This phenomenon could be explained by referring to Giddens understanding of unconsciousness. Agents wish to avoid anxiety; the main mechanism to do so is routine. Following daily and accepted rules (accepted by the majority) and avoiding any action which would result in a radical change provides the agent/returnee with what Giddens calls ontological security, i.e. a confidence and trust in the social world and the manner it appears to be. Referring back to figure 1, actions do have unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences which could have a feedback effect and be system reproductive through homeostatic loops.

As described in the background chapter and mentioned by the interviewees Lebanon is a war-torn society, having especially an influence on the way in which the political life is conducted. In that respect it is of special interest that no interviewee pursues any activity on addressing those problems identified within the political sphere. The interviewees clearly identify constraints in society, however they do not see them as enabling but rather restricting their choice of actions. Except for those agents of stability who intentionally reproduce structure, they seem to feel alienated from the society. They move and act within a given body of rules and resources within the social system, without really feeling as a part of it. Although they stress their belonging and love to the country of Lebanon, the Lebanon they refer to is not the actual Lebanon they are living in. Lebanon is referred to as place of beautiful nature, with a joyful way of life. Compared to the accounts from their migration countries and the way in which they are seen, the difference is striking. US, Canada, and

Europe are seen as places of order and rules, democracy and protection of their citizens. In describing their migration countries interviewees clearly refer to *States*, the provision of state services and the relationship between citizen and state there. Lebanon however, is not seen as a *State* as such. Interviewees do not return to the *State* of Lebanon, but to a Lebanon which is a space rather than a political body. This notion of Lebanon can be a result of the migration experience and the notion of home they developed while being abroad (Abdelhady 2008). This understanding of the Lebanon might be a reason why interviewees are reluctant to take on transforming actions, as they feel alienated from the social system.

Coming back to my research question if returnees are agents of change and potential drivers of development, I can conclude for my sample that only a minority intentionally take on transformative actions and become agents of change, thus their potential effect on development processes within Lebanon might be rather limited.

Concerning the applicability of Structuration Theory, Giddens theory helped me describing and explaining my findings within the frame of his theory. I tried to explain why the agents of change act within certain fields and why problems within politics are not addressed. My research does only focus on individual action and not collectivities. Giddens provides agents with the power to intervene in events as a transformative capacity. This implies that a power to intervene in a course of events is equally with a power to lead to social change or a transformation of society. He directly implies a connection between activity and change. However, it is doubtful how much the power of the individual agent to intervene is really a power to transform as transformation or change usually requires a group of people acting on a common ground. As Loyal puts it: "It appears that Giddens wants people to have choice because he wants them to be capable of effecting change in the existing order of things" (Loyal 2003:67). I cannot make any assumptions on the real outcomes of the actions of the agents of change, however the possibility exists that they might contribute to transforming society on a larger scale.

All in all, my deductive approach shows that Structuration Theory is applicable for exploring the development potential of highly-skilled returnees.

6 Conclusion

It was the aim of my study to contribute to the debate about migration and development, i.e. to answer the question to which extent highly skilled returnees might contribute to development in the home country. To do this I assumed that a developmental process basically means changing the society through transforming underlying structural properties which are a major constrain to development or pose a development problem in itself.

My findings show, that only a few returnees of my sample have the intention to induce changes and that these changes do not take place in the political field. It could be shown that a feature of agents of change is risk-taking behavior and creativity. The high number of agents of stability can best be explained by referring to Giddens' concept of routine and ontological security.

Special attention should be placed on the results on political activism. They mirror the need for a new understanding of citizenship and a new relationship between the citizens and its state as it has been identified by UNDP (UNDP 2009). Policy implications of this work are thus, that there should not necessarily be a government policy directed at spurring return to Lebanon through government provided forms of any support. It is questionable, upon the reputation the government has, if any returnee would accept support through the government. Rather a concerted effort should be directed at improving the overall political situation, especially in regard to citizenship. Returnees pose only one potential source of skills, ideas and change in a society. Though they can play a very important role in the national development process at home, they are not the only influential group.

Linking my findings back to the broader discussion of return migration and development, it has to be acknowledged that in the case of Lebanon, for the findings of my study the link is not given. However, these findings are only relevant in the case of Lebanon and cannot be generalized whether on a space or time axis, and are also not enough for the case of Lebanon, but only constitute exploratory findings. They describe a specific result linked to the specific time and place of the composition of this work.

Further research on the topic could be done by focusing on people within the social proximity of returnees. So far, qualitative studies on the topic put the returnee in focus. However, his accounts of any change potential are only subjective assumptions. Therefore, it would be needed to verify his accounts by other people, i.e. family, friends and colleagues who can give accounts of if the returnee really introduced change. In general further research on return should, in light of the multidisciplinary of development, be an interdisciplinary project, not only including sociology but also disciplines as economics, political sciences, or geography.

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Appendix A - List of Interviewees

Interviewee #	Interview date and form	Sex m/f	Age	Profession/working in	Date of leaving and return dd.mm.yy (if given)	approximate years abroad ⁷	Emigration Country yrs. (if given)	Second citizenship
1	In person, 07.12.2010	m	45	Engineer	89-01.10	21	Canada 11 yrs., Emirates 10yrs.	yes, Canadian
2	In person, 09.12.2010	m	39	Engineer	13.10.90-03.96	6	Canada	yes, Canadian
3	In person, 10.12.2010	f	65	Entrepreneur,	1978-1981; 1978-95	20	UK 3yrs., Canada 17yrs.	yes, Canadian
4	In person, 13.12.2010	m	32	Doctor	8.10.07-29.10.2010	3	France, Belgium, Germany	no
5	In person, 14.12.2010	m	50	Landscape Architect	86-96	10	Canada	no
6	In person, 15.12.2010	m	27	Agricultural engineer	09.06-11.09	3	France	no
7	In person, 20.12.2010	f	32	Doctor	06-09	3	France	no
8	Skype, 01.03.2011	m	28	Advertising	05-02.10	5	Qatar 2½, US 2½	yes, American
9	Phone call, 15.03.2011	m	33	Advertising	01-10	9	Dubai, Saudi-Arabia	no
10	Skype + Chat, 07.03.2011	m	32	Business	85-99	14	US	no
11	Skype, 17.03.2011	f	32	Creative director in advertising	03-05; 05-09,	6	Japan 2, Kuwait 4	no
12	Skype, 14.03.2011	f	27	Designer	06-09	3	US	yes, American
13	Phone call, 03.03.2011	f	52	Lawyer	12.88-17.06.91	3	Germany	no
14	Skype with video, 24.02.2011	f	54	Human resource consultant	75-10	35	United Arab Emirates, England, Canada, (Qatar, Dubai	yes, Canadian

⁷ Especially interviewees returning and leaving to Lebanon already several times could not recall exact dates or number of years

15	Skype with video, 09.03.2011	f	51	Human Resource consultant	99-09	10	Syria, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai	no
16	Phone call, 06.03.2011	m	28	Business	06-10	4	Saudi-Arabia	no
17	Skype with video, 17.03.2011	m	28	Advertising, free-lance writer	03-09	6	UK	yes, British
18	Questionnaire and further call, 04.03.2011	m	42	Human resource consultant	84-08	24	Greece 6, Canada 18	no
19	Phone call, 09.03.2011	m	47	Engineer , trading	76-92	26	UK, US	no
20	Skype, 17.03.2011	m	34	Architect	99-08	9	Japan 6, US 3	yes, British
21	Phone call, 14.03.2011	m	35	Lawyer	02-07	5	France	no
22	Phone call, 01.03.2011	m	38	Lawyer	99-04	5	Germany	no
23	Phone call, 14.03.2011	m	31	Business	06-03.08	2	United Arab Emirates	no

Appendix B – Interview Guide

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study. I will explain to you know the details about it I am a Masters Student in International Development and Management at Lund University in Sweden. I am conducting a study on highly-skilled returnees in Lebanon for which I interview several returnees. I collect these data for my Masters Thesis. I will ask you questions about your experience as an emigrant, your return to Lebanon, how you experience living in Lebanon now and what you think about Lebanon overall. You do not have to answer my questions if you do not want to. Also you can draw back from this interview at anytime. Everything you tell me is strictly confidential to me, I will not use your real name in my thesis. The data will only be used for the purpose of my thesis. Do you have any further questions? Do you agree with these conditions? Can I record the interview?

At first I would like to ask for some personal data about you.

Age:

Marital status:

Profession:

Year of leaving:

Year of coming back:

Second citizenship:

Migration Countries:

Migration

Why did you leave? How was it?

Did you go alone or together with your family?

Did you plan on coming back?

Did you keep in touch with your family and friends? How did you keep in touch?

Return

What was the main reason for you to return?

Did you took the decision to return alone or with your spouse, family? Did everyone support the decision?(if applicable)

Why did you return? How was it?

How were friends and families reactions when you returned?

Being back

Did things change in Lebanon since you left and until you came back? What did change? In which way?

What do you think has to change in Lebanon? Who could do that? What do you think could be possible to achieve those changes you mentioned? Do you feel a responsibility to act in a way to try to solve these problems? Do you feel that returnees could have a special role in Lebanon?

Could you explain to me what Lebanon is for you?

What do you think about the high rate of emigration from Lebanon? Do you have friends or family who want to emigrate/already live abroad?

Would you like more people to come back? What has to be done for them to come back?

Did you already have a job upon return?

Would you advise your friends to come back?