

## Migration, enterprise and society

Over the past two decades, in response to new patterns of global migration, migrant entrepreneurship and ethnic entrepreneurship literatures have developed as sub-streams of entrepreneurship studies. Within this existing body of knowledge, there have been important theoretical developments focusing on concepts such as structure and agency (Giddens, 1991), the notion of ethnic enclaves and the existence of an ethnic economy (Portes and Jensen, 1992; Light *et al.*, 1994); Bourdieu's conceptions of forms of capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990) and mixed-embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010) that have sought to explain how migrants have settled in a variety of settings predominantly in the Global North and have engaged in entrepreneurship as a way to improve their economic conditions. Within this corpus of literature, there has been an over reliance on focusing on the power of social capital embedded in ethnic networks that offer ethnic advantages to migrant entrepreneurs. More recently, these ideas have been challenged (Ram *et al.*, 2017) owing to changes to contemporary societal processes. Such processes include the further racialization of society, global migration trends and market ghettoization, the gendered structured nature of migration and the changing role of regulations. As a result, there is a clear intellectual need to engage more deeply with complex theoretical constructs in terms of capital, thereby shifting focus to understanding cultural and symbolic capital, currently under-researched (Rodgers *et al.*, 2019) understanding different strategies of migrant integration into society through bricolage and patchworking (Villares-Varela *et al.*, 2018) and calls for an incorporation of historical perspectives and better understanding of varieties of context, not only from the geographies that migrants leave behind but also including geographies of the receiving societies and different patterns of entrepreneurial activity.

The aim of this special issue is to contribute to a growing strand of academic literature, which recognises the social and cultural contexts in which entrepreneurial endeavours take place (Bruton *et al.* 2010; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Welter and Smallbone, 2006). Within this "social turn" in the study of entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 1995; Ansari *et al.*, 2012; McKeever *et al.*, 2014) there is a recognition of the "everyday" nature of many manifestations of entrepreneurial practices and the fact that the entrepreneurs themselves and the entrepreneurial processes and practices are not taking place in political, cultural or societal vacuums. Rather than simply accepting the traditional view of entrepreneurial activities involving the "super-hero" stereotype of the entrepreneur (Burns, 2001), a growing strand of critical entrepreneurship (Anderson *et al.*, 2010; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009) calls for the recognition of the everyday (Johannisson, 2011) and mundane nature (Rehn and Taalas, 2004) of varied forms of entrepreneurship. In order to critically examine the dominant discourses of entrepreneurship, Steyaert (2005) argues for the need to explore diverse and alternative entrepreneurial individuals, processes and practices beyond the mainstream. Embracing the desire within the "European tradition" of entrepreneurship (Gartner, 2013; Down, 2013; McKeever *et al.*, 2014) to look beyond the "mainstream" has led to calls for more academic interest in the "other" (Gartner, 2013) entrepreneurial individuals and practices living and taking place on the edges and margins of our societies (Watson, 2013; Imas *et al.*, 2012).

To this end, taking the UK as a contextual example, over the past decade, increasing numbers of "new" migrants have arrived in the UK (Jones *et al.*, 2014). This is explained by a rise in refugees and asylum seekers from war-torn countries (Edwards *et al.*, 2016) and migration from the new EU member states (Vershina *et al.*, 2011; Ciupijus, 2011; Drinkwater *et al.*, 2009; Khattab and Fox, 2016; Barrett and Vershinina, 2017). Despite the



---

growth of “new” migrant communities in the UK, within an “age of super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007; Ram *et al.*, 2017), such groups have rarely figured in contemporary debates on self-employment and/or entrepreneurship, other than in a few notable studies (Edwards *et al.*, 2016; Ram *et al.*, 2008).

Although migration seems to be absent from mainstream academic literature on business and management, the proponents of the “super diversity” paradigm (Vertovec, 2007) have argued that at present a number of important populations are either excluded from the research agenda, or appear rarely; voices which play a critical role in the fabric of multicultural society. For instance, in the field of business, the core concept associated with migration – “liabilities of foreignness” (Fang *et al.*, 2013) – sees “difference and distance” as liabilities, whether they are national, cultural, geographic or semantic. Whilst existing research is valuable, recently it has been suggested that an emphasis on liabilities and adverse outcomes associated with such differences may hinder our understanding of the processes and conditions that help to leverage the value of diversity in a wide range of contexts. Moreover, the field of entrepreneurship, treats ethnicity in a negative light, and the theory exploring ethnic minority enterprises seem to highlight the negative effects of environment on ethnic migrants who set up and run businesses in new geographical locations. Researchers in entrepreneurship have the opportunity to examine the specific political contexts of excluded groups (new arrivals: legal, illegal and refugees) and pursue important theoretical and policy-related questions that cast light on the workings and complexities of modern economies around the world.

We received 34 submissions and through the rigorous double-blind review process, 18 strong papers have been included in this double special issue on “Migration, Enterprise and Society” theme. The first special issue “Global Dynamics” includes papers dedicated to understanding the global dynamics of migrant entrepreneurship, involving themes such as ethno-national variations of migrant entrepreneurs, the role of diasporic communities in supporting migrant entrepreneurship, a critique of the role of opportunity structures for migrants pursuing entrepreneurship. Moreover, we have included papers that develop further the concept of “breaking out”, have adopted a gendered lens for understanding migrant journeys into entrepreneurial activity and finally a paper presenting empirical analysis of the notion of return migration. We now briefly outline these contributions in turn.

The opening paper by Nazareno, Zhou and You presents an overview of the changing trends and ethno-national variations in order to explain the global dynamics of migrant entrepreneurship. The authors argue that there is heterogeneity of experiences and the changes in migration and integration trends as well as ethno-national variation are caused not only by unequal access to resources for individual entrepreneurs, but this is further exacerbated by structure in home and host environments and interactions between national, local and transnational global forces. Such a systematic literature review can provide an important insight into developments within the migrant entrepreneurship literature. Following this, we have two papers that focus on what happens to those communities that have settled in a new host context a long time ago. These papers look at how diaspora communities are developing ways to support entrepreneurship projects. Whilst Discua Cruz and Fromm focus on how highly skilled migrant diasporans re-invest into social entrepreneurial ventures in the local home country context, Ekanem in his paper offers important insights into how diaspora entrepreneurs within the context of emerging economies learn from early internationalisation ventures by pursuing “born-global” strategies rather than traditional, more staged forms of internationalisation. Three further papers explore the traditional migrant entrepreneurship concept of opportunity structure. First, Hagos, Izak and Scott, taking a social constructivist perspective, present evidence that the opportunity structure not only comprises of the objective institutionalised barriers but also is constrained by the more subjective performance measures of new migrants’ enterprises.

Second, Kazlou and Klinthall explore how shifts in the liberal regime for labour immigration to Sweden have impacted upon the self-selection of migrants into entrepreneurship in Sweden. Finally, Evansluong, Ramirez Pasillas and Bergström examine how the opportunity creation process leads to the integration of migrant entrepreneurs from different backgrounds into the new host environment. Of particular interest, is how the authors theorise the migrant acculturation process, focusing on three specific stages of breaking ice, breaking in and breaking out.

Moving on, the next two papers examine how specific markers of identity are implicated in the journeys of migrant entrepreneurs. Yeröz offers an intersectional analysis of migrant women's cultural capital development not only through the lenses of gender and ethnicity but also considering the importance of social class. Hamid, O'Kane and Everett examine how ethnic migrant entrepreneurs utilise identity work to build legitimacy in host societies by balancing conformity and distinctiveness. Finally, Pauli and Osowska explore the experiences of return migrant entrepreneurs, paying particular attention to how the experiences of migration have enriched the entrepreneurial capitals available for these migrants upon returning to home countries and how entrepreneurial ideas have been formulated during the migration journeys.

The second part of the special issue, "Beyond the West" is dedicated to recognition of the importance of other contexts, politically and geographically, beyond the remit of the developed Global North. For the last few decades, research on migrant entrepreneurship has focused on understanding the motivations and engagement in entrepreneurship by a variety of ethnic groups, which have left developing countries and sought to settle within developed world contexts. Examples of prominent studies include Ram *et al.* (2008)'s study of Somalis in Leicester, Koreans in Los Angeles (Nee and Sanders, 2001) and Vietnamese in London (Bagwell, 2018). Such studies focused on how migrants developed businesses, which tended to be set up within ethnic enclaves and focused on the exchange of cultural goods. Within such studies, there was an exaggeration of ethnicity as a marker of identity that enabled these groups to coalesce around the ethnic locality. However, in recent developments, studies have started to move beyond focussing on solely the "co-ethnic" experiences and instead focus on the "co-migrant" experiences based on shared migrant journeys rather than ethnic similarities (Rodgers *et al.*, 2019).

The opening paper in the second part of the special issue is Verver, Passenier and Roessing's paper focusing on Belize and Cambodia. In both of these countries, the authors importantly outline the historic entrepreneurial trajectories of migrant entrepreneurship. Contrasting sharply to traditional studies on migrant entrepreneurs in the Global North, the authors showcase how migrant entrepreneurs comprise of business elites rather than solely individuals seeking out existences on the margins of society. Furthermore, the authors posit that the business activities of migrant entrepreneurs in these specific contexts are not confined to ethnic community boundaries.

Following this, we have included two papers on informal entrepreneurship. The first paper by Bisignano and El-Anis explores the different legal statuses of informal migrant entrepreneurs and how these markers impact upon the mixed-embeddedness of these migrants in social and economic contexts. Second, Afreh, Rodgers, Vershina and Williams explore the multifaceted nature of context and its influence on motivations, decisions and actions of migrant youth entrepreneurs, underlining non-economic rationales for engaging in informal entrepreneurship in Ghana. Transnational entrepreneurship activity has been the focus of investigation by Santamaria-Alvarez, Sarmiento-González and Arango-Vieira who examine the case of Columbia and how transnational migrant entrepreneurs play an important role in overcoming difficulties within Columbia's economic and social transformation.

The remaining five papers devote themselves to one of the most critical issues of contemporary migration, namely the displacement of refugees from a variety of war-torn countries. These studies adopted different methodologies and offer insights into strategies

and tactics adopted by refugee entrepreneurs to create entrepreneurial ventures, whilst being displaced. Crucially, the papers highlight how individuals, whilst on the margins of society, are still able to negotiate and reclaim their agency through a variety of ways. Heilbrunn focuses her attention on African refugees in Israel, who are engaging in “bricoleuring” by building an entrepreneurial marketplace on the edges of the state-run detention centre, thereby explicitly showcasing how individuals can enact entrepreneurship under extreme conditions. Meister and Mauer outline the findings of a five-month study in which refugee entrepreneurs have participated in an incubation programme, offered by the German state, arguing that incubators with a social purpose have the capacity to transcend the barriers that migrant entrepreneurs often experience in host societies. Cheung, Kwong, Manzoor, Rashid and Kim provide another notable contribution which outlines how internally displaced individuals in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria, despite the lack of resources, create and develop social enterprises to serve the other displaced population in the war and conflict zones. Mawson and Kasem’s paper explores how Syrian refugees in the UK, taking part in the UK government’s Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme, develop individual entrepreneurial potential and how their difficult journeys to the UK impact upon their strong intentions to engage in entrepreneurship. Finally, Alexandre, Salloum and Alalam focus on the intentions of Syrian refugees to engage in entrepreneurship in Lebanon, despite the constraints imposed upon them by strict regulations from the Lebanese state. The authors describe how the individuals rely on social bonds and collective culture as mechanisms to overcome the odds.

Overall, we hope that this special issue will engender fruitful discussions around contemporary issues of migration and entrepreneurship within the journal readership and beyond. One interesting contribution from the studies outlined in this special issue is the underlying importance of familial relationships in supporting entrepreneurial ventures and the emerging role of community within and across migrant groups with shared migration experience, beyond the narrow reimits of the ethnic enclave, both used as a means to support fellow migrants, who are equally disadvantaged. The current literature often overlooks such emerging phenomena. We believe that the papers included in this special issue provide a guiding light and new directions and theorisations for further understanding of migrant entrepreneurship in a variety of different contexts around the globe.

**Natalia Vershinina**

*Department of Entrepreneurship and Local Economy,  
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK, and*

**Peter Rodgers**

*School of Business, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK*

## References

- Anderson, A.R., Dodd, S.D. and Jack, S. (2010), “Network practices and entrepreneurial growth”, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 121-133.
- Ansari, S., Munir, K. and Gregg, T. (2012), “Impact at the ‘Bottom of the Pyramid’: the role of social capital in capability development and community empowerment”, *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 49 No. 4, pp. 813-842.
- Bagwell, S. (2018), “From mixed embeddedness to transnational mixed embeddedness: an exploration of Vietnamese businesses in London”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 104-120.
- Barrett, R. and Vershinina, N. (2017), “Intersectionality of ethnic and entrepreneurial identities: a study of post-war Polish entrepreneurs in an English city”, *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 430-443.

- Bourdieu, P. (1986), "The forms of capital", in Richardson, J.G. (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood, New York, NY, pp. 241-258.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press.
- Bruton, G.D., Ahlstrom, D. and Li, H.L. (2010), "Institutional theory and entrepreneurship: where are we now and where do we need to move in the future?", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 421-440.
- Burns, P. (2001), *Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.
- Ciupijus, Z. (2011), "Mobile central eastern Europeans in Britain: successful European Union citizens and disadvantaged labour migrants?", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 540-550.
- De Clercq, D. and Voronov, M. (2009), "Toward a practice perspective of entrepreneurship: entrepreneurial legitimacy as habitus", *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 395-419.
- Down, S. (2013), "The distinctiveness of the European tradition in entrepreneurship research", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 25 Nos 1-2, pp. 1-4.
- Drinkwater, S., Eade, J. and Garapich, M. (2009), "Poles apart? EU enlargement and the labour market outcomes of immigrants in the United Kingdom", *International Migration*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 161-190.
- Edwards, P., Ram, M., Jones, T. and Doldor, S. (2016), "New migrant businesses and their workers: developing, but not transforming, the ethnic economy", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, pp. 1-31.
- Fang, T., Samnani, A.K., Novicevic, M.M. and Bing, M.N. (2013), "Liability-of-foreignness effects on job success of immigrant job seekers", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 98-109.
- Gartner, W.B. (2013), "Creating a community of difference in entrepreneurship scholarship", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 25 Nos 1-2, pp. 5-15.
- Giddens, A. (1991), "Structuration theory. Past, present and future", in Bryant, C. and Jary, D. (Eds), *Giddens' Theory of Structuration. A Critical Appreciation*, Routledge, London.
- Imas, J.M., Wilson, N. and Weston, A. (2012), "Barefoot entrepreneurs", *Organization*, Vol. 19 No. 5, pp. 563-585.
- Jennings, J.E. and Brush, C.G. (2013), "Research on women entrepreneurs: challenges to (and from) the broader entrepreneurship literature?", *The Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 663-715.
- Johannisson, B. (1995), "Paradigms and entrepreneurial networks—some methodological challenges", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 215-232.
- Johannisson, B. (2011), "Towards a practice theory of entrepreneuring", *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 135-150.
- Jones, T., Ram, M., Edwards, P., Kiselincev, A. and Muchenje, L. (2014), "Mixed embeddedness and new migrant enterprise in the UK", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 26 Nos 5-6, pp. 500-520.
- Khattab, N. and Fox, J. (2016), "East-European immigrants responding to the recession in Britain: is there a trade-off between unemployment and over-qualification?", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42 No. 11, pp. 1774-1789.
- Kloosterman, R.C. (2010), "Matching opportunities with resources: a framework for analysing (migrant) entrepreneurship from a mixed embeddedness perspective", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 25-45.
- Light, I., Sabagh, G., Bozorgmehr, M. and Der-Martirosian, C. (1994), "Beyond the ethnic enclave economy", *Social Problems*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 65-80.
- McKeever, E., Anderson, A. and Jack, S. (2014), "Entrepreneurship and mutuality: social capital in processes and practices", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 26 Nos 5-6, pp. 453-477.
- Nee, V. and Sanders, J. (2001), "Understanding the diversity of immigrant incorporation: a forms-of-capital model", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 386-411.

- 
- Portes, A. and Jensen, L. (1992), "Disproving the enclave hypothesis: reply", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57 No. 3, pp. 418-420.
- Ram, M., Jones, T. and Villares-Varela, M. (2017), "Migrant entrepreneurship: reflections on research and practice", *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 3-18.
- Ram, M., Theodorakopoulos, N. and Jones, T. (2008), "Forms of capital, mixed embeddedness and Somali enterprise", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 427-446.
- Rehn, A. and Taalas, S. (2004), "Znakomstva I Svyazi! (Acquaintances and connections): Blat, the Soviet Union and mundane entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 235-250.
- Rodgers, P., Vershinina, N., Williams, C.C. and Theodorakopoulos, N. (2019), "Leveraging symbolic capital: the use of blat networks across transnational spaces", *Global Networks*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 119-136.
- Steyaert, C. (2005), "Entrepreneurship: in between what? On the 'frontier' as a discourse of entrepreneurship research", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 2-16.
- Vershinina, N., Barrett, R. and Meyer, M. (2011), "Forms of capital, intra-ethnic variation and Polish entrepreneurs in Leicester", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 101-117.
- Vertovec, S. (2007), "Super-diversity and its implications", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 30 No. 6, pp. 1024-1054.
- Villares-Varela, M., Ram, M. and Jones, T. (2018), "Bricolage as survival, growth and transformation: the role of patch-working in the social agency of migrant entrepreneurs", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 942-962.
- Watson, T.J. (2013), "Entrepreneurial action and the Euro-American social science tradition: pragmatism, realism and looking beyond 'the entrepreneur'", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 25 Nos 1-2, pp. 16-33.
- Welter, F. and Smallbone, D. (2006), "Exploring the role of trust in entrepreneurial activity", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 465-475.