

Lebanese food, 'Lebaneseness' and the Lebanese diaspora in London

Hospitality & Society, 9(2): 145-160

doi: 10.1386/hosp.9.2.145_1

Ali Abdallah, Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Qatar

Thomas Fletcher, Leeds Beckett University, UK

Kevin Hannam, City University of Macau

Abstract

Lebanese food, as a cultural tradition, and in the context of Lebanese migration, mobility and diasporic identity, is the focus of this article. We use ethnographic methods in the form of participant observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with restaurant owners, workers and members of the Lebanese diaspora to critically examine the connections between diasporic identity and Lebanese food in London. The analysis revealed that Lebanese migrants living in London are highly affected and influenced by their homeland and its traditions. Analysis also revealed how the Lebanese hospitality industry has grown and adapted, becoming embedded, hybridized and contested by members of the Lebanese diaspora. We argue that this contestation revolves around a mobile sense of place and belonging.

Keywords

diaspora

identity

food

hospitality

Lebanese

migration

mobilities

Introduction

‘We do not see ourselves as waiters and chefs, we see ourselves as Lebanese migrants promoting our identity to the rest of the world’ (Focus group 3, 2011). In the above quote we see the mobility connections between working in hospitality, migration and cultural identity proudly expressed. Lebanese food has become a global phenomenon, with many other cultures utilizing the phrase ‘Lebanese food’ to signify a certain type of (often) fast food associated with grilled meats (kebabs), bread and hummus. While there are acknowledged food politics over the origin of staple Middle Eastern dishes (Ijicho and Ranta 2016), this article seeks to explore the connections between the Lebanese diaspora, food and mobility by asking the following research questions: how do Lebanese restaurant workers perceive their own cuisine? How has it become hybridized through globalization processes? Finally, how do they contest this globalization through attempts at maintaining their own cultural identity? Based upon qualitative research with Lebanese restaurant owners and workers and members of the Lebanese diaspora in London we seek to answer these questions and argue that Lebanese food and ‘Lebaneseness’ have become embedded in London, but also hybridized and subsequently contested by the Lebanese restaurant workers themselves. In doing so we use a mobilities theoretical approach to understand the fluidity of belonging for the Lebanese diaspora.

The UK 2011 census recorded nearly 16,000 Lebanese-born immigrants residing in the United Kingdom (ONS 2013); however, the size of the wider diaspora, including subsequent generations, is widely estimated to be anything between eight and fourteen million, more than the population of four million residents in Lebanon itself (Tabar 2005). Lebanese migrants in the United Kingdom can be broadly classified into two groups. First are the pre-Civil War migrants who sought a better lifestyle abroad and searched for investment. Second are the

post-Civil War migrants who fled political turbulence, leading them to hunt for day-to-day employment as a means of survival. Pre-war migrants became investors while post-war migrants became employees. Pre-war migrants originated from wealthy and upper-class backgrounds and most were Christian and had lived in the more luxurious suburbs of Beirut (Tabar 2005). They sought out investment in economically stable countries such as the United Kingdom, with London being a popular business hub. Post-war migrants, meanwhile, typically from medium- to low-income families, had left Lebanon in search of brighter economic futures. These post-war migrants usually found employment within the hospitality industry and promoted closer ties between the pre-war wealthy migrants, who had already invested in restaurants, bars, bakeries and cafes within London.

In the Arabic world (broadly conceived), food, cooking and wider hospitality practices associated with these are considered to be essential components of living. They are not only used as a form of consumption but also as a form of entertainment, conviviality, identity construction and cultural expression (Stephenson 2014). Hasan (1999) states that, for Arabic people, hospitality lies at the heart of who they really are in terms of identity, while Schulman and Barouki-Winter (2000) claim that Arabic people put the duty of hospitality above prayer. In this context, Mason has argued that:

While it is important not to fall prey to Orientalist romanticisations of the Arab world, notions of hospitality (dhaifa) and generosity (karam) are of central importance within Arab culture. Given the importance of hospitality within Arab culture, and the continuing sense of the wider Arab 'nation' transcending state boundaries, it is not

surprising that the migration and reception of fellow Arabs is constructed within a discourse of hospitality. (2011: 356)

Stephenson (2014: 157), however, cautions against any over-generalization of 'Pan-Arab' hospitality, emphasizing the 'differing ethnic, regional and national interpretations and attributes of Islamic hospitality'. Hence, in this study we examine Lebanese hospitality in terms of the ways in which for those working in this industry the construction of 'Lebaneseness' constitutes a key element of their contested and hybridized identity. We begin by establishing the wider theoretical connections between contemporary 'mobilities' and the Lebanese diaspora.

Theorizing mobilities and the Lebanese diaspora

The mobilities paradigm is a contemporary concept in the social sciences that investigates the movement of people, materials and ideas and the implication of such movements (Sheller and Urry 2006; Hannam et al. 2006). The concept of mobilities not only deals with the physical movement of people, information and objects, but also takes into consideration the relations between such im/mobilities and their ethical dimensions (Adey 2010; Adey and Lin 2014). In addition, mobilities research extends beyond the physical practice of movement to the meanings, representations and ideologies associated with movement (and stillness). It not only explores the direct movement of people, ideas, information and objects, but also attempts to interrogate the effects and implications that this may have on people, including culture, identities and the environment (Urry 2012). The interdisciplinary field of mobilities research thus

encompasses research on the spatial mobility of humans, nonhumans and objects; the circulation of information, images and capital; as well as the study of the physical means for movement such as infrastructures, vehicles and software systems that enable travel and communication to take place. (Sheller 2011: 1)

Comentado [k1]: I just added the missing year here

Therefore, it brings together some of the more purely 'social' concerns of sociology (inequality, power, hierarchies) with the 'spatial' concerns of geography (territory, borders, scale) and the 'cultural' concerns of anthropology and media studies (discourses, representations, schemas), while inflecting each with a relational ontology of the co-constitution of subjects, spaces and meanings (Sheller 2011). Moreover, mobilities research has foregrounded the materialities of mobilities, highlighting the ways in which various 'things' become socially important for travel and the making of places. One aspect of such mobilities is the travel of food and the resulting work involved in the movement and affordances of hospitality (Germann Molz 2007; Mintz 2015).

In terms of food mobilities, Duruz (1999: 307) has noted, 'on a regular basis, a culinary map is drawn and re-drawn – one that is textured with memories' through everyday food practices. More recent research has developed these insights from a mobilities perspective, as Gibson (2007: 4) notes: 'food is good to think mobilities with'. Cook and Harrison (2007: 40) show the complicated global biographies of foods as they make their way through various capitalist brokers such that demands for authenticity from both consumers and producers become largely erased. Furthermore, Gibson (2007: 15) notes that: 'eating is important for the figure of the migrant in diasporic practices of migrant home building'. This allows connectivity between old and new memories and can be utilized by diaspora in the context of

‘modernisation, dislocation and regionalisation, re-emplacing their homeland, making their locality visible and sensible’ (Panyagaew 2007: 117). Moreover, diaspora make culinary maps that ‘are produced by everyday inscriptions of the imagination – inscriptions that involve the senses, memories, rituals and moments of possibility – on familiar places associated with food’ (Duruz 1999: 308).

It is thus impossible to think of any diaspora without understanding their varied mobilities (Coles and Timothy 2004; King and Christou 2011). Diaspora has conventionally referred to the transnational dispersal of a cultural community. Raman (2014: n.page) suggests that early readings of diaspora made a number of assumptions, namely that ‘they were born of suffering and loss, contained a desire to return to a “homeland” [...] [and were] potentially radical in character, a subaltern in the midst of dominant political structures’. Raman argues that these assumptions prioritize the legitimacy of those communities who were *forced* to leave a dwelling place. As a result, they are unable to account for migrant communities who are in control of their movements (see Stephenson 2006). Raman observes that early conceptualizations of diaspora were largely essentialist. Subsequent iterations, developed primarily from the work of Stuart Hall (1994) and Paul Gilroy (1993), are increasingly nuanced and anti-essentialist – instead interpreting diaspora ‘as a subversive mode of identification, which challenged notions of absolute states of being’ (Raman 2003: n.page).

Kalra et al. (2005) argue that diaspora means to be *from* one place, but *of* another. Thus, understanding diaspora requires that we understand ‘migrant’ communities as being existentially connected to a specific place of origin or an imagined body of people that extends beyond the current dwelling place (Hage 1997). However, belonging to a diaspora is

Comentado [TF2]: The original 2003 publication link has been removed and replaced with one from 2014. However, page numbers have been removed.

not necessarily about identification with a single source of cultural heritage; rather, diaspora should be conceptualized as a state of consciousness, which is not *necessarily* linked with a sense of rootedness and/or belonging (Brah 1996; Anthias 2001). Consequently, belonging is never a question of affiliation to a singular idea of ethnicity or nationalism, but rather about the *multivocality of belongings* (Kalra et al. 2005: 29). This multivocality, however, can be both enabling and constraining in that, if we think about diasporas as possessing very fluid notions of ‘rootedness’, we should note that this may also translate into a shared sense of (non)belonging. Thus, as Fletcher (2012: 617) has argued,

diasporic identities do not simply revolve around either, the reproduction of existing cultures within new settings; or the appropriation of new ones. Instead, diasporic identities must [though I would now amend to ‘may usefully’] be viewed as being fluid, syncretic and hybrid.

As Stuart Hall (1994: 235) wrote:

The diaspora experience [...] is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.

What is clear from each of these examples is that the concept of diaspora constitutes a rich device to think about questions of belonging, continuity, hybridity, mobility and solidarity in the context of dispersal and transnational networks of connection (Fortier 2002). Fortier (2002) further argues that the presence and experiences of diasporic subjects put any normative notion of culture, identity and citizenship into question by their very location outside of the time-space of the nation. We can see understandings of the 'nation' and 'home' also being contested through contemporary examples of transnational mobilities and reverse diaspora – where those who have left the homeland, been exiled or have even simply been on an extended working holiday have subsequently returned to their ancestral 'homeland' (Wilson et al. 2009; King and Christou 2011). For example, Taylor (2015: 193) shows that returning Punjabi migrants' attempt

to distinguish themselves from the resident population through conspicuous consumption, and simultaneous attempts from Punjabi residents to exclude Non-Resident Indians from 'real' Indian status, lead to a continual reprocessing of home across different sites of mobility, as well as demonstrating the 'never fully achieved' nature of home.

Nevertheless, despite their dispersal and fragmentation, Humphrey (2004) argues that members of the Lebanese diaspora are united by their experiences of exile and conflict. He refers to 'group exile', imposed by wars and civil unrest and 'individual exile' caused by a lack of financial stability. He suggests that, in the case of the Lebanese, diasporic experience is the product of national disintegration and the destruction of their social worlds, and their experiences of resettlement in migration. While their cultural history of being Lebanese (their

'Lebaneseness') remains a source of pride for many within the diaspora, it is also the case that being Lebanese is often an unavoidable ascriptive identity that is imposed upon them, based almost entirely on cultural stereotype. For Farry (2005), 'Lebaneseness', in the context of the West becomes a burden for most Lebanese migrants, specifically during turbulent times, including rising Islamophobia in the wake of 9/11 and war in the Middle East, as they are associated with Islamists, even the Christian Lebanese. Lebanese communities therefore, irrespective of their religious affiliation, carry a 'burden of representation' wherever they travel. Abdelhady (2007, 2008) similarly argues that Lebanese diasporic identity has become increasingly transient. It is less focused on the myth of return (Ali and Holden 2006), but rather on building homeliness in the diaspora and therefore oscillates between the search for roots and the move towards ever-increasing hybridity.

Research methods

This study employed a range of ethnographic approaches to observe and experience the Lebanese diaspora in a natural setting, in this case, hospitality. Fieldwork was conducted between 2011 and 2013 by Abdallah who, as a British Lebanese living in the United Kingdom at the time, could be considered an insider within the Lebanese community. Debates about the promises and pitfalls of insider/outsider status in qualitative research are already well rehearsed elsewhere (Berry and Clair 2011; Duneier 2004; Fletcher 2014; Gallagher 2000). For the sake of this research, it is important to note that a shared cultural history was invaluable for facilitating data collection. Hawamdeh and Raigangar (2014: 27) concluded that: 'Openness, flexibility and a reflexive approach by the researcher can help manage challenges in Arab settings'. Indeed, the challenges of collecting data with Arabic speakers have been noted in terms of the need to have an open discussion about personal space with participants and their families prior to conducting research. Moreover, as the

researcher conducting the interviews and focus groups is male, this limited him to conducting the research only with males and mixed male and female groups to maintain cultural values.

At the time of data collection Abdallah was living and working in northern England and so due to the necessity to be in London, some 350 miles away, data were collected intermittently over a period of three years. Between 2011 and 2013, Abdallah made nine trips to London, spending between two and eight weeks there at a time. Due to the busy lifestyles and commitments of diaspora members and the necessity for each trip to be as productive as possible three forms of qualitative data collection, namely participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, were undertaken during each visit. Andrew Gimson, writing in *The Spectator*, noted that:

Londoners have no need to travel to Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus or some other city of the Middle East in order to experience the sensation of being in the Arab world. A visit to the southernmost stretch of the Edgware Road is quite sufficient. (2003: n.pag.)

Comentado [CE3]: Please replace n.pag. with appropriate page number if available.

Comentado [TF4R3]: No page as this is from a website

Thus after determining that Edgware Road acted as the central hub of the Lebanese diaspora in London, primary data collection began there and gradually shifted to various suburbs depending on the information provided from participants and the data collected.

A total of nineteen different groups took part in focus group interviews (see Table 1 below). Focus groups consisted of restaurant/franchise owners and staff members, food suppliers,

Lebanese families, staff from the Lebanese Embassy and members of Lebanese community groups. In addition to the focus groups, 40 individual semi-structured interviews took place with general members of the Lebanese diaspora in and around London. In terms of participant demographics, most focus groups were with men but varied considerably in terms of age. All respondents had some experience of working in the hospitality industry.

Participant observation was conducted on a daily basis during each trip. Observations included hospitality establishments such as restaurants, bars, fast food outlets and cafes, community centres, recreational parks and various Lebanese businesses. Cafes and restaurants were visited on a regular basis throughout the data collection period, with an average of three repeat visits to each establishment to build trust and rapport with participants. To ascertain a sense of the 'everyday', repeat visits were required as a means of observing the behaviours of diaspora members working in the establishments and the different guests who were present on different occasions. In addition to observing and consuming the hospitality on offer, Abdallah participated in community events, such as the Lebanese Festival in July 2013.

[Insert **Table 1:** Summary profile of respondents.]

Throughout the fieldwork it was clear that participants preferred to communicate in their mother tongue, Arabic. Abdallah is fluent in both Arabic and English and thus all data (excluding fieldnotes) were initially collected in Arabic. As the data were recorded in Arabic; this necessitated a long procedure of translating and transcribing. Data transcription involved a two-way process of typing up audio recordings and translating information directly from

Arabic into English and subsequent coding. Data were subsequently manually coded according to key themes and re-coded into sub-themes. One overall theme focused on the relations with home that respondents had and three research sub-themes became apparent during and after primary data collection: (1) the embeddedness of the Lebanese restaurant industry in specific areas in London; (2) the ways in which this industry has been globalized and hybridized; and (3) how members of the Lebanese community sought to contest the globalization of their 'Lebaneseness' through recourse to emphasizing their cultural traditions.

Embedding Lebanese food in London

In the literature review above, we have seen how diaspora have been conceptualized based, in part, on a mobile sense of 'belonging' and rootedness/uprootedness (Ahmed et al. 2003). Interview and focus group data in particular identified a strong connection between Lebanese cuisine and Lebanese rootedness in Edgware Road, London. Indeed, in much the same way that Roland Barthes (1972) identified French cuisine such as steak-frites as being central to French national identity, many respondents discussed how the quality of Lebanese food and hospitality were intimately linked with their inter-generational national and cultural identities. Respondents from focus group 3, who were members of staff from a restaurant on Edgware Road, stated that:

Working in a Lebanese restaurant is a passion for us because we know how to please customers and know what they want. Lebanese cooking is something that we learnt from our parents and grandparents and we are skilled in serving it to customers.

Respondents from this focus group discussed how hospitality is about much more than food and drink and, in fact, acts as a source of pride within the diaspora. Indeed, Edgware Road (known locally as 'Arab Street') in London acts as a central hub to both diaspora members and visitors seeking Lebanese hospitality. On one of his first fieldwork trips to London, Abdallah observed:

I look around Edgware Road and see the mixtures of Arabs and Europeans on the same street. I walk into any of the Lebanese restaurants on Edgware Road and see the passion that all staff members put into the cuisine, from attracting the customers and calling them in from the street, to serving the dishes, to the quality and taste of the food itself (April, 2011).

Pre-war migrants, in particular, were the key investors and creators of the Lebanese hospitality industry in London, although they are not the only investors. Members of the post-war migration cohort are also keen to establish new businesses and invest in their lives as members of the diaspora in London. With respect to the businesses established by the earlier generation of migrants, they were responsible for creating the basis of the Lebanese hospitality industry that exists around Edgware Road. Wealthy post-war migrants have since channelled further investment, innovations and food hybridity into this pre-existing industry.

The Lebanese diaspora in London began from the development of restaurants that were first established on and around Edgware Road, Westminster and South Kensington and grew thereafter (see Figure 1 below). As a result, Edgware Road became the centre or 'hub' of the

diaspora in London, a place where they would meet, socialize and, sometimes, reminisce (Figure 2 below). This embeddedness was illustrated by the testimonials of a number of respondents, each of whom had lived in London for over 30 years.

FIGURE 1 (Figure 1: Locations of the Lebanese diaspora hospitality industry in London.)

ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 2 (Figure 2: The spread of Lebanese restaurants on Edgware Road, London.)

ABOUT HERE

The presence demonstrated in Figure 2 is a significant reason why Edgware Road has become so attractive to new migrants, local Lebanese hospitality seekers and Arabic tourists in general. Looking beyond Edgware Road, as Figure 1 clearly shows, there are plenty of other Lebanese-type restaurants around London. Indeed, the popularity of and saturation of restaurants on Edgware Road eventually led to the prohibition of further restaurants there (Pharoah and Hale 2007). This has resulted in the geographic spread of restaurants to nearby districts in London.

Edgware Road is thus home to a variety of Lebanese restaurants, each providing its own unique interpretation of Lebanese hospitality and cultural traditions. Yet, despite their diversity, they each share a view that Lebanese hospitality is shaped by its cuisine, music, dancing and arkeeli (Arabic pipe smoking), all of which have come to represent and embody

‘Lebaneseness’. Respondents from focus group 3 with workers from one restaurant emphasized that:

Customers find it easy to visit us here as we are on Edgware Road. The road has a reputation for Lebanese cuisine and once they visit the road they then shop to find the best restaurant. Our advantage is that our restaurant offers traditional hospitality and entertainment and customers like this.

Edgware Road is, therefore, a hub for embodying ‘Lebaneseness’ and a place where the Lebanese diaspora has become rooted. Edgware Road is not necessarily unique in this respect. Brick Lane, for instance, has become the hub for the Bengali Diaspora and its food in London (Alexander 2011; Frost 2011). Participants from focus group 6 with family members who owned a restaurant described how their approach to hospitality is a reflection of their Lebanese identity but also their connection to London:

For us this is not a restaurant, this is a representation of our core values and this is what made our restaurant successful, we care about it. We also wanted to respect the place and the culture we live in.

These testimonies from restaurant owners and restaurant workers reinforce their commitment to showcasing Lebanese values or ‘Lebaneseness’ through the cuisine but also their ‘respect’ for the local culture that they are embedded within.

Hybridizing 'Lebaneseness' through food

Many respondents discussed the existence and influence of contemporary innovations that have developed a hybrid Lebanese cuisine catering to the London touristic experience. Participants from focus group 4 with restaurant employees discussed that what made their restaurant a success was the commercial potential of establishing a Lebanese fast food outlet. The respondents explained that:

All the Lebanese restaurants that you see in London are restaurants that sit customers down and offer them a service over a long period of time. A customer visiting a restaurant would have to wait at least one hour in order to eat. We wanted to offer a quick service where a customer could consume Lebanese food in 15 to 20 minutes.

The latter demonstrates the intersection of old and new cultural identities typical of hybridity (Fletcher 2012). In this instance, traditional cuisine is utilized in a western, fast food style. The success of a Lebanese fast food restaurant relies heavily on western customers as most Lebanese would not find this style of food consumption appealing. Observations at this restaurant revealed that nearly all the customers were non-Lebanese. In addition, this restaurant's opening hours also reveal a distinctly western approach and target. As these respondents pointed out: 'Our restaurant's opening hours are from 6pm to 1am, so we tend to attract lots of party goers or evening workers who simply want a quick meal'. Respondents from this restaurant also spoke more openly about fusing traditional Lebanese approaches with the demands of integrating in and appealing to British culture. In this way the hybridity and mobility of the Lebanese food actually affords greater embeddedness within the local environment:

For us it was a way of implementing Lebanese culture while also respecting British culture. We do not like being seen as strict Arab Muslims. We want to show everyone that Lebanese culture also serves alcohol and we combined the British style bar into our restaurant [...] Our goal is to make Lebanese food just like our mother made it, but serve it in a British ambience. (Focus group 5)

This implementation of Lebanese culture in a British context emphasizes the ‘multivocality of belongings’ (Kalra et al. 2005) that are created through hybrid food mobilities.

Contesting ‘Lebaneseness’ through food

There are limits to hybridity, however. For example, participants in another focus group asserted that the success of their restaurant was related to the upholding of the owner’s religious beliefs:

[T]he owner is a Muslim and believes that by not serving any alcohol in any of his restaurants he will gain trusted regular customers [...] in the month of Ramadan our restaurants are by far the busiest amongst all other Lebanese restaurants because our customers know that we do not serve or sell alcohol.

The struggles between old and new, tradition and innovation, which are occurring within the Lebanese diaspora, are reflected in the diverse cuisine options available along Edgware Road. For some members of the Lebanese diaspora, Edgware Road represents the site of complex

cultural struggle between the negotiation and renegotiation of hybridity (as articulated through the hospitality industry), in addition to reflecting current events in the homeland and political divisions within the Lebanese diaspora itself (Schänzel et al. 2014).

While the non-diasporic consumer may accept that the Edgware area is the focus of Lebanese food culture and traditions in London, the same is not necessarily true for members of London's Lebanese diaspora. In two of the focus groups conducted it became clear that while for some Lebanese and many non-Lebanese people Edgware Road is the epitome of 'Lebaneseness', for other members of the diaspora it has become a crude and distasteful representation of their homeland culture. Respondents from focus group 6 stated that:

For us, Edgware Road is Ajwa Road [Ajwa is an Arabic word meaning the 'filthiest'] as there are lots of Arab males seeking female Arab companions and vice versa, lots of black trading and money laundering, party seekers and troublemakers.

Respondents from focus group 8 added:

Edgware Road attracts Arab tourists that visited Lebanon in the past and seek the same atmosphere in London, attracts visitors of different nationalities including British as they find it unique and entertaining and also attracts Lebanese that are seeking work opportunities or are single and want to have a good time.

The emphasis here is on the ways in which Lebanese food culture has become attractive to tourists as part of a wider trend towards culinary tourism (Long 2004) rather than locals and the sense that this aspect of globalization has led to a sense of uprootedness for these members of the Lebanese community.

While the restaurants on Edgware Road are predominantly Lebanese owned, many Lebanese diaspora members do not actually frequent them. Rather, they seek out other locations for socializing with one another, including their homes. As participants from focus group 7 with Lebanese families explained:

For us, Lebanese families, Edgware Road is not our centre. We prefer meeting in socials like this [during a school day out], or we regularly meet in each other's houses and occasionally we visit Lebanese restaurants on the outskirts of London. But not Edgware Road!

These respondents thus actively sought to de-centre themselves from the Lebanese community in Edgware Road, displacing themselves within the diaspora both metaphorically and physically.

While claiming to offer a 'traditional' Lebanese experience, some respondents were also keen to discuss the commercialization and commodification of Lebanese cuisine and hospitality in contrast to that offered in their own homes:

Lebanese hospitality provided in restaurants is not the same as the one provided at home. Our cooking requires detailed attention and hours of preparation. What you get in restaurants is simply made for customers and not made with complete care and detailed attention. Even arkeeli is prepared differently at home. (Focus group 18)

It was further added that:

Every Lebanese knows that real Lebanese hospitality is only offered in Lebanese homes. There is much more to food than tabbouleh, hummus and shawarma.

Traditional Lebanese dishes take hours to prepare and require detailed attention when cooked. This is something that restaurants are not willing to do. (Focus group 19)

Consequently, for some Lebanese respondents, Edgware Road provides only Lebanese hospitality that is performed predominantly for non-Lebanese customers and, in particular, global tourists (on the performance of hospitality see Crang [1994]). They contest the hybridity of Lebanese cuisine and instead emphasize that it has become commodified for western consumption. For them, 'Lebaneseness', however, remains associated with *home* cooking and it is the site of 'home' that helps maintain cultural identity rather than the restaurants on Edgware Road.

Conclusion

We began this article with a quotation from one of our focus groups that emphasized the mobility connections between working in hospitality, migration and cultural identity. This article has examined the embeddedness, hybridity and contestation of Lebanese food and ‘Lebaneseness’ in London. We argue that the Lebanese diaspora living in London remains highly affected and influenced by multiple connections to ‘home’ – even when, as Taylor (2015) acknowledges, these are never fully achieved. First, they have fostered an embeddedness within London, through the Lebanese restaurant scene in and around Edgware Road, thus re-creating and ‘rooting’ ‘Lebaneseness’ through its food, even while this food becomes hybridized. Second, there remains an idealized connection to Lebanon, the Lebanese ‘homeland’. However, while many Lebanese restaurant workers dream of returning to Lebanon, many more acknowledge that this is an impossibility, embodying the ‘myth of return’ (Ali and Holden 2006: 217). Third, this ideal notion of the homeland is also connected to displacing or de-centring ‘Lebaneseness’ away from its London centre in Edgware Road and towards home cooking in members of the Lebanese diaspora’s own homes. The Lebanese diaspora in London uses hospitality as a means of both cultural survival and contested identity development: it is thus not a static culture but a highly mobile one.

References

Abdelhady, D. (2007), ‘Cultural production in the Lebanese diaspora: Memory, nostalgia and displacement’, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 35:1, pp. 39–62.

____ (2008), ‘Beyond home/host networks: Forms of solidarity among Lebanese immigrants in a global era’, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 13:3, pp. 133–53.

Adey, P. (2010), *Mobility*, London: Routledge.

Adey, P. and Lin, W. (2014), 'Social and cultural geographies of air-transport', in A. Goetz and L. Budd (eds), *Geographies of Air Transport*, London, Routledge, pp. 61–72.

Ahmed, S., Castañeda, C., Fortier, A.-M. and Sheller, M. (eds) (2003), 'Introduction: uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migration', in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Oxford: Berg pp.1-19.

Alexander, C. (2011), 'Making Bengali Brick Lane: Claiming and contesting space in East London', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 62:2, pp. 201–20.

Ali, N. and Holden, A. (2006), 'Post-colonial Pakistani mobilities: The embodiment of the "Myth of Return" in tourism', *Mobilities*, 1:2, pp. 217–42.

Anthias, F. (2001), 'New hybridities, old concepts: The limits of "culture"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24:4, pp. 619–41.

Barthes, R. (1972), *Mythologies*, New York: The Noonday Press.

Berry, K. and Clair, P. (2011), 'Reflecting on the call to ethnographic reflexivity: A collage of responses to questions of contestation', *Cultural studies ⇔ Critical Methodologies*, 11:2, pp. 199–209.

Brah, A. (1996), *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London: Routledge.

Coles, T. and Timothy, D. (eds) (2004), *Tourism, Diasporas and Space: Travels to Promised Lands*, London: Routledge.

Cook, I. and Harrison, M. (2007), 'Follow the thing: "West Indian Pepper Sauce"', *Space and Culture*, 10:1, pp. 40–63.

Crang, P. (1994), 'It's showtime: On the workplace geographies of display in a restaurant in southeast England', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12:6, pp. 675–704.

Cresswell, T. and Merriman, P. (2013), *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Duneier, M. (2004), 'Three rules I go by in my ethnographic research on race and racism', in M. Bulmer and J. Solomos (eds), *Researching Race and Racism*, London: Routledge, pp. 92–103.

Duruz, J. (1999), 'The streets of Clovelly: Food, difference and place-making', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 13:3, pp. 305–14.

Farry, M. (2005), 'Shifting identities among second and third generation Lebanese living in Aotearoa/New Zealand', in P. Tabar (ed.), *Lebanese Diaspora: History, Racism and Belonging*, Beirut: Lebanese American University, pp. 251–75.

Fletcher, T. (2012), "'Who do 'they' cheer for?': Cricket, diaspora, hybridity and divided loyalties amongst British Asians', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47:5, pp. 612–31.

____ (2014), "'Does he look like a Paki?': An exploration of "whiteness", positionality and reflexivity in inter-racial sports research', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 6:2, pp. 244–60.

Fortier, A. (2002), 'Queer diaspora', in D. Richardson and S. Seidman (eds), *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, London: Sage, pp. 183–98.

Frost, N. (2011), 'Green curry: Politics and place-making on Brick Lane', *Food, Culture & Society*, 14:2, pp. 225–42.

Gallagher, C. (2000), 'White like me? Methods, meaning, and manipulation in the field of white studies', in F. Winddance Twine and J. Warren (eds), *Racing Research Researching Race*, London: New York University Press, pp. 67–99.

Germann Molz, J. (2007), 'Eating difference: The cosmopolitan mobilities of culinary tourism', *Space and Culture*, 10:1, pp. 77–93.

Gibson, S. (2007), 'Food mobilities: Travelling, dwelling and eating cultures', *Space and Culture*, 10:1, pp. 4–21.

Gilroy, P. (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London: Verso.

Gimson, A. (2003), 'The Arab Street', *The Spectator*, 12 April,
<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2003/04/the-arab-street/>. Accessed 26 June 2018.

Hage, G. (1997), 'At home in the entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, "Ethnic Food," and migrant home-building', in H. Grace (ed.) *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sydney's West*, Sydney: Pluto, pp. 99–153.

Hall, S. (1994), 'Cultural identity and diaspora', in P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, London: Harvester, pp. 392–403.

Hannam, K., Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006), 'Editorial: Mobilities, immobilities and moorings'. *Mobilities*, 1:1, pp. 1–32.

Hasan, A. (1999), 'Arab culture and identity: Arab food and hospitality', Suite University, www.suite101.com. Accessed 18 March 2012.

Hawamdeh, S. and Raigangar, V. (2014), 'Qualitative interviewing: Methodological challenges in Arab settings', *Nurse Researcher*, 21:3, pp. 27–31.

Humphrey, M. (2004), 'Lebanese identities: Between cities, nations and trans-nations', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 26:1, pp. 15–17.

____ (2005), 'Lebanese ethnicities in a globalising world', in P. Tabar (ed.), *Lebanese diaspora: History, Racism and Belonging*, Beirut: Lebanese American University, pp. 31–54.

Ijicho, A. and Ranta, R. (2016), *Food, National Identity and Nationalism*, London: Routledge.

Jensen, M. T., Scarles, C. and Cohen, S. (2015), 'A multisensory phenomenology of interrail mobilities', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 53, pp. 61–76.

Comentado [CE5]: Please provide issue number if available.

Comentado [TF6R5]: No issue number – just issue date 'July'

Kalra, V. S., Kaur, R. and Hutnyk, J. (2005), *Diaspora and Hybridity*, London: Sage.

King, R. and Christou, A. (2011), 'Of counter-diaspora and reverse transnationalism: Return mobilities to and from the Ancestral Homeland', *Mobilities*, 6:4, pp. 451–66.

Lebanese Information Centre (2013), 'The Lebanese demographic reality', <https://www.lstatic.org/PDF/demographenglish.pdf>. Accessed 6 September 2017.

Long, L. (2004), *Culinary Tourism*, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press.

Mason, V. (2011), 'The Im/mobilities of Iraqi refugees in Jordan: Pan-Arabism, "Hospitality" and the figure of the "Refugee"', *Mobilities*, 6:3, pp. 353–73.

Mintz, S. (2015), 'Food and diaspora', *Food, Culture & Society*, 11:4, pp. 509–23.

ONS (2013), 'Census 2011', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>. Accessed 25 June 2018.

Panyagaew, W. (2007), 'Re-emplacing homeland: Mobility, locality, a returned exile and a Thai restaurant in Southwest China', *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 8:2, pp. 117–35.

Pharoah, R. and Hale, T. (2007), 'Behind the numbers: Migrant living patterns in Westminster', *Revealing Reality*, <https://www.revealingreality.co.uk/work/behind-the-numbers-migrant-living-patterns-in-westminster/>. Accessed 12 June 2018.

Raman, P. (2014), 'In search of the "authentic" diasporic subject', *Himal South Asian*, 22 December, <http://himalmag.com/search-authentic-diasporic-subject/>. Accessed 30 July 2017.

Schänzel, H. A., Brocz, M. and Sadaraka, L. (2014), '(Un)conditional hospitality: The host experience of the Polynesian community in Auckland', *Hospitality & Society*, 4:2, pp. 135–54.

Schulman, M. and Barouki-Winter, B. (2000), 'The extra mile: The ancient virtue of hospitality imposes duties on host and guest', *Issues in Ethics*, 11:1, pp. 12–15.

Sheller, M. (2011), 'Cosmopolitanism and mobilities', in M. Nowicka and M. Rovisco (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 349–66.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006), 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38:2, pp. 207–26.

Stephenson, M. L. (2006), 'Travel and the "freedom of movement": Racialised encounters and experiences amongst ethnic minority tourists in the EU', *Mobilities*, 1:2, pp. 285–306.

____ (2014), 'Deciphering "Islamic hospitality": Developments, challenges and opportunities', *Tourism Management*, 40, pp. 155–64.

Comentado [CE7]: Please provide issue number if available.

Comentado [TF8R7]: No issue number, just date – 'February'

Tabar, P. (ed.) (2005), *Lebanese Diaspora: History, Racism and Belonging*, Beirut: Lebanese American University.

____ (2010), *Lebanon: A Country of Emigration and Immigration*, Beirut: Lebanese American University.

Taylor, S. (2015), "'Home is Never Fully Achieved ... Even When We Are In it": Migration, belonging and social exclusion within Punjabi transnational mobility', *Mobilities*, 10:2, pp. 193–210.

Urry, J. (2012), *Sociology Beyond Societies*, London: Routledge.

Wilson, J., Fisher, D. and Moore, K. (2009), 'Reverse diaspora and the evolution of a cultural tradition: The case of the New Zealand "Overseas Experience"', *Mobilities*, 4:1, pp. 159–75.

Contributor details

Ali Abdallah is assistant professor and programme leader in tourism management at Stenden University, Qatar. Prior to joining Stenden, Ali was previously programme leader of events management at the University of Sunderland, England. His research interests include cultural tourism and tourism development in the Middle East, diaspora and mobilities in the United Kingdom, and cultural traditions as forms of tourist attraction.

Thomas Fletcher is a senior lecturer at Leeds Beckett University, UK. His primary interests relate to issues of equality and diversity and social justice in the context of sport, leisure and events. He has published his work in a range of international journals. He is editor of *Sport, Leisure and Social Justice*, *Cricket*, *Migration and Diasporic Communities* and *Sports Events, Society and Culture* (Routledge). His first research monograph, *Negotiating Fatherhood: Sport, Leisure and Family Practices*, will be published by Palgrave late 2019. He is currently Chair of the Leisure Studies Association.

Kevin Hannam is professor of tourism mobilities and Dean of the Faculty of International Tourism and Management at City University Macau. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Previously he held positions as Head of Tourism & Languages at Edinburgh Napier University, Director of Doctoral Programmes at Leeds Beckett University and Associate Dean (Research) and Head of Tourism, Hospitality and Events at the University of Sunderland, UK.

Contact:

Ali Abdallah, Tourism Management, Doha, State of Qatar, Stenden Qatar University of Applied Sciences, Al-Jeleit Street, Bin Omran.

Comentado [CE9]: Please provide complete publication details. The first time the book is mentioned in the text, please insert the author surname and year of publication, in the (Author year) format, for example (Dennison 1965).

Comentado [TF10R9]: Surely this isn't necessary for a biography???

Comentado [CE11]: Please provide current full institutional postal address (including post/zip code).

E-mail: ali.abdallah@hotmail.co.uk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1086-4585>

Thomas Fletcher, School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Leeds Beckett University, UK.

E-mail: t.e.fletcher@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4618-5480>

Kevin Hannam, Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University Macau.

E-mail: kevinhannam@cityu.mo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6034-3521>