

Summary

“Proving Oneself”:

Entrepreneurial Trajectories of Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Egypt (2011-2023)

Maya Chehade

Thesis Supervised by Jean Pierre Filiu, Professeur des Universités, Sciences Po

This thesis evaluates how entrepreneurship shaped Syrian refugees’ socio-economic transformations in their trajectories of forced migration in Egypt and Jordan between 2011 and 2023. It argues that entrepreneurial trajectories help better explain some of the key transformations that took place in the lives of Syrian refugees. The thesis offers four main contributions to different bodies of literature as well as producing a professional project in international development. The first contribution of the thesis is tied to entrepreneurship, which has been proven to be more than just an economic activity for Syrian refugees. In fact, the thesis shows that refugees partake in entrepreneurial projects linked to civil society organizations, providing them with valuable resources that enable them to sustain their lives economically and socially. The second contribution relies on Syrian refugees’ identities in transformation, with the thesis depicted a “re-imagination” of Syrian identities in exile, a term borrowed from Benedict Anderson. In fact, Syrian refugees’ forced migration trajectories revealed a redefinition of Syria according to social networks rather than a national territory defined by its geographic borders. The third contribution of this thesis is that capital conversion has proven to be a useful theoretical tool to better understand socio-economic transformations of refugees in host countries. The theoretical framework used in the analysis shows the intersection of different types of capital (economic, social, cultural, human, and symbolic) in refugees’ entrepreneurial trajectories and notes the importance of social and symbolic capital in refugees’ integrations in host countries, enabling them to better mobilize their resources and capacities in Jordan and Egypt’s challenging regulatory environment. Finally, this thesis contributes to the researcher’s professional development, as it shows that entrepreneurship is a solution to “refugee governance” in host countries due to political and international relations dynamics, which are worth considering when advising on international policies or designing programs that encourage self-reliance through entrepreneurship.