



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT



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# Migrant Entrepreneurship: Developments at the Intersection of Policy and Practice

FINAL CONFERENCE OF THE PROJECT MIG.EN.CUBE

Bologna, 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

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**Editors**

Daniela Bolzani, Giuseppe Simone

**Scientific committee**

Daniela Bolzani (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna), Benson Honig (DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University), Monder Ram (Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship, Aston Business School), Rosana Reis (ISG International Business School), Vittoria Scalera (Amsterdam Business School, University of Amsterdam)

**Organizing committee**

Giuseppe Simone, Francesca Regoli, Fardeen Dodo, Elena Sinico, Giulia Marino, Firdawss Gartite, Laura Toschi, Federica Bandini (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna)

**Conference co-organizers**

EBN – European Business Network, IOM – International Organization for Migration Italy; LEMEX – Chair in Small Business and Entrepreneurship, University of Bremen; Microfinanza s.r.l.; The Human Safety Net.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Daniela Bolzani** (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna), **Benson Honig** (DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University), **Monder Ram** (Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship, Aston Business School), **Rosana Reis** (ISG International Business School), & **Vittoria Scalera** (Amsterdam Business School, University of Amsterdam)

## Background

The number of international migrants continues to grow steadily all around the world, representing around 3.6% of the global population (UN DESA, 2022). Europe has historically been a central player in global migrations, increasingly so because of the appealing living and working conditions of many European countries and the ease of movement within the European Union (UN DESA, 2020). Migration dynamics and policies in this region have been, and can be projected to be further influenced by, climate change (Bednar–Friedl et al., 2022), war and conflicts (OECD, 2022), and demographic issues such as ageing and birth decline (Mongelli & Ciscar, 2018).

Migration generates the presence, in the same territory, of people from different cultural backgrounds, enacting different cultures of entrepreneurship and exploiting a variety of opportunities, resources and business strategies (Guercini et al., 2017). As a result, there is mounting evidence of the positive contribution that migrant entrepreneurs can bring to host countries' economies (OECD, 2021).

Over the last decade, several European initiatives have been launched to support migrants engaging in entrepreneurial activities, so as to help them to fully exploit their potential (European Commission, 2012; OECD, 2021). In fact, besides the risks and challenges associated with launching a new business, migrant entrepreneurs may lack historical roots and emotional attachment to the territory and, due to their connection to ethnic and diasporic networks, might have diverse degrees of embeddedness with respect to local or transnational networks, which can provide access to ideas, resources, markets, and technologies (Kloosterman, 2010; Ram et al., 2017; Honig, 2020).

A pressing issue for policy-makers is thus represented by the ways in which immigrants can be socialised into the local "social networks that connect entrepreneurs, advisors, investors, and workers and that allow the free flow of

knowledge and skills” (Spigel, 2017, p. 56). The development of support services and activities to sustain migrant entrepreneurs into entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as those implemented by incubators and other services for business/entrepreneurship support, could thus be one important enabling factor (e.g., Bolzani & Mizzau, 2019; Harima et al., 2018). However, while many new programmes have recently been launched by mainstream incubators or other actors to sustain migrant entrepreneurship start-up and growth (Rath & Swagerman, 2016; Solano et al., 2019; Buenfil van Rijs et al., 2021), the academic knowledge in this domain is still scant, fragmented and disconnected from the policy debate.

## **Aims of the Conference**

This book collects the proceedings of the international Conference “Migrant Entrepreneurship: Developments at the Intersection of Policy and Practice” held in Sala Borsa (Bologna) on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The conference was foreseen as one of the dissemination events of the Erasmus+ project MIG.EN.CUBE – fostering MIGrant ENTrepreneurship inCUBation in Europe. It was organized as a free interdisciplinary event open to scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners, with the aim to share experiences of policies and practices of entrepreneurial support initiatives for migrants (e.g., pre-incubation, incubation, or acceleration programmes), increase awareness of potential strengths and weaknesses of such initiatives, and stimulate academic-policy-practice dialogue.

A call for abstracts was launched by the Scientific Committee to attract the contributions from scientists and practitioners interested in the topics of the Conference (deadline 28<sup>th</sup> February). 34 abstracts, either early stage or in a more advanced stage, were considered for inclusion in the Conference program. The Scientific and Organizing Committee engaged in attracting a number of qualified speakers and co-organizers to develop the different parts of the program.

## **Conference program**

The conference program was organized as a two-day event. The first day of the conference was dedicated to creating a multi-stakeholder platform to allow policy-practice-academic dialogue, reflection, and interaction. The second day of the conference was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of academic papers.



## 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023

<b>9:30-10:00</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>10:00-10:10</b>	<b>Institutional greetings</b> <b>Angelo Paletta</b> (Director, Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna) <b>Cristina de Maria</b> (Rector's Delegate for Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna)
<b>10:10-10:25</b>	<b>Introducing the conference and the project MIG.EN.CUBE: Daniela Bolzani</b> (Associate Professor, Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna and MIG.EN.CUBE principal investigator)
<b>10:25-10:40</b>	<b>Reflections on local public policies, international mobility and entrepreneurship</b> <b>Rosa Grimaldi</b> (Professor of Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship and Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, Innovation, and International attraction, Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna) <b>Gian Luca Baldoni</b> (Responsible for the Internationalization Unit, Emilia-Romagna Region)
<b>10:40-10:55</b>	<b>Keynote speaker: David Halabisky</b> (project coordinator, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities)
<b>10:55-11:20</b>	<b>Keynote speaker: Monder Ram</b> (Full Professor, Aston Business School, and Director, Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship)
<b>11:20-12:30</b>	<b>Panel discussion</b> <b>Shawgi Ahmed</b> (Director of Public Leadership, PLACE Network), <b>Chiara Davalli</b> (Senior Project Leader, European Business Innovation Centre Network), <b>Patrick Landi</b> (Partner, Venture Capital OPES Italia Sicaf), <b>Silsila Mahboub</b> (Entrepreneur, Representative of European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees – EU-COMAR), <b>Vira Mistry</b> (Entrepreneur, Development practitioner and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion specialist), <b>Giuseppe Torluccio</b> (Vice President, Grameen Foundation Italia, and Full Professor of Financial Markets and Institutions, Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna). Moderator: <b>Marina Sarli</b> (EU Programs Lead at Impact Hub Network).
<b>12:30-13:00</b>	<b>Q&amp;A session</b>
<b>13:00-14:00</b>	<b>Light lunch</b>
<b>14:00-16:00</b>	<b>Parallel working groups: debating the issues and constructing new actions.</b> 1) <b>Nurturing refugee entrepreneurship between liabilities of refuge and assets of mixed embeddedness</b> (co-organized by LEMEX - Chair in Small Business &

	<p><b>Entrepreneurship, Universität Bremen, and Fondazione Generali – The Human Safety Net).</b> Includes Papers Presentation Parallel Session #1 “Refugee Entrepreneurship”.</p> <p>2) <b>Inclusive entrepreneurial support: theory and practice</b> (co-organized by European Business Innovation Centre Network, Impact Hub Amsterdam, ISG International Business School, PLACE Network).</p> <p>3) <b>Migration as an opportunity for international entrepreneurship</b> (co-organized by International Organization for Migration). Includes Papers Presentation Parallel Session #2 “Internationalization and migration”.</p> <p>4) <b>Building thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems: Support services, finance and investments, and institutions</b> (co-organized by the Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna, and Microfinanza s.r.l.).</p>
<b>16:00-16:30</b>	<b>Plenary session:</b> sharing experiences and propositions for actions based on the four working groups.
<b>16:30-17:00</b>	<b>Keynote speaker: Benson Honig</b> (Full Professor, De Groote School of Business, McMaster University, and founder of Reframery)
<b>20:30</b>	<b>Social dinner (invited speakers)</b>

### 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

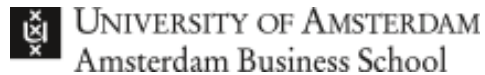
<b>9:00-10:35</b>	<p><b>Academic Papers Idea Development and Advanced Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parallel Session #3 “Refugee Entrepreneurship”</li> <li>– Parallel Session #4 “Micro-Macro Relationships”</li> <li>– Parallel Session #6 “Policies and supports”</li> </ul>
<b>10:35-11:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<p><b>Academic Papers Idea Development and Advanced Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parallel Session #3 “Refugee Entrepreneurship”</li> <li>– Parallel Session #5 “Transnationalism and Return”</li> <li>– Parallel Session #6 “Policies and supports”</li> </ul>
<b>12:30-14:00</b>	<b>Light lunch</b>

## INSIGHTS FROM THE PROJECT MIG.EN.CUBE

**Daniela Bolzani** (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna) & **Giuseppe Simone** (University of Parma)

### Aims and Structure of the project

MIG.EN.CUBE – Fostering MIGrant ENTrepreneurship inCUBation in Europe – is an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Commission (Strategic Partnership for Adult Education, 2020-1-IT02-KA204-080069) (November 2020 – April 2023). Led by the University of Bologna (Italy) (P.I. Dr. Daniela Bolzani), it involves the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Institut Supérieur de Gestion (France), Fondazione Grameen (Italy), Impact Hub Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Place Network (France), Impact Hub Company (Austria), and Migration Policy Group (Belgium).



MIG.EN.CUBE was set to take into account the current critical issues in fostering migrant entrepreneurship in Europe, characterized by a fragmentation of incubation programs targeting migrant entrepreneurs, the diversity of actors that provide incubation activities, a strong focus on the “demand side” (i.e., migrant entrepreneurs) but a lack of training opportunities and exchange of best practices for incubation professionals targeting this group, and the super-diversity of (would-be) migrant entrepreneurs.

The project thus sought to enhance the knowledge and competences of diverse incubation professionals dealing with (would-be) super-diverse entrepreneurs, so as to foster the opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs to learn and experience how to start and growth a successful business. Specifically, MIG.EN.CUBE aimed at (1) increasing the understanding of specific incubation needs of migrant entrepreneurs and of the competences required for incubation professionals working with them; (2)

systematizing and sharing best practices for innovative incubation programs for migrants across Europe; (3) providing incubation professionals with new, tried-and-tested materials and tools for advising, training, performing, and assessing incubation for migrant entrepreneurs.

MIG.EN.CUBE was innovative in contents because it developed and strengthened relevant and high-quality knowledge and competences of incubation professionals, accounting for the super-diversity of migrant entrepreneurs and the diversity of incubation professionals' profiles, extending the offer of high quality learning materials and training opportunities tailored to individual adult learners' needs. The project was innovative in approach, because (1) it assumed that not only migrant entrepreneurs should be supported, but also the incubation professionals working with them (matching supply- to demand-side); (2) it worked with a bottom-up logic, developing materials based on a scientific assessment of best practices and real training needs of targeted beneficiaries; (3) it was based on the collaboration between academic institutions, private companies, and civil society bringing complementary perspectives and competences. MIG.EN.CUBE was innovative in methods, because it proposed the development of learning materials based on a bottom-up approach and interactive processes, and the use of methodologies focusing on the development of transversal competences and action learning.

Transnationality was a key feature of MIG.EN.CUBE, which brought together partners from three European countries (Italy, France, The Netherlands) characterized by different immigration and entrepreneurial regulatory frameworks, aided by partners from two additional European countries (Austria and Belgium) with strong European and international networks.

The methodology of the project was designed around four main phases: (1) the preparation phase, carried out before the beginning of the project and within the first three months of activity, to provide with a strong background to start; (2) a scanning and assessment phase, which aims to increase the public understanding of specific training needs of migrant entrepreneurs and incubation professionals dealing with this group; (3) the production phase, which regards the development of training contents targeted to incubation professionals; and (4) the dissemination phase, aimed at achieving impact and relevance.

## Key results and lesson learned

The first set of results emerging from the MIG.EN.CUBE project regard the development of new knowledge and scientific evidence.

The [Research Report on the “Incubation Services for Migrant Entrepreneurship”](#) (Buenfil van Rijs, Scalera & Lupoi, 2021) presented systematic information about the organizational characteristics of the incubation services currently offered in France, Italy and The Netherlands, with a specific focus on those targeting migrant entrepreneurs. The three countries analysed in the report are interesting because they have introduced different policies to boost benefits of migrant entrepreneurship, particularly in high-tech sectors (e.g., start-up visa policies), and improve migrant's socio-economic inclusion. The research involved desk research, with the primary aiming of gathering qualitative data on the incubators (e.g., year of foundation, business model, goals, services provided, and target groups), and semi-structured interviews with 48 entrepreneurial support organizations offering different incubation and acceleration services.

The Dutch, French, and Italian entrepreneurial ecosystems are in continuous evolution, but are overall open to supporting migrant entrepreneurship. The research showed the existence of “migrant-specific” entrepreneurial support initiatives, which are specifically designed for migrants, and “generalist” entrepreneurial support programs, which welcome in their programs both local residents as well as entrepreneurs coming from abroad. On the one hand, migrant-specific entrepreneurial support initiatives have, in general, the mission of empowering migrants by offering them the tools, knowledge, and competencies to transform their ideas into business opportunities. Accordingly, their activities mostly regard the provision of training, aiming at the development of entrepreneurial competences from a perspective of personal growth. On the other hand, generalist entrepreneurial support initiatives are more likely to provide services connected to business acceleration – such as the provision of support to reach clients and final markets, searching staff, achieving funding or investments. Accordingly, they are more likely to provide incubation spaces and to adopt customized methodologies, such as mentorship or pairing with experts and consultants.

The research highlighted that there are two sources of complexity to keep into account when analyzing the entrepreneurial support initiatives dedicated to migrants: (1) the different profiles of migrants looking for support services (e.g., students/researchers, start-up visa holders, refugees or asylum seekers, newly arrived migrants or long-term sojourners), and (2) the different nature and stages of business idea development.

The co-existence of these different groups, with unique support needs, suggests the necessity to deal with “super-diverse” entrepreneurs (Ram et al., 2013) and is mirrored by the wide variety of services offered to migrant entrepreneurs in the three countries, accompanied by common and idiosyncratic hurdles.

The [Library of Current Practices](#) of incubation services for migrant entrepreneurs provides with a description of several examples about inclusive methodologies and incubation processes adopted by entrepreneurial support organizations in France, Italy, and The Netherlands. In particular, the library provides an overview about practices in the domain of intercultural skills, language and communication training, basics of entrepreneurship training, technical training and consulting, networking, mentoring and coaching, and market reach and funding.

The [Research Report on “Incubators’ Training Needs to Serve Migrant Entrepreneurs”](#) (Martinelli & Bolzani, 2021) was based on qualitative data collection undertaken via in-depth interviews with 48 incubators offering migrant-specific or generalist incubation services across France, Italy, and The Netherlands, and on quantitative survey data from incubation managers and professionals, counting 105 completed responses.

This study highlighted that professionals working in entrepreneurial support organizations require both technical entrepreneurship- and business-related competencies, necessarily complemented by soft and interpersonal skills for providing effective services. Indeed, the psychological and affective dimension of entertaining relationships with entrepreneurs was emphasized by several professionals. However, the competences required to deal with migrant and native entrepreneurs depend on the stage of development of their start-ups, on the sector, but also on the entrepreneurs’ characteristics.

There are different approaches to establishing a relationship between incubation professionals and entrepreneurs. For example, entrepreneurial support organizations’ professionals might emphasize technical, business-related content in their relationships with entrepreneurs, taking a role of guidance in respect of the entrepreneurs’ autonomy. Alternatively, the relationship could be oriented towards a more personal approach, becoming educational in driving the personal development of entrepreneurs through entrepreneurial competencies and life skills. Both types of relations are important and have their own pros and cons. For migrant entrepreneurs, the risk of technical-centered relationships is that the individual’s voice is not heard; the risk of personal-centered relationships lies in hidden power imbalances and “charitable assistentialism”.

One of the most important findings of the research is that entrepreneurial support organizations need to increase the formal training opportunities offered to their professionals. This is particularly relevant with respect to training in the domain of intercultural competences, equity, diversity and inclusion, and pedagogical approaches to training, tutoring, and mentoring.

The research carried out by the team of MIG.EN.CUBE suggest the following recommendations for policy-makers and managers of entrepreneurial support organizations:

- **Increased Awareness:** Incubation professionals should work towards recognizing stereotypes and raising awareness of implicit power dynamics in their interactions with migrant entrepreneurs, within their programs, and in the surrounding ecosystem.
- **Enhanced Training:** Entrepreneurship support programs and organizations need to more investment in adequate training for their internal staff and the portfolio of external consultants/mentors.
- **Greater Inclusion:** Policymakers and incubation program managers should involve migrants in the design and implementation of policies and programs, as well as in funding decisions.
- **Improved Coordination:** Investments are needed in coordinating efforts between entrepreneurship support organizations and other actors in entrepreneurial ecosystems (such as universities, funders, investors, and other business support services). Collaboration with public institutions (such as social services, labor services, and migrant reception systems) is essential to develop effective solutions that meet the diverse needs of migrant entrepreneurs, providing incubators with complementary skills and resources.
- **Enhanced Measurement:** Policymakers and entrepreneurship support organizations should establish clear goals, assuming that the entrepreneurial activities of migrants are not mere welfare policies at their core.

Leveraging the insights derived from extensive research, the MIG.EN.CUBE project team has developed two educational tools aimed at managers and professionals in entrepreneurship support services, as well as policymakers. These tools were made available to the public in the early weeks of April 2023.

Engaging 13 university professors, 12 incubation professionals, and 10 migrant entrepreneurs, a free Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) has been created. This course comprises three modules covering (1) social and relational skills, (2) intercultural competencies, and (3) techniques and approaches to business planning and growth. Accessible in five languages—French, English, Italian, Dutch, and Portuguese—the online course can be freely accessed, following registration, on the website: <https://linktr.ee/migencube>. Participants can choose to follow specific modules or the entire course, receiving a certification from ISG International Business School.

The second educational tool is the '[Inclusive Incubation Handbook](#),' designed for managers, professionals in incubation services, and policymakers. This manual serves as an online repository, exploring the potential for (better) working with migrant entrepreneurs. It provides methodological principles and practical tools to enhance the inclusivity of entrepreneurship support programs and policies. The handbook, accessible for free in three languages—French, English, and Italian—includes concrete cases of best practices and recommends relevant readings.

These significant topics have been the focus of additional interactive dissemination events, three of them taking place in Bologna, Paris, and Amsterdam, along with two well-attended online webinars with an international audience. All the materials of the project will remain available for a period of three years on the project website. Several information have been transferred to the public through social media posts, dissemination seminars and conferences, public presentations, scientific and non-scientific articles. The project will strengthen the efficacy of support programs linking entrepreneurship and migration, focusing on the development of relevant high-quality knowledge and competences for professionals and policy-makers.

To know more:

Project website: <https://mig-en-cube.unibo.it>

Project LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mig-en-cube/>

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# REFLECTIONS ON LOCAL PUBLIC POLICIES, INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## Strategies for inclusive innovation @ the Municipality of Bologna

**Rosa Grimaldi** (Municipality of Bologna and Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–Università di Bologna)

The city of Bologna welcomes conferences and events, such as this one, offering opportunities to discuss migrant entrepreneurship and aimed at identifying policy implications.

The city of Bologna is well known in Italy for being one of the most 'inclusive' cities and for the concrete actions supporting inclusion. Inclusion for the Municipality means effort in:

- Integrating – support people from other countries in living their life experience in Bologna, with regard to their work, their families, their kids. The municipality has put at place support services to facilitate landing from abroad.
- Welcoming – greet newcomers so that they can perceive Bologna as their future home.
- Accepting – embrace diversity of cultures, perspectives and religions.
- Defending – focus on civil rights in respect of individuals' feelings and ideas.

The challenge is to transform these beautiful words into concrete actions, in different areas, encompassing health, school, house and services in general.

In the current mandate, the Municipality is also working on innovation to promote entrepreneurship and to attract talents from other Italian regions and from abroad. We have launched in May 2023 a brand-new action, [BET – Bologna Empowering Talents](#). It's the 'bet' of the city of Bologna to attract and retain talents in the local territory. BET has attracted (through a call) 13 talents from all over Italy (recent graduates), who have been involved in 'open innovation' programs in collaborations with three local companies, addressing challenges promoted by companies themselves. Talents have been also exposed to beauty of the local territory, through excursions, visits to museum and social events.

The municipality is also working on sensitizing private companies on issues like Diversity and Inclusion and Equity Management (DI&I). The Mayor in first person has launched a series of meetings with a subset of local companies (up to 36 local companies among the best performing and more innovative) to discuss with them best practices in DI&E Management and to promote the joint co-creation of actions that bring together private companies and the Public Administration, aimed at implementing DI&E withing organizations in a successful way.

## **Emilia-Romagna Region: Local public policies**

**Gian Luca Baldoni** (Emilia-Romagna Region)

The aim of this presentation is to offer a brief overview of the potential impact of the entrepreneurial activities of migrants in the framework of regional policies and measures for economic development implemented by the Emilia-Romagna regional Government.

The economic context of the Emilia-Romagna region, one of the most industrialised and developed in Italy, is characterized by a vibrant entrepreneurial environment in which the manufacturing sector plays a key role both in terms of employment, added value and exports. Emilia-Romagna's economy is strongly export-oriented and shows high resilience with positive trends in the short and long term: the region ranks first in Italy for per capita exports, and exports are 42% higher than imports. An idea of the level of internationalization of the local industry is also by the high number of local companies controlled by foreign enterprises (more than 1,300).

Moreover, throughout the region, there are 54,525 companies owned by a foreign entrepreneur, most of them are individual companies owned by a single entrepreneur, with few or even no employees<sup>1</sup>. Most of these companies are active in traditional sectors, such as the building sector (36%), retail (23%), restaurants (9%); only 9% is a manufacturing company.

The regional Government of Emilia-Romagna provides a wide range of measures to support local enterprises in their growth, innovation and internationalisation, or to

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<sup>1</sup> These figures may underestimate the real presence of migrant entrepreneurs, due to the difficulties to properly identify the origin of the founder or owner of a company in the public databases.

support startups. Most of these measures consist in granting financial support to private investments, through regular public calls.

Even if there is not a specific measure devoted to the support of migrant entrepreneurship, any company located in the region has the opportunity to apply to these calls. Through the regional database of state aid to companies, we can have a detailed overview of the participation of companies founded by foreign entrepreneurs to these measures. Most of the local companies applying to the regional measures are limited liability companies but we only have data available concerning individual companies, due to the database configuration. Despite this limitation, since 2017 the individual foreign companies receiving financial support from the Emilia-Romagna Region, in all measures, have been 503, for a total grant of 4.25 million euros for the implementation of an overall investment of around 13 million euros<sup>2</sup>.

These companies operate in the same traditional sectors and are consistent with sectoral distribution of regional companies, as above mentioned.

To participate to these calls for grants, companies are required to present an investment project. The regional financial support is not granted for ordinary business.

Although these numbers may appear not so significant when compared to the overall measures of the regional Government to support the local economy, nonetheless they, indirectly highlight a group of foreign entrepreneurs able to define and follow an authentic entrepreneurial path of development. This is also confirmed by the presence of around 100 startups founded by migrants in our region.

Recently, within the regional strategy for local development, the focus on the need to attract skilled professionals (“talents” as they are often referred to in regional plans<sup>3</sup>) has become a key point. This could probably encourage a new approach towards the positive contribution that migrants, and specifically their attitude to become entrepreneurs, may have in keeping the local economic environment dynamic and resilient.

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<sup>2</sup> Source “Bancadati aiuti di stato Regione Emilia-Romagna”. Figures refers to the period from July 2017 to March 2023.

<sup>3</sup> For more details: Regional Law 21 February 2023 n.2 “Attracting, retaining and enhancing highly specialized talents in Emilia-Romagna”.

## **PARALLEL WORKING GROUP #1 - Nurturing refugee entrepreneurship between liabilities of refuge and assets of mixed embeddedness**

**Jörg Freiling** (LEMEX – Chair in Small Business & Entrepreneurship, Universität Bremen),  
**Tenzin Yeshi** (LEMEX – Chair in Small Business & Entrepreneurship, Universität Bremen),  
and **Stefano Rovelli** (Fondazione Generali – The Human Safety Net)

### **Rationale/motivation for the topic**

The purpose of this session was to address the need for research into refugee entrepreneurship research settings. This session examined the topic of refugee entrepreneurship through the lens of research scholars, refugee entrepreneurs, and refugee support groups. The session included a presentation from the research scholars, followed by a panel discussion and group activity on the refugee entrepreneurship topic.

Refugees have always been a global concern, particularly since 2015, following the civil war in Middle Eastern countries, which resulted in an influx of refugees into European countries. Although integrating those refugees is imminent, refugees are often regarded as a burden on host countries. Several studies, however, have focused on the untapped resources, potentials, and entrepreneurial intentions that contribute to the host country's economy. Refugees can be resourceful and positive contributors if adequate resources are available. Refugee entrepreneurs' integration into society can lead to economic stability and growth for refugees and host countries. Fostering the refugee entrepreneurship spirit aids in the resolution of the refugee crisis, as well as the promotion and development of domestic entrepreneurship using refugee ethnic business experience, skills, and innovations.

### **Topics of discussion**

A panel discussion featuring researchers, refugee entrepreneurs (EU-COMAR), and a refugee support group (ACH) was held after presenting two papers on refugee entrepreneurship in the context of South Africa and the UK. The discussion covered a wide range of subjects. The heart of the discussion was how to close the gap between policymakers and refugee entrepreneurs from an academic perspective. The

discussion also addressed the needs of refugee entrepreneurs, the current state of the topic, and how established policy helps/restricts refugee entrepreneurs. A paper idea session to the value of scholarly research on refugee entrepreneurship was highly informative and exciting, given the variety of settings and audience perspectives. There are some valuable insights from the seminar, and we look forward to addressing more such discussions on the stated topic.

## Key takeaways and recommendations

The panelists and audience made four key recommendations on how to embrace refugee entrepreneurs in the future:

- ❖ More interaction between refugee entrepreneurs and policymakers is required to reflect mutual interests and expectations on both sides.
- ❖ The government should play an active role in refugee support organizations, such as an incubation program that shapes refugee business ideas in the early stages of their business venture.
- ❖ More research should uncover the potential and untapped resources rather than the barriers to refugee entrepreneurship topic.
- ❖ The refugee entrepreneur should be regarded as a distinct entrepreneurial agent. Thus, cross-country collaboration between research institutions and refugee support groups is paramount in comprehending the significance topic.

This working group was co-organized by: LEMEX (Chair in Small Business & Entrepreneurship) Universität Bremen, and Fondazione Generali – The Human Safety Net.



## PARALLEL WORKING GROUP #2 – Inclusive entrepreneurial support: Theory and practice

**Rosana Reis** (ISG International Business School) & **Chiara Davalli** (European Business Innovation Centre Network)

### Rationale/motivation for the topic

*All Europeans who want to set up their own business, whatever their profile, should receive active support. (Brigitte Fellahi-Brognaux, Head of Unit, European Commission DG EMPL)*

Businesses that receive tailored support from incubators have higher survival rates, create more jobs, and generate more revenues. However, to date there is a need to transforming progressively the dominant mindset of incubation, so as to unleash the entrepreneurial potential of under-represented groups and social economy initiatives. In this regard, business incubators should be regarded as a potentially effective way to support migrant entrepreneurs. Migrant-specific incubators are becoming more common across Europe. These incubators are designed specifically for migrant entrepreneurs and provide tailored support to help them overcome the unique challenges they face. Yet, it is important that also mainstream business incubators understand that they are well positioned to act as change agents in their local/regional entrepreneurial ecosystems, as they do already act as catalysts and can broaden their scope to mobilise a wider range of resources and stakeholders to generate greater social impact through entrepreneurship.

### Topics of discussion

The working group was organized as an interactive session with participants. After an introduction and ice-breaking activity, led by Michele Caleffi (PLACE Network), the participants could draw on inspiration from a Vira Mistry (Entrepreneur, Development practitioner and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion specialist).

Proposing a shift in the role of “mainstream” business and innovation support actors to sustain under-represented groups in entrepreneurship requires a holistic approach, aimed to promote and support an “eco-systemic” change, bringing incubation and

business support services closer to the whole of society to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment as means to create jobs, develop skills and give unemployed and vulnerable people an opportunity to fully participate in society and the economy.

In this regard, Chiara Davalli (European Business Innovation Centre Network) presented the activities of the project LIAISE - Linking Incubation Actors for Inclusive and Social Entrepreneurship project, which received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020) under Grant Agreement n° VS/2020/0374. Powered by LIAISE, the project Better Incubation was led by EBN, the European Business Innovation Centre Network, with Impact Hub and EVPA. Better Incubation proposed three intervention levels:

- **Programmatic level:** providing BSOs concrete tools and methodologies to shape inclusive incubation and acceleration programmes
  1. Better Incubation Toolkit: is a comprehensive collection of hands-on tools and methodologies to make incubation and support programmes more inclusive and accessible.
  2. Better Incubation Insights Paper on Inclusive Incubation Pilots: outlines the lessons learned during the inclusive incubation pilots run by EBN and IHUB members.
- **Organizational level:** helping BSOs reconsidering their organisations to truly embrace an inclusive culture and approach
  3. Better Incubation Roadmap: aims to be a practical easy-to-read guide directed primarily to the mainstream BSOs willing to create and design organisational processes to better cater the needs of social and marginalised entrepreneurs.
- **Ecosystemic level:** acknowledging the complexity of the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems and the need for an orchestrated intervention to multiply the effect incubation and acceleration programmes on the economy and the society
  4. Better Incubation Policy Recommendations

All these toolkits and publications are available at [www.betterincubation.eu](http://www.betterincubation.eu).



Rosana Reis (ISG International Business School) and Rutger de Rijk (Impact Hub Amsterdam) presented the recent research conducted by MIG.EN.CUBE, in particular the issues highlighted in the report: “Incubators’ training need to serve migrant entrepreneurs.” Through the research, several different approaches from incubators about immigrant entrepreneurs were identified:

- Incubators that work with immigrant, accepting any entrepreneurial project, applying a “welfare” approach;
- Incubators that work with selected groups of immigrants, aiming for high-tech projects;
- Incubators that do not work with immigrants but are “open to”;
- Incubators that do no work with immigrants and think that migrants either do no have the capacity/knowledge or social networks/opportunities to be successful high-growth entrepreneurs.

There is room to improve the knowledge, attitudes and competences of the managers and professionals working in these different types of incubators. In this regard, the most needed contents are about social skills (e.g., perception and unconscious bias, emphatic listening, approach to failure) intercultural skills (e.g., understanding interculturality, intercultural skills and attitudes, diversity and inclusion), ad-hoc business planning and growth skills (e.g., individualized competence identification, basic entrepreneurship competences, credit, finance and investments competences, business planning, pitching and communicating business ideas, managing human resources). These contents were developed to train incubation professionals in the “[Incubating migrant entrepreneurs MOOC](#)” developed by the MIG.EN.CUBE project, with the leadership of ISG Business School. It put together 14 months of work, involving 48 people of different nationalities and backgrounds (13 academic professors, 12 incubation professionals, 10 entrepreneurs). The MOOC is released in English, French, Italian, Dutch and Portuguese. It features 6 hours of contents, with 73 videos (introduction, conceptual insights and testimonies), complementary materials, practical exercises and a forum to exchange experiences and insights. Additionally, the “[Inclusive incubator Guidebook](#)” is targeted to policy-makers and incubation professionals who want to improve their understanding and competences about how to better serve the needs of current or aspiring migrant entrepreneurs. The Guidebook is thought as a set of motivational incentives to work with migrant entrepreneurs, methodological principles and tools to guide the development of programs, and inspirational good practices. This guidebook was developed by Impact Hub

Amsterdam with the contribution of all project partners. The Guidebook is a free online resource available in English, French, and Italian.

During the session, all the participants could exchange additional reflections and experiences about providing support to migrant entrepreneurs, share practices that they have created or problems that they are not able to solve.

## **Key takeaways and recommendations**

Some adjustments need to be taken and implemented to ensure that incubation services meet the specific needs of under-represented groups in entrepreneurship, and, in addition, new, unusual partnerships must be established to reach out and retain vulnerable people in the incubation programmes.

The real “revolution” is in the way services are delivered, programmes designed, and opportunities communicated. It is not *the what*, but *the how* that must be carefully assessed by incubation managers.

Individual business incubators are not going to be able to change the culture and institutional practices around social and inclusive entrepreneurship alone. It is important to take an outward looking to the wider ecosystem, considering the needed broader cultural and institutional change. In this regard, three key reflections are the following:

- Implementing a human-centric approach. Business support organization must be ready to go beyond the usual entrepreneurial needs. When accompanying a would-be entrepreneur/entrepreneur from a vulnerable group, you also accompany his/her personal story and growth, and you can't disregard it when working on their entrepreneurial ideas. Many time, offering incubation services to these groups means offering an opportunity to raise career/entrepreneurial awareness, boost self-confidence, a safe space where to try out new ideas and test personal skills and capacities.
- Thinking widely. Inclusive incubation is a lot about managing and supporting complexity. Complex cultural and social backgrounds, complex regulations, complex financial settings that require different expertise, knowledge, and networks that need to work in synergy to maximise the impact of the offered support.
- Approaching inclusion as a journey. A journey is made of a thousand steps, but it has to start somewhere. Choose your first step, look at your local context,

understand the needs, the opportunities, and design together with your stakeholders the first/next steps. Define a simple impact assessment framework and use it as a compass to steer the direction, measure and look at the work already done and improve it. Try to move from a programmatic approach to a more systemic one, this leading to a wider and long-lasting impact within your organisation and for the wider ecosystem.

This working group was co-organized by: European Business Innovation Centre Network, Impact Hub Amsterdam, ISG International Business School, and Place Network



## PARALLEL WORKING GROUP #3 - Migration as an opportunity for international entrepreneurship

**Caterina Dollorenzo & Daniele Panzeri** (International Organization for Migration)

### Rationale/motivation for the topic

There is a growing interest in the role migration can play in supporting business internationalization. The role of diaspora has been investigated from a number of different perspectives that span from cultural or religious legacy (Schotter & Abdelzaher, 2013), to the role of Diasporas in internationalizing businesses of the home country (Rabbiosi, Gregorič, & Stucchi, 2019), passing through the capacity of multicultural enterprises in promoting economic transnationalism (Arrighetti, Bolzani, & Lasagni, 2014). The relevance of this topic is highlighted also in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes migration as a powerful driver of sustainable development, for migrants and their communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. Within this framework, since 2010 IOM in Italy has been supporting initiatives to leverage the nexus between migration and development. In particular, with the E-Merge program, IOM supports multicultural entrepreneurship, emphasizing the potential that migratory backgrounds represent particularly in terms of social impact and transnationality of business activities. Indeed, the benefits of the emerging multicultural enterprise model are various<sup>4</sup>, and include greater resilience and tendency towards innovations in products, organization and ownership structure. However, to fully capitalize on their capabilities, these enterprises would benefit from support interventions, empowering them to navigate the challenges of globalization, increase their businesses' social impact, and provide development opportunities to countries of origin. At the same time, engaging, training and fostering dialogue among local and central public institutions, academics and practitioners is crucial to leverage the potential of this cultural diversity. In this context, the working group has therefore been an opportunity to promote cooperation on these topics among key stakeholders and deliver a set of action-oriented joint recommendations for further action in this field.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information: [Merging Competencies, Valuing Diversity: The Multicultural Enterprise as an Emerging Model | IOM Publications Platform](#).

## Topics of discussion

The panel consisted of scholars and practitioners who brought attention to a different dimension of the contribution that migration can bring to international entrepreneurship. Scholars had been chosen among those who participated in the call for abstracts launched in the framework of the conference. Practitioners work in the field of migrant and multicultural entrepreneurship, including key actors and stakeholders of the aforementioned E-Merge initiative. Discussions in the working group revolved around the key role of diaspora communities as promoters of the socioeconomic sustainable development of their home countries, but also of host/new residence countries, and on the importance of providing for a favorable legislative framework, funding and capacity building opportunities for diaspora entrepreneurs, institutional actors and practitioners.

During the working group, programs supporting migrant and diaspora entrepreneurship were introduced and discussed, including good practices such as *Trait d'Union*, implemented by Fondazione Finanza Etica<sup>5</sup>, a project between Italy and Tunisia which focuses on the growth of youth and female entrepreneurship and the strengthening of local governance in the circular economy. The project is an example of collaboration between private sector actors and local and central public institutions in this area. Another initiative is *Microcredit for great ideas*, a call for business projects for people with a migrant background based in Italy. In this case, Banca Etica<sup>6</sup> provides access to a guarantee fund set up by Fondazione Finanza Etica, to facilitate access to credit for interested parties. *StudENT for Africa* was also presented during the panel, an entrepreneurship development program of the University of Bologna, addressed to all its students and recent graduates and aimed at supporting the implementation of innovative entrepreneurial projects to create economic and social development in Africa. The above-mentioned *E-Merge* initiative was briefly outlined, highlighting how the awareness of the intrinsic value of cultural diversity and how to leverage it, can be key for the success of the multicultural enterprise itself, including for strengthening its social impact.

A session of paper ideas presentations was chaired by Prof. R. Kloosterman. Results of research on the topics of diaspora networks as catalyst in diaspora entrepreneurship (Lutaj), and of return migration, entrepreneurship and development in North

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<sup>5</sup> Fondazione Finanza Etica is the cultural foundation of Banca Etica Group.

<sup>6</sup> Banca Etica is a financial intermediary promoting access to credit for businesses that meet specific environmental, social and governance (ESG) and economic sustainability criteria.

Macedonia (Zulfiu Alili & Arifi) underlined some outstanding issues in this field, above all the need to create connections between academia and practitioners in order to provide tailored and multi-faceted answers to the same starting questions.

## **Key takeaways and recommendations**

### **Policymakers:**

- **Listen to the emerging demand** coming from the diaspora / multicultural entrepreneurship. Paying attention to these needs would also translate into more accountability from the public authorities towards this part of civil society and business niche
- Be willing to support these efforts by providing a **conducive legal framework**, recognizing the importance of multicultural enterprises as a way to create innovation, business and development opportunities between different countries, including through internationalization
- Support Diaspora Organizations and Multicultural Enterprises with **adequate resources**, including, but not limited to financial support

### **Academics:**

- Keep **studying the phenomenon** of diaspora / multicultural entrepreneurship and investments
- Be open and facilitate more **knowledge transfer and exchange that can benefit both practitioners and policymakers**, including by presenting research and policy recommendations not only among academia but also to practitioners and by advocating with public authorities to achieve a change in the political agendas and strategies
- Share knowledge and advanced research also among students in these academic areas

### **Practitioners:**

- Be open to academia and research, **obtain and leverage evidence** in order to develop support and training programs and initiatives for enterprises and the private sector
- Create **awareness on the value and model of the multicultural enterprise** among decision makers and institutions

- Support sustainable and social-impact business ideas and enterprises to tap into the added value of their multiculturalism and integrate it into their business strategy, including with **capacity building** activities, such as training, coaching, facilitating networking opportunities, **access to credit**, etc.
- Involve diaspora in the **promotion of national trademark**, recognizing its key role in trading home-country products in host/new residence countries (and vice versa), as a potential investor in countries of affiliation and as a promoter of products or equipment coming from host/new residence countries in origin countries.

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This working group was co-organized by: International Organization for Migration.



## **PARALLEL WORKING GROUP #4 – Building thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems: Financial and non-financial support services**

**Davide Libralesso** (Microfinanza) & **Laura Toschi** (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna)

### **Rationale/motivation for the topic**

Small, young and innovative companies are considered the lifeblood, the backbone and the heart of our economy as they are largely responsible for making an important contribution to output, employment and productivity. However, they face several challenges in attracting funding and other types of support due to the presence of high level of information asymmetry, lack of collaterals and track records to understand their past performance and forecast their future potential. These problems are also more pronounced for migrant entrepreneurs, as they may struggle to adapt to different cultural, institutional, legal contexts and be accepted in a foreign market. Understanding how to address this gap is, thus, of primary importance and being aware of the challenges and opportunities in establishing connections between migrant entrepreneurs, support services, finance and investment bodies, and institutions is a relevant starting point.

The goals of the discussion in this working group were the following:

- a) identifying, on the demand side, the current needs for financial and non-financial services for migrant entrepreneurs and the obstacles faced in access to finance;
- b) exploring the potential for impact investments into migrant and inclusive business for social investors (supply side) and the barriers for this to happen.

### **Topics of discussion**

After the introductory remarks by Davide Libralesso (Microfinanza) and Laura Toschi (Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna), the working group has been organized first as a roundtable of invited participants who have addressed the following questions:



- a) Migrant and inclusive business: why is the sector still weakly served by standard financial services;
- b) Loans vs Equity vs Grant: market expectations and impact investors attitudes;
- c) Risk profiles within migrant and inclusive businesses: a barrier to attract investments?
- d) Communicating the impact of migrant entrepreneurship within local economies. A leverage to attract private investments?
- e) Could innovation in financial services overcome the limits of traditional finance and serve this market?

Participants to the roundtable were Ebru Sarikaya (research associate, University of Mannheim), Valentina Primo (founder, Start-up Without Borders), Camilla Spadavecchia (assistant professor, Tilburg University), Vittoria San Pietro (Emilbanca), and Alessia di Cesare (CGM Group).

The second part of the working group was organised around a discussion identifying the main limits to migrant entrepreneurship:

- a) Lack of access to capital: entrepreneurs with migrant background may have limited access to financial resources, such as investments, loans or even grants, which can make it difficult for them to start or grow their businesses;
- b) Legal and regulatory barriers: entrepreneurs with migrant background may face legal and regulatory barriers that limit their ability to operate businesses, such as obtaining permits and licenses;
- c) Limited social networks: migrants may have limited social networks, which can be a disadvantage when it comes to networking and building relationships that are essential for business success;
- d) Discrimination and prejudice: migrants still face discrimination and prejudice from potential customers, employees, and other entrepreneurs, which can limit their ability to succeed in their businesses;
- e) Lack of market knowledge: entrepreneurs with migrant background may lack knowledge of the local market, including consumer preferences and buying behaviours, which can reduce their chances of success;
- f) Language barriers: in some cases, migrants still face challenges in communicating with their customers and other stakeholders due to language differences. This can hinder their ability to market their products and services effectively.

Several participants contributed to this discussion, such as Giuseppe Torluccio (Fondazione Grameen Italia), Benson Honig (Full Professor, McMaster University, and founder of Reframery), Sonia Gennaro (LITA.CO), Chiara Buongiovanni (Social Impact Agenda per l'Italia), and Elena Mencaroni (Fondazione con il Sud).

## Key takeaways and recommendations

- Migrant entrepreneurs bring an opportunity for host economies/societies. There is a need to measure and communicate the social and economic impact of migrant businesses within local economies;
- Many of the barriers migrant entrepreneurs are facing are similar to other entrepreneurs, but migrant entrepreneurs express specific needs (demand side) of financial services;
- There are two types of issues to take into account as a barrier for migrant entrepreneurs to access financial services: hard facts (e.g., lack of collaterals / guarantees, insufficient bank history and weak track records), and soft facts (cultural barriers, attitudes considering human mobility as a limit vis-à-vis a bank);
- Old-fashioned rating system represent a barrier in access to finance for this target group and should be updated;
- Reducing discrimination (intentional/non-intentional) is still an issue to be addressed;
- Networks and a comprehensive approach, in particular through building relationships and cooperation within the entire entrepreneurial or institutional ecosystem, are essential to make a change happening;
- Women entrepreneurs might face stronger barriers to entrepreneurship, not just related to the access to financial services, in particular in some geographic/cultural areas (e.g., Middle East);
- Refugees' entrepreneurs have also more limited opportunities to express their potential;
- Approaching migrant entrepreneurs by adopting inclusive credit/investment policies might be interesting from the bank perspective: market shares have proved to increase if working with the cultural background of the clients;
- Need to identify or design dedicated financial tools for this target. Some innovation (like equity crowdfunding) may help to overcome some barriers, while microfinance or some public guarantees instruments (also leveraged through public funding) may facilitate access to finance;

- Business support services are often standardized and not tailor-made, as they are needed;
- Importance of capacity building to migrant entrepreneurs, also through peer-to-peer programmes, and programs helping them in the identification of business partnerships, not only or simply investors / financiers.

This working group was co-organized by: Department of Management, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna and Microfinanza s.r.l.



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## **PAPER PRESENTATION – PARALLEL SESSION #1 “REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP”**

Chair: **Tenzin Yeshi** (University of Bremen)

### **Paper idea – Refugee entrepreneurship in South Africa: A literature review of discourses and policy gaps**

**Sadhana Manik** (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

Small retail shops, called Spaza shops in South Africa, providing for community needs, are a common feature in many developing countries. Spaza shops are part of the informal economy and they number more than 100 000 locally in urban, peri-urban and rural communities. They are predominantly owned by Black immigrants and as such prone to xenophobic attacks and attitudes despite their provision of critical services in peri-urban areas. Many of the immigrant entrepreneurs are refugees escaping socio-economic and political collapse/discrimination in their countries and they flee in the hope of livelihood success and a desire to contribute to the host economy. However, immigrant policies in SA are not fertile ground for developing, protecting and sustaining immigrant businesses and refugee owners even if they respond to local citizen’s needs. I unpack the policy gaps at the nexus of practice as experienced by refugee entrepreneurs in South Africa by reviewing published literature in the past 3 years with the aim of rekindling conversations on economic prosperity post the pandemic and providing recommendations for strengthening policy.

### **Paper idea – Siloed policy approaches to migrant entrepreneurship: Insights from the UK**

**David Jepson** (Ashley Community Housing – ACH)

Economic development has foregrounded technological innovation as the major driver for growth in comparison with social innovation. *Social innovation is about responding positively to social and cultural changes and harnessing them for the*

*purposes of economic development. Crucial social changes such as the ageing population and especially the increasing importance of migration have often been seen as concerned with “social” policy.* <sup>7</sup>

*This is the case at local level (for example overall responsibility for refugee integration in Bristol City Council lies with the cabinet member for adult social care), at national level (in the UK overseen by the Home Office) and at regional level, for example the West of England Combined Authority / and Growth Hub which offers small business support.*

*This siloed approach to policy development and delivery in which economic and social changes are separated, can be challenged by social enterprises from the NGO sector such as ACH<sup>8</sup> which can address the ever changing and different needs of refugee and migrant cohorts with hands including support around business development.*

ACH was established by people from refugee backgrounds, which offers resettlement and integration support to 2500 refugees and migrants every year. It can also show that refugees and migrants are more likely to see entrepreneurship as an aspiration than other communities with some 25% of refugee clients aspiring to becoming involved in enterprise<sup>9</sup>. However, mainstream business support organisations have little engagement and community organisations who connect with migrant communities. The OECD has focussed on the importance of inclusive entrepreneurship as a tool for development reflecting the lack of focus on this key resource for our economy<sup>10</sup>

ACH has delivered a Migrant Business Support programme for several years, now funded by EU AMIF, currently working with 500 migrant entrepreneurs<sup>11</sup>. This is delivered by a dedicated team of business advisors, including ongoing individual support, group sessions and on line help. A key partner in the scheme is the West of England Growth

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eurada.org/calendar/events/enhancing-social-innovation-and-support-to-inclusive-entrepreneurship-in-regional-development-strategies>

<sup>8</sup> Ach.org.uk

<sup>9</sup> ACH statistic

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/inclusive-entrepreneurship/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ach.org.uk/news-and-features/introducing-our-migrant-business-support-project>

Hub with the aim of allowing signposting to more specialist support and to encourage “mainstreaming” of assistance to migrant business.

- More than 80% of clients had no previous contact with other business support bodies which demonstrates the importance of community led organisations to develop the potential of migrant communities and link social change to economic opportunity.
- Through a flexible approach, the scheme has been able to pivot to meet the needs of super diverse migrant communities such as those from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Hong Kong who were entirely unforeseen at the commencement of the programme.
- Individual migrant entrepreneurs face very different (to barriers faced by other entrepreneurs) barriers, including language, the regulatory environment, and access to social capital and social network, especially beyond their own communities.
- Migrants wishing to harness their transnational links for example through food products, cultural activities, business links and connecting these to the local business context.

## **PAPER PRESENTATION - PARALLEL SESSION #2 "INTERNATIONALIZATION AND MIGRATION"**

Chair: **Robert Kloosterman** (University of Amsterdam)

### **Paper idea - Diaspora networks as catalysts in diaspora entrepreneurship**

**Alma Lutaj** (UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies – SSEES, University College of London)

#### **Background and Motivation**

The international migration remains a quickly growing megatrend that will have a massive impact on society, including business and entrepreneurship (UN, 2022). The Covid-19 epidemic has harshly illustrated the fragility of this world even from the perspective of privileged actors such as cosmopolitan entrepreneurs (Nummela, Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, Harikkala-Laihinén & Raitis, 2020).

Nowadays – thanks to digital platforms with global reach – increased opportunities are available for diaspora entrepreneurs who can play vital roles in facilitating trade and investments between their countries of origin and countries of residence (UNCTAD, 2019). Also, they can help by bridging markets and circulating knowledge transfer (Siar, 2014) and information on technology and business practices.

While many research studies discuss the significant role of diaspora in developing national economies of their home countries, there is still limited information on diaspora networks impact on diaspora entrepreneurship and innovation (Elo, 2018). In addition, fairly limited attention is given to small, developing countries with large number of diaspora such as, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia etc. where approximately up to a third of each country's population is living outside their borders.

To contribute to an improved understanding of the role of diaspora network in diaspora entrepreneurship, knowledge transfers and innovation, and their impact on the economic development of small developing countries, which may or may not be

able to emulate the success of China and India in this respect, the research study will be focused in two countries which will be treated as case studies: Albania and Kosovo. The Albanian Diaspora, historical and new, represents a unique case. Compared to the population in the country of origin, in ethnic territories, it is among the largest in the world (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2023). But, in terms of its geographic dimension, it reaches almost all inhabited continents. In total, it counts several million people, concentrated mainly in Turkey, USA, Greece, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Argentina, etc. Their diverse diaspora accounts for nearly half of each country's population, and migration remittances are higher than foreign direct investment (FDI).

This project will help in understanding the impact of diaspora networks in entrepreneurship and investment, skills and knowledge transfer, and innovation in small developing countries with the large diaspora. Such research would contribute to an advanced understanding of the role of diaspora entrepreneurs and investors as important sources of capital and innovation for many small developing countries and help in the policymaking decisions to support them.

## **Method**

This research is at an early stage. It will have a mixed method (Fauser, 2017) approach using diaspora mapping (IOM, 2022). It involves tracking and visualizing digital traces diaspora entrepreneurs across web platforms (Google Search results, Facebook pages, LinkedIn, and Instagram posts) and integrating this with an analysis of the face-to-face interview responses of a key issue actor.

## **Paper idea - Return migration, entrepreneurship and development in North Macedonia**

**Merita Zulfiu Alili** (Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, SEEU) & **Besa Arifi** (Faculty of Law, SEEU)

North Macedonia faces continues increase of emigration accompanied by significant changes in the characteristics of the emigrant population. This study contains a legal approach and analysis of legislation related to migration policies and policies aiming to stimulate entrepreneurship opportunities for return migrants. Return migrants bring the prospects of an entrepreneurship gain to their country of origin. In this paper the



key determinants of returnees becoming entrepreneurs in North Macedonia are investigated. The worsening of the social and economic conditions are main drivers of emigration in North Macedonia. In order to mitigate the consequences and implications of the intensive permanent emigration and intensify the cooperation with migrants who support social and economic development, North Macedonia needs a comprehensive and consistent migration policy, whose measures and activities are harmonized with those included in development and sectoral policies, can contribute to the advancement of all segments of economic and social development, at both national and local level. Main obstacles hindering returnees' economic engagement in North Macedonia are emphasised to be the lack of trust in institutions, corruption, non-compliance with the law, dysfunctional and untrained administration and dysfunctional institutions, slow procedures in establishing a business and problems during the implementation of activities. This paper analyses good and promising practices identified through desk research and interviews with representatives of good practices. These initiatives focused on economic engagement of returnees in North Macedonia would be recommended as a model for the returnees' contributions to the socio-economic development of the country.

## **PAPER PRESENTATION – PARALLEL SESSION #3 “REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP”**

Chair: **Benson Honig** (McMaster University)

### **Paper idea – Social Entrepreneurship of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic: Necessity or Opportunity?**

**Lukas Valek** (Prague University of Economics and Business)

#### **Motivation**

A research design focusing on Ukrainian refugees and their entrepreneurial activities in the Czech Republic after the first waves of refugees passed and war is still raging in Ukraine. The core examined features are their feeling of being refugees in relation to existing social networks, related embeddedness, their previous experience with entrepreneurship, and their will to continue with business back in their home country. The critical question is whether relocated Ukrainians find entrepreneurship due to their relocation as a necessity or an opportunity to help themselves and others and whether they will continue after their return (if they do).

#### **Background**

During the initial contact with the minority, it was discovered that many of the people running from the war in Ukraine prefer not to be identified as refugees and tend to look for ways to fit in hosting society as soon as possible. That helps a wide network of social capital (Chaskin, 2001) that might belong to a specific person (or a social group). The need to take care of oneself can often result from starting up a business, contrary to a perceived myriad of problems in achieving so in a hosting country (Ram, Jones, Doldor, Villares-Varela, & Li, 2022) . Various levels of existing social capital call for to use scope of the mixed embeddedness theory (Kloosterman, 2010) , with the addition of views on the social, cultural and financial capital (Dabić et al., 2020) with self-organising elements of co-production (Cahn, 2000; Pestoff, 2012) and further

expanding on views of those who already had business by “dis” and re-embeddedness theory (Harima, 2022) in search of elements of social entrepreneurship business models that support inclusiveness (Krueger, 2021) .

## **Method**

The method is suggested to be qualitative based on interviews and a script designed by underlining theory. Because the nature of the study requires some contact with entrepreneurship, the proposed target group are newly arrived Ukrainians who are actively trying (or have succeeded) to become entrepreneurs and whose businesses show signs of more altruistic behaviour and inclusiveness.

## **Contribution**

To our knowledge, little attention is given to analysing the entrepreneurial activities of displaced Ukrainians beyond compulsory registration when gaining a business license. The proposed research takes a step further to identify broader community and social capital dimensions of certain types of businesses concerning their potential impact on entrepreneurs’ lives and surroundings.

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## **Advanced paper – From refugee to entrepreneur: understanding the challenges of refugee entrepreneurs in Istanbul**

**Hülya Kaya** (Ministry of Interior, Türkiye)

The Syrian refugee crisis has turned Turkey into the world's largest refugee-hosting country. The EU-Turkey Statement, known as the 'refugee deal' has led to the entrapment of refugees in Turkey without any prospect of durable solutions. Refugee entrepreneurship is praised as a fast track to economic self-reliance; nevertheless, very little research has taken place in developing countries. Turkey as a developing country with its wide informal economy and increasing refugee protection responsibility is a unique case to understand the socio-economic inclusion of refugees through entrepreneurship and provide sustainable long-term solutions to the ongoing refugee protection crisis. Exploring the difficulties of refugee entrepreneurs can contribute to better design of facilitating environment for refugee entrepreneurs and might result in more effective entrepreneurship policies.

This study focuses on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) established by Syrian refugees in Istanbul, starting from the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011. In-depth interviews with 12 refugee entrepreneurs and 12 key stakeholders (government agencies, international organisations, NGOs and business associations) will provide valuable data to identify the legal and administrative challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs and develops policy framework and recommendations for

sustainable support and enhancement of refugee enterprises. This study follows the concept of “mixed embeddedness” according to which refugee entrepreneurs are seen as actors in their institutional ecosystem with their opportunities and constraints.

The findings suggest that there are four main legal and administrative challenges that affect refugee businesses negatively: temporary protection status, restricted mobility within and outside of the country, difficulties in getting work permission and business registration and no objective and transparent rules for accessing public incentives and finance. Stakeholders also underlined that whilst support programmes are impressive, they are fragmented and often dependent on specific and time-limited funding streams. Turkey should develop a holistic approach and national strategic development plan to transform refugee entrepreneurs’ integration by interaction to integration by design. Furthermore, there are serious deficiencies in monitoring, auditing and impact analysis of the entrepreneurship programmes. Donors mainly focus on the numbers, not the outcome of the projects and their long-term effects. They are looking for quick solutions to complex issues that require multidimensional solutions. Local governments have a leading role in the integration process of Syrians and the establishment of women’s cooperatives. Social enterprises and cooperatives are very important for inclusive and gender-specific entrepreneurial support since they are more flexible economic structures and hybrid models with intensive home production processes. They have become a very important hub for refugee women entrepreneurs but their legal infrastructure is not fully established yet. There are many gaps and uncertainties about their sustainability. Many cooperatives collapse after financial assistance ends. Social procurement could be the only way to support these cooperatives.

## **Advanced paper - Entrepreneurial emancipation of marginalised (displaced) entrepreneurs: Syrian refugees in Turkey**

**Mustafa Ozbilgin** (Brunel University London), **Cagla Ozgoren** (Bahcesehir University), **Mine Karatas-Ozkan** (University of Southampton), **Rifat Kamasak** (University of the West of England), **Joanna Vassipoulou** (Brunel University London) & **Esin Sayin** (KOSGEB)

### **Motivation and background**

In this paper, we scrutinise the negative presumptions and study the positive contribution that refugee entrepreneurs make to society and the economy. We explore the entrepreneurial experiences of Syrian refugees in a context where there is extensive deregulation and an absence of supportive organisational discourses for diversity (Baykut et al., 2021; Küskü et al., 2021). Given this context, our motivation is to demonstrate how entrepreneurial activities can generate a positive social impact and change even in an adversarial context through the framework of emancipatory entrepreneurship.

There is still a lack of understanding of how specific contexts generate different constraints that entrepreneurs aim to liberate themselves and others (Ruebottom and Tobiana, 2021). It is time to address this dearth of empirical studies considering the importance of emancipatory entrepreneurship highlighting its contextualised nature, particularly for refugee entrepreneurs, i.e. marginalised individuals with the potential for emancipatory social impact. Therefore, drawing on established frameworks of emancipatory entrepreneurship (Calas et al., 2016; Rindova et al., 2021), we draw attention to the social impact of the process of entrepreneurship. More specifically, we address the following questions: a) how do refugee entrepreneurs experience entrepreneurial emancipation? and (b) how do emancipatory mechanisms differ based on their resources and marginalisation?

### **Methodology**

Through 34 structured interviews, we have generated and analysed qualitative data through abductive method. We have found that experiences of emancipation and

emancipation strategies are driven by their personal resourcefulness and received institutional support either in the form of social/business networks or governmental support. Even under adverse conditions some were able to thrive and experience emancipation as entrepreneurs. The participant Syrian refugees cope with the challenges of the displacement through two thriving mechanisms: resilience building/bolstering, which help them to free themselves from the constraints, and reconfiguration of arrangements to generate a change, which help them release the constraints for others.

### **Contribution**

Our contributions are multiple. We contribute to the recently growing literature on emancipation-as-entrepreneurship (Rindova et al., 2009; Ruebottom and Tobiana, 2021; Zafar and Ometto, 2021; Jennings et al., 2016, Verduijn et al., 2014, Pergelova et al., 2022; Martinez Dy et al., 2018) through contextual theorisation of emancipatory process as experienced by marginalised entrepreneurs highlighting the role of emancipatory mechanisms in supportive and unsupportive contexts. We advance knowledge by showing that the emancipation mechanisms of displaced and marginalised entrepreneurs differ based on their resources and degree of marginalisation, and their associated use of resource mobilisation and contextual influences lead to differential societal impact that they make.

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## **Advanced paper – Investigating the role of religion on displaced migrant entrepreneurship**

**Tenzin Yeshi** (University of Bremen) & **Jörg Freiling** (University of Bremen)

More than eight out of ten people worldwide belong – actively or passively – to a religious group. Religion provides a moral code by which one lives and influences individual decisions, including certain occupations. However, is there also a moral load of religion impacting entrepreneurial endeavors? There seems to be an intertwined relationship between religion and entrepreneurship, which influences the entrepreneurial activities and behaviors of the entrepreneur (Dodd & Gotsis, 2007). Religion and enterprise have a complex interdependent affinity, and scholars have often tried to investigate their relationship (e.g., Audretsch et al., 2013). The association between religion and entrepreneurship can be traced back to Weber (1930), who claimed that religion influences individuals' economic behaviors. Previous studies show that religion can influence individuals' decisions in undertaking entrepreneurial activities (Audretsch et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2022; Henley, 2017; Balog et al., 2014). The role



of values in the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged but hardly tested empirically.

Displaced migrant entrepreneurs have become more prevalent over time. There are now 117.2 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (UNHCR, 2023). The term "displaced population" refers to people who have been forced to flee their homeland because of persecution, war, or violence and have a well-founded fear of persecution, prohibiting their return (UNHCR, 2020). On one hand, the displaced population is often marginalized and faces social isolation and enduring poverty. On the other hand, this displacement causes them to seek ways to boost their confidence, trust, and hopes to embark on risky endeavors such as venturing (Cheung et al., 2019). Religion could be a source of motivation for DME to pursue self-employment. However, the impact of religion on displaced migrant entrepreneurs has yet to be investigated. The role of religion in displaced migrant entrepreneurship (DME) has received little attention and is underrepresented in the entrepreneurship literature. Against this background, this study examines religion's role in DME. Two research questions were raised in this study: (i) What is the nature of religion in the context of displaced migrant entrepreneurs? (ii) How does religion influence the entrepreneurial behaviors of displaced migrant entrepreneurs?

This study draws on qualitative data collected from 22 semi-structured interviews with displaced migrant entrepreneurs in India and rests on snowball sampling considering displaced entrepreneurs from diverse entrepreneurial backgrounds. The findings of this study will provide new insights into the role of religion on DME, allowing practitioners and policymakers to delve deeper into this topic. This study is the first to exude an adherent overview of the role of DME through an empirical study. It will further provide a roadmap for future research on the role of religion in DME.

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## **Advanced paper - Syrian refugee entrepreneurship in the Netherlands from an intersectional approach**

**Samaneh Khademi** (Radboud University)

In 2015, a large number of asylum seekers, primarily from war-torn Syria, migrated to Western European countries, including the Netherlands, in search of safety. Since then, Syrian refugees have become the largest group of newcomers to the Netherlands (Dagevos & Maliepaard, 2018). The scientific relevance of understanding the newly arrived Syrian refugees and their integration has been recently acknowledged by various scholars (Freiling et al., 2019; Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2020). However, most studies on Syrian refugee entrepreneurship in the Netherlands have focused on the country's opportunity structures, overlooking the autonomy of Syrian entrepreneurs as independent agents and neglecting the role of their diverse intersectional backgrounds in their entrepreneurship (Embiricos, 2020, Harima, 2022).

This article proposes an agency-based approach, using intersectionality to gain a deeper understanding of how Syrian refugee entrepreneurs exert their agency in the

Netherlands. The research question is: How do Syrian refugee entrepreneurs exert their agency at the intersection of identity categories through their entrepreneurship in the Netherlands?

The study employs thematic life-story interviews with 14 Syrian refugee entrepreneurs (men and women) who immigrated to the Netherlands after 2015. The results show that the agency is realized through the intersectional identity elements of gender, age, religion, class, and ethnicity in the entrepreneurial context. Socio-economic inequalities among refugee entrepreneurs in the country of origin are reproduced in the host country, affecting how Syrian refugee entrepreneurs exert their agency.

The study considers two dimensions of agency: cognitive and practical. The cognitive dimension refers to the way people understand the existing reality to redefine themselves as autonomous subjects who can play a role in changing reality. Syrian refugee entrepreneurs redefine their identity, their home, and their entrepreneurial motivations to realize their cognitive agency. The practical dimension refers to the ways in which individual autonomy is realized. Practical agency is exerted by establishing entrepreneurship, discovering and utilizing new resources, and adopting agentic entrepreneurial strategies.

The study reveals that while the opportunity structures in the Netherlands generally support refugee entrepreneurship, there are instances where regulations and policies can act as barriers. This is due to the lack of an intersectional approach in these policies and the failure to acknowledge the diversity among refugee entrepreneurs based on their different intersectional identities.

This study contributes to the existing literature by combining the fields of refugee entrepreneurship, intersectionality, and agency. It shows how refugee entrepreneurs exert their agency before, during, and after entrepreneurship in the light of intersectional categories of gender, class, age, ethnicity, and religion.

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## Advanced paper – Harnessing the resilience and embeddedness of refugee entrepreneurship

**Tenzin Yeshi** (University of Bremen)

The refugee entrepreneurship issue has piqued the attention of academicians and policymakers worldwide in recent years. Particularly, since 2015, the rate of research publications on the issue has increased dramatically due to the global refugee crisis. Accordingly, to UNHCR global appeal figures, 2023, there are over 29.3 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2023). Refugee entrepreneurship is a viable integration option as refugees often have prior entrepreneurial experience from their home country and exhibit stronger entrepreneurial intentions than locals in the host country (Almohammad et al., 2021; Freiling & Harima, 2018; Mawson & Kasem, 2019; New American Economy, 2017; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019). Research exhibits that the refugee experience from the home country could influence the entrepreneurial activities of refugees in the host country (Harima, 2022; Yeshi et al., 2022). However, prior studies have primarily emphasized the embedding process of refugee entrepreneurs in the receiving country context (Jiang et al., 2021; Meister & Mauer, 2018), neglecting the aspects from the home country context.

In entrepreneurship research, scholars revealed that resilient individuals are more likely to perform better entrepreneurial output and economic success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014; Saridakis et al., 2013). By applying a notion of adaptive resilience, entrepreneurship scholars have investigated how individuals experience “continuous transformation and learning in the aftermath of disruptions” (Korber & McNaughton, 2018, p. 1136). Moreover, understanding individuals' resilience in an embedding process through multiple contexts is essential to advance refugee entrepreneurship research because engaging in entrepreneurial activities requires refugees to rebuild their resilience over time. Previous studies have not yet investigated the dynamic relation of how the resilience shown by refugees influences the embedding process of refugee entrepreneurs in the host country. Against this background, this study aims to contribute to the resilience of refugee entrepreneurship by investigating the multiple contexts of their embedding process. Therefore, this study addresses the following two research questions: 1) How does resilience influence the embedding process of refugee entrepreneurs? 2) How does the embedding process of refugee entrepreneurs constrain or enable their entrepreneurial activities?

Based on the 65 semi-structured qualitative interviews, this study finds that the resilience of refugee entrepreneurs is influenced by multiple contexts that enhance the embedding process of refugee entrepreneurs. Furthermore, unlike previous studies that primarily treated refugee entrepreneurs' embeddedness as an opportunity, this study finds refugee entrepreneurs encounter both constraints and opportunities when embedding in the host country. Moreover, this study provides a dynamic view of refugee entrepreneurs' venture development process through the lens of resilience and its embeddedness process.

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## **Advanced paper – Much ado about refugee entrepreneurship: Do Ukrainian refugees in Poland show a higher propensity to start a business than Ukrainian economic migrants?**

**Alexandra David** (Institute for Work and Technology of the Westphalian University of Applied Sciences), **Sabina Kubiciel** (Opole University of Technology) & **Jolanta Maj** (Wrocław University of Science and Technology)

The body of literature on refugee entrepreneurship is steadily growing (Abebe, 2022; Harima, 2022; Ranabahu et al., 2022; Stoewe, 2021). Thereby it generally argues that refugee entrepreneurs differ from other minority entrepreneurs including economic migrants. As main differences scholars point to ethnicity (Shepherd et al., 2020) or migration contexts (Alrawadieh et al., 2018). Others refers to disadvantage mechanisms including language barriers, legal status, institutional obstacles, challenges when entering the labour markets (Gold, 1992; Desai et al., 2021; Yeshe et al., 2022) – or limited access to local ecosystems in different spatialities (David & Schäfer, 2022; Hartmann & Philipp (2022).

Based on the literature review, it appears that there is a lack of clarity and consensus regarding the origins of the high interest in refugee entrepreneurship. While the growing attention may be rooted in the general public discussion circulating around refugees' labour market integration, on the other hand its origin could lie in refugees' possibly higher level of start-up activity and/ or possibly higher propensity to set up a business (David & Coenen, 2017; Betts et al., 2017).

To shed light on the initial source and better understand the phenomenon, our study asks:

Do different migrant cohorts (refugees and economic migrants) in Poland of the same (Ukrainian) origin are more likely to show a propensity to business formation?

To give initial answers, we have collected data from 229 (pre-war) Ukrainian economic migrants who moved to Poland before the Russian invasion and contrasted them with the 228 Ukrainian war refugees (conducted April to May 2022).

Our findings draw first trends on differences in entrepreneurial behaviour of the analysed cohorts of Ukrainians in Poland. In so doing, we contribute to the existing knowledge of the concept of refugee vs migrant entrepreneurship and may also help policy and practitioners to gain better understanding.

We have developed recommendations to adequately support minority entrepreneurs depending on the nature of their migration process (forced or voluntary migration). Policy and practice support for these groups of entrepreneurs is particularly needed in the less experienced immigration countries such as Poland. The research can support the development of services and activities to sustain refugee and migrant entrepreneurs into entrepreneurial ecosystems and incubators (Bolzani & Mizzau, 2019; Terstriep & David, 2022).

## **Advanced paper – Investigation of common success factors for refugee entrepreneurs in Türkiye**

**Meryemhan Gül** (Central Bank of Ireland) , **Isilay Talay** (Trinity College Dublin), **André van Stel** (Trinity College Dublin & Kozminski University) & **Orkun Bayram** (Antalya Bilim University)

Today, Türkiye is a host country of more than 3.8 million refugees, from countries including but not limited to Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Pakistan, etc. Refugee entrepreneurs have the potential of making significant contributions to the host country's economy and society. Therefore, it is highly desirable to increase awareness of the conditions and characteristics of refugees leading to successful entrepreneurship activities. For this purpose, we aim to provide scientific evidence to answer the research question "What are the common success factors for refugee entrepreneurs in Türkiye?"

The chosen data collection method is one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted between June-Sep 2022 with refugee entrepreneurs who have settled in Türkiye (Central Anatolia region). The respondents have been living in Türkiye for nearly a decade and are owning enterprises with less than 50 employees with



economic power to employ other people. The 11 respondents included in the research were able to overcome the challenges and adversity they faced and were able to realize the business opportunities they discovered. Thus, we categorize the respondents as opportunity-driven (rather than subsistence) refugee entrepreneurs.

We find that preparedness for innovation, proactiveness, self-reliance, and optimistic attitude to be the common factors among these successful opportunity-driven entrepreneurs. The respondents had a strong awareness for the value proposition, demand, and market gap for the business opportunity they wanted to pursue, and they conducted elaborate research and thought process before engaging in the entrepreneurship activity. Moreover, after initiation, they continuously worked to enhance their business network and relationships to scale their businesses, which resulted in them increasing the trade volume in the export channels from Türkiye to regions such as Arabian Peninsula. Hence, they provided added value to Türkiye's economy. Finally, they adopted a self-reliant and optimistic attitude. They focused on overcoming the common refugee perception in Turkish society by assuming the full responsibility of their business from all aspects; and they commonly adopted a strong optimistic predisposition about Türkiye's economic situation. Before coming to Türkiye, they mostly worked in hostile business environments with minimum enforcement of laws and regulations, and hence they were mostly satisfied with the governance and structured regulations for the business environment in Türkiye. They believed the effects of current fluctuations in Turkish economy can be shouldered.

We believe this study provides insights into exogenous and endogenous factors contributing to the success of refugee entrepreneurs. With the exacerbation of global geopolitical tensions, the refugee influx to other countries in the world will keep increasing; and success of refugee entrepreneurs is expected to gain more and more prominence.

## **PAPER PRESENTATION – PARALLEL SESSION #4 “MICRO-MACRO RELATIONSHIPS”**

Chair: **Rosana Reis** (Institut Supérieur de Gestion Business School)

### **Advanced paper – Immigrant-founded firms' entrepreneurial orientation and performance: The moderating role of founders' acculturation process**

**Erika Branca** (Ghent University & University of Antwerp), **Petra Andries**, Ghent University & **Silvio Bianchi Martini** (University of Pisa)

#### **Motivations and Background**

Immigrants play a disproportionate role in entrepreneurship: in the United States, they constitute about 27% of entrepreneurs, despite being only 15% of the workforce. A similar trend is noted in the EU (OECD, 2019). While the increasing presence of immigrant entrepreneurs has been widely discussed (Pekkala Kerr & Kerr, 2020; Ulceluse & Kahanec, 2018), insights regarding differences between immigrant and native founders and the implications of these differences for firms are scarce (Dabić et al., 2020), even if it is widely recognized that founders' characteristics matter for firm strategy and performance (Lumpkin & Erdogan, 2004).

The present study addresses the implications of founders'(non-)migration background for firms' strategy and performance. Building on Strategic Leadership Theory (SLT; e.g., Cannella et al., 2008), we propose that immigrant-founded firms have a higher Entrepreneurial Orientation (i.e., use a more innovative, proactive, and risk-taking strategy; Armstrong & Hird, 2009; Carland & Carland, 1992) and therefore perform better than native-founded firms. Integrating insights on acculturation (Berry, 1997), we further argue that this relationship is moderated by three key aspects of the acculturation process of the immigrant-entrepreneur, namely his/her (1) acculturation orientations, (2) sociocultural adaptation, and (3) psychological adaptation.

## **Methods**

This study uses data on entrepreneurs and their start-ups in Italy. Analysing start-ups allows for studying the early stage of the entrepreneurial path when the influence of entrepreneurial characteristics on EO is more pronounced (Bryant, 2014a; Nelson, 2003). Information was collected via an online survey and complemented with secondary data. In total, we contacted 742 entrepreneurs, with a response rate of 20%.

After removing observations with missing values, we obtained a sample of 151 complete responses (consisting of 48 immigrant-owned and 103 native-owned firms). To compare immigrants with native-owned firms, we employed the pair-matched technique (eg. Chaganti et al., 1985). The final matched sample is composed of 90 matched-pair firms: we were able to match 45 (out of 48) immigrant-owned firms with their respective 45 (out of 103) best-fitting native-owned firms. We matched on entrepreneurs' age, gender and level of education.

Hypotheses were tested employing OLS regression. As perceived discrimination in the host country is known to be pivotal in adaptation (elBouk et al., 2022; Poblete, 2018), it is included as a control variable in our analyses, along with perceived cultural distance. Robustness tests with time lags and follow-up survey data were performed.

We find that immigrant-founded firms indeed have a higher Proactiveness than native-founded firms. We further observe that the positive relationship between founder (non-)migration background and firm EO is weaker in case of acculturation towards the home country and stronger in case of effective psychological adaptation.

## **Contributions**

Present work aims to contribute to Strategic Management and Immigrant Entrepreneurship literature by explaining how an entrepreneur's life experience, such as migration, is able to impact his/her firm's EO. Results referring to acculturation towards the home country show how poor appreciation and emotional attachment to the host environment not only led to the risk of immigrant entrepreneur's marginalisation but also to a lower level of EO. This insight could be interesting for policymakers who may design effective policies, in the home and host country, tailored to stimulate the attachment toward the host country and community. Also, demonstrating how psychological adaptation is related to EO highlights the crucial

role of well-being, mental health and satisfaction with life, in relationship with firm strategy.

## **Advanced paper - How does foreignness influence the resource orchestration process? A study of migrant entrepreneurs**

**Veselina Stoyanova** (University of Birmingham) & **Stoyan Stoyanov** (University of Bath)

Migrant entrepreneurs often encounter difficulties in host countries due to their "liabilities of foreignness" (LoF). While increased openness in the host context is believed to reduce these challenges, the process of turning liabilities into "assets of foreignness" remains unclear. This study explores the role of "resource orchestration" (RO) in this process, which refers to how migrant entrepreneurs structure, combine, and use their resources. Zooming into the process of resource orchestration (RO) offers a timelier explanation of why resource performance differences exist even in cases where migrant entrepreneurs as orchestrators possess similar or identical resource bundles and capabilities.

This study utilizes a qualitative, interpretative case-based research approach based on 23 entrepreneurial organizations based in Brazil that were founded and operated by American and British migrants. These organizations were located in Sao Paulo, which has a large population of self-employed foreign-born individuals. The businesses we studied had all successfully established connections in Brazil and were represented by the migrant entrepreneurs we interviewed. A total of 38 interviews were conducted, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, and focused on the founder of the entrepreneurial organization. This research focused on high-knowledge domains, which is distinct from earlier studies that have mainly examined migrant entrepreneurial operations in low- to medium-knowledge domains. By studying these higher-knowledge domains, the researchers aim to improve our understanding of migrant entrepreneurs' operations in the knowledge-based and consulting sectors.

Our findings show that when MEs interpret foreignness as an asset, they are more likely to engage in less combinatorial, and generally shorter, RO process paths. This reflects

their confidence in the value and the applicability of their home-country assets. As a result, such actors configure the RO process differently than actors who perceive their foreignness as an asset. MEs who regard their foreignness as a liability, pursue more combinatorial and more elaborate resource orchestration process paths. Their initiated orchestration dynamics reflect the perceived need for learning more about the host-country's unique market characteristics and coordinating their knowledge repositories more closely to the new environment.

This research study contributes to the RO theory by explaining how the orchestrators' perception of foreignness influence and lead to changes in the orchestration process. We propose a model that explains the variance in the configuration of RO stemming from how MEs regard their foreignness. We show how the variance in perception of foreignness leads to different groupings of RO processes in different temporal sequences. By doing so, we add to scholarly calls for developing a more robust perspective of resource orchestration by extending it to consider variance in firms, particularly in how MEs perceive their foreignness. We argue that perceiving foreignness as an asset or a liability influences how MEs orchestrate resources abroad.

## **Advanced paper - Migrant firms and the host economy: isolation or integration? New evidence for Italy**

**Alessandro Arrighetti** (University of Parma), **Andrea Lasagni** (University of Parma), **Giovanni Foresti** (Intesa Sanpaolo - Direzione Studi e Ricerche), **Serena Fumagalli** (Intesa Sanpaolo - Direzione Studi e Ricerche) & **Sara Giusti** (Intesa Sanpaolo - Direzione Studi e Ricerche)

The degree of economic integration of the migrant-owned businesses with the indigenous productive system is a topic of great relevance for the understanding migrant entrepreneurship in itself as well as for assessing the implications on the innovativeness and development of the production system in which migrant businesses operate (Jones, Ram and Villares-Varela, 2019). There are two theoretical models substantially in conflict with each other: i) the enclave model, that prescribes a minimum economic integration with the host economy; and ii) the breaking-out

model (or crossing the ethnic boundaries) which, instead, prescribes a very high level of integration with the host economy. The aim of our work is to verify the prevalence of a migrant business model strongly 'integrated' with the native economy (breaking out) vs. a business model based on 'segregated' economic relations within the co-ethnic community (enclave).

This study is based on a large database of migrant enterprises: the ISID (Intesa Sanpaolo Integrated Database). The ISID is a very large archive with financial information on partnerships and joint-stock Italian companies, and with information about all members of the board of directors. Using the ISID sample of migrant enterprises, we focus on the commercial relations (payments/receipts) of migrant enterprises with their suppliers and customers. We are able to distinguish between transactions with migrant-owned partners (suppliers or customers) from those with native-owned ones. The transactions examined can be considered an appropriate proxy for evaluating the degree of economic and social integration existing between firms managed by immigrant entrepreneurs and firms owned by Italian entrepreneurs. We have transaction data for a sample of more than 1,200 migrant enterprises active in the manufacturing sector. All transactions (payments/receipts) included in the dataset are concerning suppliers and customers active in all business sectors.

Our results may be summarized as follows. First, for immigrant-owned firms of the Italian manufacturing industry the prevalent model is certainly the breaking-out one. Indeed, the overall share of transactions carried out with other migrant businesses by migrant enterprises included in our sample is very small (less than 10%); this result does not depend on the specific manufacturing industry (Pavitt classification). Second, after having identified the set of migrant firms corresponding to the enclave model (those with the percentage of transactions with migrant-owned partners greater than half of the total transactions), we found that this typology accounts for a very small proportion of the total amount of migrant enterprises in our sample (less than 3%). Finally, using an ANOVA analysis, we investigate similarities and differences between enclave model firms and breaking-out model ones. Our results show that: i) the group of breaking-out firms is associated with high geographical dispersion; ii) the group of enclave firms is localized in places where the density of migrant firms (of

all sectors) is relatively elevated; iii) the transactions carried out by the enclave firms are concentrated in the same industries to which enclave firms belong; iv) the difference in the age of the firm between the enclave group and that of the breaking-out one is not significant.

## **Advanced paper – Are migrant social entrepreneurs different? Case studies of work integration social enterprises in the UK**

**Eleni Chiarapini** (Alliance Manchester Business School), **Asmund Rygh** (Alliance Manchester Business School), **Xia Han** (Alliance Manchester Business School) & **Johannes Kleinhempel** (Copenhagen Business School)

Migration is a challenging phenomenon for many countries around the world, in 2020, there were 281 million international migrants worldwide (United Nations, 2020), and 84.2 million people were forcibly displaced (United Nations, 2021). The salience of migration and the refugees crisis has been made clear by the inclusion of specific goals and targets addressing migrants and refugees in the SDGs (McGregor, 2020; Piper, 2017) and migration has been called as one of the next big questions to address by the IB scholarship (Buckley, Doh, & Benischke, 2017).

The literature addressing migrant entrepreneurship has mostly focused on profit-oriented ventures, while pro-social ventures have been overlooked. Scholars investigating migrant entrepreneurship have provided evidences on the economic contribution of migrant entrepreneurship to societies (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015; Kerr & Kerr, 2020), however, their social contribution has yet to be analysed. Social entrepreneurship has the potential to tackle numerous societal problems (OECD, 2021), limited research has been carried out on foreign-born individuals establishing social enterprises in the destination country. Migrants are participating in social entrepreneurship as a result of migrants initiatives (Greenhalgh, 2015) as well as public policy initiatives (Froy & Pyne, 2011; Naimi, Hehenberger, & Clewett, 2020), and are addressing societal issues by implementing social innovation in both, the home and host country (Bolzani, Marabello, & Honig, 2020).

We investigate work integration migrant and native pro-social ventures helping migrants in the UK. Migrants are active change makers who are participating to social changes and not passive “issues” to be resolved (Naimi et al., 2020). We aim to provide a better understanding of migrants’ social contributions in the UK. As the institutional environment will be held constant, the similarities and differences between the pro-social ventures can be attributed to the firm and its stakeholders.

The work integration social enterprises targeting migrants’ and refugees has been selected due to their relevance in the academic literature; as there is no theory or model for the integration of refugees (Castles, 2002), a conceptual framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) identified ten domain for integration. Employment was identified as the first domain, and it has emerged to have a positive impact on long-term social integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).

We carried out an exploratory qualitative multiple case study to address the following research questions: (1) What are the motivations for migrants to engage in social entrepreneurship, and how do they differ from those of natives? (2) How do migrant and native social enterprises develop/ attract resources? (3) What challenges do migrants face when establishing a social enterprise? How are these challenges overcome?

The case study uses primary data collected through 25 semi-structured interviews with firms’ managers and stakeholders of work integration social enterprises in the UK.

We contribute to the analysis of migrant and native social enterprises by understanding the motivations, similarities, differences, and limitations faced by migrants’ social entrepreneurs. We contribute to the literature on social entrepreneurship and migrant entrepreneurship by developing a study aimed to help policymakers to create tailored policies to help migrants contribute to society through social entrepreneurship.

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## **Advanced paper - Pathways towards emancipation: Identity work and social entrepreneurship by and for migrant communities**

**Asma Naimi** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), **Lisa Hehenberger** (Ramon Lull University, ESADE Business School), **Sophie Bacq** (Northeastern University, D'Amore-Kim School of Business) & **Jill Kickul** (University of Southern California, Marshall School of Business)

Social entrepreneurs from migrant communities are often front and center to address the societal challenges that they and their community members experience. For example, Hamdi Ulukaya, a Kurdish immigrant from Turkey based in the United States, started The Tent Partnership for Refugees, an organization that has successfully mobilized the private sector to improve the livelihoods of refugees worldwide by integrating them into local workforces (Tent, 2019). The beneficial outcomes achieved by initiatives like Ulukaya's demonstrate important promises for our understanding of entrepreneurship as a source for social change. Therefore, in this study, we aim to answer: How do social entrepreneurs from migrant communities address the social challenges their communities face? In this inductive study, we find that their multiplicity of identities (i.e., role and social identity) shape their entrepreneurial actions and play a vital role in their emancipation. We identified two key mechanisms: (1) identity work as resisting, by (i) positivizing their social identity and (ii) accentuating their role identity; and (2) entrepreneurial actions as empowering, by (i) taking ownership of their marginalized position and (ii) including the target group in solutions.

This study makes two notable contributions to the entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship literatures. First, we provide insight into the emancipatory pathways taken by migrant social entrepreneurs to address marginalization inside and outside their communities, expounding on how they emancipate the self and other in the process. This duality between inside and outside, and self and other, provides new insight into entrepreneurship as emancipation (e.g., Chandra, 2017). Second, we reveal the interplay between migrant social entrepreneurs' role identity as founders of social ventures and salient social identity as members of a marginalized group and identification with users of the solutions they develop, showing how and under which

circumstances identity work can become a vital part of the emancipatory entrepreneurial process. These findings build on entrepreneurship research on identity (e.g., Essers and Benschop, 2007), adding to scholars' understanding of the heterogeneity of social entrepreneurial approaches (e.g., Wry and York, 2017). Finally, our study also has important practical implications for those who seek to serve migrant communities by warranting the participation of social entrepreneurs from those communities in the development of policies and solutions, drawing on their domain-specific knowledge and experiences to best shape social change.

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## **PAPER PRESENTATION - PARALLEL SESSION #5 "TRANSNATIONALISM AND RETURN"**

Chair: **Vittoria Scalera** (Amsterdam Business School, University of Amsterdam)

### **Paper idea - Migrant entrepreneurs and global production networks; concepts and policy implications**

**Robert Kloosterman** (University of Amsterdam)

Processes of globalization have deepened and extended all kinds of ties. Economic (supply chains), financial (capital flows), social (cross-border migration and diaspora populations), and cultural (e.g. consumer taste) linkages have become much more widespread after 1990. These processes are not unidirectional and also selective. Certain products, places, groups, and cultural practices have displayed much more pronounced trajectories of globalization than others. Notwithstanding the huge differences in these processes, one can safely say that migrant entrepreneurs are very much part of them not just in the sense that they physically embody cross-border movement, but they are often also actors in initiating and maintaining economic, financial and socio-cultural ties between their place of origin, their place of settlement, and, increasingly, their diasporas.

This contribution will focus on: i) the analytical aspects of their pivotal role in processes of globalization ; and ii) the potential policy implications of the role of migrant entrepreneurs in the establishment of cross-border ties. The point of departure will be the mixed embeddedness perspective which highlights the interaction between the individual entrepreneur and the opportunity structure and broader societal context. To be able to better grasp the global dimension of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship, I will use components of the global production network approach developed by Neil Coe and Henry Yeung and explore how this can contribute to a better understanding. This foundation, then, will inform a brief analysis of the possible policy implications of the increasing role of migrant entrepreneurs in cross-border networks.

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## Paper idea - Pivoting business ideas in the context of migrant returnee entrepreneurship

**Daniela Bolzani** (Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna)

While many definitions exist of what is a pivot for new entrepreneurial firms, a recent review of the literature has suggested to view pivots as strategic decisions made after a failure – or the identification of a potential failure – of one or more elements of the current business model potentially threatening the start-up’s resource base (Chaparro & de Vasconcelos Gomes, 2021).

Pivoting is a term used in the entrepreneurship literature to examine changes brought by entrepreneurs acting in highly uncertain conditions, in particular because entrepreneurs have no prior historical performance, prior entrepreneurial and industry experience, or lack a suitable industry peer group (Kirtley & O'Mahony, 2019). Entrepreneurs in start-ups are often forced to make sense of what they do and about their future opportunities based on thin or ambiguous data, thus learning from several sources while “doing” strategy (Ott et al., 2017; Leatherbee & Katila, 2017).

While many firms are “born global” or international since inception (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005), to date the nuances of pivoting in the domain of internationalization has not been tackled for entrepreneurial firms. I believe that this is an important yet neglected area of research, given the high uncertainty and distance linked to the national, cultural, geographic or semantic “unknowns”, which generate liabilities commonly discussed in international business and entrepreneurship research (Stahl et al., 2016). In this paper, I thus tackle the following research question: what factors trigger a pivot for entrepreneurs establishing a business across the borders?

Based on prior research, pivoting in nascent new ventures is strongly dependent on founders (Snihur & Clarysse, 2022). Individual differences, biases, and how entrepreneurs frame information and uncertainty are therefore key in determining decision-making in terms of business model changes by entrepreneurs (e.g., Grimes, 2018; Wood et al., 2019). Therefore, it should be expected that only a portion of entrepreneurs will respond to new information about potential failures or opportunities in developing their nascent venture (Kirtley & O'Mahoney, 2019).

In this paper, I study such patterns in the context of new venture creation activities undertaken by migrants returning to their homelands from abroad<sup>12</sup> (for recent reviews, see Bolzani, 2021; Gruenhagen et al., 2020) through “return and reintegration” policies. Offered by supranational authorities, such as the European Union or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Ghosh, 2000), or by national governments (Haase & Honerath, 2016), such policies provide returnees with a budget that can be allocated to setting up a business in their country of origin.

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<sup>12</sup> This paper addresses international migration occurring between countries of the global South and North. Therefore, return migrants are defined herein as returning to home countries in the global South.

Specifically, I explore a unique dataset of 93 African and Latin American return migrants supported by an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) project in Italy<sup>13</sup>, sponsored by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund 2014–2020 during the period 2016–2018.

The data allow me to follow longitudinally any change in the business plan of these micro-entrepreneurs over 6 months since return to the home country. I thus analyze these configurations and their association with pivoting via Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), which is a configurational, case-oriented, method (Ragin, 1987; 2008). The preliminary findings suggest that both individual experiences in terms of migration history (length of time out of the home country and recent returns) and policy assistance (support to business plan received in Italy and in the home country) configure different patterns of entrepreneurial pivoting for Latin American and African returnees.

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<sup>13</sup> The name of the project is not disclosed to ensure full anonymity of the reported data.

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## **Advanced paper - My business or my country: the role of concurrent embeddedness in host country and home country on the performance of immigrant entrepreneurs' business**

**Qiong Wu** (IE Business School) & **Julio De Castro** (IE Business School)

Immigrant entrepreneurship has received significant attention in the academic literature, with a focus on the success factors related to host countries. However, little research has examined the role of home country embeddedness in determining the performance of immigrant entrepreneurs. The present study is thus driven by the



following research questions: How does the concurrent mixed embeddedness in host and home countries determine the business success of immigrant entrepreneurs? How do the trade-offs between family and business that immigrant entrepreneurs face affect business performance?

This paper uses an embeddedness theory approach to examine how transnational social and institutional contexts in both the home country and host country affect the success of immigrant entrepreneurs. In addition, we investigate the role that fear of failure plays in this relationship. We test our theoretical model based on surveys from 267 immigrant entrepreneurs in four different countries - Spain, France, the UK, and Italy. The results largely support our hypotheses and further indicate that home country embeddedness is an “invisible obstacle” for immigrant entrepreneurs. As a result, immigrant entrepreneurs should utilize their limited resources prudently in order to navigate these multifaceted challenges. Our study contributes to a better understanding of the complex elements in home and host country contexts and their influence on immigrant entrepreneurship, specifically their resource decisions. Our findings also have important policy implications for both home countries and host countries.

## **Advanced paper - Return migration and entrepreneurship: longitudinal evidence from Poland**

**Anke Lasek** (Cracow University of Economics), **Jan Brzozowski** (Jagiellonian University) & **Nicola Coniglio** (University of Bari Aldo Moro)

The literature on development impact of international migration for the home countries stresses the importance of return migrant entrepreneurship. As international migration and return migration are selective processes, the returnees are expected to be more risk-taking, creative and willing to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities than the non-moving individuals. Consequently, return migrants and return entrepreneurs in particular are often perceived as the key agents of change in their home countries,

as they can positively and significantly influence socio-economic development (Wahba, 2014).

Moreover, as most of migration flows still occur between developing/emerging and developed economies, the returnees should be able to capitalize on the experience accumulated abroad, including transfers of high-tech, managerial models and business ideas. Additionally, they should take advantage of social, cultural and most important – financial capital – accumulated during stay in a foreign country. The literature also stresses the importance of transnational ties & networks: return entrepreneurs can be more innovative than natives, leveraging on business contacts with foreign business partners who were forged during immigration (Sinatti, 2022).

Indeed, the empirical evidence shows that in most cases returnees are much more entrepreneurial than natives. This is the case of Egyptian (McCormick & Wahba, 2001; Wahba & Zenou, 2012) or Albanian returnees (Piracha & Valdean, 2010). Further analyses demonstrate that actually the experience and skills gathered abroad play a decisive role in entrepreneurial choice by returnees (Black & Castaldo, 2009; Hamdouch & Wahba, 2015). Yet, some authors cast doubts on importance of return entrepreneurship for development of home economy, by claiming that returnees are not more productive than non-migrants (Gibson & McKenzie, 2012). Also returnees must not be always in advantageous position towards non-movers, as they might experience depreciation of social capital at home, which negatively impacts on a possibility to start a business (Naudé et al., 2017). This heterogeneous results about the entrepreneurial propensity of return migrants can be mostly explained by data scarcity: most of the studies have to rely on cross-sectional studies, and the dynamic analysis of the entrepreneurial performance in such case was not possible. The only exception in this regard is the study of Marchetta (2012), where the author is able to compare survival rates of return migrants in Egypt based on two rounds of ELMPS survey in 1998 and 2006. Based on this 2-period analysis Marchetta finds that migration experience substantially enhances the survival rate of entrepreneurial activity of an individual (Marchetta, 2012).

In our paper, we contribute to the literature on return entrepreneurship in several aspects. First, contrasting to most of the studies who include North-South or developed – developing country movements, we include Polish economy, which has

experienced a substantial outflow of emigrants mostly to the Western EU member states after 2004 (i.e. entry of Poland into the EU). Yet, according to the estimates between 40 and 50% of the post-accession migrants from Poland have returned to home country (Anacka & Fihel, 2016). Consequently, return migration to Poland after 2004 constitute an important return flow between developed destinations and developed origin country, a case which so far has been investigated only to a limited extent, with exception of Romanian return entrepreneurs (Croitoru, 2020). Second, taking the advantage of Social Diagnosis study, we are able to exploit a broader set of dimensions of return entrepreneurship than in previous studies, ranging from mere self-employment, entrepreneurial status, opening a business up to investment activities. Third, and most important, we take the advantage of the longitudinal dimension of the dataset: Social Diagnosis study (Czapinski and Panek, 2015) enables to analyze the economic performance (including entrepreneurial activity) of return migrants and non-movers for five consecutive waves (for these five waves (2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015) and over a 9-year period.

Our results indicate that the impact of return migration on entrepreneurship in Polish case is at best modest. Returnees are more likely to be self-employed: this effect is strong and significant 2, 4 and even 6 years upon return. The probability of opening a business is also higher for a recent returnee. Yet, the entrepreneurial status (i.e. individual who runs a firm and employs other people) is not correlated with migration experience, nor are the investment activities. Moreover, the survival rates for entrepreneurship status do not differ between return migrants and non-movers, but actually the precise risk of a business failure (risk of losing a lot of money through business activity) is significantly higher for individuals with migration experience. When it comes to economic performance of individuals, return migrants exhibit higher incomes than non-movers, but the entrepreneurial status is completely irrelevant in this aspect: there is no difference between return entrepreneurs' income and the income of returnees who are in waged employment.

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## **Advanced paper – Returned migrants and remittances for development of family entrepreneurship in Kosovo: Findings based upon a qualitative interview**

**Valdet Hadri** (Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt), **Dieter Bögenhold** (Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt), **Daniela Bolzani** (Alma Mater Studiorum–University of Bologna)

### **Motivation and Background**

Kosovo is a country with a significant incidence of immigration. For nations that send a lot of labour, return migration has the ability to be a major driver of economic growth. For the past few years, concepts related to returned immigrants and family entrepreneurship have been introduced and discussed in various texts of policy and entrepreneurship science literature. To date, however, the debate has been primarily exploratory and theoretical in character. It should be highlighted the relevance of return migrants and impact on home/host countries in order to attract and facilitate return migration policies in the context of family entrepreneurship. Return policies also don't have a structured review process, which makes determining their efficacy challenging. Nonetheless, having a return policy sends a message to emigrants that they are welcome to come back. While enhancing ties to the diaspora and utilizing its developmental potential, better integrating diaspora and return migration policies can ease return and re-integration.

The article will explore the context of returned migrants and remittances within the family entrepreneurship experience, exploring their family ties and reasons for remitting and investing specifically at family enterprises.

### **Method**

The study employs qualitative methodology, with the selection criteria consisting of returned migrants, return migrants who have created family businesses, and those who have relatives or family members residing overseas. Thematic coding, also known as thematic analysis, will be used to look at word meaning and sentence construction in order to discover literary topics. Twenty interviews have been conducted, with the goal of completing data analysis and composing the first draft by the end of April.

## **Potential contribution**

The article aims to reflect on future directions with respect to both further research and professional action. We contribute to filling this gap through developing a framework of how institutions can create a range of constraints and opportunities for return migrants on developing family entrepreneurship. Furthermore, by demonstrating how governments could assist returned migrant entrepreneurs financially by offering special financing rates and subsidies, tax exemptions for start-ups, lowering land costs for their family businesses, and providing free operations guidance.

## **PAPER PRESENTATION – PARALLEL SESSION #6 “POLICIES AND SUPPORTS”**

Chair: **Monder Ram** (Aston Business School)

### **Paper idea – Thailand's smart S Visa policy: its compatibility with migrant entrepreneurship**

**Shekh Mohammad Altafur Rahman** (Thammasat University)

#### **Background**

Thailand, a middle-income Southeast Asian country, is a major destination for migrants in ASEAN. The migrants were responsible for 4.3 – 6.6 percent of Thailand's GDP in 2010 (ILO/OECD, 2017). International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates the number of migrants in Thailand is about 5 million (IOM, 2020), which is about 7.6% of its population. However, as of August 2022, there were 2,167,937 registered migrant workers in Thailand (Ministry of Labour, Thailand, 2022), and the rest are irregular migrants. The conditions of migrants in Thailand are challenging. High costs, long waiting times, poor working conditions, exploitation, human smuggling and trafficking, transnational crime, and bureaucratic red tape discourage many from entering to work in Thailand through legal routes.

To deal with such a situation Thailand has taken innovative and practical approaches. Among them initiating various Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with its neighbors, taking anti-trafficking programs, and enhancing legal and policy measures are notable. During 2016–18, Thailand developed a more comprehensive legal framework, including the adoption of the Royal Ordinance Concerning the Management of Employment of Migrants. After COVID-19, the Thai cabinet approved on 5 July 2022, a resolution on the “Management of migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam for Thailand’s restoration.” Very recently Thai government has shown its’ willingness to bring in high-skill migrants as well as those who can invest substantively. For that, the visa regime has created a new channel.

The government wants to attract technology-based startups so they have this program where one can have a newly introduced SMART S visa. The SMART S is for entrepreneurs who want to work on innovative technology. In light of the visa provisions, the government has officially published a new law allowing foreigners to work or invest in 18 types of companies. But, it requires a 600,000-bath bank deposit, health insurance, and a company. There are doubts among the concerned sections about the success of the SMART S visa program. The limited number of applications for the SMART S card is due to the cumbersome requirements of papers, the condition of having local partners in forming a company, lack of state support, and other competitive policies in the region.

### **Methods**

To understand the conditionalities of the success of the SMART S visa, the paper asks two essential questions. First, how does the SMART S visa allow extended provisions of migrant entrepreneurship in Thailand, and second, how to mitigate the challenges to the success of the SMART S visa policy? To answer this, a legal-policy analysis was conducted by using existing secondary data from both print and web materials.

### **Potential Contribution**

This research has the potential to allow new discussion to improve the provisions of the SMART S visa. The migrant and development organizations and academicians will be benefited from the research.



## **Paper idea - Mind the gaps: a holistic review of the graduate entrepreneur visa scheme from the perspective of a university-based business incubator**

**Wendy Wu** (Edinburgh Napier University Enterprise Hub) & **Jason Ran** (Edinburgh Napier University)

### **Motivation and Background**

The UK Government's Graduate Entrepreneur visa scheme was designed to retain talented international students with innovative business ideas in the UK for two years after graduation to develop their businesses. However, the scheme's effectiveness, reasons for its transition to the Tier 1 entrepreneur Visa, and how to support immigrant graduate entrepreneurs in the British mainstream eco-system remain unclear. This research aims to address these gaps by examining the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Scotland from the perspective of university-based business incubators that implemented the scheme.

### **Methods**

This study adopts a qualitative strategy, including interviews, policy documents, focus groups, and reflective notes from the database. Thematic analysis will be used to cluster the knowledge pattern and irregularities. The study applies the 'Personal experience method' (Clandinin and Connelly, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) triangulated with content analysis in extant literature with a view to the conceptual framework to enable further data gathering in the field. The researchers will use an insider-out and outsider-in approach to analyse the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Scotland and identify enablers and inhibitors of international entrepreneurship development. The study evaluates the adequacy of the service and provisional, policy, and practice gaps in developing international entrepreneurs and their businesses. The researcher proposes a new policy framework for embeddedness that considers cultural, physiological, emotional, social, and political perspectives into an integrated framework.

## **Potential Contributions**

This study identifies multifaceted gaps in service provisions that address the transnational embeddedness of the potential of international entrepreneurs. It advances the inclusiveness and diversity of policy literature, entrepreneurial education theories, and pedagogy, explicitly relating to the entrepreneurship university agenda. This research serves as a model for evaluating and improving similar programs worldwide. The study's results benefit support services, activities, and university curriculum development by providing suggestive indicators on training trainers, business advisers, and educators. This research contributes to the broader discussion of international entrepreneurship development in Scotland and beyond by addressing the gaps in knowledge and policy surrounding the Graduate Entrepreneur visa scheme.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of implementing schemes that support international entrepreneurs and emphasises the need for policymakers to consider the holistic nature of entrepreneurship ecosystems when designing and implementing such programs. This study contributes to the broader discussion of international entrepreneurship development in Scotland and beyond by addressing the gaps in knowledge and policy surrounding the Graduate Entrepreneur visa scheme. The proposed policy framework for embeddedness provides a new perspective on developing international entrepreneurs and their businesses.

## **Advanced paper – Attracting new entrepreneurs: Migration policy responses for entrepreneurship and preferred migrants**

**Maria Elo** (University of Southern Denmark)

International migration policies are largely built on a rather utilitarian approach that focuses on country level functions of markets and societies. These policies address both resources that are relevant for labour markets and for the private sector entrepreneurial activity. Hence, they are vital in shaping economies suggesting that

decisionmakers need to gain a more interconnected understanding of these dynamics generated by migration (Hawthorne, 2005; Barnard, Deeds, Mudambi & Vaaler, 2019). The increasing global competition for talent has pushed countries to compete for wider range of migrants, specifically for migrants who are starting up new ventures. Previously, policies typically focused more on firm and country-level investments (e.g. Graham & Krugman, 1991; UNCTAD, 2022) and investor visas (see “Golden visas” in Elo, 2021), but now new approaches bringing entrepreneurial activity into the host country are developed (e.g. Sternberg et al., 2023). Despite global policy recommendations for inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, there is in-existent research addressing the how destination countries envision the candidates in their policy programs or practice policy (Zhan, Bolwijn & Farinelli, 2018). Who do these policies target? This paper compares five OECD countries and their policy responses. The analysis indicates that although the new focus is more inclusive, it still relies notably on capitals that mainly privileged highly-skilled migrants bring with them when they migrate (Aman et al., 2020). In these five countries there are no start-up visa options that would allow any entrepreneurial venturing “from below” or a shift of status during the migratory pathways. The policies illustrate exclusionist approaches and practices (Joppke, 2007). This points out the need to rethink how the sustainable development goals are implemented in a way that captures more holistically the economic participation and development potential of less privileged migrants (cf. OECD, 2010).

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## **Paper idea - Do financial institutions discriminate against minority entrepreneurs?**

**Lilith Burgstaller** (University of Freiburg), **Bettina Müller** (Department of Industrial Economics and International Management, Centre for European Economic Research), **Ebru Sarikaya** (University of Mannheim) & **Christoph Sajons** (University of Mannheim)

Migrant entrepreneurs play an important role for the host economies. They contribute significantly to employment in OECD countries (Mestres 2010), are equally innovative as their domestic counterparts (Brixey et al. 2013) and are increasingly involved in knowledge-intensive services.

Despite this large significance in economic and social terms, a large fraction of migrant entrepreneurs fails right at the start due to a lack of funding (Metzger 2022), and this obstacle is particularly significant for individuals from minority groups. As previous analyses from the US and Italy show, banks tend to differentiate between minority and non-minority applicants in their lending strategy, with minority applicants having significantly worse access to capital and paying higher interest rates (Alesina et al. 2013, Fairlie et al. 2020). In spite of the relevance of this topic, there is hardly any robust empirical analysis of bank lending to entrepreneurs in existing research. More specifically, we conducted a systematic review of the literature on discrimination in lending and reveal two large gaps in this context: (1) We could not find any experimental study on bank lending in general. And (2), there seems to be no experimental study on entrepreneurs in particular and their interaction with banks.

In our study, we want to fill this gap by conducting experiments aimed at two important stages of bank lending to entrepreneurs: First we examine the first contact between an aspiring entrepreneur and a bank by means of a field experiment. That is, we send out emails to banks in Germany and ask them for conditions for a business account and a business loan. Doing so, we randomly vary the senders' name and email accounts between typical German or foreign names. We then record the (non-)responses and examine whether there are systematic differences in response rate, response time, and informational content between enquiries sent from email addresses with foreign-sounding names and those sent from German-sounding ones.

Second, we get as close to the bank employees' real decision-making on credit applications as possible without submitting fake credit applications and run a discrete-choice experiment about lending decisions with bankers. In the experiment, we present participants a series of decision situations with two competing hypothetical loan requests at a time and ask them to indicate which of the two has a higher chance to get their approval. The loan requests randomly vary the name of the applicant (migration background and gender) and several key characteristics (sector of the venture, requested credit amount, age, experience, educational degrees, collateral).

The results will indicate which factors play a role in the lending decisions of bankers, and in particular, whether they apply different decision criteria for native and migrant applications. So far, we have done a pretest for study 1 and preparatory work for study 2 by talking to bankers of several banks in Germany and have already obtained the approval of the Ethnics Commission of the University of Mannheim.

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## **Advanced paper - Gap between entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial support - newly arrived immigrants in Sweden**

**Nina Lazarczyk-Bilal** (Luleå University of Technology)

### **Motivation and background**

The paper aims to study the enablers and barriers to start a company in the host country from the perspective of newly arrived immigrants defined as those who came to Sweden within a period between 2012 and 2018. The goal of the study is to explore their perception about starting a company in the host country, taking into consideration their knowledge about entrepreneurial support initiatives.

### **Methods**

It is a qualitative study based on 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with newly arrived immigrants living in Sweden, eleven individuals with refugee experience and one migrant worker with the EU passport who arrived in Sweden to live in a safe country for LGBT+ people. The term individuals with refugee experience (background) emerged from the analysis of the qualitative material encompassing recognised refugees, asylum-seekers, quota refugee and family reunion migrants with refugee background. The group with refugee experience includes six convention refugees, two asylum-seekers, one quota refugee and two family reunion migrants.

## **Contribution**

In terms of theoretical contribution, the concept of career embedding emerged from the analysis, and it is defined as a social phenomenon of getting embedded or re-embedded in the professional career in the host country and relies upon three main components, i.e. long-term employment in a Swedish organisation, social network and Swedish education. In other words, individuals with refugee background stress on the need to obtain a permanent employment in a Swedish organisation, build there a professional social network and complete their formal education in Sweden. These steps are perceived by the newly arrived immigrants as crucial for the formation and further development of their entrepreneurial intention in the host country. These steps are particularly underlined by the immigrants with higher education planning to go beyond a small business. In line with the career embedding phenomenon, the findings point out that it is the opportunity theory which applies to the Swedish context, in which newly arrived immigrants decide to start a company once they see the business opportunity, and not as a response to the unemployment.

Consequently, the phenomenon of career embedding translates into practical contribution as it highlights that newly arrived immigrants see the opportunity to build social networks relevant for their future business activity predominantly by being permanently employed in a Swedish organisation rather than taking part in the entrepreneurial support initiatives. The findings show lack of business accelerator support and lack of start-up capital as significant barriers in developing further the entrepreneurial intention of newly arrived immigrants. In conclusion, the study shows evidence that among newly arrived immigrants there is entrepreneurial potential, which does not meet the adequate entrepreneurial support.

## **Advanced paper – Mentors as identity work Orchestrators: facilitating migrant entrepreneurs' integration abroad**

**Stoyan Stoyanov** (University of Bath) & **Veselina Stoyanova** (University of Birmingham, Business School)

Little is known about how mentoring facilitates migrant entrepreneurs' (MEs') host-country integration. This study generates insight by exploring the role of mentoring in bridging MEs' identity differences. We propose a more nuanced view that accounts for the identity work that takes place during the mentoring process. We highlight the mentors' role in orchestrating (i.e., shaping) mentees' identity work via identity prompts and signals. Besides, we find that mentees' identity is shaped by the cognitive and behavioral responses to the impact of their mentors. Hence, the study presents a dynamic and agentic perspective on migrant entrepreneurship literature, emphasizing the role of the mentor in facilitating MEs' integration abroad.

Exploring qualitative data from 14 mentor-mentee pairs, this study's findings show that on an endogenous level, the mentor-mentee relationship is in essence an identity work process. Hence, treating these relationships as such allows enriching the mentorship field by considering mentors' role in helping mentees navigate available identity boundaries and dynamics. Our findings suggest that MEs' identity work within a mentorship relationship goes through three phases: Exploration: Personal Identity Development, Experimentation: Generating Identity Work Awareness, and Integration: Mobilizing Identity Circulation. We discuss in-depth the occurring dynamics in each of these phases.

This study's contribution is twofold. Firstly, by examining mentorship through a social identity lens, we highlight the agency role of mentors and mentees and respond to calls for in-depth exploration of the interplay between these relational actors and for 'actionability' within mentorship research. We emphasize the role of the mentor as an identity orchestrator, and that of the mentee as an identity worker. Furthermore, examining mentorship through a social identity perspective illuminates the mechanisms by which migrant entrepreneurs categorize and evaluate social norms for establishing their path to integration in the host country.



We propose a model that illustrates the mechanisms underlying the endogenous dimensions of the mentoring process, resulting in migrant entrepreneurs' integration in the host country, characterized by their ability to actively read and circulate identity signals across identity groups.

Secondly, our study contributes to the identity work literature by highlighting the role of the mentor as an identity orchestrator, an actor who can initiate the mentee's identity work process through identity prompts and cues. The mentor becomes an enabler of the inter-group comparison that the mentee experiences. Over time, this enables the mentee to engage in the active circulation of identity signals across identity groups, thus developing their own identity work capabilities that support their positioning in the host-country business environment. The MEs' ability to engage in identity work can result in complementary activities such as brokerage and organization development. Viewing mentor-mentee relationships through social identity work lenses allows for enriching the mentorship field by considering the presence of identity boundaries, dynamics, and signals, which can obstruct or enable the MEs' integration.

## **Advanced paper – Interstitial spaces as informal accelerators for the social integration of refugees and migrants**

**Florian Koehne** (Johannes Kepler University Linz)

Interstitial spaces are informal microinteraction settings for actors from different social contexts (Furnari, 2014). Common examples include incubators (Villani & Phillips, 2021), makerspaces (Browder et al., 2019), and coworking spaces (Garrett et al., 2017; Howell, 2022). Due to the open interaction among social actors with different field positions, interstitial spaces are fertile grounds for new practice generation (Furnari, 2014) and future-making.

Earlier research on future-making has depicted the future as an unknown point in time that cannot be accurately planned or calculated (Wenzel et al., 2020). Rather, it is through discursive, bodily, and material practices that actors construct the future

(Thompson & Byrne, 2022; Wenzel et al., 2020). Notably, this often involves collaborative practices across sociospatial fields (Thompson & Byrne, 2022; Whyte et al., 2022).

While existing literature has made important inroads for a better understanding of interstitial spaces and future-making as two separately emerging fields, my research concentrates on the overlaps of both fields. The organizational context of my research is an interstitial space in rural Germany where a group of refugees, volunteers, and citizens frequently comes together and interacts. These interactions result in future-making practices for refugees with insufficient capacity for creation of desirable futures. I ask the following research question: How can interstitial spaces function as enabling fields for the future-making practices of social actors whose agency to imagine and create desirable futures is significantly constrained?

My qualitative research builds on a theory of practice approach (Bourdieu, 1977) with a particular focus on hysteresis effects that occur when the field and habitus relationship of individuals becomes disrupted (Bourdieu, 2000). This limits individuals in their ability to develop new practices and a probable future (Bourdieu, 1990). However, my initial findings suggest that interstitial spaces can function as accelerators for the closure of the time-lag between abrupt field changes and habitus adaption to facilitate collaborative future-making.

My research makes three major contributions. First, I contribute to the literature on interstitial spaces by challenging the assumptions that social actors, who frequent interstitial spaces, occupy relatively stable and durable field positions that they “do not lose or change” through their interactions in these spaces (Furnari, 2014: 444; Villani & Phillips, 2021). Instead, I demonstrate that there are many instances in which participants occupy significantly unstable structural positions and show how interstitial spaces can promote structural changes. Second, I contribute to Bourdieu’s theory of practice by demonstrating how interstitial spaces can accelerate the habitus formation for future-making practices when social actors suffer from hysteresis effects. Third, I contribute to the literature on future-making by providing a process model that shows the development of the future-making capacity of disadvantaged social actors before, during, and after their interaction in interstitial spaces.

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## **Paper idea - The meaningful diversity blueprint book: A qualitative research to meet the community-to-community economic ecological-investment model**

Cecilia Olivieri (X23 Science in Society), Davide Carminati (X23 Science in Society), Lorenzo Maggio Laquidara (X23 Science in Society) & Shaghayegh Attar (X23 Science in Society)

The relevance of self-entrepreneurship for migrants has become a topical issue of social and economic importance. In the field of European migrant entrepreneurship empowerment projects, X23 stands out as an expert entity coordinating and partnering with several projects (ESGs, Me4Change, ELYME, etc.) in collaboration with a number of EU partners. Our experience in this field and the related literature suggest that current practices and methods for migrant's support are often inadequate to guarantee long-term success of business ideas.

Despite the availability of incubators and financial programs, migrant entrepreneurs may still face challenges in pursuing entrepreneurship. X23 undertook the hereby research project 'The meaningful diversity BluePrint Book', intended to further explore the European migrant self-entrepreneurship ecosystem, and extract an authentic narrative from stakeholder experience. Such a narrative should describe its current state of the art and limitations, needs, and potentials, and explore innovative solution to these limits.

The methodological framework of this research is developed around four main pillars. First, it is based on qualitative analysis paradigm with a stress on the participatory approach. Migrants are directly involved in the co-writing and backtalk. Secondly, results are elaborated through and integrated with, socio-linguistic analysis, supported by the use of a computational linguistic framework (i.e. Nooj Corpus processor - <https://atishs.univ-fcomte.fr/nooj>), with the aim of reaching the deeper meaning of interviewee discourse. Social Network Analysis (SNA) is then employed in order to explore the existing relations within groups and networks (NNs, network of networks), and their propagation factor in the ecosystem. Finally, an Action-Research methodology is envisaged, with a focus on real case studies.

Supported by the mentioned criteria, our study wishes to advance a multi-tiered, multi-sourced, and multi-level narratives, supported by transversal experiences of practitioners and stakeholders involved in entrepreneurship processes (i.e. business incubators, policymakers, researchers, and most important firsthand migrant entrepreneurs themselves).

Early results suggest how migrant entrepreneurs may face discrimination, bias from potential investors or other stakeholders, in relation to their goals, aspirations and needs as individuals. Large part the training, funding, involvement, and outreach opportunities reflect the widespread bias that migrant and mainstream entrepreneurs are fundamentally "different". Training program designers often consider migration as the common denominator of all forms of migrant self-entrepreneurship projects disregarding the entrepreneurs' special needs and potentials. Program vagueness and an impression of migrant enterprise as too risky, resulting in significant underinvestment in migrant self-entrepreneurship, prevents European social systems to reap any socio-economic benefits from migrant entrepreneurship.

In the wake of these considerations, we highlight categories resulting as absolutely essential for strengthen the potential ground of migrants' companies, e.g.: the adoption of robust practices of networked small-scale investments by "community investors"; financial devices for lending unsecured loans to local social enterprises and community businesses; risk sharing techniques.

Such a self-propagating "community-to-community" engagement of (public or) private funding networks towards communities of migrants' entrepreneurial initiatives would intensify a ground of beneficial relationships, distribute negative risks and successful responses evenly, propagating a decisive-skyrocketing nutrient effect beneath the economic and societal ground which triggers fecundity starting from the root.

## **Paper idea - Home country considerations and migrant entrepreneurial support programs in Norway**

**Dimitris Polychronopoulos** (University of South-Eastern Norway)

### **Motivation and Background**

Based on the findings from a systematic literature review on migrant entrepreneurship in Europe that I am concluding, with the help of my academic advisor Anh Duc Nguyen, we have proposed a research agenda to address several gaps in the literature, including in the field of migrant entrepreneurship support. In this respect, understanding how to incorporate a migrant entrepreneur's home country into the support program is of keen interest for migrant entrepreneurs who seek to engage in transnational business.

Frequently the programs are one size fits all, so this qualitative case study aims to find out how much home country consideration is already a part of entrepreneurial support programs in Norway. This study will use Mixed Embeddedness (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, & Rath, 1999; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018) to provide the context for sense-making of opportunity structures in the welfare state of Norway, to investigate the agency of the participants of migrant entrepreneurship support programs and how the entrepreneurship support programs currently respond to the home country factor and in which cases they could respond by lending greater consideration to home country factors.

### **Methods**

The data collection will include observation, text analysis, focus group interviews, and semi-structured interviews. The observation will be from my direct attendance at some of the online and in-person sessions of the entrepreneurship support programs. The text analysis from the entrepreneurship management system, various course materials, and the entrepreneurship handbook the participants use. The focus groups are with those who attend the programs. The semi-structured interviews are with the program owners. The research follows an abductive approach (Awuzie & McDermott, 2017; Tjora, 2020), partly based on the insights gathered from the program participants, where the interview guide may evolve as we discover new insights, partly

based on Mixed Embeddedness (R. Kloosterman et al., 1999) So far, I have conducted focus group interviews with participants from seven different entrepreneurship support programs in Norway, and one pilot of the semi-structured with the program owners of one of the support programs.

### **Potential contribution**

The findings will aim to show how home country considerations are currently considered in entrepreneurship support programs in Norway and when, why, and how home country considerations could be a part of entrepreneurship support programs in future.

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