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Shape the Enterprise, Shape the Life: Strategy of Living Life in Refuge as an Ethnic Entrepreneur in Light of Immaterial Labor

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Abstract

This article aims to present and analyze the strategy for living life of Syrian refugees, examining the ethnic enterprise in light of the notion of immaterial labor. A qualitative and exploratory study was conducted in the city of Porto Alegre (Brazil), based on a *corpus* of research whose thematic focus was ethnicity in the food-sector enterprises of Syrian refugees. The data were accessed by means of newspaper reports, visits to the enterprises, the consumption of products, narrative interviews, and direct observation with photographic and field diary records. The participants were Syrian refugees interconnected through family ties and a common origin who share two enterprises – an ethnic snack bar and confectionery. The analysis resulted in three axes: (a) routes and obstacles in refuge; (b) immaterial labor in the ethnic enterprise; and (c) being an ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living life in refuge. It is highlighted that the metaphorical models of wanderer and player help to illustrate the production of subjectivity outlining the ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living life as a refugee operationalized by immaterial labor. These conclusions provide an analytical perspective on the subjectivity for ethnic enterprises by showing that the ethnic

entrepreneur in correspondence with the self-entrepreneur in immaterial labor operates in the sense of producing/composing/affirming the strategy for living life in refuge. Thus, by shaping the enterprise, it shapes the life.

Keywords: refugees; Syrians; immaterial labor; subjectivity; ethnic entrepreneurship.

Introduction

The transformations of work relating to the forms of life and to the production of subjectivity correspond to the global capitalist reality (Camargo, 2011; Cocco, 1995; Gaulejac, 2007; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001; Lazzarato, 2017; Scherer, Grisci, & Chanlat, 2021; Sennett, 2012). Covered by the notion of immaterial labor, these transformations highlight that work as production cannot waive and fail to combine with self-work (Lazzarato, 2014). This relates to the understanding that immaterial labor consists of the total mobilization of the individual for manual and intellectual work at the same time, with the demand for their knowledge, communication, information, cooperation, culture, and affectivity being the emphasis directed toward capitalist production (Camargo, 2011; Cocco, 1995; Gorz, 2005; Grisci, 2011; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001).

Thus, “the capitalism of nowadays finds the positive balance it seeks... in the subjective involvement that every ‘immaterial worker’ should demonstrate,” including more vulnerable ones caught up in displacement flows (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 51), such as the case of refugees. For Scherer et al. (2021), the associations derived from immaterial labor are capable of forming favorable alternatives to the modes of working and living of refugees, such as the creation of enterprises in cooperation networks.

In this sense, this study seeks to associate ethnic entrepreneurship with the logic of immaterial labor, based on the connection between social capital and the use of ethnic resources in enterprises (Dabić, Vlačić, Paul, Dana, Sahasranamam, & Glinka, 2020; Light, 1998). Specific cultural and social characteristics of each group are believed to contemplate and operate elements such as values, knowledge, abilities, information, solidarity, and professional ethics (Light, 1998; Rahman, Alshawi, & Hasan, 2021; Zhou, 2004), in a cooperation network (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001; Sennett, 2012) that refugees observe in favor of the ethnic enterprise, which beforehand leads to the argument of the correspondence of immaterial labor to the exercise and performance of the ethnic entrepreneur.

Given the vulnerability in the forced displacement that characterizes the refugee’s migration, it is also argued that the ethnic entrepreneur presents a strategy for living life that contemplates routes and obstacles in refuge. Metaphorical models related to the strategy for living life in displacement, presented by Bauman (2011) — stroller, player, tourist, and wanderer – are shown to also be relevant for discussing refuge in the Brazilian reality.

The United Nations Organization for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021) published that, by 2020, 26.4 million individuals who crossed countries’ borders were recognized as refugees, 4.1 million were awaiting a decision regarding their request for refuge with a need for protection, and 51.9 million were in a similar displacement situation. In Brazil, data from the Refuge Report in Numbers identify 57,099 individuals recognized as refugees by 2020, although the number of requests for that

recognition is considerably higher – there were 265,729 requests between 2011 and 2020 (Silva, Cavalcanti, Oliveira, Costa, & Macedo, 2021).

This occurs because Brazil only recognizes as refugees those who fit the United Nations concept – individuals in forced displacement due to persecution because of race, religion, nationality, social group, political opinion, conflicts, violence, or serious and generalized violation of human rights (UNHCR, 2021) — which was defined in the Geneva Convention in 1951 and established in the country by the Statute on Refugees (Law n. 9,474/1997). For the other applicants, according to the new Law of Migration (Law n. 13,445/2017), there are other categories such as immigrant, border-crosser, visitor, and stateless person. This is the case of the Haitians who are mostly immigrants and receive a humanitarian welcome visa (Yamamoto & Oliveira, 2021). Although there is the distinction and legal recognition, in practice the challenges for integration in the host country can be similar for those in a situation of vulnerability (Faria, Ragnini, & Brüning, 2021).

Until 2018, Syria was the country with the highest cumulative number – 3,326 recognized refugees in the whole country (Brazil, 2018). Since 2019, it has dropped to second place (3,594 refugees in 2020), with Venezuela being in first (46,412 refugees in 2020) (Silva et al., 2021). Among the Brazilian cities, Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, is among the ones that most receive immigrants and refugees (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2019).

In light of the above, the aim here is to present and analyze the strategy for living life of Syrian refugees, examining the ethnic enterprise in light of the theoretical notion of immaterial labor. For that, exploratory-qualitative research was conducted with six Syrian refugees, interconnected through family ties or shared origin, based on their experiences in two ethnic enterprises in the city of Porto Alegre belonging to the food sector and consistent with the notion of immaterial labor.

Considering the integrative review carried out by Dabić et al. (2020), the topic of immigrant entrepreneurship has presented theoretical bases from sociology (such as social capital, cultural theories, theories of disadvantage, and classical theories), economics (such as transaction costs and classical theories), psychology (such as competences and micro-level analysis), and organizational studies and entrepreneurship (such as theory based on resources, social networks, and inter-organizational relations, and theories of strategy), with a predominance of positivist and quantitative research in North American, European, and Asian contexts.

In this sense, this article stands out as it contributes to understanding the dynamics of the ethnic entrepreneurship of immigrants in Brazil, especially by addressing the emergence of enterprises run by individuals in a situation of refuge, whose characteristic of forced migration distinguishes them from other immigrants. The study also stands out as it is conducted based on qualitative research with narratives, field diaries, and photographs that help to illustrate the South-South migrations, a current phenomenon that differs from the common destinations of migration to the Global North. Thus, it adds to the pre-existing studies the notion of immaterial labor as a driver of the functioning dynamic of these enterprises, problematizing the consequences of work for the subjectivity of refugee workers in a different context from in the studies that are predominantly conducted in Europe, Asia, and North America. This section is followed by the

theoretical framework, the methodological approach, the presentation and analysis of the results, and, finally, the concluding remarks.

Combining refuge with the notion of immaterial labor

The debate about immaterial labor is born from the interest of sociologists and philosophers in studying the transformations of capitalism, the modes of working, and the resulting impacts of these changes for the subjectivity of workers. André Gorz, Antonio Negri, and Maurizio Lazzarato, engaged in the so-called movement of Italian operaism and of the French post-structuralism, were the pioneers of these studies (Camargo, 2011). Currently, other authors give continuity to this debate and others, despite not using the term, address characteristics demanded and invested by the contemporary worker that coincide with the theoretical notion of immaterial labor. These scholars have developed theses that, although not identical in their epistemological starting points and in their unfolding, are connected when they analyze the post-Fordist production models and the relations conceived based on them, at the heart of which is the mobilization and centrality of the worker's knowledge as a productive force by means of cooperation networks.

The notion of immaterial labor can be understood by the "activities that produce a material or immaterial good, characterized by the prevalence of communication, information, cooperation, and culture in the production of a particular good" (Camargo, 2011, p. 8). It is also characterized by constitutive discontinuities and generates implications for the conceptions of time and space, so that the demarcation of times and spaces of work and non-work is shown to be increasingly unlikely. According to Gorz (2005), immaterial labor comes to appeal to leisure activities (or any mode of non-work) as a form of investment, something that would lead individuals to deduct part of their lives for full-time integration in work.

Suddenly the most human aspects of man, his potential, his creativity, his interiority, his affects, all that was outside the productive economic cycle, and before involved the reproductive cycle, becomes raw material for capital itself, or becomes capital itself. All that before belonged to the private sphere, to intimate life, or even that which is artistic in man, that which characterizes the artist more than the worker, becomes required in production. (Pelbart, 2003, p. 99)

According to Grisci (2011), Mansano (2009), and Pelbart (2003), the demand for more creative and imaginative labor obliged the capitalist logic to operate in the unconscious, in the sensibility, and in the affects of individuals, so as to always place them at the disposal of work, mobilizing them entirely. In that logic, affective relationships and moments of leisure may gradually lose ground to organizational commitments, or be employed for immaterial labor, which uses life experiences.

Gorz (2005) indicates that the mobilization of the individual involves that reach of work into all spheres of life. The worker of the immaterial, says the author, gives "to the recreational, sporting, cultural, and associative activities in which self-production is the end in itself, an importance that ultimately surpasses that of the work" (p. 23).

For Lazzarato and Negri (2001), the transformation that began in the 1970s is moving in a hegemonic direction and is irreversible, characterizing living work that is increasingly intellectualized and communicative. The meaning of that hegemony of immaterial labor in relation to material labor does not involve the substitution of one for the other. More than that, the immediate work tasks are increasingly subordinated to the capacity for processing information.

In sum, it is understood that the new management practices produce in their centrality a living work and make the divisions between producer and consumer, physical and intellectual work, and the time-space of work and time-space of non-work increasingly fluid (Gaulejac, 2007; Grisci, 2011; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001; Sennett, 2012). Within that logic, the notion of immaterial labor is associated with all work carried out, whether intellectual, manual, the producer of merchandise or of services. According to Cocco (1995), “in the intersection of the new relationship that links production and consumption, immaterial labor can be precisely defined as the interface that makes active and organizes the creative production-consumption relationship, continuously innovating the conditions of communication” (p. 1171). Lazzarato and Negri (2001) indicate that immaterial labor is developed through cooperative forms, through productive networks created based on the increasingly accentuated involvement of the worker with their work.

More recent studies in the Brazilian setting have addressed the perspective of immaterial labor to consider the contemporary relationships and analyze fields of work in different contexts from those studied by the pioneering authors, who primarily focused on Europe. Examples of studies that can be mentioned include teaching work (Hypolito & Grishcke, 2013), studies of designers (Mansano & Périgo, 2020), of independent musicians (Grillo, 2016); models of expatriated fashion (Prestes & Grisci, 2017) and of artisan, artist, and kitchen chef refugees (Scherer et al., 2021). These efforts are relevant in the sense that different fields of activity, through immaterial labor, end up appropriating the subjectivity and even the existence of the workers on behalf of capital. Thus, the worker’s mobilization is constituted as a pillar for supporting production and wealth.

Just as transformations of work promise emancipation through the experience of new forms of life that would emerge through ethical-political self-work, that is, through the imposition of each individual’s productive capacity, transformations of global capitalism prompt forced displacements. From this perspective it is “imperative for one to assume the risks and costs for which neither the commercial activity nor the State are willing to pay” (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 51).

Displacements cause the circulation of not only individuals, but a multiplicity involving the homeland, the native language, the local customs, the modes of relationship, the gestures, the rhythms and rhymes, the rhetoric, the art, the aesthetic norms, in short, the life engendered in the various social spaces (Gorz, 2005; Lazzarato, 2014; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001). Inherent to the individual, such multiplicities transcend borders. It is that which immaterial labor uses in the sense that, according to Lazzarato and Negri (2001), it is the activities developed outside work that stimulate its vivacity. So, the modes of working appropriate and exploit the investments in know-how characteristic of a particular country, region, and/or culture, generating value for the individual.

According to Scherer et al. (2021), the refugee, “in the host or transit country, is one who finds themselves in a less stable position and in different precarious anchorings such as partial or provisional insertions also consistent with the logic of immaterial labor” (p. 379). Other studies conducted in the Brazilian context corroborate the understanding about the limitations of access

and social mobility available to immigrants and refugees in the host country. Faria et al. (2021), for example, highlight that although there is the legal recognition and workplace inclusion of immigrants and refugees in Brazil, social recognition has not yet been legitimized. There also remain obstacles and exclusion from the cultural (discrimination and racism), political (recognized as cheap labor, and not as citizens), and economic viewpoints (informal, precarious, and low-qualification jobs). Yamamoto and Oliveira (2021), in turn, mention that the search for social and workplace inclusion demands displacements beyond international migration. The immigrants engage in practices of organizing their day-to-day through social networks, engendering the experiences of mobility in not only an economic, but also political context. This organizational practice may be associated with the affective and inventive cooperation networks of immaterial labor.

The convergence of refuge and immaterial labor implies considering refugees as workers who seek social and workplace inclusion in the host country, in a life perspective corresponding to the will to live in the face of limit situations. For refugees, the self-effort related to the overcoming of barriers of access to systems and slowness of the bureaucratic processes relating to refuge, examples indicated by Jardim (2016), may also be considered as a stage of the work carried out.

As Lazzarato (2014) clarifies, the “strength of capitalism lies in its capacity to integrate the functioning of desire as ‘economics of possibilities’ within its own functioning, in order to promote and demand a new subjective figure: the economic subject as ‘human capital’ or self-entrepreneur” (p. 50). In the ideology of self-realization it is the very potential for development that is placed in synergy with the company’s goals of profitability. Good self-management, from the perspective of self-capitalization, would therefore be the key factor of the success of both the individual and of the company (Gaulejac, 2007). Although “capital exploits life, it does not mean that life coincides with capital... That separation is always possible, as the subjectivation process is always still to be carried out,” warns Lazzarato (2017, p. 237).

Given the exhaustive divulgence of widened freedoms, the choices increasingly fall on the shoulders of the individual – who is required to be able to manage, control, and monitor themselves (Gaulejac, 2007). That invisible activity of self-production, although silent about the precariousness of work, is the key that enables access to the social world of employment, as beforehand it is possible to make out the way refugees form their cooperation networks and direct their efforts in relation to work in the destination country. Sennett (2012) warns that the tie with the community was a strong characteristic of the worker in a Fordist period, which was evident among immigrants of the same nationality in their ethnic enterprises. However, in post-Fordism these ties have become weaker, due to the prevalence of individualism as a new characteristic of work, with flexible specialization, fluidity, adaptation, risk taking, agility – just like immaterial labor. The author states that the ties of the community are still a passage, although “in a more elementary way, in the sense of mutual dependence” to establish oneself in the world of business (p.160) – which can be configured as one of the survival strategies of refugees through investment in ethnic enterprises.

Ethnic enterprise

During recent decades, ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship has drawn increasing academic interest (Dabić et al., 2020). The ethnic enterprise is one of the main activities performed by individuals who migrate to other countries, generating income and economic

development for the society that receives them (Cruz & Falcão, 2016). The ethnic product, that which contemplates a cultural and identity heritage, is the main reason for the emergence of immigrant enterprises, especially in places where the demography is composed of a history of immigration (Rahman et al., 2021; Zhou, 2004), although it is necessary to point out that not every immigrant entrepreneur is an ethnic entrepreneur (Zhou, 2004).

With relation to refugees, specifically, the ethnic enterprise may be one of the few alternatives found for that minority group given the scarce work opportunities presented in the destination country (Cruz & Falcão, 2016), worsened by a “blocked mobility,” which refers to a context of strong structural barriers for foreigners (Light, 1998; Rahman et al., 2021; Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990). With these fundamental characteristics running through ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship (Dabić et al., 2020), the focus of this research lies in the entrepreneurial activity initiated by immigrants and refugees, which has at its heart an ethnic product or service.

Pioneering studies on the topic, such as that of Waldinger et al. (1990), sustained the thesis of economic assimilation, which foresaw that the enterprises of immigrants, even if they started their businesses with a focus on ethnicity, lost their ethnic identity over time, seeking to draw closer to the local mainstream businesses. We should highlight the prevalence of investigations into the adaptation process of these individuals in a different country from that of their origin. Aldrich and Waldinger (1990), for example, verified that ethnic entrepreneurs present flexibility in relation to the environment that receives them, adapting specificities of their businesses according to the demands of the market. That flexibility also relates to the resources available in the locality, which vary substantially between societies and over time.

More recent studies show that ethnic entrepreneurs preserve a close relationship with groups of the same ethnicity, since they share culture and origin, and they end up directing their products and services toward these compatriots, also known as coethnics. Maintaining a clientele of compatriots can also bring innovation (Rahman et al., 2021), as well as collective strategies for facing the precariousness and lack of social recognition of their enterprises (Idriss, 2021). There are also studies that show that other entrepreneurs bet on the originality of the offer of products to the culture of the destination country, where the main public is the natives who are still unfamiliar with the products and services to be offered (Zhou, 2004). It is perceived that the immigrant entrepreneurial strategies are diversified and can include participation in the ethnic and non-ethnic market, depending on local demographic, political, and economic specificities. We can therefore observe the formation of a cooperation network specific to immaterial labor, which favors the emergence and maintenance of the ethnic enterprise.

The networks of social ties based on a sociological lens are configured as a theme present in the studies on ethnic entrepreneurship, as they drive financial, social, and human capital, as well as operating as a network of emotional support for the immigrants (Dabić et al., 2020; Diniz, Guimarães, & Fernandes, 2019; Idriss, 2021; Zhou, 2004). The study of Diniz et al. (2019) highlights the impact of the social networks on the reception of refugee entrepreneurs in Brazil – based on the life history of a Syrian who started selling kibbehs in his religious community and currently runs his two ethnic restaurants – this being an important support strategy used during the implementation, development, and divulgence of the businesses, which also relates to a strategy for economic and social insertion.

Wessendorf and Farrer (2021) indicate that restaurants are alternatives for common enterprises for immigrants, as the present research also shows, since they work as a point of interaction for people with different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and languages, even in places where the cultural diversity is still emerging. The authors explain that although the immigrant owners seek to adapt their enterprises to local cultural habits, food may be an opportunity for their customers to get to know the cultural norms of the origin of the owners of the ethnic enterprises.

It is understood that the culture of origin, despite being the crucial factor of ethnic enterprises and a point discussed in the areas of administration and sociology, including international studies on entrepreneurship and migration (Dabić et al., 2020), remains scarcely discussed when related to subjectivity. Prestes and Grisci (2021) approach that perspective by highlighting that immigrants use their origin as a mode of (re)creating their territories; that is, they use previous ethnic elements in the destination country as a mode of feeling more secure and making that new environment their new home based on those native elements they take with them or seek to organize beyond the borders of their countries.

Based on that, it is argued that the configurations of the entrepreneurial activities are diverse and can be analyzed in relation to the modes of production of subjectivity that mobilize the individuals toward the destination country and that configure their enterprises. These configurations affect the different strategies for living life in displacement.

Strategy for living life in displacement

When discussing the idea of a life project, Bauman and Raud (2018) highlight the pertinence and sustenance, nowadays, of a life project to be realized in the following forms, one that: (a) from early on, once and for all, would be forged step by step, established for an entire life; (b) still not entirely visualized, would contain the hope of coming to have its gaps filled throughout the journey; and (c) inconclusive, is viewed from a flexible and open perspective eager for experiences – known or unknown – to be learned.

For the authors, the first two models are doomed to fail, and the third is consistent with the continuous path deviations presented in liquid times. These deviations can be illustrated from an even more extreme perspective, as exemplified by conflicts, wars, disasters, and social, economic, and environmental collapse, understood as elements that cause forced displacements, as is the case of the refugees in this study who were displaced due to war.

Faced with forced displacements, one life strategy could be consistent with what Bauman and Raud state:

Flexibility, not coherence; the willingness and ability to change destinations and vehicles over the course of the existential journey, and non-fixation on acquired beliefs and habits; in the end, forgetting instead of remembering: these are the mottos of the time. Working not so much according to a distant ideal condition, but taking full advantage of the endemically transitory opportunities of the moment (Bauman & Raud, 2018, p. 80)

The vulnerability of life in refuge is associated with the horror of being imprisoned and stuck, an aspect that Bauman (2011) relates to the four lifestyles – stroller, player, tourist, and wanderer – which together refer to the metaphor for the liquid life strategy. These four styles sing “sometimes in harmony, but more often in a cacophony” (Bauman, 2011, p. 126). Although seen as interlinked, there are restrictions in the sense of considering them as a standardized lifestyle, since, according to the author, each one contains a certain dose of ambivalence and follows “somewhat in the direction of taking account of the notorious anxiety, inconsistency, and indecision of the life strategies practiced” (p. 137).

The stroller is an individual who lives “life as a stroll,” enjoying “all the pleasures of modern life without the torments inherent to it” (Bauman, 2011, p. 127). Strolling means repeating reality in a series of episodes and testing matches and mismatches without major impacts. The present is valued differently from the past and the future. According to Bauman, the stroller lives in a consumerist, private, secure, closed, and solitary world.

The player is an individual who sees the world as a game, which is divided into a series of matches, with a painless beginning and end. Players, partners, and adversaries should be aware that the game is only a game and, although it is hard to accept, it does not contemplate piety or cooperation. “The game is like a war, but the war that the game is should not leave a mental scar, or nourish grudges” (Bauman, 2011, p. 136). By fixating on the here and now, they do not plan the future, or foresee the durability of relationships.

The tourist is an individual who moves purposefully, due to their anxious dissatisfaction and desire for experiences. They seek foreign places that can bring them pleasure and that at the same time provide security and well sign-posted escape routes. When the adventure ends, the tourist can go back to their home, a safe and familiar place. The tourist trips increasingly consume their life, turning into a mode of living, in which it is increasingly less clear which is the place they are visiting and which is their home.

The wanderer¹ is an individual who wanders without a defined destination, who is not content with the managed and supervised space and for that reason seeks a new order. What made the wanderer so was their unpredictability and only apparent freedom to move and escape from the clutches of local control. Their course is put together little by little. Their stay in a particular place depends on the generosity and patience of the local inhabitants. Thus, the wanderer seeks places that beckon them, the least cruel, the most hospitable, capable of offering opportunities that were denied them in other places or in their own place.

Being in a condition of displacement is a sensible strategy, the only possibility of delaying the future; it is what relieves the present suffering (Bauman, 2011; Bauman & Raud, 2018).

Methodological approach

To fulfill the objective of presenting and analyzing the strategy for living life of Syrian refugees, examining the ethnic enterprise in light of the notion of immaterial labor, this study favored the construction of a *corpus* (Bauer & Aarts, 2008) to carry out qualitative-exploratory research that addresses complex situations – the vulnerability of life in displacement and its

relationship with ethnic entrepreneurship and immaterial labor – still urgently requiring systematization.

For Bauer and Aarts (2008), a *corpus* is built in a way that is aligned with the objective of the research and is defined by a thematic focus, according to the context that will be studied, and it can include written and non-written material, such as image and sound. The materials of the *corpus* of this research have as a thematic focus the ethnicity in the Syrians' enterprises, and they were accessed by the researchers through newspaper reports, visits to the site of the enterprises, the consumption of products, narrative interviews, and direct observation with records in field diaries and photographs.

The study featured the participation of six Syrian refugees working in two small-sized food-sector ethnic enterprises located in two neighborhoods in the city of Porto Alegre. The research was started based on a report published in a mass-circulation newspaper, whose headline announced the novelty in the preparation of typical food offered by refugees from the war in Syria – (a) a confectionery that sells Arabic sweets and pastries and cakes for parties; and (b) a snack bar, which also sells Arabic sweets and pastries, but whose flagship product is shawarma, a Syrian bread sandwich that is typical in the Middle East.

As a strategy for approaching the data collection in the form of direct observation, there were initially visits and consumption of the products offered in the respective enterprises, which enabled a conversation regarding the possibility of and consent to participation in the study. At the time of the research, of the six Syrians working in the enterprises, one died a natural death (Abdul) and another moved to São Paulo (Samir). Although they had participated in informal conversations during the observation, in the phase of carrying out the narrative interviews, there were four interviewees: one who worked at the confectionery (Salim) and three from the snack bar (Saib, Jamil, and Kaleb).

The direct observation was carried out during various visits to the confectionery and the snack bar between the months of May and December of 2019. The aim of the observation was to discover in the setting of the enterprises and in the experience of the entrepreneurs characteristics related to the immaterial labor and to the ethnic enterprise and that, in their interconnection, were configured as a strategy for living life in displacement, going beyond the dynamics of the business. During the visits, records were produced that included photographs of the sites and a field diary, reporting on the dynamic of the enterprises, the modes of communication, the informal conversations, the relationships with customers and partners, the presentation of the entrepreneurs, and the visual and sensorial ethnic elements present in the two establishments.

In line with Loizos (2008), it is noted that the photograph is part of a greater complex of past actions that can document historical and cultural specificities. As the observation was carried out, ethnic elements drew the attention of the researchers, who, being from a different culture and origin from the entrepreneurs, were easily able to note their foreign identity and associate them with the theoretical perspective of this study. So, the photographs of such elements were taken with the Syrians' authorization, a moment at which they casually commented on the meaning of the object or situation photographed. This variety of the *corpus* increased gradually and ceased when it was judged that there was the material needed for the critical magnitude of the analysis (Bauer &

Aarts, 2008), as well as when it already presented elements that provided complementary robustness to the narratives (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2008) of the refugees.

To carry out the narrative interviews, the orientations of Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2008) were followed, who indicate the reconstruction of the context lived in the most appropriate way the informant judges, which dismisses question-answer frameworks. Thus, the narratives referred to the Syrians' personal and work experiences, using as a guide the story of the refugee, which highlighted the combination between life history and socio-historical context. According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer, it is the plot that outlines the start and end of the story, establishing criteria for choosing actions, in an attempt to link events and give sense to the narrative, an indication followed in this study.

The interviews occurred at the participants' workplace, according to availability. They lasted sixty minutes on average and occurred in the interviewees' language of preference: one in Portuguese, one in English, and two with the help of Portuguese-Arabic-Portuguese translation by one of the entrepreneurs. It should be noted that during the course of the interviews, sometimes there were pauses so that the Syrians could serve customers or fulfill work demands.

The analysis of the *corpus* followed the guidance of Bauer and Aarts (2008) and of Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2008) for fully transcribing and/or organizing the materials – the content of the narrative interviews and of the field diary and photographs – and for grouping the materials in axes of analysis, so as to tell the story of the refugees and their enterprises based on the theoretical framework. The chronological dimension was implied in the analysis, seeking to present the narratives in sequential episodes, although the non-chronological dimension was also present when it was essential to build the plot. Both dimensions are complementary and, according to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2008), give analytical sense to the narratives. Three axes resulted from the analyses:

- a) routes and obstacles in refuge – of Saib, Samir, Salim, Jamil, Abdul, and Kaleb: priority was given to describing already-known strata, functions, and categories (Bauer & Aarts, 2008) such as age, education, work experiences, and family relationship in the destination country, as well as the refuge process, employment experiences, and the emergence of the enterprises in Brazil.
- b) immaterial labor in the ethnic enterprise: the choice was made to analyze still unknown representations (Bauer & Aarts, 2008), evoking the relationships experienced in the day-to-day of the refugees that led to the configuration of the ethnic enterprises through the exercise of immaterial labor.
- c) being an ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living life in refuge: the decision was taken to relate strata, functions, categories, and representations in order to understand the combination of theoretical perspectives that design the social space (Bauer & Aarts, 2008), thus reflecting in the strategy for living the life of a refugee.

Shaping the enterprise, shaping the life: narratives of Syrian refugees

Routes and obstacles in refuge

Since childhood, the brothers Saib, Samir, and Salim — 30, 32, and 34 years old, respectively — accompanied the bakery-confectionery work of their family, in a place where family ties and work-related values were formed (Sennett, 2012).

We were fine in Syria. My father worked there, my uncle, my cousins, my brothers, and almost sixty employees. Since I was little, our parents taught us to always stay by their side. We studied, but at the weekend we had to go to work, go into the factory even if I had to climb on a chair to reach the table. (Saib, 2019)

In 2011, the Saib family anticipated the unfolding of the Arab Spring in neighboring countries and migrated to a bordering country. *“My father felt that war was coming to Syria, he managed to close the store and all the workers left. We fled to Jordan to save what we had”* (Saib). In that first decision to displace for self-protection, it is already possible to note the individual assuming the costs and risks that the State was unable to cover (Lazzarato, 2014). In addition, that choice highlights the convergence between being a refugee and the metaphor of the wanderer (Bauman, 2011), someone that moves to escape from control networks, who seeks a new order and opportunities that are denied them in the place of origin. This self-mobilization — which Gorz (2005) understands as covering all aspects of life — is motivated by survival, but also by an investment to not leave the productive arena.

Saib, with an education in cinema, did not work in the area, as he identified with the work of a pastry chef and was always dedicated to the family business. Between 2011 and 2014, besides Jordan, he tried to work in Malaysia and in China, but without satisfactory opportunities, particularly due to the legal barriers related to the foreigner’s working visa, which requires free self-work (Gorz, 2005) in the form of dribbling governmentality devices mobilized to manage the life of refugees (Jardim, 2016). The network of contacts was a driver and prolonger of the refuge route, something common in the organizing process of immigrants (Yamamoto & Oliveira, 2021). He migrated again in 2015 on the invitation of a Syrian friend who worked in a restaurant in Brazil.

I did a lot of research on Brazil before traveling. I didn’t want what had happened in Malaysia and in China to happen again... so I went to the UN and they asked: what do you want to do in Brazil? I don’t know what I’m going to do. (Saib, 2019)

The ability to interrelate and take risks shows, beforehand, indications of an entrepreneurial capacity embodied in immaterial labor (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001). That subjectivity illustrates the figure of the player at the start of yet another game (Bauman, 2011); in the anxiety to not displace blindly, he protected himself as much as he could against the unavoidable uncertainties.

Obtaining refugee status and being in the host country does not mean the inexistence of obstacles. When an accident occurred in the workplace indicated by the friend in Brazil, Saib made use of the network of contacts he is establishing in the country. *“I worked there for almost two*

months, there was a gas explosion... they sent everyone away. So I was on my own. My friend went to São Paulo and I came to Porto Alegre, with the help of Brazilian friends" (Saib, 2019). In Porto Alegre, he knocked on the doors of food establishments, he told his story, and asked for work. "I got a job in a confectionery, I worked a little in an Arabic restaurant, only at the weekend. Then I made a CV, I sent it everywhere. I worked in a hotel, by the day, until I got a job in September of 2016. All that time, without a signed worker's card" (Saib, 2019). Saib figured as a wanderer, willing to scour the city and expose himself to strangers in search of a sign to follow (Bauman, 2011), using his communicative, informative, and cultural abilities (Camargo, 2011; Grisci, 2011) to sell himself.

Saib arrived in Brazil at a time when the economic crisis was beginning and job offers were drying up, so he mobilized as much as he could the capacity to "manage one's workforce" (Gorz, 2005, p. 24). "When I was fired it was a difficult time, I didn't have any money saved, because I was buying a dough mixer, an oven, spatulas, spoons for myself, you see?" (Saib, 2019). Administering gains in sporadic opportunities, which depended on his mobilization (Gaulejac, 2007; Gorz, 2005; Grisci, 2011; Lazzarato, 2014), Saib planned a future based on his self-determination and piecemeal investment. At that time, Samir joined him.

Samir, also a pastry chef and still in Jordan, was unable to get a job and asked his brother Saib for help. The family reunification rule enabled his acquisition of refugee status at the Brazilian consulate. On arriving in Brazil in 2016, Samir got a job in the same sweet shop as his brother. Self-employed, both produced the sweets the store sold. "The work dried up a little, the crisis was taking hold, and we suffered, me and my brother, we were working one day, and weren't for three" (Saib, 2019). It is observed that the uncertainties of the game remain (Bauman, 2011), but family ties are taken as points of support (Sennett, 2012) for the refugee and as a network of cooperation for immaterial labor (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001). In the midst of that, the brother Salim arrived.

Salim studied engineering, but had always seen himself as a pastry chef. Due to work-related impediments, he migrated from Jordan to Saudi Arabia, where he worked as an executive chef responsible for more than a hundred workers. With his employment card expired and not being able to return to Jordan, he asked his brothers for help. He arrived in Brazil in 2017, after seven years without seeing anyone from the family.

My brothers we facing some difficulties here in Brazil. But we had the hope of starting a new life for our family, a future with freedom. It's not all about money, it's about freedom! It's about being able to go to other countries when you want, to establish something for yourself. That's why Brazil. It was the country with the most open mind toward refugees.
(Salim, 2019)

Reflecting on work beyond the monetary value enables foresight of the entrepreneurial action embodied in immaterial labor related to the social existence (Gaulejac, 2007) and to the social development of the individual (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001), an essential foundation for ethnic enterprises to emerge (Dabić et al., 2020).

In 2018, they founded a confectionery in the city of Porto Alegre, an enterprise for reuniting the refugee brothers. The confectionery is, for the brothers, a reference of work as a family reunion around the same business; and of past-present-future time. It unites the history lived and to come.

At the time of the data collection, Salim performed the roles of both head pastry chef and general manager of the confectionery; Samir went to São Paulo in search of better opportunities, as there was not the work demand for everyone; Saib interlinked his story with the stories of other refugees presented below.

Jamil, 30 years old, lived with his family and studied management in Syria. In 2011, the year in which his brother fell victim to the war, Jamil left for Jordan, where he remained for three years and worked as a store assistant. Unhappy with legal impediments related to work, in 2016 he left for Russia with friends in the hope of opening his own business. There they stole his documentation and money. With his return to Jordan being impossible due to legal impediments, he saw in Brazil a possibility of refuge. He evaluates his journey in hindsight.

There was so much going on that I don't even remember the day I closed the door of the house and left. I arrived here with nothing and Brazil accepted me. The war in Syria prevented me from going to many places, I wanted to bring my friends, my security, but I couldn't. I couldn't speak to anyone, no-one spoke even English, I felt alone. (Jamil, 2019)

Among other things, his story outlines the path of the wanderer “not due to the difficulty of settling down, but because of the lack of places to settle” (Bauman, 2011, p. 131). Initially, Jamil got established by working in a big company in another state of the South region. His relationship with the three brothers arose after his parents discovered the existence of sons of friends who were refugees in Porto Alegre. In search of a point of support during the refuge, Jamil found himself temporarily working in the confectionery until one day when the work ties expanded, reaching Abdul.

Abdul, 49 years old, was the owner of a large restaurant in Syria, where he sold shawarma, sfiha, and Arab barbecue. Just like Jamil, his family was the victim of a series of bombings during the war, and he lost his mother, his brother, and his partner. Details of his coming to Brazil were let slip from the story told by the other refugees. Abdul arrived in the country in 2015 and worked in different restaurants. At the mosque he attended, he met Jamil, who invited him to open an Arabic snack bar – it is common for religious places to be points of socialization and opportunity for ethnic entrepreneurship (Cruz & Falcão, 2016; Diniz et al., 2019; Idriss, 2021). Both called Saib to serve the customers due to his ease of communicating in Portuguese. In 2019, some months after the inauguration of the snack bar and the welcoming of the refugee Kaleb, Abdul died a natural death.

Kaleb, 21 years old, was a teenager when, in 2013, he left Syria with his parents, brothers, and sisters-in-law. The loss of a friend in a bombardment and the likely recruitment of his brothers for the war was the trigger for them to flee to a refugee camp in Jordan. From there, with much effort, they managed to get to the capital, where they remained for seven years. He was unable to go back to school and sold fruit and vegetables in the street to help his family. Unaccepting of the situation, Kaleb knocked on the door of consulates of various countries. In a movement that outlines the wanderer, he found in Brazil a path to follow at the crossroads (Bauman, 2011). “I wanted to go in search of my dream, I didn't care where. I want to go back to school, speak Portuguese, and work to be able to bring my family” (Kaleb, 2019). Where existential weakness would be expected in the face of the precariousness of the condition lived, strength and mobilization to move ahead are

observed. On Facebook, Kaleb sought in a group of Syrian refugees in Brazil some point of support for the refuge and, in 2019, Abdul offered him residence and work at the snack bar – a strategy shown to be a novelty for the coming together of coethnics and in the configuration of ethnic entrepreneurship nowadays.

After Abdul died, Saib became a partner in the snack bar, where he worked full-time. Although he shares tasks with Jamil and Kaleb, serving the public is his priority.

It is noted that the paths of the Syrians do not necessarily repeat, but they converge in times, distances covered, losses, impediments, suffering, and seeking conditions to work and live. The figure of the wanderer stands out with points of support, family and work ties, which are revealed to mitigate the life of refuge and are able to support the formation of ethnic enterprises and their connections – as Figure 1 shows – thus ceding more space to the figure of player.

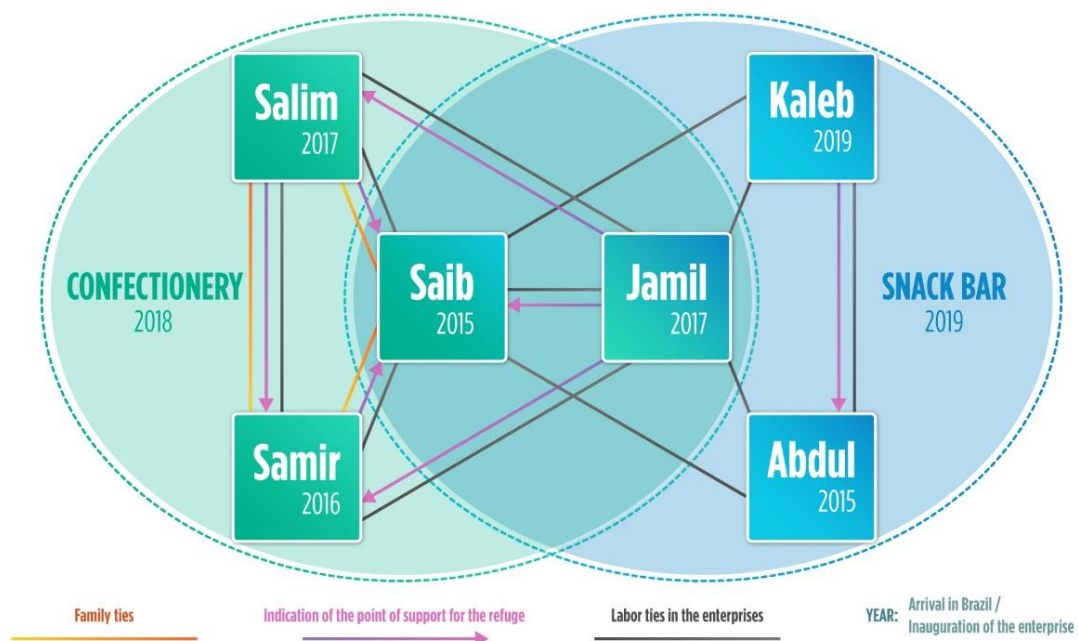


Figure 1. Ties and flows in refuge: the formation of the ethnic enterprises

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The routes and obstacles of the refugees are interlinked in the two ethnic enterprises, which, through immaterial labor, reflect the life of each one of the refugees.

Immaterial labor in the ethnic enterprise

The three brothers report the difficulties encountered during their journey, especially during the phase of preparing to open the confectionery. These obstacles are aligned with the characteristics that govern society and immaterial labor, such as the scarcity of time, a short timeframe, and weak bonds of trust and commitment (Sennett, 2012), and that are accentuated in relationships between “strangers,” or are even undesirable, such as the wanderer (Bauman, 2011).

“As we’re new here, it’s almost impossible to find someone that trusts you, gives you guarantees. It’s hard for Brazilians, isn’t it? Imagine for us” (Salim, 2019).

We began to look for a store to rent, but we had little money. It was really, really hard. More than six months looking for a guarantor. And spending. Then I met a guy, he’s a dentist and his wife’s a lawyer. We were talking normally and he said: I’ll be your guarantor, I’ll help you, out of nowhere. (Saib, 2019)

Although in a business game there is no room for compassion, displacing as a wanderer means constant exposure until obtaining the natives’ empathy (Bauman, 2011). It is in this errant wandering that the social and support networks are formed, those that, as the study of Diniz et al. (2019) showed, can provide the financial resources to drive the immigrant entrepreneurship.

The confectionery *“was opened six months after I arrived. We faced various difficulties to open it. Many things that I never imagined I’d be capable of doing. We built that wall, all you see around here, we built it.”* (Salim, 2019). *“Me and my brothers were builders, painters, electricians... we cut the wood ourselves”* (Saib, 2019). Based on the speech of Salim and Saib, the full-time multi-tasked individual is noted (Gorz, 2005; Mansano, 2009; Sennett, 2012), demanded in their full capacity, *“capable of making use of the diversity of their talents”* (Gaulejac, 2007, p. 191), taking on the risks and costs of the mobilization on behalf of the work (Lazzarato, 2014).

The sfihas, the Syrian sweets, the falafel, and the shawarma produced and sold at the establishments stand out in the gastronomic market as they are produced by a recently-arrived Syrian, someone with wanderer traits, one that *“still smells of other places”* (Bauman, 2011, p. 30). As in the study of Scherer et al. (2021), it is not necessary for the refugee to be a kitchen chef; they merely need to know how to cook, mobilizing their native *savoir-faire* and their ethnic background. It is noted that it is the immaterial labor demanding the culture, the interiority, the affects (which were initially outside the productive economic cycle) that capitalizes on the products (Mansano, 2009; Pelbart, 2003). The refugees are unanimous in saying that their products would not have the same value if they were produced by Brazilians – which refers to the subjectivity originating from their country of origin engaged in their work (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001) — and they also stand out from those produced by Arab immigrants already known to the Brazilians. *“The customers tell us that there are other Arabic restaurants in Porto Alegre, but that they prefer ours”*, Saib comments (field diary, 08/15/2019).

In that context, the once immigrant already forms part of the urban setting, and what emerges as a novelty is the idea of being a refugee. Complementarily, another device for capturing consumers also occurs due to the recent media attention regarding the situation of the war in Syria. That exposure, according to Saim, boosts the demand for Syrian products and, consequently, for their life stories. The player-entrepreneur enters stage, needing to recognize what the market game is looking for (Bauman, 2011). *“People are curious to meet us, to hear our story, what we’re doing here, to know if we’re comfortable. We feel very welcome. I’ve never felt any type of racism here, I only feel welcomed by people”* (Salim, 2019). This situation leads the ethnic entrepreneurship to a level of entrepreneurship mobilized by the subjectivity of the refugee. In the immaterial labor, it is

“subjective life itself that is apparent, being taken as a sort of raw material” for marketing (Mansano, 2009, p. 519).

Besides the inviting sweets displayed on the outside counter, when entering the confectionery, it is possible to note writing in Portuguese, Arabic, and English in the store window, on the menu, and in the decoration. If anyone has any doubts about what the language is of the calligraphy that stands out from the others, there is an Arab-Portuguese dictionary on the shelf. More hidden, there is a Portuguese grammar book.

At the snack bar, arrival is marked by the sound of typical Arabic music and by the store front with photographs of Arabic products. On more careful inspection, it is perceived that it says *kibe frtio*, with a typing error in the second word, easy to see for a native, but not for a foreigner. It is possible to see the vertical meat and chicken skewers being prepared by the uniformed workers, one of them with Brazil, written in English, sewn on the sleeve of his dolman. On the orders, the words are written in Arabic (field diary, 05/24/2019). Figure 2 presents photographic records of some of these elements that relate to the immaterial labor through the maintenance of the language of origin in the different activities of the restaurant, to the reinforcement of the ethnicity of the enterprise through the sensorial and visual elements, to the mixture of the culture of origin with the culture of the destination country, and to the effort to learn Portuguese to capitalize on the work.



Figure 2. Ethnic elements in the enterprises of the Syrian refugees

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the processes of adapting the confectionery's products to the market of the destination country, time was previously dedicated to local research and study. Syrian sweets are generally produced with puff pastry, walnuts, pistachio, and other spices, and they are not as sweet as the Brazilian palate prefers. For that reason, at the time of serving them, the confectionery provides a portion of separately wrapped sugar syrup. With relation to the taste, the Syrians report that it is necessary to maintain the originality and know and recognize the availability of inputs in the host country (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). *"We use nineteen seasonings in the meat and fourteen in the chicken. They don't have some seasonings in Brazil, so we order them from abroad, from Jordan"* (Jamil, 2019).

Understanding the local palate is a game that is learnt as it is played (Bauman, 2011), it requires patience and attention to what the customer has to say, and it is not always easy, in a country with such different customs. Regarding that situation, Salim lets out:

We're working to understand. As I've noted, people here like sweet, sugar, strong condiments, we try to balance our ideas with the Brazilian culture. I get tips from the customers, but it's very hard to truly understand, because there are people who like our products and people who don't like them. So we don't yet know what way to go, you see? (Salim, 2019)

That search to understand the local culture specific to the ethnic entrepreneur (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Zhou, 2004) drives the refugees to new subjectivity production processes, especially to the central mobilization of the individual's know-how on behalf of the work, characteristics of immaterial labor (Camargo, 2011; Grisci, 2011; Lazzarato, 2014; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001).

In general, the interviewees showed themselves to be adaptable, available, and proactive in relation to the work they perform. However, they do not give up the secrets that constitute their gastronomy of origin, a characteristic also identified in the study of Prestes and Grisci (2021) about immigrant kitchen chefs in Brazil.

We have something which is the "chef's secret." We can have employees, but we have a little safe, something in that safe, which is the rest of the recipe not shown on the specifications. The employee doesn't know what's inside, if they were to copy the specifications to make elsewhere, they wouldn't be able to make the recipe. (Saib, 2019)

The rigor of keeping the ethnic essence in the product is also seen in the choice of meats and chicken used in the shawarmas. Saib says that he went in person to meet the suppliers to guarantee the maintenance of standards in accordance with their origin. *"They have to obey the halal procedures, which according to the Moslem religion means that the meat allowed for consumption should follow feeding, rearing, and slaughter standards"* (field diary, 11/21/2019).

One of the first elements that refugees need to live in the host country is to master the local language (Dabić et al., 2020). In line with Gorz (2005), Lazzarato (2014), and Lazzarato and Negri

(2001), investing in themselves to master the language adds value to the work of the refugees. That ability led to Saib being called to work at the snack bar with Jamil and Abdul. Kaleb illustrates that logic when he reveals his dream: *“to learn Portuguese to be able to study again and finish school. That’s the only way I’ll have better job opportunities and help my family that is still in Jordan* (field diary, 06/06/2019). Jamil and Salim communicate using “business Portuguese,” they serve the customers, they know the names of the products and ingredients, the form of payment, and other vocabulary involved in the day-to-day of the enterprises. However, when the conversation deepens, they go back to communicating in their native language.

Kaleb and Jamil manifested an interest in seeking a Portuguese course in a civil society organization that attends to refugees for free, outside their working hours, a common action for many immigrant workers (Scherer et al., 2021). Salim comments that he does not have a lot of free time to study Portuguese, since managing the confectionery requires his engagement during the whole day – in that sense, it is noted that the space-time of life coexists with that of work. There is investment, in this case, in knowledge of the language and culture of the place of destination, which takes up the life of the refugees on behalf of improvements for the work (Gaulejac, 2007; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001; Mansano, 2009; Pelbart, 2003; Sennett, 2012). As a strategy for approaching the language, Saim bought a grammar book, he studies on his own, and he practices Portuguese with the customers. With one of them, there is an exchange relationship, a win-win game. The customer teaches Salim Portuguese and Salim teaches him Arabic. Excited, he remembers the day when that customer-teacher-student gave a surprise: *“this [bilingual Arabic-Portuguese] dictionary is very famous [laughs] it was a present from a customer. It’s very moving, it touched my heart. I almost didn’t know him and he gave me a present. Everyone who comes here takes a photo of the dictionary.”*

Most of the public that consumes the products of the two enterprises are Brazilian, attracted by different flavors and by the low price, which constitutes one of the strategic fronts of the business (Zhou, 2004). In addition, relationships are preserved with groups from the same ethnicity, an initiative that also provides innovation (Rahman et al., 2021) and social recognition for the ethnic enterprises (Idriss, 2021). In one of the researchers’ observations, carried out at the snack bar, there was a visit from a group of teenagers descended from immigrants from different Arab countries. On arrival, they shouted: *“Hey, cousins!”* – a common manifestation between compatriots – and continued the conversation in Arabic (field diary, 09/12/2019).

It warrants mentioning that, besides the natives and coethnics, the enterprises also receive people from religions historically in conflict with that of the refugees. Regarding that aspect, Saib points out the ecumenism in favor of a “life in peace” and the prospering of the enterprise in Brazilian territory.

Our religion is Islam. Once a Jewish woman stopped in the doorway: “hey, can I come in? I really like your product, but I’m Jewish.” I said: “before you come in, I’m going to give you a hug and now you can definitely come in, make yourself at home. We have no problems with any religion, any country. Here everyone is a brother, Jews, Moslems, Christians. Don’t worry, we like and respect everybody. If anyone has a history of war, conflict, it’s not with us.” She was very happy and now she’s our customer. Almost 80% from that neighborhood, of our customers, are Jewish. (Saib, 2019)

While the situation of refuge required breaking ties with a large part of the family, it also enabled the production of other ties with compatriots and natives. The refugees reported having established bonds of friendship with their customers, having mobilized personal characteristics so as to get closer to them. They thus produced intimate relationships that accompany the capitalist relationship of production/consumption that composes the immaterial labor (Cocco, 1995; Grisci, 2011; Lazzarato, 2014; 2017; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001).

The production/consumption that accompanies ideas and stories of Syrian refugees requires the use of their native know-how (Lazzarato & Negri, 2001), their cultural and social characteristics, as well as their work experiences in order for them to operate in favor of the enterprise (Light, 1998). This therefore implies that the immaterial labor performed by them is configured in the ethnic enterprise from conception to the everyday modes of working at the snack bar and confectionery. Thus, for the refugees in this study, immaterial labor is an element that shapes the ethnic enterprise and shapes life, as will be seen below.

Being an ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living life in refuge

The previous axes were connected in order to provide reflections on the Syrian refugees' strategy for living life. Whether through the premonition of war or the eagerness to live, the routes and obstacles of the Syrians are presented as a constant wandering, open, flexible, and eager (Bauman & Raud, 2018). The imposition of the distance from their places of origin results in passages through places that undermine the idea of their settling and discourage them from the idea of establishing themselves (Bauman, 2011). The refuge route unfolded according to the life and work opportunities offered to the wanderer-refugees in the various countries they passed through, a scenario also indicated in the studies of immigration in Brazil such as that of Diniz et al. (2019), Faria et al. (2021), and Yamamoto and Oliveira (2021). Brazil emerged as a gamble (Bauman, 2011) that at least offered them the foundations for sustainment to restart their lives. Like for many player-refugees, (re)creating their own work and territory, through ethnic entrepreneurship, presented a viable and desirable alternative (Cruz & Falcão, 2016), since it is what can contribute to the refugees escaping from cultural, political, and economic exclusion, as well as providing social recognition, common characteristics of Brazilian immigration, according to Faria et al. (2021).

Although the routes are individual, the collective experience among the refugee compatriots in the ethnic enterprises was a determining factor for the building of ties and for the constitution of a network of intimate bonds in the refuge context, with this being the basis for exercising the immaterial labor. In a situation of recommencement, the three compatriots who work at the snack bar live together and close to their enterprise. The work, for them, provides the hope of bringing relatives together in the near future. *"I work to one day help my family"* (Kaleb, 2019). *"I don't know how I'm going to see my family yet, you know?"* (Saib, 2019). The speech reveals a feeling of a one-way journey. It is thus apprehended that the work shared with family members and compatriots enables the maintenance of native habits and, consequently, the feeling of safety in another country, as the following speech highlights: *"We cook Arabic food here for us to eat"* (Saib, 2019). *"Here Jamil has us and we have him, he helps us and we help him"* (Saib, 2019).

Being an ethnic entrepreneur in a situation of refuge has required the refugees to assume various manual and intellectual roles (Gorz, 2005; Lazzarato & Negri, 2001) — cooks, managers, and even builders of the workplace itself. As Salim mentions, that life in another country has enabled them to have new dreams. *“Our dream is big and we’re going to achieve it. Creating something bigger than I imagined and I believe I can do it. Because in our country we had no future”* (Salim, 2019). As a distinctive characteristic of an entrepreneur, it is perceived that they imagined an enterprise and worked on behalf of the future through their businesses. *“Here is our start. We’re moving at baby steps, but I hope in the future we can achieve something bigger. I used to work in big companies, mass production, lots of employees. That’s my dream”* (Salim, 2019).

Together with Sennet (2012), it is deduced that the increase in the number of refugees in the context of the destination country expands the network and, consequently, the possibility of hosting. In the network seen, the point of support for the refuge was Saib, seen by Salim as *“the real adventurer, the one that came first. I’d never have done this if I didn’t have Saib and my other brother here. He came without knowing anyone, without being able to speak the language, without knowing anything, but he managed to get by. That was how he started the confectionery in Brazil”* (Salim, 2019). Life, work, the very question of refuge is remodeled that way.

In this sense, it is understood that the strategy for living life in displacement for the Syrians is linked to their path of refuge, to the ties created or strengthened, and to the experiences lived in the homeland. The creators of the two enterprises — the three brothers and Abdul — had vast experience as owners of businesses from the same segment and applied that knowledge in the situation of refuge. Jamil and Kaleb used the know-how of their compatriots. None of them had the support of social organizations that help refugees, unlike in the study of Scherer et al. (2021) in which civil society organizations played a role in driving enterprises. Thus, the strategy relates to possible autonomy, to own resources, and to being entrepreneurial — characteristics required of the worker by capitalism.

Based on that evidence, it is perceived that characteristics such as adaptability and inventiveness in the refuge context are normal and necessary (Bauman & Raud, 2018). However, it should be noted that the strategy for living life is also shaped *a priori* according to the socioeconomic conditions of the individual. In this sense, not every refugee could be entrepreneurial, with the social class in the country of origin being one of the relevant markers for this initiative, since it involves bureaucratic and economic requirements (Anwar & Daniel, 2017; Jardim, 2016).

In the specificity of the immaterial labor in the ethnic enterprise, it is deduced that the Syrian refugees invest a lot of themselves and from their culture of origin in order to sell their products. If what they bring as cultural baggage is considered as sellable, what they are and the situation they find themselves in also is — the fact they are Syrians and they are refugees makes them stand out in society, generating free media for their enterprises and arousing the curiosity of the local population. The ethnic food product, by serving both coethnic and native consumers (Idriss, 2021; Rahman et al., 2021; Zhou, 2004), reaffirms the food sector as a type of business that invites cultural diversity through the interaction of people from various origins (Diniz et al., 2019; Wessendorf & Farrer, 2021), which can contribute to the breaking down of stereotypes and preconceptions in relation to refugees. Their strategy for living life matches and mixes nuances of the wanderer and of the player and without planning life over the long run, it requires making the most of opportunities and the context of the “here and now.” Constant exposure to strangers and the

adoption of do-it-yourself type work (Bauman, 2017) relate to the mode of being of the participants. These metaphors help to illustrate the production of subjectivity outlined in the direction of the ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living the life of a refugee operationalized through immaterial labor. So, the entrepreneur's actions present in immaterial labor therefore shed light on the ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living the life of a refugee.

Concluding remarks

This article aimed to present and analyze the strategy for living life of Syrian refugees, examining the ethnic enterprise in light of the notion of immaterial labor. The qualitative and exploratory study undertaken based on a *corpus* of research resulted in three axes: (a) routes and obstacles in refuge; (b) immaterial labor in the ethnic enterprise; and (c) being an ethnic entrepreneur as a strategy for living life in refuge.

It is believed that various elements are activated to compose that strategy: the social context, the previous training, experiences, and financial condition, the family/friendship ties, the point of support for the refuge, and the religion, language, and food of the homeland. Of the four lifestyles in displacement indicated by Bauman (2011), it was found that the Syrian refugees are consistent with nuances of the wanderer – by being treated as foreigners, who come from other places and seek a new order; and the player – by playing the game of “here and now,” investing what they can self-mobilize, which beforehand announces the ethnic entrepreneur/immaterial labor. Although life has pushed them into refuge, in their baggage they have socioeconomic-cultural characteristics of the country of origin that, in the logic of globalized capitalism, will be capitalized on as immaterial labor.

It is concluded that the metaphorical lifestyle models (Bauman, 2011) contribute to illustrating the production of subjectivity outlining the strategy for living life in refuge, in which the ethnic entrepreneur gains shape through the exercise of immaterial labor. That provides a new analytical perspective on ethnic enterprises, by showing that the ethnic entrepreneur, in correspondence with the self-entrepreneur in immaterial labor, operates in the sense of producing/composing/affirming a strategy for living life in refuge. Thus, through shaping the enterprise, the refugee shapes their own life in refuge.

It is concluded that, by enabling the correspondence between ethnic entrepreneur and immaterial labor, this study corroborates and advances in relation to the literature pertinent to ethnic entrepreneurship and to immaterial labor; and that by highlighting circumstances of mobility and work composed of the subjectivity of the refugees, it advances in relation to the literature pertinent to refuge.

It is also important to highlight that the strategy for living life in displacement is outlined based on opportunities and obstacles that depend on the context and reality to be analyzed, which can differ including internally within countries. It is known that the Brazilian context presents extensive inter- and intra-regional inequality and, therefore, depending on the state, city, or region, different barriers and levels of social inclusion and recognition can be found.

As a limitation of the study, there was the impossibility of conducting an interview with two of the refugees due to unexpected circumstances. However, it is noteworthy that the composition,

the methodological *corpus*, that covered the combination of visits to the enterprises, narratives, observations, diaries, and photographs, was shown to be fruitful for studies with immigrants and refugees, as well as helping to overcome language barriers – a characteristic of research with foreigners. For future studies, we suggest an analysis of the developments resulting from the pandemic period for the refugees and their enterprises, as well as studying the ethnic enterprise as a strategy for other minorities in a situation of vulnerability.

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Notes

1. The term used in the work of Bauman (2011), translated to Brazilian Portuguese, was vagabond. However, the decision was made to substitute it for wanderer on the understanding that it

maintains the meaning of the concept – one who moves around erratically – thus removing the pejorative connotation attributed by Brazilian Portuguese – one who does not like working.

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