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Modernity and tradition of Lebanese food consumption between standardization and particularisms

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The aim of this paper is to explore urbanization phenomenon and its consequences on food consumptions through tradition or modernity in Lebanon. Our research has demonstrated that the thesis of the increase of food dependence with urbanization (urban population was multiplied by 4 in the last forty years) was not confirmed.

Data from questionnaire with 216 households on food consumer's behaviour have been discussed. Empirical results have proved that in Lebanon, neither tradition nor modernity is the exclusive prerogative of the cities or the villages. The tendencies towards modernity or tradition are present in the villages as well as in the cities.

Keywords:

Lebanon, Beirut, urbanization, questionnaire, households, food consumption patterns, tradition, modernity, particularisms, standardization, urban food styles.

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Introduction

The process of urbanization is not recent (Cépède, 1984). It is irreversible and is closely related to the development process (Den Hartog and Van Staveren, 1983; Perennes, 1994). The 21st century has been defined as the «cities century» by the United Nations¹ with a fast concentration in some big cities (Delisle, 1991; De Nigris and Coccia, 1973). It is not necessary to demonstrate that urbanization nowadays is a great fact of civilization, as decisive as was the advent of agriculture in the past (Haeringer, 1999).

At an international scale, the process of urbanization is considered as a reality to manage, to benefit from the potentialities of the city for the whole national welfare or to equilibrate the relation between rural and urban zones (CILSS, 1991).

Nowadays, it is difficult to compare data between cities of the world due to the great variation in the definitions adopted by each country. Countries adopt a size criteria (according to the number of inhabitants) (Delisle, 1989a), or administrative classifications (departments or capitals of provinces). Some other countries adopt a «mixed » definition combining the two previous cases. Other definitions use the dominance of modern sectors, like secondary or tertiary ones or of the informal sector.

A key feature of this remarkable period of urbanization in Lebanon has been the change in the nature of the Lebanese diet. The modification in consumer tastes and demand has critical implications for the whole food system. It is a critical point to be investigated. The stake of its evolution is not only to balance the supply and demand in response to the demographic growth and the changes of the agro-nutritional models under the effect of prices and incomes. The stake for the individuals is the ability to build a coherent identity through multiple memberships (Bricas, 1995). The food plays a part of major importance in the construction of the individual, social (collective) and cultural identity (Chiva, 1998; Garabuau-Moussaoui, 2002).

Urbanization is considered as the principal factor of food transformation consumption patterns (Malassis and Ghersi, 1996). In Lebanon, food is important. The consumption of traditional food accompanies all social occasions (marriage, baptism, funeral, and so forth). Beyond the food resemblances to the other Mediterranean countries, Lebanon has certain specificities. It constitutes a ground of mixing for a long time where many civilizations followed one another impregnating mentalities of the country and in particular Beirut with various cultural influences. Therefore, its food is largely influenced by its historical heritage, by the diversity of its relief and its climate. The food habits reflect this extremely old past and the cultural mixtures of which Lebanon was the witness.

In the Near and the Middle-East, cultural mixings were numerous. Therefore, the original identity of the dishes is sometimes confused. The food habits of city-dwellers are a kind of combination of various Arab and non-Arab traditions. They are typically Mediterranean, including Turkish, Persian, north-African, Greek, Armenian, south-European and Arab origins (Khuri, 1974). Indeed, many dishes (or products) are asserted simultaneously by the Lebanese, and by the Greek, Turk, Syrian and Jordanian people, and so forth as typical national dishes.

In reality, all the difference is in a nuance. Indeed, these different dishes have a lot of common ingredients. However, each one of them has one or more specific ingredients (like special spices for example) that make the difference. In the same way, manner of cooking and of consuming made that different varieties of dishes exist.

Moreover, within the same country, we do not exclude the possibility of evolution of an ethnic, national or regional dish. This last will not lose therefore its statute of “food identity card”. The cuisine is assimilable to a language; it appears as a process of civilization that tries

to integrate natural and wild food in a culture by imposing a determined form to it, thus contributing to codify the relations between the society and the world (De Garine, 1970).

The memory of the people is short and, in addition, selective. It tries to nationalize certain ingredients (Bessis, 1995). Therefore, certain food modes described as authentic are, actually, “hybrids” in the sense that they are the result of additions and loans which were, gradually, interiorized by the various culinary cultures until they become the features characterizing the national food patterns (De Labarre, 2000).

Nowadays, food evolutions become faster and frequent due to globalization and its effects in all aspects of life. Indeed, globalization has great influence in the food system. It contributes to the disappearance of certain particularisms and to the emergence of new food modes created by the process of “interbreeding” and finally, to the spread at a transcultural scale of some products and food practices (Poulain and Tibère, 2000).

The aim of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of urbanization and its consequences on food consumptions in Lebanon. Is there, due to urban modernity, a generalized standardization; or particularisms in food consumptions remain as an excellent field of resistance where differences are still present by attachment to the tradition?

I. Empirical investigation

Our analysis based, on one hand, on the report of an irreversible and important urbanization and, on the other hand, on the fears (or the risks) of standardization, felt as more likely and faster with the globalization.

The questions of this investigation concern food in the city and its characteristics. They are the following:

- ❶ How can the urban food consumption model be characterized?
- ❷ When recently installed in urban zones, is there a break with the rural model in the food consumption of households? Is the break incisive, or the acquisition (by mimicry) of the urban model progressive? Are there stages in the appropriation of the urban food consumption model?
- ❸ When some macroeconomic indicators show a tendency to the standardization of the urban food consumption in developing countries, how do microeconomic and social data prove the resistance by the culture? How does culture activate food identity memberships and cuisine to refuse standardization? What are the mobilized features of traditional food consumption?

Lebanon, our case of study, is characterised by the following elements:

- ✓ spending for food is highest (33 percent of the total of the spending) in comparison with the other household expenditures (Administration Centrale de la Statistique, 1998);
- ✓ Lebanon is strongly urbanized (up to 90 percent)² This high percentage is not only due to the specific growth of cities but also to the urbanization of villages, accelerated by the war. At present, more than ever, the limits between the city and the village are difficult to outline³ in Lebanon, especially in the summer period when villages become urbanized (Bourgey, 1980/1981).

Lebanon presents in this field two specificities:

- ❶ on one hand, and contrary to what takes place in developing countries, the

growth rate of the rural population decreases because of the decline of the birthrate in rural areas and the urbanization of villages. Indeed, over a period of 40 years going from 1961 till 2001, the rural population decreased by 3,15 times (our calculations from FAOSTAT database). The urban population became a majority in Lebanon from 1966;

② and on the other hand, and contrary to what took place in the Arabic world, the modernization due to the European and American education began in the Lebanese villages before reaching and affecting the cities which soaked in the Ottoman traditions (Corm, 1990).

✓ Lebanon imports the major part of its food (whether it is in the form of raw materials or of products of first or second transformations). Lebanon depends on the import for the satisfaction of 80 percent of its calorific needs (our calculations from FAOSTAT database).

✓ The Lebanese is always known for his openness to other countries and to other cultures, openness proved by the enormous Lebanese diaspora worldwide (the Lebanese is a big traveler) and by the waves of emigration of various peoples towards Lebanon.

Consequently, in front of these various elements, we could think that Lebanon is strongly influenced by the world food model! The results of our inquiry synthesized in a following paragraph show that it is not true.

By transposing the general problem on the Lebanese case, and to answer the questions that we settle, we can emit the following explanatory hypothesis: in the cities (in Lebanon), new forms of food consumption develop, while the original food practices are still present for the following reasons:

↪ on one hand, the attachment of the Lebanese to his village of origin, and to his cuisine convey for him the tradition in all its dimensions and bind him to traditional food products and practices.

In his article of 1980/1981 entitled: “The urbanization of the Lebanese village”, Bourgey qualifies the Lebanese as a recent city-dweller: the emigration towards cities goes back up to the end of the XIXth century and especially of the XXth. The Lebanese is still “the man of the village” who maintains deep links with his village of origin even after his installation in the city. This continuity in the contact is easy because the dimensions of the country are restricted and facilitate consequently the relations cities / villages (Bourgey, 1970). Indeed, the particular sentimental attachment of the Lebanese to his village of origin is indisputable and the registers of birth, marriages and deaths of villages keep the names of families having emigrated since several generations into the city. This attachment is, therefore, institutionalized and “legalized” by the State. Certain city-dwellers continue to vote in their village of origin because a person is legally from Beirut only if he was registered in Beirut at the time of the last population census, which has been conducted in 1932, as well as his descendants regardless of their actual places of residence⁴!

↪ And on the other hand, the tradition remains for the advantages it gives to consumers:

- by decreasing the uncertainty related to the consumption of new products. And as Fischler (1990) says: if eating is thinking, eating traditional food is pre-thought for the eater;

- by decreasing the anxiety felt in front of products without traceability. This feeling of risk is aggravated, on one hand, by the absence or the quasi-absence of

the State as institution of control and regulation and on the other hand, by the weak role (and weight) of consumers' associations as relay between the consumers and the State on one side and the consumers and the upstream of the field as a counterweight (farmers, transformers, distributors, and so forth) on the other side. Therefore, our empirical hypothesis is less “manichean” than the assertion advanced by Chonchol (1987) for whom the inhabitants of cities tend to adopt the western attitudes, whereas those of the villages remain more attached to the values and the traditional consumptions of their societies. For us, both aspects coexist in the city and make the Lebanese urban context more dynamic. Furthermore, we consider that, due to the specificities of Lebanon, its villages are less folded up on themselves than we think, not living in an autarky that tries to immortalize the traditions. They are simultaneously opened to modernity.

II. The objectives of the investigation

Confronted with the necessity of producing saleable offers in a context of plethora, the producers are in search of the consumer, which is sometimes qualified as a “chameleon”. Therefore, the study of the consumer becomes inescapable for a better development of the food field. Nowadays, in Lebanon, the information on his tastes and preferences as well as on the conditions of the demand is inalienable (Radtke and Atallah, 1999). The leaders of the country and the politicians have difficulty in promulgating laws and in establishing policies suitable to the consumers (and to all the actors of the field). In this context, the analysis of the demand is the preliminary in any action on the supply and in any policy.

Specifically, in this investigation, we will:

- 👍 verify empirically the relationship between urbanization and the supposed dissolution of food traditions and the dependence of world market;
- ✌️ study consumers' behaviors and their attitudes in the field of food consumption.

Concretely, we will study the relationship between the variations of food behaviors (traditional or modern ones) and the reactions of consumers to the origin of the products (local, imported, traditional, and so forth) in given socioeconomic conditions.

Through this verification, we will establish behavioral differences in food consumption in relation with the different phases of urbanization phenomenon.

III. The urban food styles

The city plays the role of a moving plate propagating the food modes gradually towards the villages. Therefore, a better knowledge of the current urban food models (in particular in terms of quantities or types of products consumed) allows a better prevision of the global evolution of food demand and the ability to face this demand (Delisle, 1991). The urban food model becomes more and more determining on the profile of food demand at the national level.

It is too simplistic to think that with the urbanization, the food of developing countries aligns itself with the western model (Delisle, 1989b). Numerous works show that there is no evident statistical link between urbanization and food dependence, and emphasized the reversibility of the tendencies, what constitutes a refutation of one of the essential hypotheses of the food mimicry (Requier-Desjardins, 1989). The food habits evolve certainly, but coexist in the city the traditional models and the new food styles, which would deserve to be better known, but

which the classic inquiries of consumption are unfit of seizing. However, when the purchasing power increases, the demand for non-traditional food increases too. But this phenomenon does not have the same importance everywhere, and it would be very difficult to know whether it is additive or substitutive.

Non-economic variables also intervene in the food choices of the urban consumers (Delisle, 1989b).

The urbanization could engender an increase of incomes, but it will not inevitably improve the population nutrition. Special attention is required to avoid some traps (Chernichovsky and Zangwill, 1990):

- ☑ food prices seem more expensive in urban zones than in rural ones;
- ☑ varieties and prices are different between rural and urban zones perturbing habitual food diets established through the generations;
- ☑ life in the cities offers more options to spend money putting food expense in competition with the other expenses;
- ☑ the support of the most deprived is very weak in urban zones. Picking is often impossible and space available for gardening and breeding is even very narrow, and sometimes non-existent.

IV. Globalization, food continuities and changes

Developing countries are facing dietary changes stigmatized by an opening to the foreign cuisines (especially occidental ones). The main vectors of this modification evoked by the literature are the following:

- ◆ at the *sociological* level, the food imitation ensues from effects of demonstration by the dominant class holding the outside capital and the device of the State by a process of identification / differentiation;
- ◆ at the *economic* level, the change is facilitated by the development of trade. Consequently, once the systems of self-sufficiency are broken, countries open more to each other, especially to the west;
- ◆ at the *social organization* level, food consumption evolves in the city in answer to the new living conditions: development of the wage-earner including that of the female workforce (decreasing, by this way the available time to cook), and so forth. Consequently, the industrial transformation is replacing the domestic one, favoring the distribution of new products (Requier-Desjardins, 1985).

However, evolutions could happen to various links of the food consumption chain. We note:

- ◆ an evolution of products: in a given space, an adoption of new food or dishes;
- ◆ an evolution of the processes on one or more operations of the chain of transformation;
- ◆ an evolution in the social organization at the levels of the practices of traffic of products (city / village), of their transformation and their consumption (restaurant, food of street);
- ◆ an evolution of the raw material by substitution;
- ◆ an evolution by extension of outlets: products previously strictly reserved for a special class of the population are democratized, reaching the lower socio-economic classes (O'déy and Bricas, 1985).

At a global level, the study of consumption patterns let us expect a paradoxical double movement of divergence and convergence in food consumption:

> The convergence is the consequence of economic factors: the supply of multinational firms meets the demand of the “global” consumer influenced by world diffusion of information and professional or touristic trips.

< The divergence proceeds, in this standardized world, by a “universal” consumption pattern arisen from the cultural interbreeding and from the search for peculiarity by the social groups (regional, ethnic, religious). The consumer is engaged in this search for identity in reaction to the globalization. This paradox would have inspired the big companies in their transnational market segmentations by the elaboration of global products (to master the costs thanks to the large-scale effects) with local image (differentiation by the packaging and the message) (Rastoin, 1998). Therefore, the global agro-business borrows from the culinary folklores that it contributed to split to propel homogenized versions in the four corners of the universe (Fischler, 1990).

Through events perceived as breaks or crises, we can perceive continuities in the social set. The food will thus be dreaded in this perspective as one of the obstacles to the world standardization through the cultural attachment to the traditions (Courade, 1992).

The diet of the emigrants seems to be an important aspect in the study of food habits evolutions because the migrations are generative of the change and at the same time indicate it (Pagézy, Bley and Moutanabbi, 1994).

Some sociological and anthropological studies show that in a context of acculturation, the food evolutions were the slowest with the preservation on several generations of the original food characteristics, while other central elements of identity as the usage of the mother tongue have disappeared (Poulain and Tibère, 2000). The food would be the last cultural feature, which migrant populations lose long after the original tongue, the religion and the way of getting dressed (Fischler, 1990; Rivière, 1994; Hauser, 1987; Fieldhouse, 1986).

This preservation of the food practices over the years and over the generations is deep and goes beyond the food act in itself. It allows probably to reconstitute another identity representation, vaster and more complex than the simple daily or traditional practice (Le Huu, 1987). The cuisine continues to be a sign of membership and a social and cultural code of recognition. It separates more than it gathers.

Therefore, the recent democratization of certain products did not abolish the social borders; it moved them (Bessis, 1995). However, the representations and the food practices of the migrants are facing changes at certain dimensions of the food field and also in the various modes of organization and management of the every day life. These changes result from a search of equivalence, of interchangeability of products, of the preparation procedures adaptation and of progressive incorporation of new arrangements and capacities (Calvo, 2002).

On the other hand, these culinary system evolutions neither disturb the local products consumption nor the traditional preparations. They indicate, in the contrary, the capacity of the consumer to combine simultaneously or successively the modern products and the traditional ones through diversification, “interbreeding” or “creolisation” or through innovation.

The traditional diet, prescribed by the religion and based on the old myths is replaced by a new mythology (De Garine, 1970) that each one seeks to build with his own way.

Within this framework, the opposition between modernity and tradition seems to be insuitable (Husson, 1994). It is as if the behaviors of the consumers oscillated in a kind of balance. Consequently, when a tendency develops, the counter-tendency emerges a little later as if any

evolution of the behaviors in a direction involved an opposed reaction, under the effect of a general law of compensation or homeostasis (Bardou, 1997).

V. The Lebanese model of food consumption

In 1961, Lebanon depended on the importation (of raw material and processed food) for the satisfaction of 79 percent of its calorific intakes. In 2001, this percentage rose to 80 percent. Thus, during these 40 years, the importations varied a little (our calculations from FAOSTAT database). Even if Lebanon depends largely on the world market for the satisfaction of its daily caloric needs, the conclusion should be carefully nuanced. The Lebanese importation varied a little during the last forty years, while the urban population was multiplied by 4. Therefore, the fear of an increased food dependence of Lebanon with urbanization was not confirmed overall by facts.

Total daily caloric intake in Lebanon between 1991 and 2001 was about 3.161 Kcal per capita/day. It was even higher than those of other developing countries (2.621 kcal per capita/day) and of the world (2.757 Kcal per capita/day), with a high contribution of vegetable calories (87 percent of the total of calories).

During the 3 periods (before war, war and after war⁵), the total caloric intakes have been increasing. Lebanon rose up from a total of 2353 Kcal per capita/day in 1961 to 3161 Kcal per capita/day in 2001.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Figure 1 shows that cereals constitute the first source of calories in Lebanese diet (due to the large consumption of bread). Fats, vegetables and fruits are respectively the second and third sources of calories. We also note that the total fats' intake⁶ level in Lebanon has doubled in 40 years.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Figure 2 shows that in 2000, Lebanese diet has some peculiarities compared to those of northern and southern Mediterranean countries. Except for sugar, sweeteners and cereals, Lebanese consumptions are comparable to northern Mediterranean countries. They differ from those of northern Mediterranean countries for the lower consumption of animal products, such as milk and dairy products, meat and eggs, fish and seafood, and for the higher consumption of pulses, fruits and vegetables.

The comparison of the Lebanese consumption of pulses, fruits and vegetables with those of the other groups of countries shows their importance in the Lebanese model of food consumption.

INSERT TABLE 1 AND TABLE 2

Lebanon occupied the first position in terms of fruits and vegetables supply per capita in 1961. In 2001, Lebanon occupied the second position after the Greece. However, the Lebanese average of supply between 1992 and 2001 was superior to the Greek one. In Lebanon, it was about 442 Kg per capita/year, while in Greece it was about 432,5 kg per capita/year.

The Lebanese pulses supply in 2001 was superior to those of all countries. When comparing Lebanon to Egypt (considered as a big consumer of pulses), we notice that in the two countries this supply rose up between 1961 and 2001 but more quickly in Lebanon.

VI. The experimental case study

6.1. Studied products

Our study relates to the following products: bread and bulgur as well as milk and dairy products. They were retained like indicators of tradition and modernity, necessary to determine the attachment (or not) of the Lebanese to the traditional products. Our questionnaire includes also questions about the other groups of products.

The bread is of primary importance in the Lebanese Kitchen (FAO, 1995), all or almost all food is eaten with bread (Tohmé, 1994; Khater, 1985). It is consumed with all the meals (Kanafani-Zahar, 1994). The bulgur (which is a sort of broken wheat) is a basic ingredient, impossible to circumvent in the preparation of certain Lebanese emblematic dishes, for example Kebbé, tabbouleh, and Kichk.

Milk and dairy products were retained in our study because of their importance on the households' consumption in Lebanon⁷ (the supply is about 125 kg per capita in 2001) (FAOSTAT database). Their contribution to the total of caloric intakes per day doubled over the last 40 years. Within this group of products traditional, imported or industrial ones exist, thus allowing a comparison between the state of the two following tendencies: the tradition and modernity.

6.2. Geographical field: Beirut and two villages

Our sample consists of 216 households⁸ with respect to a certain geographical, demographic and social variety. 78,7 percent⁹ of the surveyed households reside in Beirut (170 households) and 21,3 percent in two villages in the north of Beirut (46 households): one located in rural zone (Obeidat) is isolated and the influence of urban area is weak and the other in "rurban" zone (Rihané) is not far from an urban zone. In the first, 30 households were surveyed and 16 in the second. Beirut was selected since it includes more than one third of the total Lebanese population where all the socio-economic categories¹⁰ coexist.

6.3. Presentation of the questionnaire

Our questionnaire was pretested near a group of 15 housewives. Initially elaborated in French, it was translated into Arabic. It is made of 56 questions including 17 open. The questions are gathered in three parts: a first and second part formed each of two questions addressed respectively to urban households and to the rural ones and finally a third part made up of 52 questions common to all households, indifferently of their place of residence.

The questionnaire was organized in 5 sections:

- ◆ consumed products;
- ◆ practices of supply, conservation, preparation and consumptions;
- ◆ food representations of the housewives¹¹ (to explore the meaning they give to their behaviors);
- ◆ interpenetrations between Lebanese cuisine and foreign ones;
- ◆ socioeconomic identification of the household.

We are aware that data collected by these three parts of questions do not constitute a right reflection of the real changes. They represent the changes in progress as well as the aspirations to be changed because they depend on the declarations of the housewives.

The seizure and the processing data of the questionnaires were carried out on Excel and SPAD version 5.5 (System For the Analysis of the Data).

The data processing was carried out initially on Excel for a classic descriptive analysis (cross tables, and so forth) and thereafter on SPAD version 5.5 for the Factorial Analysis of the Multiple Correspondences¹² and for the Ascending hierarchical clustering.

6.4. Our sample

We proceeded investigation by questionnaire, near a reasoned sample of households taken of the Lebanese population (of Beirut and two villages) as developed below. The investigation by questionnaires was carried out with our care during December 2002 and November and January 2003. The average duration of each questionnaire was 40 minutes.

Our sample is an adaptation of certain techniques of sampling, namely the quota sample, the areal survey and by the method of the routes.

Our adaptation of the quota sample: the criterion selected is the current place of residence. The Lebanese population is to almost 90 percent urban and 10 percent rural. Our sample includes a total of 216 households, 78,7 percent selected in the mohafazat¹³ of Beirut and 21,3 percent in two villages in the north of Beirut. We have increased the rural part of our sample to be able to inquire in the two villages.

Our adaptation of the areal survey: The territory of investigation is divided into a certain number of parts (in the case of Beirut, it is divided in zones). We selected at random the zones to be investigated. It consists in trying to reproduce the conditions of a randomized selection. Beirut, which is a mohafazat is subdivided in twelve land districts gathered in five zones: Beirut Centre (with the districts of Bachoura, Marfa', Minet el-Hosn, Saïfi and Zoqaq el-Blatt), Ras Beirut (with Aïn el-Mreissé and Ras Beirut), Moussaitbeh (with Moussaitbeh), Mazraa (with Mazraa) and Achrafieh (with Medawar, Rmeil and Achrafieh). We inquired a district by zone chosen at random. Thus, the five surveyed districts are those underlined above. In each one of them, 35 households were inquired. This technique was used only for the investigations in Beirut. For those carried out in the two villages, it is only the method of the routes explained below which was used.

Our adaptation of the method of routes: It is used to limit complete arbitrary choice of the surveyed households. Once the district chosen at random, we began the round in the principal street of each district, while stopping at 1/20 building. We inquired the household living at the ground floor of each building located on the right of the staircases. At the end of the principal street, we moved towards the street located on its right and so on until inquiring the 35 households¹⁴ of each district.

VII. The results of the experimental case study

The answer to the first question of this investigation has been given by the review of the literature. A grid has been developed to synthesize the different analyses. This grid has served to the elaboration of our questionnaire.

The synthesis of the different analyses of urban food consumption patterns can be summarized in the figure below.

INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE

When comparing the answers of our households to the questionnaire (partially based on this grid), we can affirm that urban households conform less than the rural dwellers to the grid of contemporary food behaviours. Therefore, modernity, in the case of Lebanon, isn't more frequent in cities than in villages.

The analysis of our data related to the evolution of the frequency of consumptions of certain products¹⁵ shows that the tendencies are similar in the villages and in the cities of Lebanon. But rhythms are different.

To verify how food consumption interacts with urbanization and how the duration of residence in urban zone influences it (to answer the question 2 of our investigation), we have carried out Hierarchical Cluster only for urban sample (170 households). The city-dwellers were divided into 4 classes: households that live in the city from 1 year (or less) to 5 years (new-city dwellers), those from 6 to 10 years, those from 11 to 20 years and those from over than 20 years.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

The classes elaborated by Hierarchical Clustering show that the new city-dwellers and also the long date city-dwellers (20 years and over) are traditional in their food behaviors. Only the food representations of long date city-dwellers are modern.

The following could summarize urban food tendencies: the new city-dwellers remain traditional. Several years after, they float in the stability. After living in urban zones between 11 and 20 years, households' behaviors become hybrid (stability, modernity, and tradition are simultaneously noticed). Finally, long date city-dwellers return back to the tradition.

When we ask the housewives what are the strong features of the Lebanese cuisine, they first mention the good taste (whether they are rural or urban). The second strong point mentioned by all the housewives is the great consumption of fruits, vegetables and cereals. They evoke then the ingredients of the Mediterranean cuisine (garlic, olive oil, lemon, and so forth), the conviviality, the refinement of the Lebanese kitchen, the quality of its raw materials and the pleasure to the eyes and finally its nutritional quality.

When we ask the housewives to choose among four possibilities¹⁶, which are the greatest risks that threaten the Lebanese cuisine, urban ones consider that the substitution of foreign dishes to the Lebanese ones is the more probable risk that threatens Lebanese cuisine. However, they think that this substitution is not made in the detriment of traditional dishes but of other Lebanese dishes.

Indeed, for the total of the housewives, "the loss of the traditional dishes" is the most non-existent risk.

When we ask the housewives which are the food evolutions noticed among the last three generations we noticed that they are of the same types at the three generations: more foreign

dishes, more fast-food, more diversification, and less fats food, and additions of new ingredients.

The table below recapitulates the answers of the households to the questions related to the food practices adopted, the products consumed and to some of the housewives representations according to their traditional or modern aspects.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

This table shows that the relation between modernity and tradition is rather unclear. The various tendencies exist according to if one treats a particular aspect of practices (or products, and so forth) or if all confused.

Conclusions and perspectives

The dynamics of food consumption in Lebanon can be interpreted as interplay between the rural and the urban spheres instead of two distinct patterns of lifestyles. We have found that the dichotomisation of the food consumption model may draw away the attention from the dynamics of the rural-urban interface, blurring important interdependencies between both of them.

The results are still very controversial, due to the complicated web of interactions between the factors involved. The analysis of the data shows that in Lebanon, neither tradition nor modernity is the exclusive prerogative of the city or the villages. The tendencies towards modernity, tradition or stability are present in the villages as well as in the cities.

We could note, beyond the divergence of the debates, the importance of the food like a powerful rampart facing the standardization so much predicted and feared. In various contexts, the ways of food preparation or consumption show a will of “modernism” and simultaneously a will to maintain certain traditions. These two wills combine in various ways. The trap to be avoided would be to speak about duality. It will be more relevant of speaking about compromise. Within domestic consumption, this compromise seems to be carried out by various combinations between practices of provisioning, practices of preparation, practices of consumption and the choice of products to consume. For example, traditional Lebanese meals, based on pulses fruits and vegetables now include livestock products as well as processed food such as high value products.

The Lebanese are living in a divergence between their declaration and their concret behaviors. The society is divided in two visions, traditional and modern that are simultaneously imbricated and opposite. Therefore, we can conclude with Jammal Mouawieh (1994) that in Lebanon, the modernism is visible in technical know-how, in behaviors and in attitudes, while the tradition is remaining in ideas, speeches, particularly about identity.

In a globalized context, Lebanon is balancing between two reactions: the first is characterised by the acceptance and adaptation to modern norms and practices, while the second appears in the rejection and the refusal to be identified by this modernism. Lebanese life styles are influenced by this duality (Ministry of Social Affairs and UNDP, 1998).

To complete this investigation, it would be necessary to study, in more details, the influences of the foreign cuisines on the Lebanese one. It would be a question, in the same way, of

undertaking in-depth studies on the reasons, which explain the maintenance of the Lebanese cuisine in the world.

Lastly, we think that the same type of analysis in other countries of the area (or economically similar or close to Lebanon) makes it possible to enrich the theoretical aspects that relate to urban food consumption. It is a question of knowing if the Lebanese case is specific or not or if the same tendencies are observable in other contexts, which would consolidate a theory of urban food consumption

¹ This information was selected from the following Website:

www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/agricult/ags/AGSM/SADA/SADA-1_.HTM (6 February 2002).

² Our calculations from FAOSTAT database website: <http://apps.fao.org/page/collections?language=FR>

³ The inquiry concerning the working population in 1970 considered rural any village of less than 5 000 inhabitants with the exception of the inner suburbs of Beirut. This criterion is always valid in Lebanon!

⁴ Since 1932, under divers pretexts and justifications, the population census was never seen out. Some go so far as to say that this abstention aims at protecting and at maintaining the confessional established (precarious and delicate) proportions, which constitute the base of the distribution of the public services of the State (Bourgey, 1970; Abu Khalil, 1989).

⁵ Before-war: from 1961 to 1975; War: from 1976 to 1991; After-war: from 1992 to 2001.

⁶ Hwalla Baba (1998) noticed that the Lebanese people (especially the young ones) tend to substitute calories issued from cereals by those from fat. Therefore, they actually suffer from illness related to the diet, comparable to those noticed in occidental countries. The author asserts that the first sources of mortality in Lebanon are the cardio-vascular illnesses and the diabete has the same incidences of those of occidental countries.

⁷ In other countries of the Middle-East, the supply of milk and dairy products in 2001 was about 77 kg per capita and the Maghreb about 79,5 kg per capita (our calculations from FAOSTAT database).

⁸ Lebanon follows in its definition of household the recommendations of the United Nations. A household is "a group of persons of the same family or not, sharing same housing and having food expenditure jointly" (Administration Centrale de la Statistique Libanaise, 1998). In this investigation, we adopt the same definition.

⁹ These percentages are not round numbers because we were obliged to eliminate certain questionnaires, which were not exploitable.

¹⁰ **Administration Centrale de la Statistique Libanaise.** 1996. Statistical studies. The city of Beirut, beginning of 1996 (results of the census of the buildings and the establishments). Beirut. N. 3.

¹¹ All surveys consider the housewife as a privileged person to investigate when studying the food field (Bricas, 1998).

¹² The Factorial Analysis of the Multiple Correspondences was privileged since our questionnaire includes questions of a quantitative and qualitative nature.

¹³ The mohafazat is the greatest administrative unit in Lebanon. This last is divided into 6 mohafazats of which Beirut. These mohafazats (except for Beirut) are divided into cazas.

¹⁴ A posteriori, 5 questionnaires were not exploitable.

¹⁵ Products or groups of products concerned are the following: vegetables, fruits, exotic fruits, meat, milk and dairy products, fishes and seafood, low-fat products, ready-to-eat dishes, frozen products, raw meat, cereals, bread and bulgur.

¹⁶ The four modalities proposed are: the risk to lose difficult to prepare dishes, the risk to lose long to prepare dishes, the risk to lose traditional dishes or the risk of substitution between Lebanese and foreign dishes.

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Modernity and tradition of Lebanese food consumption between standardization and particularsims

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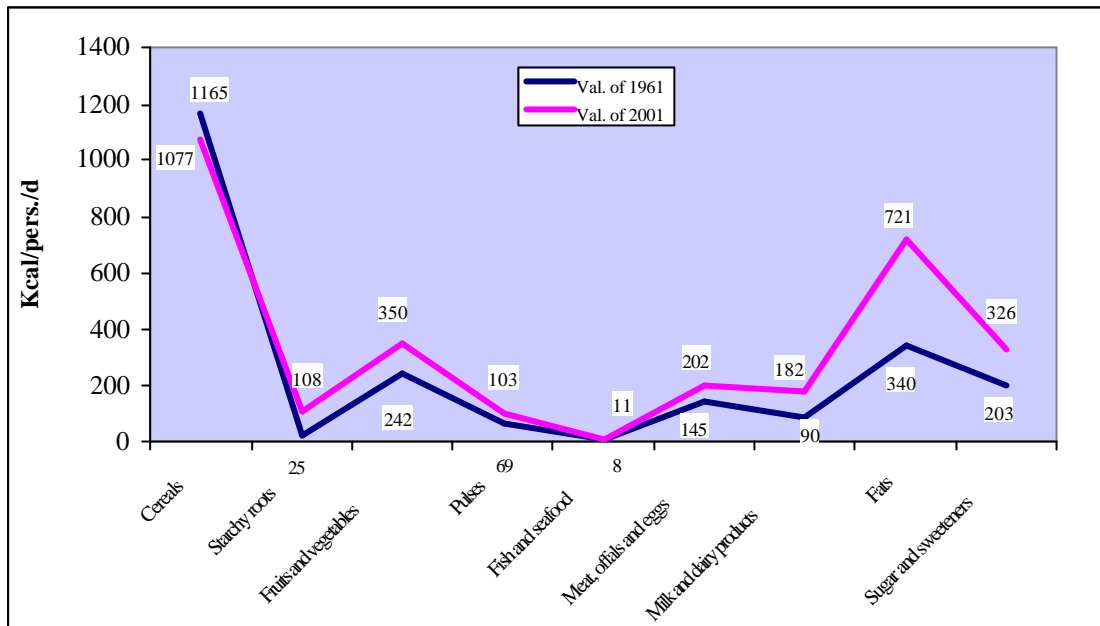
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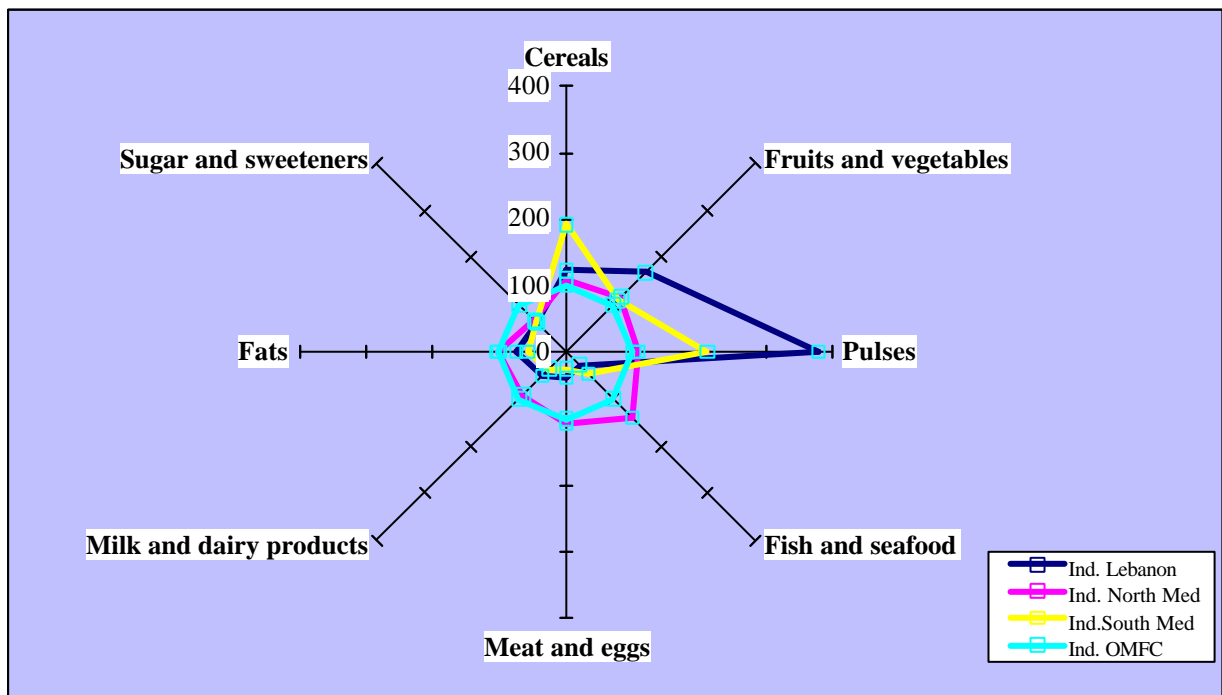
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Figure 1: Lebanese food supply in 1961 and 2001.



Source: Our calculations from FAOSTAT database.

Figure 2: Comparison between northern and southern Mediterranean countries diets and Lebanon in 2000.



Source: Our calculation from FAOSTAT database (Indicators calculated on the basis of the OMFC-Occidental Model of Food Consumption).

Table 1: Evolution of fruits and vegetables supply in Kg per capita/year.

<i>Countries</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>2001</i>
Developing countries	83	166
Developed countries	141	198
EU (of 15)	165	240
World	102	173
Turkey	279	330
Lebanon	256	377
Greece	248	417

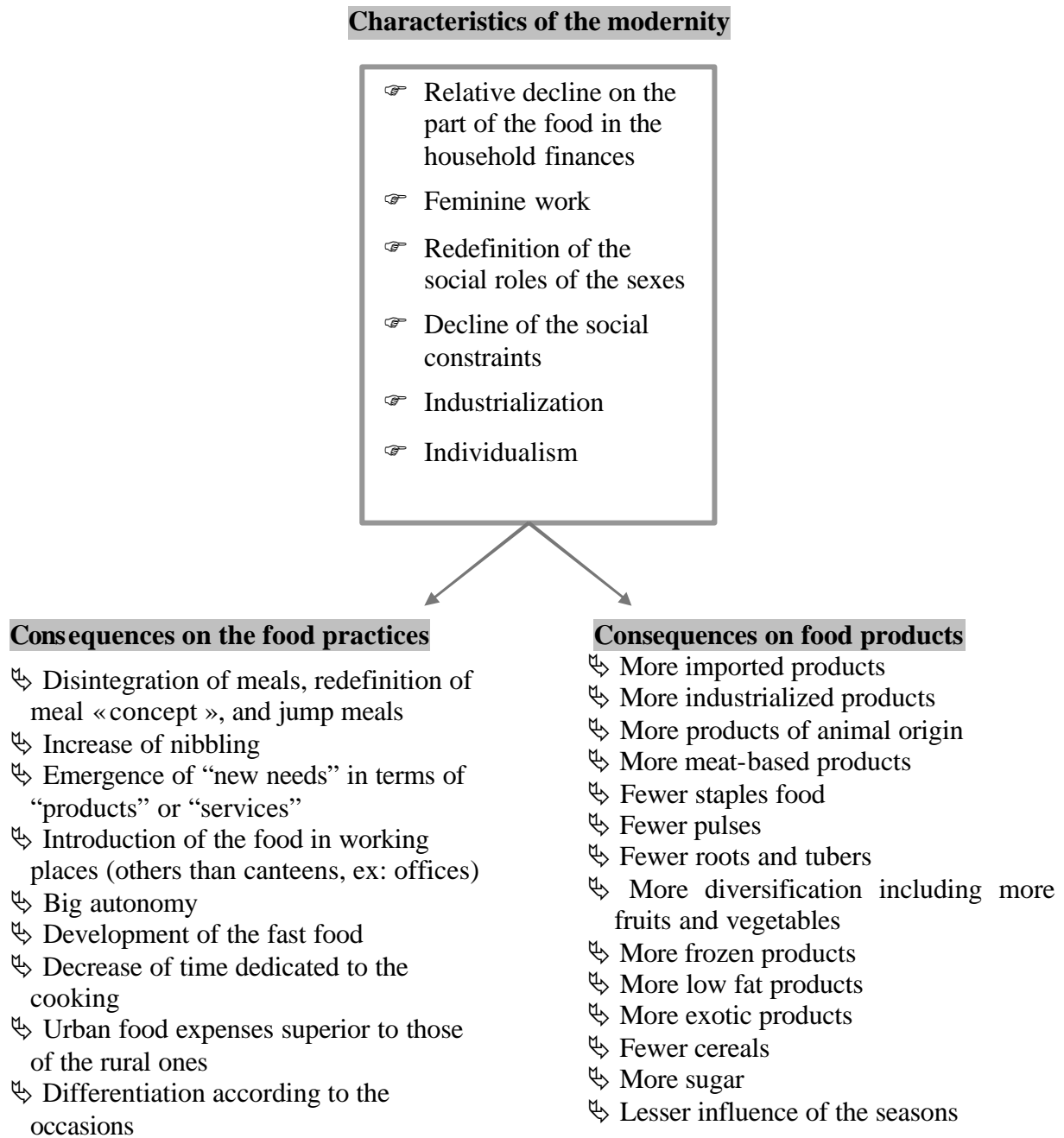
Source: FAOSTAT.

Table 2: Evolution of pulses supply in Kg per capita/year.

<i>Countries</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>2001</i>
Developing countries	12,2	6,5
Developed countries	3,6	3,0
EU (of 15)	3,5	3,7
World	9,5	5,7
Egypt	6,6	9,1
Lebanon	7,3	10,6

Source: FAOSTAT.

Figure 3: Modernity, its characteristics and its consequences on urban food consumption



Sources: Our synthesis of Poulain, 2002; Poulain and Delorme, 1996; Den Hartog and Van Staveren, 1983; Chonchol, 1987; Delisle, 1989 and Snrech, 1999.

Table 3: Synthetical table of food tendencies according to the duration of residence in the city.

	New-city dwellers	Urban from 6 to 10 years	Urban from 11 to 20 years	Urban from over than 20 years
Practices	Traditional	(Nothing)*	Stable	Traditional
Products	(Nothing)*	Stable	Hybrid (modern and traditional)	Traditional
Representations	Traditional	(Nothing)*	Hybrid	Modern

* : “Nothing” means that data analysis doesn’t give any precision about this point.

Table 4: Synthetic table of food tendencies according to the zone of residence.

	Rural households	Urban households
Practices of supply and preparation	Mostly traditional	Mostly modern
	Coexistence of modernity and tradition	
Place and manner of consumption	Mostly modern	Mostly stable, but also traditional
Products	Traditional and stable	Modern and stable
Bread & Bulgur, Milk and dairy products	Modern and stable	Modern and traditional
Rural/urban diet	Farming food better perceived from the nutritional point of view but similar compared to criteria.	Farming diet globally better perceived
Most probable risk	Loss of the traditional dishes and substitution between foreign dishes and Lebanese ones	Loss of dishes long to prepare