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Syrians in Beirut post-2011: The Impact of the Syrian Crisis on
the Lebanese Labour Market

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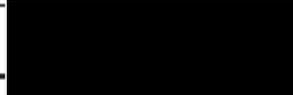
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Dedication Page

To my loving parents, brothers, and supportive friends

Syrians in Beirut post-2011: The Impact of the Syrian Crisis on
the Lebanese Labour Market

Elie El Khoury

ABSTRACT

The Syrian crisis had a profound political, social, legal, and economic impact on Lebanon. The country has been historically part of a circular migration with Syria and a receptor of the Syrian labour for its largely informal labour market. With the ongoing Syrian crisis, the dynamics related to circular migration changed, and new dynamics related to forced migration were introduced. The aim of this research is to understand how the Syrian crisis impacted informal labour in Lebanon through understanding of the structural aspect of the informal sector, and the experiences of informal Syrian workers. This study takes informal Syrian workers in Beirut as a case study to answer the thesis's basic question: *How did the Syrian crisis impact the labour informality in Lebanon in the restaurant industry?*

Keywords: Political economy, labour informality, Syrian crisis, circular migration, forced migration, legal framework, Kafala

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
List of Tables	ix
Introduction	1
Literature review	5
2.1 Lebanese political economy and Syrian migration before 2011: A Historical Account.....	5
2.2 The labour market structure, informality, and the coercion of the Lebanese and Syrian labour force	8
2.4 Syrian forced migration to Lebanon and the labour market shock	11
2.5 The evolution of the legal framework governing Syrian economic and forced migrants.....	15
2.6 Informality theoretical framework	17
2.7 Bourdieu’s theory of social and cultural capital, the Migration Systems theory, and the field of power in the Lebanese labour market	19
2.8 “The Invisible Cage” case studies: Syrian workers navigating informality challenges, through their social and cultural capital.....	23
Methodological Approach	30
3.1 Research population.....	30
3.2 Research Design and strategy	31
3.3 Sampling & Selection criteria	33
3.4 Ethical Considerations	34
3.5 Study procedures.....	35
3.6 Data Management	36
Findings	38
4.1 General Information.....	39
4.2 Business owners/self-employed.....	40
4.2.1 Social capital (Node one).....	40
4.2.2 Cultural Capital (Node Two)	43
4.2.3 Legal status and labour informality (Node three)	45
4.2.5 Operating the restaurants and challenges (Node Five)	46
4.3 Employees/Workers	47
4.3.1 Social Capital (Node One)	48
4.3.2 Cultural Capital (Node Two)	54
4.3.3 Legal status and labour informality (Node Three).....	58
4.3.4 Salaries and working conditions (Node 4).....	59
Analysis	64
5.1 Considering Chalcraft; the new invisible cage and the Lebanese economy during the Syrian crisis	65
5.1.1 Sustaining the service-based economy on a crisis mode	65
5.1.2 Coercion of national and foreign labour	67
5.2: Adapting the legal framework concerning Syrian nationals in Lebanon and the securitization of the crisis	68

5.2.1	Securitizing the Syrian presence in Lebanon: labour coercion through securitization	68
5.2.2	The migration industry and labour market informality	71
5.3:	Economic and labour market changes; the case of the restaurant sector	73
5.3.1	The new profile of informal Syrian workers.....	73
5.3.2	The labour market shock and labour coercion	74
5.3.3	The small Syrian owned restaurants and informality.....	75
5.4:	Social and cultural capital and habitus: compensating the lack of protection and a comparative with Chalcraft’s case studies	77
5.4.1	Interviewees living in Lebanon prior to the crisis: Interviewees 8 and 10	78
5.4.2	The restaurant owners newly comers: Interviewees 2 and 11	79
5.4.3	Category B employees: Interviewees 1, 6, 7 and 9.....	80
5.4.4	Category C employees: Interviewees 3, 4 and 5.....	82
5.4.5	Habitus, discipline, and agency.....	83
5.4.6	Accumulating social and cultural capital after the Syrian crisis: a comparative with the “Invisible Cage” case studies	85
5.5:	Considering Hart’s informality theoretical framework.....	86
5.5.1	Critique of the “Dualist school”, Legalist and Il-legalist schools of thought interpretations	86
5.5.2	Critique of the Structuralists’ school of thought interpretation	88
Conclusion	91
6.1	Summary of findings	83
6.2	Contribution	87
Bibliography	96

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of Syrian Interviewee	39
Table 2: Business owners/self-employed	40
Table 3: Workers and Employees	47
Table 4: Categories of capital acquired	48

Chapter One

Introduction

Lebanon has relied on the Syrian labour force throughout its history. Following the end of the civil war in 1990 and the signing of the Taef Agreement, Syrian workers constituted 20 to 40 percent of the total labour force in Lebanon. The 1993 bilateral Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination between Lebanon and Syria granted both Syrian and Lebanese nationals freedom of movement across borders, accessing work and residence with no constraints (Chalcraft, 2008). During this period, and due to the weak application of the labour law by the state and the need for cheap labour - especially in the construction sector- informality in the labour market prevailed. According to the World Bank, more than 60% of the labour force was irregular, comprised primarily of self-employed low-skilled workers and informal wage employees.

From the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanon has hosted an estimated one million Syrian refugees to date (Janmyr & Mourad, 2017), resulting in a major shock to the dynamics of informality within the labour market. The influx of refugees introduced an immense increase in labour supply to an already saturated market. Moreover, Syria has always been the main route for Lebanese exports, especially to the markets of the Gulf States. Thus, the border shutdown with Syria took an adverse toll on the Lebanese economy, as the country lost its export route. Consequently, this further aggravated the dilemma resulting from the Syrian crisis.

The increasing role of the Syrian refugees in the labour market sparked a major debate on the national level. As unemployment and poverty spiked amongst the Lebanese active population, especially the youth, populist discourses started to appear in the media and within the circles of the country's political elite. Narratives blaming Syrian refugees for the socio-economic crisis in Lebanon began to gain momentum. Under these circumstances, the Lebanese State, through the General Security and the Ministry of Labour, radically shifted from the 1993 Bilateral Agreement policy to adopting the October Policy in 2014, directly after the formation of a new government in September of that year (Janmyr & Mourad, 2017). The policy's main objective was to limit the number of Syrians entering Lebanon by hindering them with complicated procedures that demand financial and legal requirements. Syrians who were in Lebanon prior to the 2011 crisis and wished to obtain a residency had two options. The first option was to obtain a Kafael (a sponsor), which transforms their status from refugees to migrant workers. This poses a financial burden on them, as the fees for obtaining a sponsorship were too hefty for a community already suffering from severe socio-economic conditions. The second option was to obtain a registration certificate issued by the UNHCR as proof of refugee status; however, this status denies them the right to work, since Lebanon did not sign the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, nor the 1967 Protocol that guarantees the right to work for refugees. The shift in the policy regulating the entry and stay for Syrian nationals in Lebanon meant that, in the context of the overall securitization of the refugee crisis, the Lebanese State was pushing a vast number of refugees to illegality, and contributing to their informal entrance to the labour market. Furthermore, the influx of refugees to Lebanon brought with it numerous skilled workers into the Lebanese labour market. Those workers were investing in liberal professions in small or medium scale

enterprises (known as SME's), or were employed- mostly informally - in local enterprises. It is worth noting that those workers channelled and taught their skills to the businesses that employed them in Lebanon, hence giving them a competitive advantage.

In the period between the end of the civil war (1990) and the beginning of the Syrian crisis (2011), the Syrian labour force was predominantly represented in the agricultural and construction sectors. With the onset of the crisis, Syrian workers started branching out to sectors that were previously uncommon workplaces for them, such as the service sector. In parallel with the economic stagnation and the miniscule expansion of the labour market, the new Syrian labour force started to aggressively compete with Lebanese, Palestinian, and migrant workers (South East Asians and Egyptians) in these newly accessed sectors, as Syrian workers predominantly asked for lower wages (Masri & Srour, 2013).

This research focuses on the informal labour in the restaurant sector, as it was historically one of the most economically significant sectors in Lebanon and a major employer in the labour market. Restaurants are a major part of the service sector. This sector is considered a low production one; thus, the increased employment of forced and/or documented Syrian migrants places more pressure on it. This excessive employment in the service sector drives the wages down, increasing unemployment and exploitation of both national and Syrian workers.

The analysis eventually recognizes how the dominant Lebanese economic interests reacted towards the Syrian refugee crisis, in light of several elements: a political-economic system, characterized as a free-market economy encouraging informality by providing cheap Syrian labour force (Khater, 2017); a specific legal framework that organized the

Syrian migration to Lebanon whether voluntary (mostly pre-Syrian crisis) or forced (during the Syrian crisis); and finally the informality structure and dynamics in the Lebanese labour market. The restaurant sector will be examined as a case study. The research will also provide a historical understanding of the relationship between the Lebanese political economy and the migration of Syrian workers to Lebanon, for the sake of providing a comparative analysis with the migration trends and informality before and during the crisis.

Chapter Two

Literature review

The research is based on the model of the Lebanese political economy as a constant interacting with three variables: the legal framework organizing the Syrian labour in Lebanon, informal labour within the restaurant sector, and the type of migration.

The literature review first explores the historical context of the political economy of Lebanon, the legal framework governing the Syrian migrants in Lebanon and informality within the labour sector within two periods, prior to and during the Syrian crisis.

2.1 Lebanese political economy and Syrian migration before 2011: A Historical Account

The migration patterns before the Syrian crisis are explored chronologically, from the start of the Syrian migration to Lebanon in the early 1950's till the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, which broke that pattern. The migration patterns of the Syrian workers to Lebanon proved to be sustainable in terms of the push-pull factors between the two countries, however, these patterns endured some changes mainly because of political events and armed conflicts. In his book, "The Invisible Cage Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon", John Chalcraft (2008) provided a historical account of the labour movement between Lebanon and Syria.

Chalcraft (2008) closely links between the political economy and the labour market structure, where the Syrian labour force plays a pivotal role. His main claim is that the political economy shapes the labour market as it seeks to secure its interest and survival. Taking into consideration the ideological and political conflicts leading to armed confrontations that can hinder the political economy's interest in the short term, the latter adapts in the long term by the renewal of its system of power in the economy and the labour market. In this sense, revisiting the Lebanese economy is essential to understand the dynamics of the Syrian migration to Lebanon and its role in the labour market. Chalcraft describes, chronologically, the evolution of the Lebanese and Syrian political economy as both shaped the dynamics of the labour migration before the Syrian crisis. The spread of cash economy in the Syrian and Lebanese agrarian communities, and the further commodification of labour, during and after the French mandate, pushed for a rural-urban migration in both countries. In parallel, the mandate and post-mandate politics encouraged common-interests' politics, which stimulated the Syrian migration movement to Lebanese cities, especially Beirut. (Chalcraft, 2008)

Starting in the 1950s and 60s, Lebanon became a financial hub, disintegrating its agricultural and industrial sectors for the sake of creating a merchant state. Simultaneously, a vast population growth in rural Syria occurred along with the flight of Syrian capital into Lebanon, fuelling a construction boom, mostly in Beirut. Moreover, massive mobilization of mainly unskilled Syrian male workers began in Lebanon. The Lebanese construction and agricultural sectors required cheap labour. Syrian workers moved into the agricultural and construction sectors, where their low wages, informality, and lack of social coverage guaranteed their place in the labour market, (Chalcraft, 2008).

The cheap and informal labour was not only an economic need for the economic elite, but also a political need in order to hinder the increasing activity of labour unions demanding a social contract. In parallel, the Baathist policies in the 1960s concerning land reforms and central economic planning drove much of Syria's capital to flee the country. The remittances of the Syrian workers back home had substantial importance to the Syrian economy due to the exchange rates which compensated for the Syrian capital flight, making the Syrian State keen on sustaining these dynamics (Chalcraft, 2008).

The two political regimes, although in ideologically conflicting positions featured under Lebanese and Pan-Arab nationalism animosity, maintained the complementary dynamics of capital and labour exchange through a circular migration between the borders of the two countries. Nevertheless, such pattern was periodically interrupted by several factors. These factors were: the periodic political clash between the Lebanese and Syrian governments leading to repetitive, but temporary, border closure; the 1967 defeat and the increase of military service years for Syrian conscripts; the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1990, which dragged the Syrian workforce into Lebanese inner conflicts; the number of Syrian workers fleeing the civil war and insecurity in Lebanon; and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops in 2005. However, circular migration sustained its main characteristics of moving between borders, and remaining in high demand for unskilled workers employed by Lebanese, even those hostile to the Syrian state (Chalcraft, 2008).

With the defeat of the Maronite regime in 1990, the Pax-Syriana maintained the Lebanese political economy (Chalcraft, 2008) but handed over its leadership to Rafic Al Hariri who continued with the liberal political economy doctrine, with an increasing drive of free market economy through wide privatization programs and legal reforms of the Lebanese

Labour Law. In parallel, the entry and exit regulations from both sides were loose; laws regulating Syrian workers in Lebanon were ignored or lightly applied by the consecutive governments. In addition, the proximity between the two countries, cheap transportation, and close cultural and familial ties eased the movement of Syrian migrant workers along the borders (Chalcraft, 2008).

Lastly, the circular migration and the high mobility across the border was not an impediment to the settlement of Syrian workers, nor prevented them from creating social networks within Lebanon. Such networks were significantly important, since Syrian workers relied on them to access jobs and to receive other essential services, such as shelter and medical treatment. The role of the Syrian workforce and its standing as an informal, alienated, and mobile workforce was perfectly suitable for the Lebanese political economy. This would change and pose different dynamics after the start of the Syrian crisis in late 2010 (Chalcraft, 2008).

2.2 The labour market structure, informality, and the coercion of the Lebanese and Syrian labour force

Coercing the local and migrant labour force has been a trademark of the Lebanese labour market. The further liberalization of the economy, the faltering of the central state, the high rates of unemployment, and the weakening of the labour unions led to a surge in informality within the labour market, which in turn served the process of labour coercion.

One of the main features of the Lebanese labour market is its high unemployment rate. According to the ILO, unemployment rate varied between 8 % and 9% from 1990 to 2010, and 6.1% to 6.4% from 2011 to 2014 according to the World Bank (Gohlke-Rouhayem,

et al., 2016). The mismatch between the labour market needs and the educational system reflected negatively on the labour market and the employment level, where unemployment increases with the increase of the educational level. With around 23000 new entrants each year, the labour market was only able to provide between 12000 and 15000 new jobs on a yearly basis from 2004 to 2015 (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016). The unemployment rate among the youth is considered high, reaching 34% in 2012. For the higher-educated and upper secondary graduates, it reached 21.8% and 36.1% for university graduates (Abou Jaoude, 2014). In addition, the share of activity per gender in the labour market is male - dominated. 71% of males are active workers while only 23% are females; keeping in mind that the active status of female labour decreases after the age of 25. In contrast, male activity remains stable up to the age of 60. (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016). Most of the jobs created between 2004 and 2015 were created in the low productivity service sector, providing employment to 35% of the national workforce and 61% of the self-employed; while the high productivity sectors, such as transportation and financial services, registered employment rates of 14% for workers and 3% for the self-employed (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016)

Moreover, 90% of the labour demand is generated by the SME's (small and medium size enterprises), while enterprises employing more than 50 employees count less than 0.5% (Khater, 2017). Nevertheless, most of the SMEs are founded based on the lack of satisfaction from wage employment in the labour market rather than on entrepreneurial spirit. The social coverage, mainly provided by the NSSF, is weak and inefficient pushing more individuals to emigrate or start their SMEs. Most of these SMEs run on survival mode, where the incentive for expanding in terms of investment and formal labour is little.

This dominant pattern in the labour market made informality sustainable. (Abou jaoude, 2014). According to the World Bank, the informal sector represents around 35% of Lebanon's GNP and employs 50% of the working population (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016). With a lack of inclusive economic growth, a low job creation rate, and reduced quality in the labour market more than 28% of Lebanese live in poverty conditions and around 8% of the population are below poverty lines. (Khater, 2017).

Wage rigidity has always been an essential element in the post-war economy. The dominance of the informal economy had implications on the income distribution because of its direct relationship with informal employment. The informal market hinders the realization of decent work and adequate protection for workers and tends to drive down wages. In the absence of a regulatory environment, salaries in public and private sectors have constantly been disproportionate to the living expenses and inflation, where minimum salaries adjustment is a rigid process due to the weakness of trade unions and the strong influence of the Employers' organizations (Dibeh, 2005). As the ministry of Labour controls labour union licensing, resolving labour disputes, and providing foreign labour permits, the ministry was handed over to pro-Syrian parties (Baath Party, Syrian Nationalist Party, and Amal Movement) where they used their influence to resist the organization of the Syrian and foreign labour, and at the same time led a systematic attack on the labour movement; thus, neutralizing and weakening the labour unions and the General Federation of Labour. Consequently, the labour force lost most of its bargaining power, leading to increased socioeconomic inequalities. Simultaneously, workers mostly in the informal sector, whether nationals or migrants, were mostly exposed to legal, economic, and social vulnerabilities (Dibeh, 2005).

Another feature that was reinforced after the end of the civil war was the kinship between political sectarianism and the economic elite. The sectarian element is highly present in the political and economic structure, through systematic power sharing of Lebanon dating from the Ottoman period, and continuing during the French mandate and the independence, and increasing in aggressiveness during the civil war and after the Taef agreement era. The further liberalization of the economy, tainted by the widening of the social gap, corruption, favouritism (Wasta), and the militias' predatory behaviour on the economic space, reinforced inequality and further centralized wealth and resources in the hands of the economic elite (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016).

The post-war labour market went through cyclical crises as part of a wider structural crisis. The strong correlation between the supply side factors, creating structural unemployment, and demand side factors, aggravating cyclical unemployment, produced a highly informal labour force with low productivity. As the labour market is locked in a void circle, more Lebanese were pushed into poverty with an increasing loss of human capital due to emigration of mostly the young. Such cyclical crises deepen the exploitation in the labour market as jobs become scarcer, the casualization of employment increases, wages stagnate or decrease, and working conditions worsen (UNDP, 2016).

2.4 Syrian forced migration to Lebanon and the labour market shock

The start of the Syrian crisis meant a break of the circular migration that endured many changes from the late 1950's till 2011 - the year the Syrian crisis began. The radical political transformation in Syria with the break-out of the civil war (Zolberg et al. 1986) led to the change in the migration pattern from mostly economic migration to a forced one. Nevertheless, the theory of mixed migration denotes that migrants' movement

outside their country is not solely related to forced migration but also to interlinked economic and social factors (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2017). Although the majority of the Syrians who fled to Lebanon did so due to the on-going violence in their country, some moved because of the economic stagnation and unemployment in their country – both being direct results of the ongoing war. The migration from Syria to Lebanon, mainly forced as denoted above, not only changed the dynamics, but also the size and the profile of the migrating people (UNHCR, 2019). According to the timeline on the UNHCR data portal, the number of the registered refugees reached more than one million in mid of 2014, stagnated with less than a million at the end of 2015 till now with little variations. The demographic profile of the Syrian migrant population in Lebanon had drastically changed before the crisis and during it. While the demographics before the Syrian crisis constituted of males mainly in their working age, the population in the course of the crisis were female dominant (around half of the population) and 40 % of it was less than 12 years old (UNHCR, 2019).

In order to explore the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese economy and labour market, the analysis should include two levels. First, the impact of the forced migration on the forced migrants, and the second should be its impact on the hosting communities. The notion of the ‘forced migration shock’ relates to the high increase of the forced migrants’ numbers in certain locations. The increase in numbers can have an impact on formal and informal labour markets, gender roles within the labour market, employment status, and wages. Nevertheless, forced migration had a heterogeneous impact within the hosting community depending on their class, labour sector, and location. For an example, agricultural workers’ wages decreased due to the forced migrants’ competition, while

employers benefited from the shock to decrease wages and increase their profits. The same applies to the forced migrants by taking into consideration that most of these migrants suffered economic losses due to their forced movement. (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2015). Forced migration can either be complementary to the local labour force or a competitor to it. Still, the analysis should take into consideration that neither the local labour force nor the forced migrant labour are homogenous entities. Based on this fact, competition can arise in each group. (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2015).

The Syrian crisis had a direct impact on the Lebanese economy due to the reliance on the tourism and trade sectors. Since the start of the crisis, the number of international tourists significantly dropped. The crisis also affected Lebanon's exports, as Syria is an export route of Lebanese products- mainly to Gulf countries. Additionally, disruption of trade with Syria had implications on pushing up prices of essential commodities, such as wheat flour, touching the most economically vulnerable households. To draw on this, the Lebanese deficit widened by \$2.6 billion between 2012 and 2014, putting further pressure on the already weak structured public finance. (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016).

In general, Lebanon's unemployment rate is estimated to have doubled after 2011 to reach around 20%. According to the ILO's latest estimates, unemployment in Lebanon stood at an average rate of 9% in the period from 1990 to 2010. Although the refugee crisis response in Lebanon, according to the LCRP, created directly and indirectly 23000 job opportunities through mainly external funding (InfoPro, 2018), the World Bank estimated that around 270,000 Lebanese were dis-employed, of which around 150,000 were working in the service sector. (Chbeir, 2018). Prior to the crisis most of the Syrian workforce was located in the agriculture and construction sectors. Since 2014, the Syrian workforce had an increasing entry to the service sector that employs the largest proportion of the Lebanese workforce. (InfoPro, 2018). On the labour market level, the Syrian crisis led to

a further increase of informal workers across the already ill-regulated labour market. It is estimated that the labour market informality rate rose by around 10% after the crisis (InfoPro, 2018). The refugee influx led to a shock to the supply side in the labour market, putting more strain on the Lebanese workers' wages and employment, while the demand side stagnated with the economic slowdown. Employers are increasingly replacing Lebanese workers with irregular Syrian workers with lower wages and no social protection, pushing the Lebanese workers to be more lenient in terms of their wages and working conditions. The labour shock eventually decreased the daily wages by 60% in the construction and agriculture sectors, for instance. However, sufficient data is still missing in terms of calculating the impact of the labour shock on the wages of specific sectors. (Masri & Srour, 2013).

Another impact on the labour market is seen on the level of the SMEs and the self-employed. As 61% of the self-employed in the national labour force are located in the service sector, the Syrian refugee influx brought numerous entrepreneurs into the Lebanese labour market and therefore started to compete with the already struggling SMEs. The new Syrian-owned SMEs are providing services and products at lower prices, hence threatening the Lebanese SMEs. Most of the new Syrian-owned SMEs businesses are operating with no licenses, and do not pay taxes, water and electricity bills. In addition, most of these SMEs employ Syrians as waiters, chefs, and cleaners. (Masri & Srour, 2013). According to a study conducted by InfoPro and the World Bank on a sample of 1000 enterprises, 8% of informal businesses were owned by Syrians, most of which started their businesses after 2010. In addition, according to the World Bank estimation, there was an increase of 29% in informal businesses from 2011 to 2014 (InfoPro, 2018).

The government has been lenient towards informality for both informal workers and unlicensed businesses. A rough estimation of the level of informality in the Lebanese labour market can be linked to figures provided by the Ministry of Labour in 2014, stating that 2067 applications for work permits were submitted by Syrian workers out of the roughly 400000 Syrian labour force in Lebanon, making the ratio of regulated workers less than one percent (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016).

2.5 The evolution of the legal framework governing Syrian economic and forced migrants

The main legal legislation concerned with the Syrian voluntary migration is the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country. The law, nevertheless, was not seriously enforced as the circular migration had Syrian workers moving between the borders without registering as workers. Hence, both Syrian and Lebanese states were deliberately turning a blind eye to the informal labour of Syrian workers. (Janmyr & Mourad, 2017). After the end of the civil war, the Taef agreement was signed and thus marking the beginning of the Pax Syriana. The Syrian influence in Lebanon took shape with the Brotherhood bilateral agreement of 1993 relating to Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination. The treaty granted both Lebanese and Syrians freedom of movement, stay and employment. Still, the implementation of the agreement was ambiguous and disorganized (Gohlke-Rouhayem, et al., 2016).

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese government has been keen on using the term displaced population rather than refugees. Albeit being a founding member of the United Nations, the Lebanese State did not ratify the Refugee Convention of 1952, which relieved the Lebanese state from its responsibility towards the refugees. Therefore, the

Lebanese state has no obligation to allow refugees to work or be part of a social security network as mentioned in Article 24 of the convention titled “Labour legislation and social security” (Sadek, 2013).

In 2013, Syrian workers were allowed to access jobs in construction, electricity and sales through a circular by the Labour minister (Khater, 2017). In 2015, the Lebanese state started to apply the October Policy. Syrians coming to Lebanon have to choose and prove the reason for their stay from five categories: tourism, business, study, medical treatment, economic migrant entering with a Lebanese sponsor, or transit to another country. The policy, therefore, indirectly restricted the entry to Lebanon to only individuals with good financial standing. The policy was then followed by providing Syrian nationals with two options. The first, to obtain residency through Kafala (sponsorship) by a Lebanese citizen, which officially costs 200\$, while informally can cost at least \$500, turning them into economic migrants. The second option is to rely on a UNHCR registration certificate, which makes them refugees and hence denies them the right to work. In parallel, the Lebanese state halted the registration of refugees by UNHCR, so the latter started “recording” rather than registering them, where the recording does not provide Syrian refugees the registration certificate which is crucial for their legal stay (Janmyr & Mourad, 2017).

There is a major causal relationship between labour informality and exploitation. Informal workers, whether refugees or resident migrant workers with expired Kafala, are reluctant to report violations to the authorities which promote impunity in the workplace. Even migrant Syrian workers fear to lose their Kafala since many sponsors, or Kafil, are the employers themselves (Papavero, et al., 2017).

2.6 Informality theoretical framework

There are four schools that interpret informality. The Dualist school argues that informality is not linked to the formal sector as its activities are mostly related to isolated economic activities in rural spaces in the periphery (Hart, 1973). De Soto, from the Legalist school, argues that small enterprises turn to the informal sector because of the complicated and burdensome regulations of the state. Contrary to the previous two schools, The Structuralists, with Portes as its main proponent, contends that the development of capitalist economies encourages the growth of the informal sector as it provides large firms with cheap labour and cuts costs of formalization, thus, increasing its competitiveness through exploiting the informal sector. And finally, the Il-legalist school of thought, associated with neoliberal economics, sees informality as a choice of the entrepreneurs to avoid regulation and taxes (Hart, 1973).

The informal economy's theoretical framework, based on the International Labour Conference Resolution on Decent Work and the Informal Economy in 2002, provided a broadened framework of analysis and parameters, identifying actors and activities within the informal economy, while the analysis was previously limited to the informal sector and the production units. The parameters provided are mainly centred on the notion of exclusion of the recognized system with informal economic activities (Hart, 1973).

According to Hart, there are five categories of work. However, the research focuses on four of them, due to their relevance to the context of forced migration and informality of labour within the restaurant sector. The categories are as follows: the self-employed with no employees in the informal sector; the employers of informal enterprises; family

members of the employer whose enterprise is informal; and employees in a registered enterprise but not covered by national labour legislations, social protection and taxation (Hart, 1973).

There is a high correlation between informality on one hand and poverty and unemployment on the other hand. This correlation was thoroughly explained in the literature review, particularly the section on the Lebanese political economy and labour market structure in Lebanon. In this context, five factors driving informality were listed, the sum of which is needed to better explain informality within the restaurant sector. First, the inability of the industrial sector to produce productive and high-quality jobs resulting in further creation of jobs in the service sector characterized by predominantly low employment productivity and low-quality jobs – usually associated with the informal sector. Second, the need for companies to keep up their competitive advantages in a globalized market that encourages the drive for flexibility in the formal sector through arrangement as subcontracting or casual work, which contributes to the growth of informality. Third, labour regulation can lead to further informality due to bureaucratic complications, costly transactions, and corruption within the bureaucracy itself, which may lead to exclusion from the formal economy. Fourth, increasing privatization of public services leads to the expansion of the service sector employment level in an inequivalent manner to the industrial sector employment level. Consequently, the labour market mostly produces jobs with weak productivity and low quality, and thus leading to an increase in unemployment rates in parallel to the growth of the informal economy. And finally, economic crises lead to the growth of the informal economy as the latter acts as a flexible

shock absorber for the labour market because of the loss of jobs in the formal sector (Hart, 1973).

2.7 Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital, the Migration Systems theory, and the field of power in the Lebanese labour market

Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital

Bourdieu extended the notion of capital which was exclusive to the economic capital, to the social and cultural capital. According to him, there are two characteristics of social capital. The first is a resource created by social networks and group membership (trade unions, social clubs, political parties etc.). The volume of the social capital is, therefore, measured based on the size of the network the individual can mobilize. The second characteristic is the mutual cognition and recognition that translates into classifications creating a symbolic capital, which reproduces and reinforces power relations, legitimizes classifications and differences between social classes, and underpins workplace hierarchy, etc. (Bourdieu, 1986).

As for the cultural capital, Bourdieu identified three forms. The first, embodied state in the form of long-lasting disposition of the mind and body mostly represented in the form of culture, which is the timely process of accumulating knowledge and know how. One of the main measurements of the embodied form is the length of the cultural capital acquisition, for instance the time spent in the food industry learning skills and gaining experience. The second is the objective state, in the form of cultural goods (painting, instruments...). The objectified state of cultural capital can be transmissible in its materiality in the same manner of an economic capital. In addition, the objectified state is closely linked to the embodied state, where the owner of the means of production can appropriate an objectified state of cultural capital through economic capital, but needs at the same time the embodied state of cultural capital to appropriate them and use them in

accordance to their specific purpose. The third, the institutionalized state is the objectification of the cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications as an example. Hence, a certification that is a recognizable and standardized guarantee of certain cultural competence which allows its holder to convert this form of cultural capital to an economic capital, in the form of an increase in wages facilitating an upward mobility in workplace and labour market (Bourdieu, 1986).

Understanding the field of power of the Lebanese labour market through the Migration Systems theory.

According to Bourdieu, both types of capital, social and cultural, are resources used in the field of power, where individuals and social groups accentuate their different types of capital in order to advance their interests. The concept of the field of power can be applied in a more specific context to the informal labour market.

"The field of power is a field of forces defined by the structure of the existing balance of forces between forms of power, or between different species of capital. It is a space of play and competition in which social agents and institutions which all possess the determinate quantity of specific capital sufficient to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields" (Erel, 2010)

In order to understand how the field of power in the informal labour market is structured, and how the power dynamics between its agents' function, the research will utilize the Migration systems theory. The main reason behind it is that informal labour market in Lebanon is highly correlated with the Syrian migration

to Lebanon. Therefore, understanding this migration system enables the research to identify the agents in the field of power, how each of them accumulate and use their different types of capital and how the power structures shapes the informal labour market as a field of power. (Erel, 2010).

According to the migration systems theory, the migration system is built on durable connections and relationships (family ties, commerce, culture etc.) between two or more societies, with each having their own political and economic systems and structures. Castles and Miller, in their interpretation of the theory, focus on the regional level of the West African migration system (similar to the Syrian labour migration to Lebanon), characterized by a labour mobilization from the rural peripheries to the capitalist urban centres. Such movement not only relates to economic and labour factors, but also to social and cultural ties. The theory identifies different levels within the structure of a migration system (the macro, meso and micro structures) that have a complex interaction between them, which influences actions and decision making. The theory perceives migration as a result of wider political, economic, and social structures rather than individual decisions (O'Reilly, 2019).

Therefore, the agents in the field of power of the labour market according to the migration system structures are the following:

-Macro structures: the political economy, government policies, legislations, trade agreement etc. (O'Reilly, 2019).

The agents of the macro structures are the political institutions, such as the ministry of labour and the General security, and the economic ones. They have successfully transformed the post-war economy to a service-based and low productivity one, they have cracked down on the labour unions after the civil war, and utilized the Syrian labour migration, including the forced Syrian migration post 2011, to exploit and abuse national and migrant workers. As a result, macro structures in Lebanon have been dominating the decision making in the field of power of the labour market, through political, legal, and economic tools (O'Reilly, 2019).

-Meso structures: the groups or individuals who act as exploiters or helpers. They work as intermediaries between the macro and micro structures, hence, between the migrants, the states', and economic institutions.

The meso structures are highly influenced by the macro structures. Labour unions, civil society organizations and other rights-based organizations have been substantially weakened. Therefore, the 'helpers' in this migration system have little impact on the field of power of the labour market. On the other hand, 'exploiters', mainly sponsorship brokers and other actors in the migration industry, fit more into the Lebanese economic, political and social structures. The 'exploiters' within the meso structures are an extension of the macro structures that have historically encouraged labour exploitation and informality (O'Reilly, 2019).

-Micro structures: migrants who develop informal social networks, mainly through family connections, that facilitate the process of migration. Such networks help in obtaining legal papers, accessing jobs, supporting a business, finding shelter etc.

Informal Syrian workers in the Lebanese labour field of power have the least clout compared to elements of the macro and meso structures. As a result, they lack the ability to negotiate with employers. They struggle to secure their legal status through sponsorships, and to preserve their jobs in the labour market, and to enhance their work conditions in the shadow of an informal labour that fails to provide political or social protection. Consequently, informal Syrian workers had to heavily rely, capitalize and develop their social and cultural capital in Lebanon as the main source of accessing jobs and services (O'Reilly, 2019).

2.8 “The Invisible Cage” case studies: Syrian workers navigating informality challenges, through their social and cultural capital

The sections above discussed the elements of macro and meso structures of the migration system between Lebanon and Syria. Chalcraft provides, through the case studies in the “Invisible Cage”, a historical record of how Syrian workers navigated the challenges of informality before the Syrian crisis, through their accumulated social and cultural capital. These case studies can be used as a baseline for a comparative analysis along with the interviews from this research.

Syrian workers who came to Lebanon prior to the Syrian crisis had different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, accumulated different experiences, and acquired different social and cultural knowledge in Lebanon and elsewhere. Therefore, through

their variant social networks and personal knowledge they navigated informality and accessed work and services differently, hence, interacted differently with the field of power of the Lebanese labour market. (Chalcraft, 2008).

In Chalcraft's "The Invisible Cage", Syrian workers used their social and cultural capital in order to access work, housing, and healthcare as a crucial part of their survival. In addition, Chalcraft explains how the Syrians interact with the field of power of the Lebanese labour market. For instance, what Chalcraft calls the "savage God" of the Lebanese free market sets the foundation for a culture of exploitation. Lebanese capitalism is historically vested in the commodification of foreign labour, especially Syrian nationals, depicting them as culturally constituted to be commodities, hence, legitimizing their exploitation. Add to this the racist discourse against Syrian workers, accusing them of "disfiguring" the "modern" image of Lebanon -with poorly dressed Syrian workers in public spaces- so as to portray them as a threat to the "Lebanese identity" -as most of the Syrian workers were Sunnis and were shaking the sectarian equilibrium- a thing that further legitimized the exploitation and the dehumanization of Syrians. Interviewed Syrians in Chalcraft's book said that they suffered from low wages, work insecurity, hard labour, and poor working conditions. The interviewees said they had to work from 80 up to 120 hours per week, six and a half days per week, some enduring verbal and sometimes physical violence from their Lebanese employer (Chalcraft, 2008).

Although they were systemically marginalized, Syrian nationals have developed social networks in order to survive exploitation, marginalization and access jobs and services. Syrian nationals had almost no governmental or non-governmental support or affiliations in social clubs or syndicates. Therefore, kinship ties and work relationships were at the

heart of the constant process of reconstructing and accumulating community and social capital. As indicated in Bourdieu's social capital theory, Syrian nationals transformed their social capital into an economic one. Interviewees saved healthcare costs when they were assisted by their compatriots who sent them back to Syria to receive cheaper treatment. "So many of our friends who get ill- if an accident happened or something like that – we put them in a service taxi and {go} to Syria". Interviewees also cooperated in finding jobs for their relatives living in Lebanon or coming from Syria. It was common to see entire families working at a construction site. Syrian nationals also benefited from social relationships with Lebanese employers or from their relatives and sometimes both (Chalcraft, 2008).

Syrian nationals also cumulated cultural capital as part of their survival tactics. "Manufacturing consent" has been crucial in accessing a job and maintaining it. Interviewees, mostly workers, said they made sure to portray themselves as disciplined, honest, hardworking, and apolitical. Other interviewees, mostly business owners, made sure to quietly blend in through displaying a Lebanese flag at the site of their business, and refrained from having sensitive discussions with their Lebanese friends and customers. Other Interviewees, mostly the self-employed, emphasized on the fact that learning a certain skill guarantees their place in the market, especially in the absence of any organizational body that protects their interests, hence earning a higher income compared to tedious labour.

"You have to be quiet and learn a skill."

Nevertheless, some interviewees were more assertive and showed resistance to the concept of total discipline and obedience. One interviewee bargained for his right and as a result he earned more money and had better working conditions. Another interviewee benefited from being a Maronite from Tartus and was more capable of integrating into the Maronite community. He picked up the local accent and local fashion. He managed through his relations to get higher paying jobs and distinguished himself as a Maronite from the Syrian coast working as a skilled self-employed labourer, thus alienating himself from other Syrians coming from rural parts of Syria working in hard labour and are “culturally distant” from the Lebanese. In this sense, Syrian nationals have managed, through different tactics, to accumulate for each a certain cultural capital allowing them to navigate labour market informality, marginalization, and exploitation. The cultural capital accumulated differently by Syrian individuals can transform into social and economic capital. As mentioned previously, Syrian nationals benefited from their personal and working skills in order to increase their social network, earn more income, enhance their working conditions, or merely to access and secure their jobs (Chalcraft, 2008).

Conclusion

The literature review explored a comprehensive assessment of what has been covered on the historical context of the political economy of Lebanon, the legal framework regulating the stay and work of Syrian nationals in Lebanon, and the informality within the labour sector.

Informal labour, specifically of Syrian nationals, has been historically an integral part of the Lebanese political economy. Encouraged by both Lebanese and Syrian states, a

circular migration was formed of Syrians freely moving between their towns and villages and mostly Beirut (with both states turning a blind eye to their movement). The Lebanese employer needed cheap labour, mainly in sectors abandoned by the Lebanese labour force, such as construction and agriculture. On the other hand, the Syrians needed their worker's remittances to compensate for the capital flight after the Baath's land reform and nationalization programs. The Lebanese employers not only needed the informal Syrian labour as a source of cheap labour, but also as a means to hinder and coerce the Lebanese labour force. In the years following the Lebanese civil war, under the Pax-Syriana, the state successfully managed to crack-down on labour unions while maintaining the systematic exploitation of the Syrian workforce. In addition, the Lebanese state further liberalized the economy creating a rentier service-based low productivity economy resulting in high unemployment, wage stagnation and increased informalization of the economy and the labour market. Lebanese and Syrian workforces were subjected to exploitation, while employers in Lebanon further accumulated their wealth.

With the start of the Syrian crisis, the circular dynamics were abruptly interrupted. The Lebanese economy was severely impacted by border closures due to the ongoing war in Syria. The Syrian crisis led to a refugee influx across the border. Although the Lebanese economy benefited from external aid related to the refugee crisis, the latter created a labour market shock putting large numbers of Lebanese out of work, especially in the service sector which did not traditionally employ the Syrian labour force. Unemployment among young Lebanese and informality in the labour market almost doubled. The Lebanese state replaced its open border policy with highly restrictive policies, hindering Syrians' entry into Lebanon, with the aim of securitizing the refugee crisis. The Lebanese government

also adopted the Kafala system, leading to an increase in informalization of the Syrian labour, as abiding by the legal changes was very difficult to most of the Syrian nationals in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the latter was not a homogenous entity. Their types of informality differed from one another, so did their use of social and cultural capital, but it was all utilized to survive their informality and help them incorporate in the Lebanese labour market.

Nevertheless, this literature review discloses several gaps.

The literature discussing the legal vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees is limited to discriminatory legal legislations, while the analysis does not deploy a political economy perspective to explain exploitation in the labour market. The literature focuses on the Syrian workers as a homogenous entity while their wages, working conditions, and social networks differ from one sector to another.

As for explanations defining informality- mainly that of Hart's and De Soto's- they seem to exclude the case of informal forced migrants, while focusing on the cases of voluntary migrants only. Other factors related to forced migration and securitization of the refugee crisis should be taken into consideration as well.. In this sense, the legal legislations should be revised as they constitute a significant tool in the hands the political economy used for the coercion of the labour market.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of informal labour does not factor in the impact of forced migration on the hosting labour market, and how it specifically impacts the restaurant industry in Lebanon in terms of size, the number of employees, and the categories of the latter. Moreover, this impact should be explored in different geographical

locations since the level of development of this sector varies widely from one area to another. Adding to that, the social and economic context surrounding refugees, which differs from one area to another, and the ratio of refugees with respect to the population of the hosting community.

Chapter Three

Methodological Approach

This section provides the framework and technique for the collection and analysis of the data on the repatriation of Lebanese migrants, using both primary and secondary research. Below I describe in detail the material and justification for the selected methodological approach.

The secondary research includes a literature review through a narrative approach to the comprehensive assessment of what has been covered on the topic of return migration, reintegration, and development. Moreover, the secondary research helps identify other analyses regarding Lebanon to help disclose the gap in the study. I have reviewed journals, reports, books, and edited chapters as a backdrop to get acquainted with concepts, theories, terms and typologies on this topic. Furthermore, this section serves as a platform for contributing to my research.

I have used a qualitative method approach to collect and analyse data using a comparative design and semi-structured method for interviews. The research aims to collect data on repatriated Lebanese, their life before emigrating, their life in the destination country, and their experience as returnees in Lebanon.

3.1 Research population

The participants were recruited through personal contacts and snowball sampling. 11 participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews as there is a gap in reliable

and official data on Syrians working in the restaurant industry. Greater Beirut was selected since it is the capital and the economic centre of Lebanon. According to VASyR 2019, hotels and restaurants scored the highest as a sector of work for Syrian nationals compared to other categories in Beirut.

The research focused on Syrian restaurant workers and owners mainly serving Mediterranean/Oriental Mezza and/or fast food, since these cuisines are the most common in the restaurant industry in Beirut. The interviewed individuals were Syrian registered and unregistered workers (registered refugee or with no legal papers), Syrian restaurant owners and Syrian restaurant workers in senior positions (team leader, manager etc.). Researching informal labour is a delicate issue as it posts legal and livelihood risks on the Syrian interviewees. Through understanding this matter, I was able to gain the trust of the participants and acquire accurate and reliable insights.

3.2 Research design and strategy

The research uses the case study as a research design in an attempt to explore the informality dynamics within the informal labour market, while taking into consideration the complexity and the intersectionality between the labour market, legislations, the political economy, and labour informality.

The research methods consisted of mixed methods but focused more on the qualitative one. Crises, structural changes, legal and economic policies, and their effect on the individuals- mainly Syrian informal workers- are studied prior to and during the Syrian crisis. Nevertheless, the use of quantitative methods was necessary in order to analyse the

impact of the variables mentioned above on wages, unemployment rate, workers' profiles, and other factors. The research strategy used both desk review and primary data collection. The desk review captures the literature written on the political economy, the legal regulations framework, and informality in the periods of the Syrian voluntary and forced migration. By doing so, the findings were first used to depict the interplay between the political economy, the legal regulations framework, and informality in the period prior to the Syrian crisis. This relationship was used as a baseline and then compared to the same three previously mentioned variables but within the crisis timeframe (2011-Present). Such a narrative enabled the research to delve into the historical origins of the system of power that controls the migration and labour informality of Syrians in these two periods. Additionally, the review provided a theoretical framework for informality, which is necessary to contextualize the informality related to forced migration. Finally, the desk review revisited the literature gaps mentioned in the informality theoretical framework, mainly the works of Hart and De Soto, and the analytical framework provided of the role and challenges that forced Syrian migrants face in the Lebanese labour market.

As for the collection methods of primary data, they were used in a comparative analysis with the desk review findings and applied on two levels. The first level includes in-depth interviews that provide findings related to the employment profile of the Syrian workers within the restaurant sector, their experiences with the legal framework governing their stay and work status in Lebanon, in addition to their role and interaction with informality within the restaurant sector during the Syrian crisis. These findings are then compared to the desk review, from Chalcraft's "The Invisible Cage" that covers the historicity of the Syrian migrant workers' role and interaction in the context of the selected variables stated earlier in this paper.

The second level of analysis was based on the comparison of the findings between the different interviewees. Various trends of informality that occurred within the restaurant sector during the crisis were thoroughly inspected in terms of labour's wages, work conditions, social networks, sectarian affiliations, class affiliations, educational background, and legal statuses.

This thesis gathered rich in-depth perceptions of interviewees' experiences. Moreover, it added value and benefit as it used a semi-structure survey on 11 case studies on an understudied category of the Syrian population in Lebanon. This type of sample can only represent a category of the population but cannot be generalized.

3.3 Sampling & Selection criteria

A total of 11 interviews were conducted, among whom 8 were employees, and 3 were owners.

The case studies show how the legal, economic, and social changes that transpired in Lebanon after 2011 affected labour informality from the perspective of the Syrian working in the restaurant industry. The findings identify the dynamics within the labour market, specifically in the restaurant industry. Here two concepts arise concerning legal and labour informality, where the research fills the gap of identifying the conflicting groups and individuals, their interests, their power relations, the capital they are competing over, the legitimacy of that capital, and how they accumulate it.

The COVID-19 lockdown which was in place at the time of the interviews limited the number of interviewees to 11. The sample size was not representative, and the findings were analysed as case studies. The interviewees were all Syrian, 8 of whom were

employees (waiting tables or working in the kitchen), 2 senior employees (floor manager, team leader) and 3 owners or partners in a restaurant. The case studies take into consideration the type of the restaurant based on its clientele, what it serves, and its location in Greater Beirut.

Location within Beirut and its suburbs (Greater Beirut)	Type of costumers	Type of interviewee
Gemayzeh	Mostly well-off	Owner
Hamra	Mostly middle class	Senior staff
Hadath	Mostly middle class	Worker Kitchen
Jouniye	Mostly working and middle class	Worker Kitchen
Chiyah	Mostly working and middle class	Worker Tables service
Hamra	Mostly well-off	Senior staff
Barbir	Mostly working and middle class	Worker Kitchen
Basta	Mostly working and middle class	Worker Kitchen
Sin El Fil	Mostly working class	Owner

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This research covers a sensitive topic for the Syrians working informally. As seen in the literature review, the context of informality was linked to illegality, although participants acquired Kafala. Therefore, the research is very keen on respecting ethical considerations in order to avoid any harm to the participants. The privacy of the interviewees was safeguarded through informed consent. The interviewees were aware of their right to full

disclosure on the research. They were made aware of the tools used for data collection during the interview, as covert methods are considered an invasion of interviewee's privacy.

I provided my correct name and did not attempt to hide details about my identification and the goal behind the research.

As some of the interviewees had traumatizing experiences with war violence, forced movement, loss of friends and or relatives, and police violence among many other traumas, I was tactful not to stir issues that might cause distress to the interviewees. In certain cases, when the interviewee displayed discomfort towards a certain question, I would move on to the next question.

An official letter from the Lebanese American University was acquired stating that the research project was approved by IRB, and the university authorized me as its student to conduct the research. Consequently, I used the consent form from IRB that states the Lebanese American University approved the content of the consent form.

3.5 Study procedures

The interviewee was provided with an informed consent form and asked to sign it, in order for the interview to take place. The consent form was in Arabic, stating the name of the interviewer, the purpose of the survey, how the information will be used, their rights to confidentiality, and their ability to withdraw from the interview. I informed the interviewees that in case they wished to withdraw from the interview, the interview will be stopped immediately, and the recording erased. I also informed the interviewees of the benefits of the research as a medium for their opinions and concerns to be relayed in a transparent manner.

The locations of interviews were chosen based on an arrangement with the interviewees. The setting of the interviews respected the standard procedures related to the COVID-19 response, keeping a safe distance between the interviewee and myself. The location where the interviews were held made the interviewees feel comfortable and ensured that their privacy was respected.

I conducted the interview in a semi-structured manner. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them to Arabic. The average interview took between 30 to 50 minutes where I made sure not to extend the interviews more than the maximum time or else the interviewees would be exhausted.

Each interview took a day for transcribing. As the average ratio of transcribing is one hour for each ten minutes of recording. A day of transcription will consume between six to nine hours of transcription. The transcription was translated into English and entered into the data entry tool and coded according to the nodes, a process spanned over a day.

3.6 Data Management

As the interviews were recorded through a phone application, the recordings were extracted afterwards and kept on a hard drive. I am the only person with access to the folder, which is password protected. The folder contains the recordings, the transcripts, and the data entry tool.

The interviews were coded as following: the interview number, the type of work, and the date of the interview. For example, an interview conducted on 17/05/2020 is coded as 170520. In case the interview is the fourth one conducted with a restaurant owner on 20/05/2020, it would be coded as 04- O-200520

The data collected will be erased eventually after the thesis defence as there is no need to retain it.

3.7 Timeline

	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20		
Submit proposal to IRB	x				
Literature Review	x				
Sampling	x				
Design of survey	x				
Data collection		x			
Transcription and coding		x			
Data interpretation and Analysis		x			
1st draft		x		x	
Review		x		x	
Complete Second draft		x		x	
Proofing/Checking		x		x	
Submission			x		x

Chapter Four

Findings

This chapter presents the research findings on the 11 semi-structured interviews that were carried out in Greater Beirut; of which eight were with Syrian employees and three with Syrian business owners or investors. The interview questions were grouped into **five nodes**, each focusing on a specific area. In the *first node*, the focus is mostly on the social capital that was acquired before and after interviewees settled in Lebanon. This is to understand the volume of their social network, the mutual cognition, and the recognition between the interviewees and their social networks. The *second node* consists of questions mostly centralized on interviewees' cultural capital in its embodied, objectified, and institutionalized state. The *third node* is related to the legal status of the Syrian interviewees in Lebanon, their knowledge of the legal system, and how they accessed their legal papers. *Node four* is mostly related to the working conditions and wages. This node allows the research to draw correlations between three nodes; the social capital (node one), the cultural capital (node two), legality (node three), as well as the interviewees' ability to capitalize on their income and welfare in the context of labour informality. *The fifth and last node* consists of the Syrian business owners.

4.1 General Information

Interviewee	Pseudo name	Type of Interview	Profession in the restaurant industry
1	Samer	Employees/Workers	NGO technical trainer
2	Tony	Business owners	Owner of restaurant
3	Ibrahim	Employees/Workers	Runner at a night club
4	Ahmad	Employees/Workers	Shawarma worker
5	Tamer	Employees/Workers	Bartender
6	Jalal	Employees/Workers	Waiter
7	Mazen	Employees/Workers	Kitchen worker
8	Mahmoud	Employees/Workers	Restaurant manager
9	Rami	Employees/Workers	Waiter
10	Hagop	Business owners	Owner of restaurant
11	Salma	Business owners	Owner of restaurant

Table 1. Overview of Syrian Interviewee

The table above summarizes an overview of each Syrian interviewee’s characteristics. The workers’ demographic and socioeconomic background is similar except for Mahmoud. The 55-year-old restaurant manager immigrated to Lebanon before the Syrian crisis and has been residing in the country for a substantial amount of time. He is from the generation that lived through the start of the circular migration and the construction boom in Beirut. Seven of the interviewees are young males (27-31), middle class, received a tertiary education in Syria and came to Lebanon because of the Army conscription, as they came from areas controlled by the Syrian regime (rural Homs, Swaida, Kalamoun, Southern rural Aleppo). One describes his motive for immigrating to Lebanon by stating the following: *“I am used to a certain life. I came here because I know that I cannot survive the hardships of the military”* - Mazen. The statement indicates how the living situation in Syria became unbearable; thus, pushing them to leave their country to seek refuge in Lebanon while working in a field that they did not specialize in.

4.2 Business owners/self-employed

#	Gender	Place of birth	Year of settlement in Lebanon	Place of settlement	Profession prior to moving to Lebanon	Profession at the time of the interview	Profession in the restaurant industry	Period spent in the restaurant industry
2	Male	Wadi Nasara (rural Homs)	2013	Gemayzeh	Restaurant owner	Owner of restaurant	Owner of restaurant	1990s-till now
10	Male	Bourj Hammoud	Born and raised in Lebanon	Bourj Hammoud	Owner of restaurant			
11	Female	Damascus	2011	Sin El Fil	Owner of a clothing shop	Owner of restaurant	Owner of restaurant	2013-till now

Table 2. Business owners/self employed

4.2.1 Social capital (Node one)

Hagop is originally Armenian Syrian from Aleppo but was born in Lebanon. He said, “People won’t recognize me as a Syrian since I have been living here (Lebanon) for the past 34 years.” His mother is Lebanese and he was raised by his uncles. For ten years, Hagop worked in Burj Hammoud for a Lebanese-Armenian businessman - whom he considered a father figure- and who gave him a lot of knowledge and experience in the food and restaurant industries.

Hagop is the only interviewee who had built his social capital entirely in Lebanon. He was able to develop a social network through the Lebanese-Armenian businessman as he “was a very known and respected man.” He integrated into the Lebanese society and gained the most social capital compared to the other interviewees as he did not have to leave Syria and interrupt the accumulation of his social capital. He opened a successful restaurant in Tabarja for seven years by the seashore where he used to organize dinner parties for the Lebanese Armenian community, companies’ staff, businessmen etc. He noted that, “Every

weekend the restaurant was packed. One night's net profit was equivalent to an employee's monthly salary." At the same time, he had a parallel business that provided labour (mostly waiters) for restaurants on weekends when restaurants require extra workers. He said, "I knew most of the restaurant owners from Jbeil to Kesrwan." He then closed-down his restaurant because of the landlord. Afterwards, he began work at his current restaurant in Sin-El-Fil, which is also a vegetable market after he rented the place from Sin-El-Fil's mayor. He said, "The mayor told me not to worry about anything. The shop restaurant is registered to his name and I never had to worry about anything related to legal issues."

Interviewee number 10 also has a bank account. When asked how he could have access to banking services, he said that the staff at the bank knew him very well and he had good relations with its administration. The bank also provided him with a cheque book. The constant flow of substantial amounts of money in and out of his account made him a trustworthy client to the bank.

Interviewees 2 and 11 had extensive social capital in Lebanon. Interviewee number 2, who came to Lebanon after he lost most of his investments in Syria, is a Christian Orthodox. He had established prior to the Syrian crisis relations with multiple Orthodox monks and priests, whom he met at monasteries in Syria. He also maintained his ties with them while on visits to Lebanon. Furthermore, he has numerous Lebanese and Syrian relatives living in Akkar and Koura districts. These relatives aided him in settling into an apartment and obtaining his Kafala. Salma, who also came to Lebanon after losing her shop in Damascus, had several relatives living in Lebanon. Said relatives were Palestinian-Syrians and Palestinians living in Lebanon and related to her mother. When she came to Lebanon, her

cousin, a colonel in the Fatah Organization (PLO), helped her finalize her legal papers and avoid the bureaucracy of the General Security.

As for Interviewee number 2, after settling in Lebanon he started to accumulate his social capital through the restaurant industry. He resided in the Gemayzeh neighbourhood where he built a sizable network with the neighbourhood residents, the local businesses and the employees working in the area. He said, “I make food for the average people here. They come to my place because of the taste, the quality, and the low price. At the same time, it is not only a business; they become people that you interact with on a daily basis”. He also managed to ensure a job within an upscale French restaurant nearby. He was willing to learn new skills, expand his social network into a more sophisticated segment of the industry, and earn money because he was facing a lot of financial pressure due to political instability and the COVID-19 lockdown. He sadly note that, “I worked as a “comi”, meaning I was the guy who was doing the hard labour in the kitchen, the most exploited and the less paid. I worked for \$25 per extra day of course because I am Syrian. I did all that just to get to know the French chef and learn new techniques.” Tony also had good knowledge of restaurant owners in Beirut. He managed to secure multiple jobs for Syrians, mostly newcomers to Lebanon. Nevertheless, during the interview he expressed despair as his social network was not of much benefit to him, because as he said “This is a losing sector now, everything is crumbling. No matter how good you are in the kitchen, and no matter how many people you know, this sector is crumbling, and I am done here.”

Salma did not invest in her social network in Lebanon; thus, she did not accumulate noteworthy social capital. She said that the only people she knew in Lebanon were her relatives. She said, “My life is about going to work and back home.” Nonetheless, she got to know many traders and suppliers in the restaurant industry. Still, such knowledge did not benefit her in terms of transforming her social capital into a cultural or an economic one.

4.2.2 Cultural Capital (Node Two)

Tony worked for 20 years in the restaurant industry. He worked in the United Arab Emirates as a chef for 10 years. He has a secondary education, as he had to drop out of school and work after his father died. He started in the restaurant industry at a young age, and moved to the UAE where he gradually evolved in the restaurant industry to be a chef. After five years working as a chef, he moved back to Syria where he accumulated enough capital to open his own restaurant in Damascus.

When Tony moved to Lebanon, he accumulated more cultural capital related to the food industry. As mentioned in the above section, he used his social capital in order to get a job at a French restaurant. He said, “In Lebanon you learn more as a chef. In Syria you are limited to Oriental food. I am learning about the French cuisine which is more sophisticated and creative.” He went on to say that he added more items to his menu to meet the different tastes of his customers in Gemayzeh. He said that he learned more about

Western food so he could introduce it to his menu. “Once I included more items on the menu, like fajitas and burgers, the sales and the number of customers increased.”

Hagop had a continuous cultural capital accumulation since he kept living in Lebanon for most of his life. Hagop had to drop out of school at an early age because he had to assist his parents in the household expenses. He first accumulated his cultural capital in the business of trading with the businessman mentioned in the above section. He said, “He was my tutor, he taught me a lot of things about the business world, how things function and how people think.”

Hagop claims that he developed a good knowledge in the business world especially in the restaurant sector. He knew how to transform his cultural capital into a social one and vice versa. He said, “It is not easy to do business. You need to know how to communicate with people, to know what they want and how you can benefit from them and they benefit from you.” As mentioned above, he had successfully managed a restaurant in Tabarja where he transformed his cultural capital into a social and an economic one. After he had to close his restaurant in Tabarja, he started again with his restaurant in Sin-El-Fil. He said, “It is very hard to run a restaurant here, you need to manage your expenses and get the best deals in the market so you can sustain your business.” His new restaurant has lower income clients, forcing him to face tougher conditions in running the restaurant.

Salma had vocational education in Syria as a beautician. However, she worked at her family owned business trading in textile. They had multiple shops in Damascus and their business was prosperous. She said, “All of us, my brothers and I, had to work early in my

fathers' shop. We grew up knowing how to operate a business, talk to clients and understand the market.”

4.2.3 Legal status and labour informality (Node three)

All three interviewees are familiar with the laws and regulations related to the Syrian nationals in Lebanon. All three have their businesses registered in the names of confidants who are the estate owners.

All three did not pay more than the official rate of the Kafala. They relied on their social network to secure them the Kafala. They all said that all the legal procedures were smooth as their contacts had good ties with the General Security, Salma said, “In this country no one cares about the law, if you have money and connections, you get anything you want. My cousin made all the legal papers in no time.”

Interviewees 10 and 11 feel secure that they will not lose their business as they are registered as employees at the restaurant. Tony, nevertheless, is concerned that he might lose his business because of the ministry of Economy, where even the Lebanese landlord cannot help him. He said, “I trust the owner of the establishment, but in Lebanon you don't know when things could go wrong. If someone with good contacts with the state complains about my business because of hate or competition no one can do anything even the Lebanese landlord.”

All three interviewees have the requirements for a restaurant to operate legally. All three pay their electricity and water bills, their restaurants meet the health and hygiene requirements and standards of the MoPH (Ministry of Public Health) and have received periodically inspectors from different ministries. All three never paid any fine or penalty

as they possess all the legal documents. Still, Tony had to constantly lie to the inspectors and to customers that he is an employee at the restaurant and not an owner while the two others never faced such an issue and felt confident saying that the business is theirs.

Although Hagop does not feel concerned about shutting down his business for legal reasons, he previously lost his Safra restaurant business because he was not covered by a contract. “I made a name and a reputation out of my previous restaurant in Safra. When the business started to make good money, the owner increased the rent from \$1500 to \$2800 because he wanted to take over my business. As a Syrian, I was not allowed to own a restaurant so I had to close-down because I was not covered by the law, and the Lebanese sponsor couldn’t protect me.”

4.2.4 Operating the restaurants and challenges (Node Five)

All three interviewees have previous experience in operating businesses. Interviewees 2 and 11 had previously operated businesses in Syria, while Hagop acquired his experience in Lebanon. Interviewees 2 and 11 have been working in Lebanon for 7 years. And Hagop worked in the restaurant industry for 20 years and at his current business for 8 years.

They unanimously agreed that they are working under very challenging conditions. Tony said his biggest challenges are the legal conditions of his business, and the absence of locally produced kitchenware. He explained that most kitchenware in Lebanon is imported and costly; which is not the case in Syria. He said, “Running a business is not a stable thing in Lebanon, because as a Syrian you are hated here. I invested my money here and I am treated as an outlaw.” The other two interviewees faced challenges related to the economic stagnation and the closing of businesses. Hagop said, “We used to sell more

than 100 sandwiches per day, now we're selling on average 30 sandwiches. The crisis hit us all. We are all linked to each other in this industry.”

All three interviewees received financial and legal support when they started their business. Interviewees 10 and 11 had partners who supported them financially and provided them with the necessary legal papers. Hagop managed to open a bank account, as mentioned previously, while others did not.

All interviewees said they do not compete with Lebanese businesses and succeeded in building their own clientele. Tony said, “My place is strictly for the Lebanese working class. I am the only restaurant that caters to them in this neighbourhood.” Prior to the uprising, Tony used to earn a net profit that ranged between \$1000 and \$1200 a month, taking into consideration his extra work at the French restaurant. Hagop made on average \$1500 per month, and Salma earned \$1000 a month. But, the uprising and the lockdown took a toll on all of them. Salma said, “I find it very difficult to continue in Lebanon. The restaurant industry is crumbling after all these crises.”

4.3 Employees/Workers

#	Gender	Place of birth	Year of settlement in Lebanon	Place of settlement	Profession prior to moving to Lebanon	Profession at the time of the interview	Profession in the restaurant industry	Period spent in the restaurant industry
1	Male	Zabadani	2014	Gemayzeh	Engineering fresh graduate	NGO technical trainer	Waiter	2014-2019
3	Male	Wadi Nasara (rural Homs)	2015	Gemayzeh	Engineering fresh graduate	Runner at a night club	Runner at a night club	2015-till now
4	Male	Bloudan	2013	Beit Chaar	Engineering fresh graduate	Shawarma worker	Shawarma worker	2013-till now
5	Male	Swaida	2014	Hamra	Engineering fresh graduate	Bartender	Bartender	2014-till now

6	Male	Swaida	2013	Hamra	Arabic teacher	Waiter	Waiter	2013-till now
7	Male	Menbij (Rural Aleppo)	2012	Ghobeiri	Geography teacher	Kitchen worker	Kitchen worker	2012-till now
8	Male	Rural Aleppo	Mid 1980s	Hamra	Student	Restaurant manager	Restaurant manager	Mid 1980s-till now
9	Male	Swaida	2014	Hamra	Nurse	Waiter	Waiter	2014-till now

Table 3. Workers and Employees

The findings of the workers and employees' group showed three patterns. Each pattern showed resemblance in the size of the social network they had when they first came to Lebanon and how it impacted their process of settlement. These patterns were consistent and showed resemblance in the findings in other nodes. Therefore, I will organize the interviewees into three categories of capital acquired - A to C, the most to least capital acquired respectively.

Categories	Interviewees
A	8
B	1, 6,7 and 9
C	3,4 and 5

Table 4. Categories of capital acquired

4.3.1 Social Capital (Node One)

4.3.1.1 Category A

Mahmoud showed that he had the most acquired social capital. He has been in Lebanon for more than thirty years. He came with his father during the construction boom in Beirut and moved early to the restaurant industry. He was a chef at restaurant for 15 years, a partner in a restaurant not far from his current job and a restaurant manager for ten years. He said, "My personality was shaped here and can't live outside this country." He built extensive relations with locals in Hamra Street and in the restaurant industry. One of his friends, a Lebanese businessman who used to be a previous employer, and whom the

interviewee considered as a father figure, managed to secure him his current job as a restaurant manager.

The interviewee also managed to build a social network based on the restaurant's clients, which benefitted him professionally and socially. He built multiple amicable relations with people working for the state, and he noted that might contact them in case he needed a favour. Although his social recreational activities are limited because of exhaustion from work, his social capital is in constant accumulation. The interviewee finally indicated that he developed further relations with a "third type" of Syrians who came to Lebanon.

"Lebanon knew only the poor Syrian workers who came for the construction of Beirut and the capitalists who fled after the Baath Party took the reins of power. But there is a new type of people who resemble me, the artists, the poets, the professionals who were doing well in Syria but had to come here because of the war and the crisis." He said that they frequently come to his restaurant not only to eat and drink, but also to host cultural, musical, and political events. They became loyal clients to the restaurant, and he has formed personal and familial ties with them.

4.3.1.2 Category B

The interviewees knew little about Lebanon. One of them never came to Lebanon, two of them only came once as tourists and one came for a limited time to work with his relative in the summer. Samer said, "I only knew Lebanon through television. It was pictured for us as a wonderland, but when I came here things were very different and things are even harder than Syria."

The interviewees had to heavily rely on their social network here for the process of their settlement in Lebanon. They acquired a job, a sponsorship and shelter through their social network. Interviewees of category B had extensive social relations in Lebanon. Family friends, Lebanese relatives, Syrian relatives that were already settled in Lebanon before the crisis, and relatives who came two or three years prior to them made the bulk of category B interviewees' social capital. Jalal said, "when I first came to Cola next to the Safa football field, I felt as if I were in Jaramana (a predominantly Druze neighbourhood in Damascus) not in Lebanon." His relatives then got him a job in a cafeteria owned by a distant Lebanese relative. When Samer first came to Lebanon, he managed to secure a Kafala through one of his Lebanese relatives in Beqaa as an agricultural worker and was working and living with his cousin in Gemayzeh.

Although category B interviewees had substantial support for their survival in Lebanon, they were not happy with their jobs. All four interviewees started to show dissatisfaction with their jobs after one or two years of their arrival to Lebanon. Simultaneously, they started to expand their social capital which eventually led each one of them to find a better job. Samer managed to secure a better job as an engineer at an NGO through a new Lebanese friend that he recently met. Rami managed, through the help of his Syrian relatives who have been residing in Lebanon since the 1970s, to secure a job as a nurse. Jalal got a job at a restaurant with better pay and working conditions. Mazen, who settled with his uncle in Ghobeiri neighbourhood, quit working in daily labour and found a job through his Syrian relative at an international restaurant chain.

When interviewees 1, 6 and 9 got new jobs they changed their shelter, and they acquired new social capital that was less associated with the network of their parents and relatives

and more linked to their own social network in Lebanon through new friends, acquaintances and co-workers. Mazen didn't have to change shelter and stayed in the same neighbourhood where his brothers and relatives lived. He continued his studies at the Lebanese University, pursuing a Master's degree in geography. He expanded his social network not only at work, but also at the university where he made new friends among students and professors.

All interviewees said that being Syrian made them victims at some point of one or multiple acts of racism. Nevertheless, interviewees identified themselves as more than their national identity, class or religious affiliation. Interviewees 6, 7 and 9 said that some Syrians "distorted" the image of the Syrian people in Lebanon; thus, directly or indirectly dissociating themselves from the stereotypical image of the poor Syrian worker coming from rural areas. They affiliated themselves directly or indirectly with openness and middle-class habitus. Interviewees 6 and 9 said that the General Security officer at the border allowed them into Lebanon because they were well dressed while other Syrians were not. Jalal said, "I can't blame the Lebanese state. It is not normal to move between countries dressed in pyjamas." Rami said "Communities in Lebanon, Syria and all over the world develop when they get out of their tribalism, which is not the case for many Syrians in Lebanon." In addition, religious affiliation was utilized to their advantage. Samer said, "It's not easy to be a Syrian in Lebanon. But things are easier if they know that I am Christian." Also, Jalal said, "When police officers ask me where I come from, I would say Swaida. They let me go. I do not like sectarianism but sometimes I had to say I am from Swaida."

Category B interviewees felt confident asking for assistance or protection from their social network (especially their Lebanese friends and relatives) when facing difficulties mostly related to their vulnerability as Syrians against racism, exploitation, and state bureaucracy. Mazen said, “I was hit by a speeding car. Although it was his fault, he tried to intimidate me into giving him money. My landlord called him and dealt with him.” Jalal said that the restaurant owner defended him against racism, “The restaurant owner had an argument with the General Security because they said something insulting against Syrians,” he relayed.

4.3.1.3 Category C

Category C interviewees, much like category B, had little knowledge about Lebanon. They had a cultural shock as things were different from what they had envisioned the country to be. Tamer said, “Lebanon is very different from what we see on Television. It is a harsh country and I had no relatives to stand by me; people here are racist against the Syrians because of what the Syrian army did here.”

The three interviewees had a few relatives here, but they were not in contact with them or they were not aware of their existence, making their settlement harder compared to category B interviewees. They faced more challenges accessing legal papers, jobs and shelter. Ibrahim said, “In the first two months, I depleted the \$2000 that I came here with. I wanted to go back to see my family, even if the price to pay was serving in the army.” They had to rely on themselves to find jobs. All three went door-to-door to ask for a job. In their first two years in Lebanon, they frequently had to change jobs and shelter as they were extremely exploited. Ahmad said, “I went to Daoura to search for a job. The boss

gave me little money; I had to work more than 12 hours and slept on the floor next to five people in a small room. I quickly quit as I was not accustomed to this misery, and he eventually payed me half of my salary.”

After the second year of their arrival, the three interviewees started to accumulate and acquire more social capital. Ibrahim managed to get in touch with a relative from rural Homs. And he eventually settled in an apartment in Gemayzeh inhabited by six Syrian Christians, from his hometown, two of whom were distant relatives. One of his relatives secured him his current job at a night club. He also got to meet young men from his village all working for a sea resort in Batroun. They secured him a job at the resort working on Sundays for extra money. Ahmad reconnected with five old friends from Bloudan and Zabadani and became their flatmate. Although their rented house in Beit Chaar in Mount Lebanon is far from his workplace, he feels comfortable living with people from the same area where he comes from. He said, “They are not friends anymore; they are family to me. If you are missing home, need money or just need to talk to someone they are there for me.” Ahmad managed to get his current job because he asked door-to-door and the restaurant owner was content with his work. Tamer had the same trajectory in his settlement. After a period of constant mobility, he settled with five people from Swaida where he hails from, and became close friends with them. Ahmad got his job at a pub in Hamra after going door-to-door on said street. He met his employer who was satisfied with his work, and he is still employed there. Ahmad also said that he and his friend usually help Syrian people in need of a job or a sponsor.

In the same fashion as category B, interviewees said that they were victims of acts of racism and discrimination. Also, they were identified and self-identified by their class and religious affiliations in order to cope with such discrimination. Ahmad said, “Although we're Muslims but since our village (Bloudan) is mixed and bordering Lebanon we can easily adapt in a Christian area.” Tamer noted that although he never identified as Druze, still he is living with his friends who come from the same area in Syria. Also like category B interviewees, they affiliated themselves directly or indirectly with openness and middle-class habitus.

Nevertheless, due to the lack of the social capital that category B enjoys, interviewees in category C faced a harder time getting their legal papers, and were exploited by different sponsorship brokers. Category C interviewees developed closer relations with their new friends and newly acquainted relatives but did little to develop their social network with Lebanese nationals or individuals who are willing to support them in case they faced a problem. Ibrahim said, “I only have one Lebanese friend who contacts me from time to time and asks me if I'm fine, but generally I don't trust Lebanese people.”

4.3.2 Cultural Capital (Node Two)

4.3.2.1 Category A

Mahmoud has been working in the restaurant industry for around 25 years. He started as a cleaner, then assistant chef, a chef and currently a restaurant manager. He was also a partner in a restaurant prior to his current job. He accumulated enough cultural capital to first understand the restaurant business community, and second to better integrate in the local culture. “I've been here for half of my life. My personality and mentality were shaped here,” he said. His identity as a Syrian did not impede him from integrating in Hamra's

community. On the contrary, Mahmoud benefited from the street's identity that embraces openness and multiculturalism. The street acted as a sanctuary for him against rampant racism and at the same time as a space to meet likeminded Lebanese and Syrians (middle and upper middle class intellectuals). He stated that, "When I am outside of that street, I feel like a fish out of water."

Mahmoud capitalized on his long experience in the restaurant industry by accessing a comparatively high paying and self-rewarding job. He also made the most out of his cultural capital as a professional middle class person through expanding his social network to include Lebanese nationals and what he described as a "third type of Syrians" who came to Lebanon (poets, skilled professionals...) during the Syrian crisis. Many of these people became loyal customers and friends.

4.3.2.2 Category B

The interviewees received tertiary education in Syria and had accumulated work experience in Syria. All four of them used to work in a sector relevant to their education while they were studying. Each four of them said that they were excelling at their freshly started careers. Rami said that he received an award as one of the top nurses in Syria. Mazen had graduated and was working hard to be a steady employee and later-on a school administrator in his village. The interviewees were rapidly accumulating their cultural capital in Syria as all the interviewees did not struggle to find jobs fitting their educational background. They had to interrupt the accumulation of their cultural capital when they came to Lebanon fleeing the war (Mazen) and the army service (interviewees 1, 6 and 9). When asked if they benefited from their educational background and careers in Syria, all four interviewees said that they did not when they first arrived to Lebanon. Later, with the

expansion of their social network (as seen above) and the acquisition of better paying and more rewarding jobs, they started to capitalize on their cultural capital in its embodied and institutionalized forms. Samer eventually left his job at his cousin's restaurant and started to work for an NGO with refugees benefitting from his degree as a mechanical engineer. Rami got a job as a private nurse with a better salary than the one he was paid at the restaurant. His employer is satisfied with his work and his professionalism. Interviewees 6 and 7, who were both teachers in Syria, stayed in the restaurant sector, and commented that they also benefited from their cultural capital gained in Syria. Jalal said, "Although I struggle to remember certain information related to teaching, but more importantly it is how teaching moulded my personality, my rationality and my perspective on things and the world." Mazen, who is pursuing a master's degree in geography, said "Going to the university is vital to keep me in touch with what I love. Being around students, lecturers and professors makes life better here." Although it did not benefit him directly in his current job, it allowed him to acquire a social capital with the academic community at the Lebanese University and a space for social recreation.

Category B interviewees differed in their perception of the cultural capital gained in Lebanon. Most of it was related to their work in restaurants (preparing food, serving customers, cashier etc.) as most of their time was spent either working or resting. For interviewees 1 and 9, these skills were now irrelevant to them as they started new jobs and started to accumulate their cultural capital differently. Nevertheless, Samer said, "Who knows I might go back to restaurants and make use of things I learnt at my cousin's restaurant." Interviewees 6 and 7 made more use of their cultural capital gained in the restaurants as they see themselves in the restaurants industry for the long run and because

they do not have better options. Both interviewees received promotions in their work, showed more detailed knowledge about working at a restaurant compared to interviewees 1 and 9. Thus, they capitalized in their work on their gained cultural capital in Lebanon more than the one gained in Syria, in strike contrast to interviewees 1 and 9 who capitalized on their education (institutional cultural capital) in their current jobs.

4.3.2.3 Category C

Interviewees in category C received tertiary education in Syria but did not accumulate any work experience in Syria. They were studying and receiving allowances from their parents. Shortly after finishing their studies, they had to move to Lebanon to evade the military service. The three interviewees' responses on their settlement in Lebanon showed more frustration compared to other interviewees. Their limited social capital reflected negatively on their ability to capitalize on their degrees as engineers, where two of them said that they did not benefit at all from their educational background. Ibrahim said, "When you meet restaurant owners, they would tell you I don't care about your degree I just want your work in the restaurant," he continues, "you are a Syrian here, you are here to be exploited." While Ahmad said, "The only thing that benefited me from university is that I learned to interact with people from other nationalities and cultures."

Their process of accumulating cultural capital, as for category B interviewees, was interrupted when they settled in Lebanon. Each of the three interviewees had a year or more of continuous mobility and uncertainty until they settled and found a stable job. The cultural capital acquired mostly related to their jobs in the restaurants. All three of them developed a certain skill in the restaurant industry. Ibrahim said, "I know how to operate an accounting system at the night club. It's not a great skill but at least it gives me an

advantage at my work.” Tamer said, “I am evolving fast at my work. Now I want to be a bartender, and they paid for an English course because I need to study English for this position.” As for Ahmad, he said that, “I learned a lot of skills and the restaurant owner is very pleased. This is why I don’t have to worry about my job.”

4.3.3 Legal status and labour informality (Node Three)

4.3.3.1 Category A

All interviewees had documents to prove their identities. All of them had Kafala and none were registered refugees. Mahmoud said that he has been sponsored as a cleaner by the restaurant owner at no cost. He perceives the Lebanese laws related to his work and stay as ambiguous and constantly changing.

4.3.3.2 Category B

Interviewees first had an idea about the Lebanese laws regulating their work and stay but then understood it through practice and information from their social network and social media. Interviewees 1, 6 and 7 waited four months to a year to receive their Kafala. While Rami had to wait one year in order to get a sponsor. All four interviewees paid for their Kafala between \$1000 and \$3000. Interviewees 1, 6 and 7 did not pay more than the legal fee which is \$200. Rami did not find a problem paying more than the legal fee. He was a victim of fraud from three individuals who received his money but did not fulfil their promise to sponsor him. He eventually paid \$3000 for a contract with a local magazine to sponsor him. He said “I was ripped off three times. It cost me between \$10000 and \$12000 just to get a Kafala.” All four interviewees said that they don’t feel safe being informal. They had to constantly lie about their professions as it’s illegal to work in restaurants except being cleaners or to be registered as agricultural workers with a sponsor who is not

their employer. Samer said, “I learned to lie about what I do. I should remember when a police officer asks me to say that I am an agricultural worker in Zahle. I was always worried that one of these policemen would see me at the restaurant.”

4.3.3.3 Category C

Interviewees had similar views as category B regarding the laws regulating the residence and work of Syrians in Lebanon. Three of them waited a year until they got their Kafala. All three of them had to pay between \$800 and \$1000. Ahmad said, “I had to pay \$500 for the Kafeel (sponsor); he then blackmailed me and I had to pay him an extra \$300.” They also shared the same fears of being informal as category B interviewees. Ibrahim said, “I am legally vulnerable because I am registered as an agricultural worker and I might lose my job because there is no legally binding contract with the restaurant owner.” They also disclosed that they are exposed to blackmail. Tamer said, “It has nothing to do with the law. Kafala is a business. A lot of people only work as Kafala brokers and they benefit from us being exposed in Lebanon.”

4.3.4 Salaries and working conditions (Node 4)

4.3.4.1 Category A

Mahmoud has been working in this sector for more than 20 years. He works 12 hours per day. He gets paid around \$1500 per month, including all extra income. He has a day off per week, and he can take a sick leave whenever he wanted, although he never did. He said, “I never took a sick leave although I might be exhausted mentally and physically.” He has private insurance and he is registered in the National Social Security Fund. He also

has the Ministry of Health card. He managed to open a bank account since he is well acquainted with the bank employees, although it is not legal to do so.

Nevertheless, when asked whether he felt stable at his work or not, he said he did; but, the dire economic situation is reflecting negatively on the business. “A lot of businesses in our industry are shutting down. I do not think so. It's very hard to continue in this economy.” When asked if he felt exploited he said, “I don't feel exploited by my work, but I am exploited by the state. The state should differentiate between the ones who came during the crisis and the ones who were here since the 1990's!”

4.3.4.1 Category B

The interviewees in this category have been working in this field for six years. They work between 10 to 12 hours per day. With one day off per week. Except Jalal who works 7 hours per day.

Samer used to get paid the lowest which around 350\$ on average per month including tips and extra work in other restaurants on Sundays. Nevertheless, Samer does not pay rent as he is living with his cousin. Interviewees 6, 7 and 9 get paid between 700\$ to 800\$ including the tips. Samer and 6 had bank accounts although they cannot open a bank account.

Samer gets paid the lowest salary; that is around \$350 on average per month, including tips and extra work at other restaurants on Sundays. However, he does not pay rent as he resides with his cousin. Interviewees 6, 7 and 9 get paid between \$700 and \$800 a month, including tips. Despite its questionable legal standing, interviewees 1 and 6 had bank accounts.

Samer opened a bank account after he started working for an NGO, and Jalal through his current job. He can also take a loan of up to \$1500 from the bank.

Interviewees 6 and 7 received multiple trainings. The restaurants where these two interviewees are currently working have a more advanced business structure. When asked about promotions, Jalal said that he receives an annual salary raise of 3%, while Mazen received three training workshops and increased his salary from \$2.6 per hour (rate 1500 LBP) to \$2.8 per hour 1 day per week making around \$800 per month.

They all take 2 half hour breaks per day. All the interviewees said that they are allowed to take a sick leave, but none of them has ever done so. All received one meal during lunch. Interviewees 6 and 7 have an insurance policy and a health card from the ministry of health, while the others do not. “I don't feel that there is competition over my job because I work hard.” Interviewees 6 and 7 said that they are satisfied at their work. Jalal said he is happy at his job, where he has been working for the past 8 years. Mazen said that although he is satisfied with his job, his workplace tends to be biased against non-Lebanese, offering lower wages to them. The lack of fixed working hours, coupled with low salaries, made interviewees 1 and 9 feel exploited. Moreover, they felt that their informal status put them at risk of losing their jobs.

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Interviewees 6 and 7 received multiple trainings. The restaurants where these two interviewees are currently working have a more advanced business structure. When asked about promotions, Jalal said that he receives an annual salary raise of 3%, while Mazen received three training workshops and increased his salary from \$2.6 per hour (rate 1500 LBP) to \$2.8 per hour 1 day per week making around \$800 per month.

They all take 2 half hour breaks per day. All the interviewees said that they are allowed to take a sick leave, but none of them has ever done so. All received one meal during lunch. Interviewees 6 and 7 have an insurance policy and a health card from the ministry of health, while the others do not. "I don't feel that there is competition over my job because I work hard." Interviewees 6 and 7 said that they are satisfied at their work. Jalal said he is happy at his job, where he has been working for the past 8 years. Mazen said that although he is satisfied with his job, his workplace tends to be biased against non-Lebanese, offering lower wages to them. The lack of fixed working hours, coupled with low salaries, made interviewees 1 and 9 feel exploited. Moreover, they felt that their informal status put them at risk of losing their jobs.

Category C interviewees

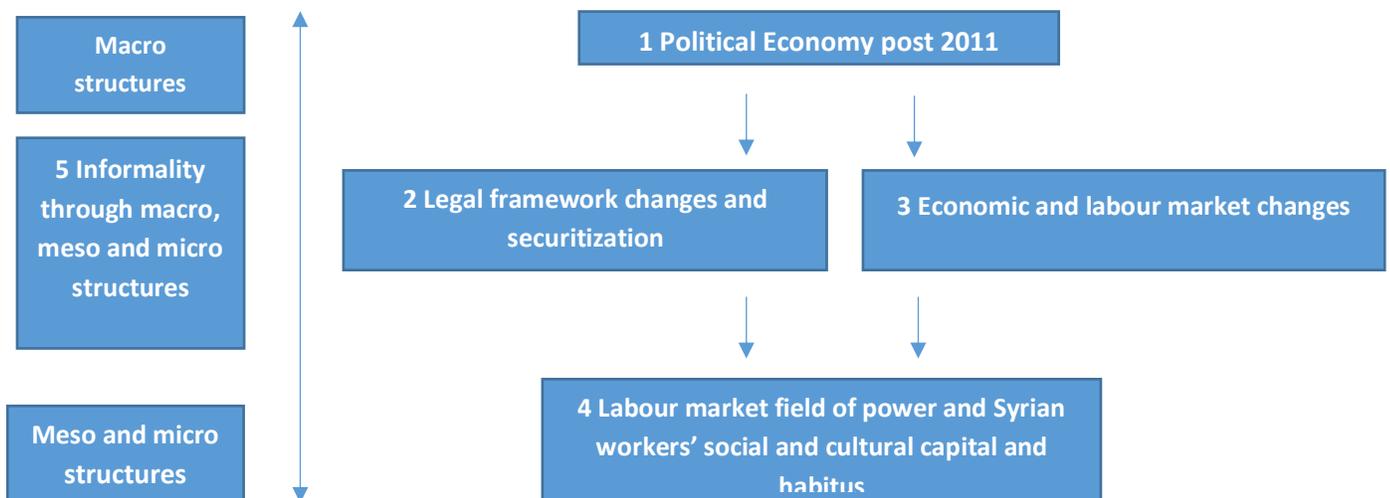
The interviewees in this category have been working in this field for six years. They work between 10 to 12 hours per day, with one day off per week. They get paid between \$600 and \$800, including tips and extra work on Sundays. No one in this category has a bank account. Only Tamer received a promotion after he started tending the bar one day per week. None of them is insured or registered in social security.

They all take 2 breaks a day. All the interviewees said that they can take a sick leave; but, none of them has taken a sick leave so far. All interviewees receive one meal during lunch. They all feel stable at work because they are on good terms with their employers. Mazen said, "I don't feel that there is competition over my job because I work hard, still, the restaurant might close because of the situation." Tamer said that he is well treated at his work; nevertheless, it is not what he intends to do on the long run. The experience of interviewees 3 and 4 was not as agreeable. They both explained that they did double the work load of a regular employee, but that they had no other option. All interviewees expressed concern over the possible shutdown of their place of employment.

Chapter Five

Analysis

This chapter sheds light on the impact the Syrian crisis had on the Lebanese political economy, causing the dynamics within macro, meso and micro structures to either change or be reinforced. Based on the Structuralists' assumption, the political economy and the political system shape the lives and decisions of individuals in general, and the informal sector in particular. It is important to acknowledge the macro factors, while still taking into consideration the micro factors through the decisions and actions of the individuals and their ability to capitalize on and recreate their capital. The chart below shows that informality is the product of a top-down effect from the economic and political systems, but at the same time it is the product of individuals capitalizing and accumulating their different types of capital.



5.1 Considering Chalcraft; the new invisible cage and the Lebanese economy during the Syrian crisis

The research based its review of the history of informal Syrian labour on Chalcraft's "The Invisible Cage". The book was published in 2009 when the circular migration was still ongoing. Much of Chalcraft's work was based on the Structuralist school, which mainly claims that the political economy, as a macro structure, shapes the lives, work relations, living conditions and the labour dynamics in general of informal Syrian workers. The same approach was used to build the analysis of this research. Nonetheless, with the onset of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese political economy maintained or adapted its legal, economic, and political tools in order to preserve the power dynamics that it was built on. As explained in the literature, the Lebanese political economy is based on a service-based economy characterized, first, by the dominance of unproductive sectors, and second, by the coercion of national and foreign labour.

5.1.1 Sustaining the service-based economy on a crisis mode

The Syrian crisis impaired the productive sectors that are mainly behind the bulk of Lebanese exports. With the onset of the Syrian crisis, the route that most Lebanese exports travel through in the Syrian inland was blocked due to the conflict in the country. As a result, exports, mainly food processing products and jewellery, have decreased, damaging the already struggling industrial and agricultural sectors. In addition, tourism decreased due to the increasing economic and political uncertainties in neighbouring countries. At the same time, around one million Syrians fleeing the conflict settled in Lebanon, through the early years of their forced migration, which had a multiplier effect on the economy by

sharply increasing the consumption of goods and services in the Lebanese market, mainly in the areas where they resided.

Post 2011, Lebanon's political economy was at a crossroads with two possible scenarios; the first was to capitalize on the Syrian crisis with the inflow of foreign aid and the fleeing Syrian human and economic capital to Lebanon to rejuvenate the primary and secondary sectors; and second to sustain the service based economy through channelling the Syrian economic and human capital into unproductive economic activities related to consumption, real estate and migration industry. The second scenario was followed, as it was more convenient to the political and economic structure of Lebanon. The human and economic capital fleeing Syria, in addition to the foreign aid (received through UN organizations and NGOs) acted as a substitute to the loss of income from the unproductive sectors, mainly tourism, trading and real estate. The service-based economy, post 2011, was relying on the economic activities the Syrians had created directly or indirectly, rather than on tourists from the Arab Gulf and Europe. As a manifestation of the dynamics of the political economy, the areas that accommodated a large proportion of refugees, mainly Beqaa and Akkar, witnessed a boom in construction, restaurants, butcher shops, grocery shops, etc. Yet, these two areas that have an abundance of agricultural lands had no major developments in the human, physical or economic capital related to the agricultural and the industrial sectors (food processing for example). The laissez faire of the state and the lack of development policies of productive sectors allowed the Lebanese political economy to adapt to the Syrian crisis and maintain its reliance on unproductive service-based sectors, albeit from different sources.

5.1.2 Coercion of national and foreign labour

Another feature of the Lebanese political economy that was preserved after the start of the Syrian crisis is the coercion of the national and foreign labour. Multiple economic and political factors led to a historical imbalance between the workers and the employers. On the economic side, the predominance of unproductive sectors over the economy, the mismatch between the educational sector and the labour market, and high levels of labour market informality led to an imbalance in the quantity and quality of jobs created in the labour market. On the political side, the Lebanese ruling class is primarily comprised of the economic elite or has close ties to it. As seen in the literature, the Lebanese political regime has succeeded over history in suppressing attempts to organize workers (whether national or foreign) and demands for a new social contract.

The Syrian crisis preserved the economic and political dynamics mentioned above. On the economic side, the political economy adapted to the Syrian crisis and preserved the supremacy of the unproductive sectors. As a result, the economy was still unable to create enough jobs, and the imbalance between the demand and supply side in the labour market even increased with rising unemployment and increasing migration of Lebanese university graduates and skilled youths. The influx of Syrians to Lebanon led to increasing competition between the Lebanese and Syrian workers in sectors not traditionally occupied by Syrian nationals. The absence of effective syndicate movements and the increasing informalization of work led to wage rigidity and eased the exploitation of both national and Syrian labour. The Lebanese political economy, therefore, benefited from the interruption of circular migration as Syrian workers lost the ability to go back to their country, meaning that they do not have the same negotiation powers as before. At the

same time, Lebanese workers lost much of their negotiation power with their employers as they were threatened to be replaced by the influx of informal Syrian workers in the labour market. The political economy preserved and further benefited from the role of the Syrian migrant workers as a source of easily controlled and exploitable labour force and as a tool of political and economic control-coercion of the national labour force.

5.2: Adapting the legal framework concerning Syrian nationals in Lebanon and the securitization of the crisis

The section above explained how the Lebanese political economy adapted to the changes brought by the Syrian crisis post 2011. The legal framework governing the work and stay of Syrian nationals is influenced by the direction adopted by the political economy towards the Syrian crisis. As part of the macro structure, sustaining the service-based economy and coercing the labour force through legal regulations goes in line with the “choice” and perception of the Lebanese state regarding the Syrian crisis. The break of the circular migration and the border closure led to new legal measures that either changed the way the Lebanese state dealt with Syrian nationals or reinforced old practices.

5.2.1 Securitizing the Syrian presence in Lebanon: labour coercion through securitization

After the start of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese Syrian border was left open until 2013. During that year, the fighting intensified. With the number of refugees multiplying, the Lebanese state decided to close the border, forcing most of the Syrians fleeing to Lebanon to enter illegally. Closing the border between Lebanon and Syria was not unprecedented, as seen in the literature. Most of the border closures were limited in time and were related to diplomatic skirmishes between the Lebanese and Syrian governments and ended

because of the mutual benefits related to circular migration. Nevertheless, this border closure had deeper implications compared to its predecessors.

First, the Lebanese state reopened the border for Syrians but under heavily controlled regulations. Syrians entering Lebanon must prove good financial standing with a medical, educational or a professional reason for the visit. The October Policy, which was an official reversal of the open border policy and circular migration, was an indicator of a larger drive to control the borders, the demographics and profile of the Syrian nationals. Antagonism against Syrians was not new to Lebanon (it began as far back as the start of the Syrian migration to Lebanon in the late 1950s) and was mostly visible in the work relations between the Lebanese employers and Syrian workers. However, what changed after the start of the Syrian crisis was that antagonism started to manifest itself in more aggressive and organized forms. The Lebanese security institutions and the Lebanese Army started implementing strict measures on checkpoints for Syrian nationals who do not possess legal papers, and conducted raids against informal settlements. Municipalities applied curfews for the first time against Syrian residents and some were registering Syrian refugees living in informal settlements for security reasons. The General Security clashed on multiple occasions with the UNHCR in order to access their data of registered refugees, and in 2015 the UNHCR under the pressure of the Lebanese state stopped registering refugees and started “recording” them so it would not acknowledge their status as refugees. Therefore, the state through its drive to accumulate and control data and exert direct control over Syrian mobility, place of living, work etc. has introduced new modes of discipline, as discussed by Chalcraft. According to the latter, Syrian workers had to adapt to the discrimination they faced from their employers and from predominantly

antagonistic communities. After the Syrian crisis, new modes of discipline and pressure were introduced to Syrian nationals, most of which were related to state security; hence, further diminishing the little freedoms they enjoyed prior to the Syrian crisis.

The interviewees within the sample studied were less vulnerable compared to other Syrian nationals in Lebanon, mostly the ones who do not possess any legal papers. Although none of them was a victim of major security harassment, they expressed their frustration with the discriminatory practices against Syrians in two manners. The first is that they do not fit the Syrian stereotype and should be treated differently by the state; and the second is through more solidarity with their compatriots. Interviewees 6 and 7 told a similar story. They explained that they were able to cross the border because they were well-dressed, while other Syrians traveling with them to Lebanon were stopped because they “looked miserable”. Another interviewee told officers at the checkpoint that he was from Swaida (hinting that he is Druze) and the police officers immediately let him pass. According to the interviewee, he would not have “played this card” had he not wanted to disassociate himself from “the kind of Syrians who distorted the image of Syrians in Lebanon.” Mahmoud, who expressed more solidarity with his compatriots, said that he would refuse to go to a village or a town that has implemented curfews. He prefers to stay in Hamra Street, as he perceives it as a safe place for him where large numbers of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals and professionals reside. Tony said that the entire country was against him. He was insulted by a man in Ashrafiye but could not respond as “all eyes are on the Syrians right now”, hence expressing his feeling of disempowerment and his fear for his security from the state. According to Chalcraft, the root of Syrian antagonism is based on class, sectarian affiliations, and fears of demographic changes. The Syrian

workers coming from rural areas in Syria, who are predominantly Muslim Sunnis, found themselves as a natural enemy of the Lebanese state that built its political economy on coercing Syrian workers and its state ideology on bourgeois values and Lebanese nationalism. Such antagonism was at the heart of the drive to securitize the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

5.2.2 The migration industry and labour market informality

Before the Syrian crisis, Lebanon could not endure a long period of border closure. After the Syrian crisis, the push-pull factors in the two countries changed. Syrians now cannot move back to Syria because of fear of prosecution, military activity, military service, and economic difficulties. In Lebanon, Syrians generally felt more secure, although they suffered heightened discrimination, racism, and poverty. In addition, Syrian households benefited from UN and NGOs' assistance. And it is to be noted that Lebanon can be used as a transit country on the route to be smuggled to Europe, mostly through Turkey. From a labour market perspective, Lebanon had no shortage of labourers that fitted the profile of Syrian nationals moving into Lebanon prior to the crisis, mainly young males from rural parts of Syria who traditionally occupied jobs in the agricultural and construction sectors. Based on that, the Lebanese state, bureaucracy, and employers capitalized on this change for their own favour.

The implementation of the October Policy led to a large informalization of the Syrian work force. Syrians registered as refugees were not allowed to work according to the labour law, and acquiring Kafala for most of these workers was too expensive, as they were barely capable of securing their household needs and living under burdensome debts. In parallel, a small proportion of the Syrian workers in Lebanon had to acquire Kafala.

Most of the interviewees, mainly young males who came after 2013 mostly to evade military service, had to acquire a sponsor so they can get into Lebanon legally.

The business owners, Mahmoud, and category B interviewees had substantial social capital in Lebanon and managed to secure a Kafala with no additional costs, although they were offered to be sponsored for an amount averaging \$1000 on different occasions by individuals who “work as sponsors”. While Rami had a substantial social network in Lebanon, comprised of relatives and friends, he paid \$3000 to a magazine so he could come to Lebanon. The case of Rami shows that having social capital does not necessarily mean that Syrian nationals can easily get a Kafala. Even those who got it with no extra expenses spent a lot of time and money on transportation and effort in order to access a sponsor. As it is illegal to own a restaurant business or work as a chef, waiter, or a manager in a restaurant according to the Labour Ministry circulars, all interviewees were registered as cleaners or labourers at their place of work or as employees working for their sponsors. In this case, the sponsor can be held accountable by the General Security for sponsoring an individual not actually working for them, or for false reports on what the true nature of the worker was at their place of business. For instance, Samer who works in Gemayzeh is sponsored by his relative as an agricultural worker in Zahleh, and Mahmoud who is a manager of a restaurant in Hamra is registered as a cleaner at the same restaurant. As for Category C of the employees, they were the most exposed to the migration industry. They had the least social capital, and as a result were exploited and blackmailed by Kafala brokers who became their sponsors. The three interviewees paid between \$800 and \$1000, and had to wait for a year in Lebanon after their entry before receiving their sponsorship.

In this sense, the Lebanese state had historically turned a blind eye to the informal labour market, mainly overlooking the movement of informal workers along the borders. After the Syrian crisis, such practices continued but in a different manner. The Lebanese law enforcement ignored the informality related to the Kafala, with Syrian restaurant workers and investors registered as cleaners while holding other posts or even investing in their place of work. Others are registered as agricultural workers with Kafala brokers or their friends and relatives. Turning a blind eye to these practices, as previously done with circular migration, sustains sources of income to the state and to agents/brokers in the migration industry. The legal framework does not provide protection for Syrian workers or investors. All interviewees said that none of them was protected by a contract, except for Jalal since he had a good rapport with the restaurant owner. This fact subjected Syrian workers to the vulnerability of easily being dis-employed, or having their business taken over, as in the case of Hagop. Therefore, the securitization of the Syrian forced or mixed migration to Lebanon was not only a political decision, but also an economic one.

5.3: Economic and labour market changes; the case of the restaurant sector

5.3.1 The new profile of informal Syrian workers

After the Syrian crisis, a new stratum of the Syrian population settled in Lebanon, the urban middle class. In this research, most of the interviewees are young graduates with tertiary education, fleeing military service. Although this sample is not representative, it reflects one of the many radical changes that happened to Syrian migration to Lebanon. Most of the interviewees were not part of the circular migration. Most of them did not belong to rural families who had to leave to work in labour intensive jobs in Lebanon. In

“The Invisible Cage”, the movement of workers along the border was not exclusive to the individual worker, but also included young male family members brought along to work with them on a construction site, or even entire families brought along to live with them in a location close to their work. Therefore, the workers' households were an essential part of the circular migration of Syrian labour. Interviewee number 7, a 31 year old male from rural Aleppo who belongs to the same generation as the other interviewees (employees), previously took part of the circular migration with his father and uncle as he worked during his summer vacation as a painter when he was still in school. For the other interviewees who are employees, they all came to Lebanon previously as tourists and none of their relatives took part in the circular migration. Mahmoud, who is from rural Aleppo, took part in the circular migration with his relatives to work in construction. He noted that he witnessed a new group of Syrians coming to Lebanon; the middle class and professionals who were doing well in Syria but had to leave because of the war. These “new comers” are teachers, nurses, and engineers who had to work in restaurants due to lack of adequate available employment in their field of education and work experience.

5.3.2 The labour market shock and labour coercion

In the sections above, the macro structures showed how the political economy and the legal framework shaped the role and position of the interviewees, and eventually “pushed” them to work in the restaurant industry. All interviewees who are employees tried to search for a job in their field of study but failed, except for Samer who got a job at an NGO. The employees who were young fresh graduates with tertiary education struggled to find jobs in their fields of expertise and education. As seen in the literature, the Lebanese labour market does not create enough jobs for the new entrants, who are mostly young males and

females with tertiary education. Similar to the case of highly skilled young Lebanese workers employed in fields that do not match their educational skills, the interviewees had to work in the restaurant industry as there was no other option left to them. All the interviewees who were employees, and who are part of this labour surplus, tried to search for a job in their field but failed. Their skills as engineers and teachers gained in Syria were irrelevant in the Lebanese labour market; therefore, they had to compete with a large proportion of the Lebanese workforce employed in the restaurant industry. As the Lebanese state took the choice of preserving the political economy and not to expand its agricultural and industrial sectors, the labour shock after the Syrian crisis increased the supply of labour in the service sector, mostly in the food and trade industry. As Syrian workers spread across sectors that were not traditionally filled or dominated by them, as in the restaurant industry, 150000 Lebanese workers in the service sector were unemployed after the Syrian crisis according to the World Bank. Having said this, dis-employing Lebanese workers is a manifestation of a historical practice of labour coercion; with limited growth in employment, that does not match with the sudden supply shock mostly in unproductive and low employment sectors, the employers in the service sector have exploited the imbalance between the supply and demand in the labour market. Such imbalance reflected on the employment, salaries and working conditions of both Lebanese and Syrian workers in the restaurant industry.

5.3.3 The small Syrian owned restaurants and informality

After the Syrian crisis, the labour market informality has dramatically increased with self-employed and owners of restaurants from Syria opening their businesses in Lebanon. In contrast with the interviewees who were employees, Interviewees 2, 10 and 11 had

previous experience in running businesses; in the case of 2 and 10 they operated restaurants, and chose to work and invest in the restaurant industry. Nevertheless, the unstable economy, the legal vulnerability, and the lack of encouragement from the state rendered their efforts to sustain and develop their businesses useless. They showed, as in the case of the employees, frustration with their businesses. The economic crisis and the COVID-19 lockdown damaged their already struggling businesses. The three businesses used to earn between \$1000 and \$1500\$ per month before the start of the political unrest and the lockdown. At the time of the interview, these businesses were barely breaking even or making little profit when operational.

Additionally, and in contrast to the literature, the restaurants of interviewees 2, 10 and 11 have been operating on similar costs and meeting the same regulations as Lebanese restaurants. Their business is registered in the landlord's name, and taxes, water, and electricity bills are not paid directly but through the real-estate owner. All three business owners have met the health and hygiene regulations and standards of the MoPH (Ministry of Public Health), paid for all necessary tests required by the ministry, and have periodically received health and hygiene inspectors. Therefore, the only aspect of informality in their businesses is their legality in terms of labour and ownership regulations related to Syrian nationals. Therefore, although they invested their money into their business, it is not legally theirs.

The changes that started after the October Policy were not only related to new labour regulations, but also to a change in the behaviour of the Lebanese state through an aggressive enforcement of law. Such an aggressive stance was not aiming at regularizing the Syrian economic activity, but rather at securitizing the Syrian presence in Lebanon

and all related activities, including the economic ones. The case of Hagop shows the legal vulnerability of the SME Syrian investors, as he lost his business because of the absence of a contract or protection of his investment by the state. Such an incident is an example of the growing predatory behaviour over the economic space after the end of the civil war; it showcases an increasing aggression against Syrian nationals after the Syrian crisis. Although interviewees 2, 10 and 11 own their businesses, they met similar challenges related to legal, labour, and economic vulnerabilities as the other employees. Contrary to the literature showing that Syrian SMEs are flourishing at the expense of the Lebanese ones, Syrian run small restaurants are facing similar and even harder circumstances (because of their legality) than the Lebanese ones, and are running, as the Lebanese SMEs, on survival mode.

5.4: Social and cultural capital and habitus: compensating the lack of protection and a comparative with Chalcraft's case studies

Informal Syrian workers in Lebanon were historically disempowered, even during the Syrian Army presence they were coerced by both Lebanese and Syrian States as it was beneficial for both to do so. After the Syrian crisis, Syrian nationals operating informally in the Lebanese labour market found themselves even more vulnerable compared to the period of circular migration, as the choice of going back to Syria was no longer available, and newly set legal regulations and state securitization conduct were implemented. In similar fashion to the period of circular migration, Syrian workers had to compensate for the absence of social and labour protection through the accumulation of their own social and cultural capital. The most relevant variables to measure the interviewees' social and cultural capital were the duration of their capital accumulation, the type of social and

professional networks they developed, the space where they developed their types of capital, the habitus they developed in Lebanon, and their ability to recreate their acquired capitals.

This analysis will be based on similarly acquired social and cultural capital when defining each category. The categories are the following:

- Interviewees living in Lebanon prior to the crisis: Interviewees 8 and 10
- The newly arrived restaurant owners: Interviewees 2 and 11
- Category B employees: Interviewees 1, 6, 7 and 9
- Category C employees: Interviewees 3, 4 and 5
- Interviewees living in Lebanon prior to the crisis: Interviewees 8 and 10

5.4.1 Interviewees living in Lebanon prior to the crisis: Interviewees 8 and 10

The first category of interviewees lived most of their lives in Lebanon. They were able to work in the restaurant industry at a young age. They capitalized on the fact that they were employed and then managed restaurants in the areas where they lived; they had an experience of around thirty years in the industry and built their social capital based on their family connections and then moved to build their professional network. They managed to move vertically in the hierarchy of the industry; from being employed and then as manager or owner. They acquired a cultural capital in the form of knowledge in operating businesses and an experience in food production. As a result, the interviewees developed a sense of empowerment and integration in Lebanon. For Mahmoud, he has developed a sense of community in Hamra Street, whereas Hagop perceives himself as a Lebanese more than a Syrian. They both feel that they should be treated on a different basis from other Syrians, since they have been in Lebanon and been contributing to the economy and the development of the restaurant industry.

The fact that they were well integrated in Lebanon allowed them to further accumulate social and cultural capital. Their accumulated social capital was recreated in the form of a cultural and economic one. Their family and professional networks allowed them to expand their knowledge as a form of cultural capital and expand their businesses and revenue as a form of economic capital. The same applies to their cultural capital, where their knowhow allowed them to expand their professional social network, which reflected positively on their economic capital. Finally, they both easily acquired their Kafala without being exposed to brokers. They also had a bank account, which is illegal for Syrians, and an insurance policy which is uncommon for a large majority of Syrians living in Lebanon.

5.4.2 The newly arrived restaurant owners: Interviewees 2 and 11

The second category of interviewees came to Lebanon after the crisis. Their accumulation of social capital was interrupted by the war in Syria. They had to restart and rebuild their social capital in Lebanon by relying on their relatives and family friends. The social capital of Tony was his Lebanese and Syrian relatives and his friends living in an Orthodox monastery. Salma, on the other hand, had lesser social capital and relied mainly on her Palestinian relatives. The relatives of both interviewees helped them settle in Lebanon, allowing them to start developing their professional network, which in turn enabled them to start their businesses. Salma met a business partner and Tony grew a substantial clientele in the Gemayzeh neighbourhood. Their social capital developed after settling in Lebanon and was mostly based on professional relations while social recreation was generally absent. In contrast with their social capital, their cultural capital “survived” their harsh resettlement in Lebanon. They both had the knowhow of managing businesses. Tony

learned new culinary skills and techniques, as he had diverse clientele compared to the ones in Syria. Salma learned quickly how to run a restaurant as she used to run a clothing shop in Damascus. She did not face a challenge to do so owing to her entrepreneurial skills. They succeeded in recreating their social capital in the form of an economic one. They succeeded in running their business, and benefited from their social capital in order to acquire a sponsor through the assistance of their relatives, without being exposed to the Kafala brokers. However, they did not enjoy the benefits of having a bank account or an insurance policy as they were not as established and integrated in Lebanon as the other interviewees who accomplished that feat.

The interviewees' cultural capital in these two categories fit the Lebanese labour market perfectly, in which the restaurant industry and the SMEs make a large proportion of its employment and economic activities. Nevertheless, the interviewees in these two categories faced the limitations of developing their businesses and careers due to legal constraints Syrian investors face in Lebanon, as well as the economic challenges the restaurant industry is facing after the economic crisis and the COVID-19 lockdown.

5.4.3 Category B employees: Interviewees 1, 6, 7 and 9

Category B interviewees were young graduates of tertiary education who came to Lebanon and had to interrupt their accumulation of social capital due to the move. They relied on their family connections as part of their social capital in Lebanon in order to settle in the country. They had a substantial size of family network in Lebanon that acted as a “first stop” for them in the country. When they first came, they were more reliant on their family network than the above categories, since the latter had both cultural capital that fits the labour market and an economic capital to start a business. Interviewees 1, 6 and 9 had

Lebanese and Syrian relatives living in Lebanon. And Mazen had his Syrian relatives who settled in Beirut during the early 1990s. All four of them lived at proximity from their families in Beirut and benefited from their long presence in Lebanon which provided them communal protection based on their religious and/or their socio-economic background. For example, interviewee 1, a Christian, first settled with his relatives in Gemayzeh, a predominantly Christian area; while Jalal, a Druze, settled in Cola in a predominantly Druze neighbourhood. The process of rebuilding their social capital in Lebanon was through either staying at proximity from their relatives (Mazen) or moving out from their relatives' circle based on a need for a better job and living conditions (interviewees 1, 6 and 9). Their newly acquired social capital in Lebanon was the friends whom they met in Lebanon, their friends from Syria who reached out to them, and their co-workers.

The interviewees' cultural capital acquired in Syria was mostly obsolete in the Lebanese labour market. They had no other choice but to work in the restaurant industry, which was not only costly in terms of losing what they learned in college, but also losing valuable time to start their careers as professionals; it has been at least five years since they moved into Lebanon and started working in restaurants. As two of them were engineers and the other two were teachers, they found a major difficulty in accessing a job that fits and develops their institutional cultural capital. The power dynamics in the labour market field of power allows informality in the restaurant industry and other sectors as in agriculture, while it is not legitimate in that field of power for Syrians to work as engineers or teachers. Nevertheless, the case of Samer showed an exception. After acquiring a substantial amount of social and cultural capital, he was employed at an NGO in a job that was relevant to his university degree. The cultural capital gained in the restaurant industry

(training, skills etc.) was seen by the interviewees as temporarily useful, because they want to invest their time and career in a job relevant to their university degree.

Although their university degrees do not match the labour market, the interviewees benefitted from their substantial social network in Lebanon to transform their social capital into an economic one. Their reliance on their family network, when they settled, provided them with the necessary time to expand their social network so they can find better jobs and working conditions, compared to the jobs they initially had when they first settled. The interviewees were capable of accessing a sponsorship without paying extra fees, a stable job which in some cases provided health coverage, and financial services. In addition, interviewees in this category found a sort of protection from their newly acquired social capital. Their Lebanese employers, friends or landlords intervened against other Lebanese individuals, and in one case against the General Security, when the interviewees were vulnerable to aggression, discrimination, or fraud.

5.4.4 Category C employees: Interviewees 3, 4 and 5

The category C of employees did not enjoy the same social network as the above categories. Although they have a similar socioeconomic profile to the interviewees in category B, they found more difficulties in settling in Lebanon, finding a job, and being exposed to the migration industry. They lacked the advantage of a “first stop” and were practically left alone in Lebanon as their families did not have the social network enjoyed by category B interviewees. Consequently, their lack of social capital in Lebanon reflected negatively on their ability to recreate cultural and economic capital and their living conditions in Lebanon. Each of the interviewees in this category lost time and money and were victims of fraud multiple times when trying to acquire a Kafala. They changed jobs

frequently as the working conditions were too harsh and, in some cases, employers were not honest about the salaries or did not pay them at all. After a year, the interviewees succeeded in acquiring a social capital that provided them with a stable job, moved to a residence with Syrians from the same area where they come from, and started to make sense of their lives in Lebanon. They eventually accessed Kafala through their employers with no additional costs, thus emancipated themselves from the stressful and risky process of brokered sponsorship. Nevertheless, their jobs paid less than the jobs of interviewees in category B; their Lebanese acquaintances from their newly gained social capital were not as close and protective as the Lebanese acquaintances of category B.

The analysis of the cultural capital accumulation of category C interviewees resembles that of interviewees in category B. Two of them are engineers, and one a nurse. They tried to find jobs in their field of education and expertise but failed, or in the case of the nurse found a job but was exploited by the employer and eventually part of his salary was not paid. They had to work in the restaurant industry as there was no other option. Eventually, as in the case of category B interviewees, they saw themselves gradually losing their work experience and their academic knowledge. The skills acquired through their jobs in restaurants are also seen as unusable on the long run.

5.4.5 Habitus, discipline, and agency

Although the interviewees come from different parts of Syria and have different religious backgrounds, they all come from the Syrian urban and semi-urban middle-class families that owned businesses in Syria or had jobs as professionals or both. When settling in Lebanon (except for interviewees 8 and 10 who were already settled in Lebanon), they

acquired different habitus based on, first, their social and cultural baggage from Syria, and second, on the amount of economic, social and cultural capital they acquired in Lebanon.

The concept of discipline is at the core of the coercion of Syrian workers in Lebanon. The workers had to quickly learn the needed skills, constantly show up to work, and bear long working hours without taking sick leaves or asking for salary increase or complaining about their work. Interviewees who acquired the least social and cultural capital expressed more willingness to accept hard working conditions, and in some cases discrimination. In strike contrast, the more the accumulated social and cultural capital a worker had, the better his/her access to preferential working conditions; thus, more agency and less discipline. The concept of discipline was essential to expand the workers' social and cultural capital and compensate for the lack of any form of social and labour protection. Still, such concept had limitations in labour coercion, where interviewees in multiple occasions showed a sense of empowerment and pride as they refuse to be insulted by their employers and left their jobs although their financial situation was precarious or they were lacking a sponsor, thus legally vulnerable. The interviewees' profile as middle class and college educated gave them a sense of identity, empowerment, and agency. They moved next to friends who have a similar social, religious, and economic background, where they found themselves more integrated in the places where they lived where they are treated as equal or less discriminated against. For instance, some perceived themselves as different from the Syrian workers who came to Lebanon during the circular migration, or the Syrian refugees who are living in tents. They also explicitly differentiated themselves from "other" Syrians, whom they regard as attached to their tribal background; while they identified themselves as are more open, civil, and accepting of others. Other interviewees,

however, showed agency against the discrimination practiced against their Syrian compatriots and refused to change their accents or go to towns that implemented curfews.

5.4.6 Accumulating social and cultural capital after the Syrian crisis: a comparative with the “Invisible Cage” case studies

The two sets of interviewees differed in age, work sectors, and social and economic backgrounds. Interviews were conducted with them at different time periods. Still, they shared many similarities related to the accumulation of social and cultural capital. The reason behind it is that the political economy’s systemic coercion of labour has not changed. They both had to accumulate social and cultural capital to compensate for the lack of political and labour protection. Kinship ties and family networks were crucial for their social capital accumulation. They acquired their first job and settled in their first shelter through their relatives. They had to work on average between 10 to 12 hours per day for 6 days a week, which is equivalent to 80 up to 120 hours per week. Their exploitation was not limited to their legal and labour vulnerability, but they were also commodified and culturally depicted by employers as culturally exploitable. They applied similar survival tactics mainly through work discipline and the “manufacturing of consent”, in addition to focusing on gaining cultural capital, through specific skills, or through integrating into the community they live in through adopting local fashion, as an example. Still, not all interviewees showed complete discipline in Chalcraft’s interviews, as some were more assertive in asking for higher salaries, better working conditions, and refusing physical or verbal violence by their employer.

Nevertheless, the two sets of interviewees had major differences in their profile. The first were mostly disadvantaged Syrians coming from rural areas, while the interviewees in this

research were mostly middle class, received tertiary education or were business owners in Syria. In addition, Chalcraft's interviewees came to Lebanon willingly to work as labourers or be self-employed; while the interviewees in this research moved forcibly and chose their work unwillingly, therefore, the employees in this research perceived the skills they gained as obsolete in the long run and only useable for the short run while they are in Lebanon. The business owners regarded their businesses in Lebanon as unsustainable due to the economic challenges they are facing. Another difference is related to the legality of their stay and work in Lebanon. The interviewees in this research had to acquire a Kafala, while the others had the option to go back to Syria. Therefore, the interviewees in this research had to acquire more social and cultural capital because the need for it was higher compared to the period of circular migration.

5.5: Considering Hart's informality theoretical framework

As displayed in the literature, there are four schools that might provide a relevant interpretation. The macro and micro structures analysed above will be integrated in analysing the type and structure of the informality in the labour market.

5.5.1 Critique of the Dualist school, Legalist and Il-legalist schools of thought interpretations

The Dualist School's interpretation of informality is based on the informal economic activities in rural peripheral areas. After the Syrian crisis, the influx of refugees mostly to peripheral areas like Akkar and Beqaa led to an increase in the informal economic activities in these areas. The Dualist school assumes that informal economic activities are positively correlated with the distance from the economic centre. Nevertheless, such an interpretation neglects the fact that Lebanese political economy encourages labour

informalization and it is not solely a matter of the ability of the state to control the economic activities based on its geographical and institutional presence. Hence, the duality of the formal economic activities in the centre against the informal economic activities in the rural peripheries does not hold, as informality is central and structural to the economy as a whole and was encouraged by the Lebanese state prior to and during the Syrian crisis.

The Il-legalist school links informality to the evasion of taxes and regulations. The Il-legalist interpretation of the informal Syrian SMEs found much representation in the literature, as they portrayed Syrian SMEs to have a comparative advantage over Lebanese SMEs, since they do not pay taxes and sell smuggled goods from Syria. Nevertheless, the three interviewees 2, 10 and 11, who were business owners, showed that they were paying their taxes indirectly through the landlord. They even suffered from greater control and pressure from relevant ministries compared to Lebanese restaurants. They complied with health and hygiene regulations, and were running in the same fashion as Lebanese owned SMEs, that is on survival mode as their business's raw material and tools were bought from Lebanon and not smuggled in from Syria. Another limitation in the Il-legalist interpretation is the fact that Syrian SMEs perceive informality as a legal vulnerability which can cost them their business, for most of the businesses are registered in the name of the landlord, and the Syrians who actually own the business are registered in the Kafala as employees at said business.

From the Legalist point of view informal economic activities are the result of the bureaucracy's burdensome cost of formalization. The three cases of the Syrian run SMEs had all the required legal papers and regulations fulfilled but their business was not

registered to their names. The limitation in the Legalist interpretation is similar to the Illegalist one, that is that SME owners are assumed to have the agency to take a decision whether they want to be formal or not, while they are already working under a legal framework that prohibits them from owning a business. Although the assumption of tax and regulation evasion and the willingness to be informal is true in some cases, it lacks an understanding of the structural dynamics of the labour market and its close relation to the political economy and the legal framework following the Syrian crisis. Lastly, the Legalist interpretation can be true in the case of individuals who avoid being formal because of the long and costly bureaucratic process, still, it has to take into consideration that the state denies the workers, who became formal and went through the bureaucratic process, access to certain sectors in the labour market.

5.5.2 Critique of the Structuralists' school of thought interpretation

The Structuralists' interpretation demonstrates the need of the capitalist economies to grow cheap and controllable informal labour in order to increase the profits of large firms. Such interpretation is the closest in understanding the dynamics of the labour market informality in Lebanon. Nevertheless, capitalism in Lebanon is essentially built on SMEs and large firms make a small proportion of the employment force in the labour market. Therefore, the use of informal work is mostly to sustain SMEs on survival mode, and the economy is mostly based on unproductive sectors that do not require large numbers of workers. Therefore, the Structuralists' interpretations failed to note that developing capitalist economies varied in their structure and did not grow in a similar fashion, hence, tended to exploit informal labour differently. Secondly, informality is encouraged by the state not only to supply the labour market with cheap and controllable labour, but also to

provide a source of income to the migration industry that flourished after the October Policy.

Finally, Hart's informality framework pointed to five categories of work that do not fit the profile of the following interviewees except for interviewee 1, who is a family member of his employer whose enterprise is informal. Hart's categories of work do not take into consideration the exclusion of migrant and refugee workers or entrepreneurs from the formal sector through legal measures. In the case of this research the interviewees are working and investing informally in the restaurant sector because they are not allowed to do so by the legal measures applied by the Labour Ministry. The categories that would encompass the participants in this research would be: 1 informal employee in a registered enterprise who is not allowed to work in a certain sector due to his/her nationality, and 2 informal employer who is not allowed to own a business due to nationality.

There is a major disparity in the theoretical framework in the case of informal labour in Lebanon. First, the dynamics of forced migration should be integrated within the theoretical framework, taking into consideration that the state excludes migrants and refugees (who make up a substantial ratio of the workforce in Lebanon) from the economic space, and at the same time pushes them to be informal as they need to earn their livelihood. Second, the nature of the informality in the labour market, in the case of Lebanon, varies between sectors, industries, and geographic locations. For instance, labour informality in the agricultural sector is not related to illegality, as in the case of the restaurant industry where it is illegal for Syrians to work as chefs or owners. As for the geographical location, the informal sector in Beirut varies in size, quality, and type of work from the one in the peripheries. Hence, applying an interpretation from a single

school of thought is inaccurate and cannot completely grasp the nuances within the informal sector.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The Syrian crisis induced changes within the labour market as it enforced or altered certain practices. This research paper examines the informality in the restaurant sector as it was historically one of the most economically significant sectors in Lebanon and a major employer in the labour market. The objective of this research is to understand the response of the dominant economic interest to the Syrian refugee crisis in the Lebanese economy. This chapter presents the conclusion of the findings and analysis. The adaptability of the political economy was translated in economic and legal changes.

6.1 Summary of findings

To answer the research's question on how the Syrian crisis impacted the labour informality in Lebanon in the restaurant industry, Syrian restaurant workers and owners in the food and beverage sector provided in-depth knowledge on the Lebanese political economy that changed or reinforced dynamics within macro, meso, and micro structures. These changes impacted the political economy in various ways. On one end of the spectrum, it has adapted and preserved its modes of exploitation and coercion of the migrant and national labour force that were present during the circular migration. On the other, it benefited from the crisis to further informalize the labour market- which was historically an effective tool for the coercion of the migrant and national labour force.

Lebanon lost the income garnered from tourism and exports, the country was compensated through the economical capital brought by the Syrians fleeing the war and

the funds of the response to the refugee crisis. This new inflow of funds had a multiplier effect on the economy as it reinforced the service-based economy. Economic activities were geared more towards consumption rather than savings and investments in the productive sectors. Meanwhile, the settlement of large numbers of Syrians in Lebanon generated a labour shock on the supply side of the labour market, with jobs created not matching the sudden increase on the supply side. This fact led to Syrian nationals moving to the sectors that were not traditionally occupied by them; thus, causing the dis-employment of thousands of Lebanese workers employed in this sector, the worsening of working conditions, and wage stagnation. In addition to the labour and economic changes, the legal framework also changed. Legal changes in this framework governed the work and stay of Syrian nationals in Lebanon. This framework, which was introduced after the October Policy, reflected the securitization of the refugee crisis in Lebanon which led to further legal vulnerability and facilitated their coercion in the workplace.

Syrian nationals faced barriers in the labour market. These barriers limited the Syrian national from opening a bank account, owning a business, and working in a specific industry. This resulted in Syrians working and investing in the restaurant industry in an informal manner. In addition, the need for a sponsor led to a surge in the migration industry. Syrians working in the restaurant industry were informal even after acquiring a sponsor, as they were not allowed to work in this sector by the labour ministry. The small Syrian business owners were also included in the systematic coercion, for their investments were not protected by the law through binding contracts, and they were at constant risk of losing their investments. At the same time, as indicated in the interviews, they were in equal standing with other Lebanese owned SMEs, paying their taxes through

the real estate owners, abiding by the regulations, and running on survival mode due to the economic situation and the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Syrians working and investing informally had to accumulate their social and cultural capital in order to compensate for the lack of political and labour protection. The accumulation of different types of capital is central in the power struggle between different agents in the field of power of the labour market. It is also necessary to further acquire and accumulate capital in the future. The theory of the migration systems that defines the macro, meso and micro structures was used to identify the agents in the labour market field of power as it has been highly related to the circular and then the forced migration from Syria to Lebanon. In this sense, Syrian informal workers' and entrepreneurs' accumulation of social and cultural capital meant their ability to recreate it into new forms of capital, such as economic capital or transforming cultural capital to a social one and vice versa. When settling in Lebanon, Syrians depended heavily on the availability of a social capital in Lebanon, mostly built on kinship ties, and a cultural capital that would be useful in the Lebanese labour market that mostly depended on the service-based sector. The ability to acquire a sponsor without being a victim of fraud, getting a better paying job with better working conditions, or having the protection of Lebanese acquaintances against racial aggression were examples of major gains of the informal Syrian workers or entrepreneurs. After making a comparison between this research's case studies and the ones in Chalcraft's "The Invisible Cage", there were many similarities between the two sets of interviewees who had different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds and were working in different sectors. Despite different migration modes and different social group profiles, Syrian nationals reverted back to similar strategies utilized during the

period of circular migration to survive in Lebanon, proving that systemic coercion was still in place. Nevertheless, the capital accumulation changed in nature after the Syrian crisis.

In the final analysis, the framework of informal labour should take into consideration multiple interpretations from different schools of thought. The Structuralists proved to have the most relevant interpretation of the labour informality in Lebanon, as informality is systemic and crucial for the “Savage God” (as described by Chalcraft) and the free system that requires cheap and controllable labour. Other schools, although having less relevant interpretations, can provide added value input, as the dynamics of informal labour are not solely influenced by macro structures and have nuances related to geographical variances, type of sector, individual decisions, bureaucratic and legal systems, etc. Still, these schools were not inclusive of the migration factor, more specifically the forced one, and did not take into account the variations between different political economies and labour markets. They also did not take into consideration the political role informal labour plays in coercing national and migrant workers. In the case of the Lebanese labour market, the securitization of forced migrants in the economic space and their exclusion from accessing sectors, the nature of the service-based sector, and the political role of informality all played a vital part in the informalization of work.

During the progress of this research, Lebanon was suffering a financial meltdown and a collapse of its economic module that started in the early 1990s, along with continuous lockdown due to the spread of the COVID-19. The restaurant industry is in the middle of this collapse, where the skyrocketing inflation and the rapid loss of most of the population’s consumption power pose a major question about the sustainability of this

sector. Amidst all this, another question arises about the future of informal Syrian workers and investors and their role in setting the new shape of political economy.

6.2 Contribution

The thesis addresses the lack of knowledge concerning the impact the Syrian crisis has on the informal labour in the restaurant sector in Lebanon. The thesis contributes by providing insight and information about said impact. Further research needs to be conducted using Chalcraft's structuralist approach to understand the dynamics of the labour informality in Lebanon. Thus, it is recommended for future research to be applied on a larger scale in the restaurant industry, as this sample alone cannot be generalized. The same applies to other sectors that are also impacted by the Syrian crisis.

Finally, this research touches on sensitive political topics in Lebanon that were the source of social tensions and heightened racism against Syrian nationals. Therefore, similar research in the future should be done to provide decision makers and public opinion with a critical perspective on the issues of the Syrian crisis and the role of Syrian labour in Lebanon.

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