

**Migrant entrepreneurship and markets: the dynamic role of embeddedness in networks  
in the creation of opportunities**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to develop insight into the linked processes of migration and entrepreneurship. By combining the literatures on network dynamics and on effectuation, we link the processes of embedding in networks (proximation) and de-embedding from networks (distanciation) to opportunity creation. We use the principles from effectuation theory of ‘bird in hand’ (using available resources) and ‘crazy quilt’ (selected use of networks) to develop a framework of migrant entrepreneurship.

We use data from 28 in-depth interviews with Polish migrant entrepreneurs in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Following an abductive process of data analysis, we combine the themes emerging from the data with those in the existing literatures to propose our framework.

Our findings show that migrant entrepreneurs’ embeddedness is dynamic and evolves across three types of networks: the origin country networks, the host country migrant networks and the host country indigenous networks. We found that migrant entrepreneurs become relationally, socially, and structurally embedded, often relying on bridging agents to access indigenous networks. Migrant entrepreneurs then leverage resources to create opportunities in the host country’s markets. Based on these findings, our framework considers the role played by multi-dimensional and evolving embeddedness in different networks in the process of opportunity creation.

**Keywords:** embeddedness; migrant entrepreneurs; effectuation; networks; opportunity creation; proximation.

## 1. Introduction

This paper considers the increasingly important subject of migrant entrepreneurship. In the migrant entrepreneurship literature, the concept of embeddedness – of being part of various social structures – has emerged as crucial in explaining the activities of migrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Zhou, 2004). Different *dimensions* of embeddedness have been examined to understand how migrant entrepreneurs access resources from their networks (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). For instance, Kloosterman et al. (1999) recognize the importance of both the *social* dimension of embeddedness of migrants within their migrant community networks and their *structural* embeddedness in the host country's institutional framework (Engelen, 2001; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). As highlighted in the migrant entrepreneurship literature, opportunity creation depends on the ability of entrepreneurs to mobilize resources from networks, including from outside their migrant community networks (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Kloosterman, 2010; Bai et al., 2018).

In the literature on migrant entrepreneurship, embeddedness is too often analysed as a static concept. However, it is clear from migration research (e.g. White & Ryan, 2008) that migrants form networks in a dynamic and evolving way. Understanding migrant entrepreneurship thus requires considering how embeddedness in different networks influences the creation of opportunities (Engelen, 2001; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). Few studies explicitly link the process of *becoming* embedded with the process of opportunity creation or consider how embeddedness in networks gives the entrepreneur access to resources from which to create opportunities. Our findings, presented further below, and our theoretical framework bring together two discussions: on the embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs in networks and on the process of opportunity creation.

We first draw on scholars from the industrial marketing tradition (for instance, Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Bizzi & Langley, 2012; La Rocca & Snehota, 2014) who theorized about business networks to bring a processual and dynamic perspective to migrant entrepreneurship. In parallel, the wider entrepreneurship literature (beyond migrant entrepreneurship) increasingly discusses the relational nature of entrepreneurship as a process (Anderson et al., 2010; La Rocca & Snehota, 2014; Tian, et al., 2018). Building on authors such as Nicholson, Tsagdis, and Brennan (2013), we adopt the processual language of *becoming embedded* as *proximation* to new networks, and of *de-embedding* as *distanciation* from existing networks.

The second theoretical lens we draw upon for our analysis of migrant entrepreneurship is effectuation theory (see Chandler et al., 2011; Sarasvathy, 2001). We argue that effectuation theory provides the link between embeddedness in networks and opportunity creation. According to effectuation theory, entrepreneurs rely not only on their own resources but also on relationships and networks (i.e. ‘whom they know’) to bring in new resources that they can use to create opportunities for new ventures (Chandler, et al. 2011; Sarasvathy, 2001; Sarasvathy et al., 2010). It supposes that entrepreneurship is ‘means’-driven, implying that entrepreneurs engage in activities based on the resources available to them, rather than on pre-established goals (or ‘ends’) (Sarasvathy, 2001). According to effectuation theory, as part of the ‘means’, entrepreneurs rely on two principles – ‘bird in hand’ (i.e. availability of resources) and ‘crazy quilt’ (i.e. selected use of relevant networks). We propose to apply these concepts to migrant entrepreneurship.

Our research addresses the question of what the dynamic interplay is between processes of network proximation/distanciation and opportunity creation in migrant entrepreneurship. We explore this question in the context of Polish migrant entrepreneurship.

A finding that emerged during early phases of our abductive process of data analysis is that embeddedness is a process. Migrant entrepreneurs proximate, distanciate and (for some) *re-proximate* within three types of networks that were identified: 1) the origin country networks (OCN); 2) the host country migrant networks (HMN); and 3) the host country indigenous networks (HIN). Our findings show that the embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs has multiple dimensions. Embeddedness can be *relational* (professional connections within business networks), *social* (socialization and communities ties), and *structural* (formal and informal relations with institutions).

In this paper, we show how migrant entrepreneurs leverage resources from different networks, in which they *become* embedded, to create opportunities and access different markets. We therefore contribute to the theoretical development of dynamic perspectives on business networks (Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Bizzi & Langley, 2012) and to the understanding of migrant entrepreneurship (Bai et al., 2018; Kloosterman, 2010). Finally, we complement an understanding of effectuation with consideration of embeddedness in different networks by migrant entrepreneurs and the role played by bridging agents in facilitating migrant entrepreneurs' proximation to wider networks, two aspects that have not been significantly considered before. By drawing on network dynamics and effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001), we thus develop our central contribution to combine a multi-dimensional (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001) and a dynamic conceptualization of network embeddedness (Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Bizzi & Langley, 2012; Jack et al., 2008) in a theoretical framework of migrant entrepreneurship. Such a theoretical explanation fills a gap in the current literature.

Our empirical data is derived from qualitative fieldwork conducted in Glasgow. We conducted 28 in-depth interviews with Polish migrant entrepreneurs in two phases – in 2008–2009 and in 2016. Through interviews, we explored the migrants' experiences of migration and

of starting up and growing businesses in the UK. Our participants had all arrived in the UK between 2006 and 2007, along with over one million fellow Polish people who migrated to the UK for work after Poland gained EU membership in May 2004 (Drinkwater et al., 2009; Home Office, 2009). In analysing the data, we followed abductive logic, combining themes from the literature with those emerging from the data. This led to a theoretical framework of migrant entrepreneurship that we propose in this paper (Klag & Langley, 2013; Langley, 1999).

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature on embeddedness in both migrant entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial marketing. We then review discussions of effectuation, and relate these to migrant entrepreneurship. We tie these debates together in an initial theoretical framework. We next outline our approach to qualitative investigation and present our refined conceptual framework, as it was developed from our primary data analysis. We focus on the different phases of embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs in the three types of networks, and link their evolving embeddedness with the effectual nature of their opportunity creation. We conclude with a discussion of our key findings, and their implications and limitations.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Embeddedness and migrant entrepreneurship**

Embeddedness is a key concept in explaining migrant entrepreneurial action, as it enables migrant entrepreneurs to access specific resources and markets (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999). In social science, embeddedness refers to the extent to which non-economic institutions and social structures (Polyani, 1944) enable or constrain economic activity. Economic behaviour is seen as “closely embedded in networks of interpersonal relationships” (Granovetter, 1985: 496). Interestingly, marketing research interested in business networks has also focused on embeddedness, as part of the relational dimension of

marketing (Bizzi & Langley, 2012). Embeddedness in this literature is defined as “personal linkages; brokering relationships; dyadic economic interaction” (Bizzi & Langley, 2012, 228). Building on this *relational* dimension of embeddedness within business networks of firms, entrepreneurs are seen as leveraging resources from networks to capture, for example, international opportunities (Bai et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2018). However, this definition of embeddedness as applying only at the *relational* level was perceived as too restrictive by those sociologists who explored the field of *migrant* entrepreneurship. They found that the *social* embeddedness of individual migrants within larger community groups has an effect on their business activities (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Wilson & Portes, 1980).

The literature on migrant entrepreneurship thus focuses on the *social* dimension of embeddedness. The tensions of interaction with the host society create conditions for solidarity through community relationships among migrants (Light & Bonacich, 1991), often in a distinct host country migrant network of common ethnic origin. Social embeddedness in such common-origin community networks allows members of those networks to share in community resources, which migrant entrepreneurs use to create opportunities, initially within the ethnic community market (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Waldinger, 2005). Resources accessed within migrant networks provide an advantage to migrant entrepreneurs compared to indigenous entrepreneurs in the host country, especially in the earlier stages of entrepreneurship. However, migrant entrepreneurs require access to a broader and more populated host country network to expand their business and diversify their activities beyond a certain point (Engelen, 2001; Lassalle & Scott, 2018). Overreliance on migrant networks can constrain their activities and the sustainability of their ventures. Thus, migrant entrepreneurs may learn about local host country opportunities and gain access to bridging social capital (Deakins et al., 2007). Through this process, they can break out from the constraints of the host country’s migrant network. Initially, however, it can often be difficult for a migrant to gain

access to indigenous networks and stakeholders to seek resources and additional customers (Kloosterman, 2010; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016; Ryan, 2011).

Whilst the social dimension is the most explored in the literature on migrant entrepreneurship, the *structural* embeddedness of migrants within the economic and institutional contexts of the host country also has a strong influence on entrepreneurial activities (Engelen, 2001; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). Structural embeddedness is required for migrants to access financial and non-financial resources and different markets within the host country (Kloosterman, 2010). The literature on migrant entrepreneurship has explored multi-dimensional (or mixed) embeddedness (Dansereau et al., 1999). This captures the impact of both embeddedness in *social* groups and *structural* embeddedness in institutional contexts (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). For instance, migrant entrepreneurs tend to rely on the *social* dimension of embeddedness, sometimes leading to over-embeddedness within co-ethnic social networks, whilst lacking structural embeddedness in the host country's institutions and relational embeddedness in relevant business networks in the host country (Deakins et al., 2007). This lack of embeddedness at the *relational* and *structural levels* limits access to relevant information about available opportunities, existing support (Mwaura et al., 2018), and business partnerships.

The crucial importance of access to resources, especially when diversifying or developing businesses (Kloosterman, 2010; Lassalle & Scott, 2018), indicates that there is a need to explore the *evolving* nature of migrant entrepreneurs' embeddedness in indigenous networks (Deakins et al., 2007). Embeddedness is not just about whether entrepreneurs are embedded or not, but is dynamic and evolving (Jack et al., 2010), in a similar way to the migration process (Gill & Bialski, 2011; White & Ryan, 2008). Works by Kloosterman (2010) or more recently by Bai et al. (2018) consider this dynamism. However, most research that explores migrant entrepreneurship considers embeddedness as something that is temporally



and spatially fixed, i.e. which exists in a single geographically defined network at a single moment in time (Palmer et al., 2017). Engelen (2001) criticizes the fact that the current terminology implies that embeddedness is one way and deterministic (i.e. from community *to* mainstream), failing to consider the dynamic interplay of migration across time and, crucially, from one network to another. Put another way, we perceive a gap in the research on how individuals become embedded or lose embeddedness. A more explicit consideration of the dynamism of embeddedness in networks over time would enhance our understanding of entrepreneurial activities, including the creation of opportunities. Without opportunity creation, migrant entrepreneurs can engage in unsustainable ventures or ones that lack potential for growth, often limited to their own community's niche market (Kloosterman, 2010; Zhou, 2004).

Business network research in the field of marketing (Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Medlin, 2004; Palmer et al., 2017) provides a useful perspective on network dynamics to complement the understanding of embeddedness in migrant entrepreneurship. Research into the dynamic role of networks has increasingly highlighted how embeddedness in networks and its influence on opportunity creation evolve (Bizzi & Langley 2012; Jack et al., 2008; La Rocca & Snehota, 2014; Tian et al., 2018). Nicholson et al. (2013) propose the terms *relational proximation* and *distanciation* to describe the processes of becoming embedded in and de-embedded from different networks. They argue that proximation and distanciation are processes that can occur simultaneously. We suggest that these terms can be used to understand how a migrant entrepreneur moves away from some networks and towards others. The terms are useful for referring to how embeddedness in networks and the process of *becoming* embedded evolve.

## **2.2. Migrant entrepreneurship and effectuation**

We use effectuation theory to link embeddedness in networks and opportunity creation (Chandler et al., 2011; Sarasvathy, 2001). In effectuation theory, entrepreneurial action relies on available resources and networks. This ties in with debates on opportunity creation in the field of entrepreneurship research in general (Garud et al., 2014; Sarason et al., 2006; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

Effectuation theory understands the process of entrepreneurship as starting from the availability of resources and networks (Chandler et al., 2011; Maine et al., 2015; Sarasvathy, 2001). We follow Sarasvathy (2001: 245) in defining *effectuation* processes as those taking a “set of means as given and focus[ing] on selecting between possible effects that can be created with that set of means”. Opportunity creation thus occurs by mobilizing available resources, while accepting affordable loss (Maine et al., 2015; Sarasvathy, 2001; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2008). Other scholars (see Desa & Basu, 2013) emphasize the importance of considering available resources as a set of ‘means’, before selecting potential ‘ends’ (opportunities). Sarasvathy (2011) speaks of the ‘bird in hand’ principle, by which the entrepreneur makes sense of the available resources and adapts his or her actions accordingly. Using the ‘bird in hand’ principle, migrant entrepreneurs overcome resource constraints, mitigate risks, and minimize costs, subsequently reaching satisficing – that is, satisfactory, but not necessarily optimal – outcomes.

Effectuation is means based rather than goal oriented: the entrepreneur analyses the available means (i.e. resources) and tries to answer the question – ‘what can I do with these means’? This promotes flexibility concerning unexpected events and supposes a positive view of contingencies and a willingness to leverage them (Dew et al., 2009), considering that entrepreneurship decisions are made under uncertainty conditions. Effectuation theory aids our understanding of the processes at stake. Opportunities can thus be seen not as pre-existent and

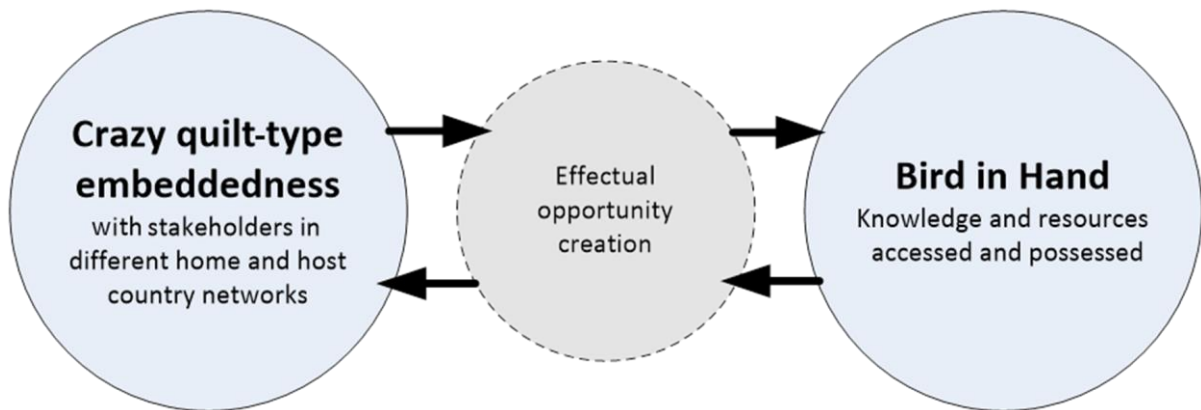
resulting from well-defined strategies, but instead as being collectively created (Sarasvathy et al., 2010).

Effectuation is based on unplanned processes, relying on non-predictive strategies and on the networks that entrepreneurs join to support their new venture. As a non-predictive and spontaneous strategy which assumes that the future does not need to be predicted, effectuation is about the entrepreneur acting, including by networking and looking for relevant partners and stakeholders (Sarasvathy, 2001; Sarasvathy et al., 2010). The emphasis on the role of networks in the creation of opportunities means that the ‘crazy quilt’ principle (Sarasvathy, 2001) can be seen to apply. This is the continuous process of identifying new stakeholders and networks to engage with, to open up access to new resources and markets.

Effectuation theory was developed through the observation of *expert* entrepreneurs. Migrant entrepreneurs, however, are often not experts, and when they ask themselves: “Who do I know?”, the answer is likely to be: “No one in this market”. In their home and host country networks, migrant entrepreneurs focus on what they have and can afford to lose (‘bird in hand’), but they also make decision based on their relational, social and structural embeddedness within different networks (‘crazy quilt’). We bring these findings together in an initial theoretical framework (Figure 1).

### **2.3. Theoretical framework**

Figure 1: A theoretical framework of the migrant entrepreneurship process.



We contend that, to understand migrant entrepreneurship and the creation of opportunity, we need to better account for the evolving embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs in different networks, and how this embeddedness influences opportunity creation. Migrant entrepreneurs' access to resources and knowledge depends on their embeddedness in different types of networks: it depends on their *relational* embeddedness (e.g. in business networks), *social* embeddedness (e.g. in community networks) and *structural* embeddedness (e.g. in institutional networks) in both the home and the host country (Deakins et al., 2007; Kloosterman, 2010). Drawing ideas from Andersen and Medlin (2016) and Bai et al. (2018), we argue that there should be further consideration of the simultaneous processes by which the migrant entrepreneur becomes embedded (proximation) and de-embedded (distanciation) in different networks (Nicholson et al., 2013) and their impact on opportunity creation.

Opportunity creation is the outcome of interactions between the entrepreneur and his or her networks (Bai & Johanson, 2018; Desa & Basu, 2013; Sarason et al., 2006). Networks provide resources and knowledge to the entrepreneur through an iterative process (Chandler et al., 2011; Read et al., 2009; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2008; Sarasvathy, 2001), in which the *resources* that happen to be available influence the specific *ends* that the entrepreneur pursues. From the literature, we can posit that the migrant entrepreneur engages in opportunity creation

in the host country, by mobilizing the available resources ('bird in hand') accessed through different networks ('crazy quilt'). As migrant entrepreneurs develop and diversify their activities (Kloosterman, 2010; Lassalle & Scott, 2018), we suggest that additional resources and knowledge – gained through access to new networks – can emerge from the opportunity creation process itself. Consequently, in Figure 1, we suggest a loop back to network embeddedness and to access to knowledge and resources, following opportunity creation. Our conceptualization therefore links the 'crazy quilt' principle of networks and the 'bird in hand' principle used to create opportunities.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research context**

The European Union enlargement of May 2004 led to an unprecedented flow of Polish migrants to the United Kingdom (Home Office, 2009). Polish nationals and citizens from other accession economies were legally entitled to enter the UK in search of employment, and the influx exceeded the numbers forecast by UK government officials. It is likely that over one million Polish migrants entered the UK between 2004 and 2007 (Home Office, 2009; Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010). It is important to stress (after Garapich, 2007: 127) that the wave of migration that took place after May 2004 "accelerated a migration process that was well under way". When the new Polish migrants arrived between 2004 and 2007, there were at least two earlier generations of Polish migrants in the UK: the post-war generation and a significant group from the 1980s (Garapich, 2007; White & Ryan, 2008). The Polish community in the UK is not therefore homogeneous (Gill, 2010). Polish migrants from previous generations emphasized ethnic integrity and distanced themselves from the new migrant wave (Garapich, 2007). The newcomers were perceived as more individualistic with

more market-oriented values (Garapich, 2007), and many did indeed create businesses – over 22,000 according to the Centre for Entrepreneurs, UK.

Because of the economic nature of the decision to migrate, members of the new Polish communities clustered in major cities and towns, including in Glasgow, which was home to over 5,000 Polish migrant workers and their families (Glasgow City Council, 2012). This provided a potential community niche market for Polish migrant entrepreneurs. In Glasgow, the Polish community is active, has meeting places and uses its own social media for seeking information, socializing, seeking job and business opportunities and advertising – glasgow24, emito, *emigrant* magazine, etc.

### **3.2. Methods and procedures**

In this paper, we adopt a qualitative approach to uncovering and understanding the role played by embeddedness in the creation of opportunities among migrant entrepreneurs. We followed an interpretivist philosophy. The main objective of the fieldwork was to capture the retrospective accounts entrepreneurs gave of their experience of migration as individual migrants and of business start-up and development as entrepreneurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Leitch et al., 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus we used in-depth interviews to capture the experiences of Polish migrant entrepreneurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Our procedures were consistent with the qualitative approaches used in entrepreneurship research (Klag & Langley, 2013; Leitch et al., 2010) and more generally in social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

#### **3.2.1. Interviews**

Since this research follows abductive logic (Langley, 1999), it began by establishing our starting themes, informed by analysis of the literature (deductive logic, see Figure 2) on the embeddedness of migrants in networks (Waldinger, 2005; Zhou, 2004). These starting themes

were used in our initial interviews as broad topics to discuss with the participants. They included the participants' experience of migration, their experience of business start-up and its further development phases (including decision-making, specific actions, their reflective account, and access to resources and markets), and their perception of the context surrounding these events, for example regarding socialization between the Polish community and the locals (e.g. Ryan & White, 2008) and access to institutions (Glick et al., 1990). The main advantage of conducting in-depth qualitative interviews was that the method allowed meaning to emerge from the interviews. This required flexibility from the researcher. The researcher did not run the interview but only facilitated and guided the discussion, letting the interviewee develop his or her own thoughts. This allowed the emergence of new themes, which were subsequently used in further interviews (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977).

To let the interview develop freely without the bias of suggestive or leading questions, the researcher only rarely asked directly about the main themes. The researcher rather asked open questions such as "could you talk to me about your arrival/your start-up?" and then reacted to what the participants said ("could you please explain?" or "why?"). In the interviews conducted during the fieldwork, it was common for the researcher to formulate a few simple questions at the start, with the following interventions being mainly to seek further explanations or examples. Frequent questions would be on personal experiences and background, socialization, and, towards the end of the interviews, reflections on the entrepreneurial journey. Interviews lasted on average 60 to 120 minutes, and were followed by informal discussion which helped the researcher to better understand the context in which the migrant entrepreneurs operated and establish rapport. Importantly, all interviews were conducted in Polish by the lead researcher, who was fluent in that language. During the interviews, the participants mostly spoke freely and forgot the presence of the researcher, who acted as an active listener (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). The interviewer was able to react at certain points

and subtly guide the conversation. For example, if a biographical account started to dominate the discourse, the researcher would guide discussion towards issues related to the migrant entrepreneur's experiences of migration and entrepreneurship, and his or her socialization and relations with institutions.

### **3.2.2 Sampling and data collection**

Participants in the study were economic migrants who had secured a job in the UK prior to emigration, using employment agency gatekeepers based in Poland. On arrival, these Polish migrants socialized with the Polish community and became engaged in low-skilled and low-paid occupations, usually as factory or construction workers, butchers, or cleaners (Drinkwater et al., 2009). They only subsequently became entrepreneurs.

The sample was created through a combination of purposeful sampling – identification of Polish migrant entrepreneurs at Polish churches, through shop fronts, in the Yellow Pages or within Polish community networks and internet portals – and ‘participant-driven’ sampling, i.e. interviewees providing the personal details for other potential interviewees (Vershina & Rodionova, 2011). As a result, 28 in-depth interviews with Polish migrant entrepreneurs were conducted, at which point saturation was reached (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In the first phase of the fieldwork in 2008/2009, 20 Polish migrant entrepreneurs were interviewed, and eight of them were interviewed for a second time in 2016. They present similar characteristics and experiences of migration, a crucial point in ensuring consistency in the data. All arrived between 2004 and 2006 and followed similar phases of migration. They all started their businesses between 2006 and 2008 and were engaged in service sector activities, serving, exclusively or not, the Polish community in Scotland (see Table 1). The sector was not a criterion for selection. However, all the entrepreneurs identified happened to be engaged in the



service sector. Some engaged in diversification activities beyond the Polish community, whereas others relied exclusively on the Polish community as their market.

Table 1: Profile of participants

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age<sup>a</sup></b> (at the time of the first interview)	<b>Arrival year</b> in the UK (years in the UK at the time of the first interview)	<b>Main market served</b>	<b>Employees<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Diversification activities beyond the Polish community market</b>
Tomasz, computer shop	Early 30s	2005 (3)	HMN <sup>e</sup> (Host country Migrant Networks)	HMN	Yes
Natan, garage	Early 20s	2004 (4)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Chrystian, <sup>d</sup> delicatessen	Early 20s	2004 (4)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Wawrzyniec, book-shop	Mid 40s	2006 (2)	HMN	Sole trader <sup>c</sup>	No
Natalia, hairdresser	Early 20s	2007 (1)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Magdalena, legal adviser	Mid 30s	2004 (4)	HMN	Sole trader	Yes
Iwan, <sup>d</sup> legal adviser	Early 40s	2004 (4)	HMN	Sole trader	Yes
Janina, hairdresser	Early 20s	2007 (1)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Bartłomiej, <sup>d</sup> boxing school	Early 20s	2005 (3)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Barbara, hairdresser	Early 20s	2005 (3)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Norbert, driving school	Late 40s	2005 (3)	HMN	Sole trader	Yes
Natasza, delicatessen	Early 50s	2006 (2)	HMN	HMN	Yes
Roland, <sup>d</sup> IT	Mid 20s	2005 (3)	HMN	Sole trader	No
Rafał, <sup>d</sup> body-shop	Early 30s	2004 (4)	HIN <sup>f</sup> (Host country Indigenous Networks)	HMN	No
Bogdan, construction	Mid 30s	2004 (4)	HIN	Sole trader	No
Leszek, hairdresser	Mid 40s	2004 (4)	HIN	HMN	No
Nadia & Joanna, restaurant	Early 40s	2004 (4)	HIN	HMN	No
Roman, construction	Early 30s	2005 (3)	HIN	Sole trader	No
Leonard, <sup>d</sup> IT	Early 20s	2006 (2)	HIN	HMN	No
Stefan, <sup>d</sup> garage	Early 30s	2004 (4)	HIN	HMN	No

<sup>a</sup> For cultural reasons, it was not appropriate to ask the participants' precise ages. Participants provided an age range.

<sup>b</sup> Source of labour (Polish community through Host country Migrant Networks).

<sup>c</sup> No employees. The entrepreneur is the only person employed in the business.

<sup>d</sup> Entrepreneurs interviewed in 2008/2009 and again in 2016.

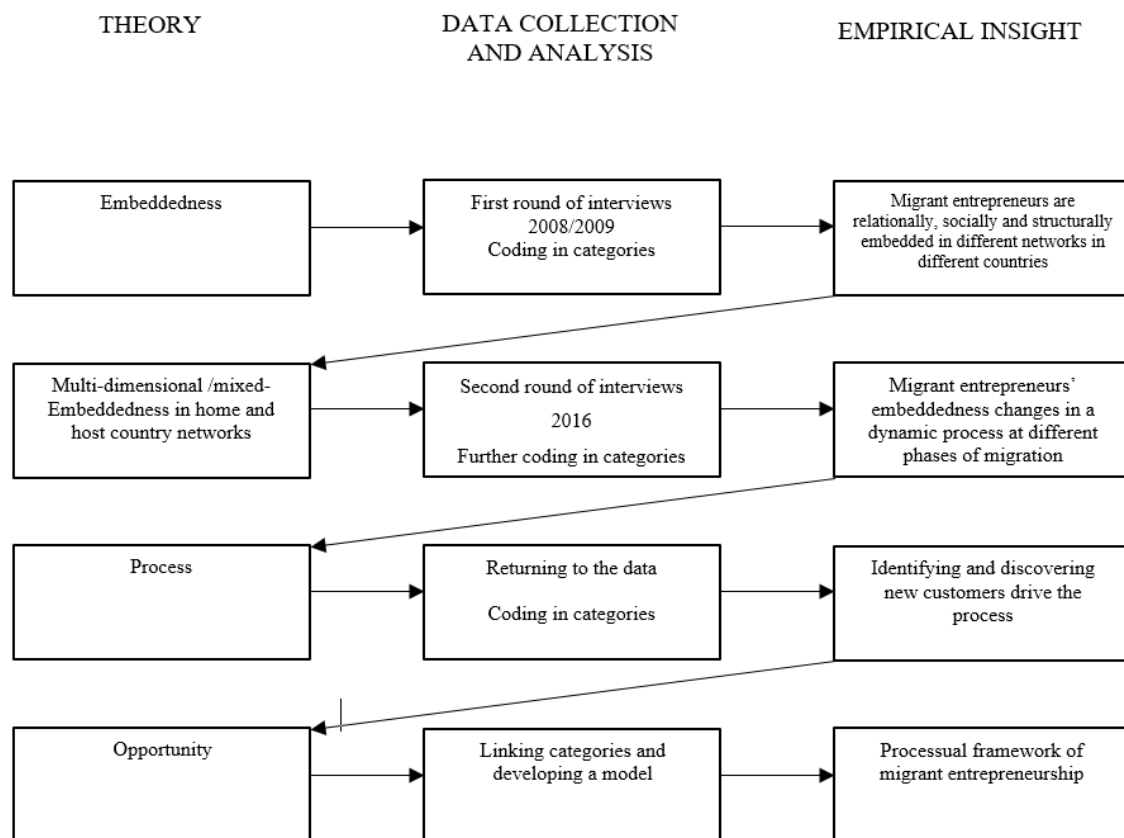
<sup>e</sup> HMN stands for Host country Migrant Networks

<sup>f</sup> HIN stands for Host country Indigenous Networks

### 3.2.3. Data analysis and limitations

Following Klag and Langley (2013) and Dubois and Gadde (2002), we adopted an abductive approach, consisting of constant reference between the data (inductive logic) and existing knowledge contained in current sources (deductive logic), as displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The abductive process of the study



After initial starting themes were *deduced* from the literature on embeddedness, data from interviews and fieldnotes were collected and compiled, and were then organized into common cross-case categories to make sense of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After empirical insights emerged or were *induced* from the data, we once more turned to the theory, and incorporated that in our analysis. We then re-examined the data in this new light, which allowed additional empirical insights to emerge. This process was repeated four times in this research (see Figure 2). The insights in both Figure 1 and Figure 3 emerged at different points in the

theorizing process, and thus show the development of the theoretical contribution. Each participant used his or her own terms to describe the migrant experience and only very rarely engaged with the interview topic in the same way or using the same terminology as another participant (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). The data analysis therefore had to start with the researchers identifying categories of meaning across the cases, which could then be coded into distinct emerging themes (Leitch et al., 2010).

For example, participants mentioned different networks in which they were embedded, such as one which involved “playing basketball with other Poles living in the area” for Stephan (Garage), or “talking about their business to people in Glasgow on emito, to get a feel for what they [the Polish community] wants, to test the waters” (Leonard, IT). Chrystian (Delicatessen) said that he “travelled back to Poland for a few days to find some good suppliers back in Poland, reliable ones with experience in the industry”. Looking at all the transcripts – amounting to 403,378 words of data – the researchers relied on inductive logic to identify themes. In this example, the different networks (HMN, HIN and OCN) appeared early in the theorizing process. Likewise, it emerged from the data analysis that the embeddedness of the Polish migrant entrepreneurs in networks was dynamic, and thus evolved over time and through the different *phases* of migration. In this case, reference to the migration literature (e.g. White & Ryan, 2008) helped to categorize the different phases and, for example, define the arrival phase as the first few months in the country. We then explored the transcripts again and found that participants were becoming embedded in *different networks* at different *phases*, depending on the *dimensions* studied. For example, many entrepreneurs started to become embedded in HIN *structurally*, before engaging if at all in *social* proximation with locals through socialization (see Table 2). Following the abductive logic of constant reference to the data and the established literature, the researchers were able to refine the analysis in an iterative way (Klag & Langley, 2013).

Following the abductive logic adopted, categorization of the rich data from the interview narratives (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Welch et al., 2011) and the interplay between our findings (inductive logic) and the literature (deductive logic), meant that the researchers were able to identify the key themes for this paper and, importantly, to establish links between them in a conceptual framework (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Klag & Langley, 2013). In other words, our empirical findings, as presented in Section 4, were integrated conceptually through theorization in a proposed model of migrant entrepreneurship (Figure 3).

As indicated above, qualitative approaches and methods can have a number of limitations. These included intrinsic interview biases from the presence of the researcher, language biases, and the interview setting, which was sometimes not ideal, especially when conducting the interviews in the participants' premises. This first set of biases was reduced through procedures such as conducting the interviews in Polish to make the participants more at ease. Another limitation of qualitative research is that the findings cannot be generalized. However, because participants were telling their own stories and the context was very specific – Polish migrant entrepreneurs in Glasgow – the research was not looking for generalizable findings (Gioia et al., 2013; Langley, 1999). Instead, the intention was to theorize from the data (Welch et al., 2011), using the coding procedures of categorization, with constant reference between the data and the literature, following an abductive logic (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This approach has been described by a range of authors interested in qualitative research (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Klag & Langley, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the next section, we introduce our proposed dynamic framework of migrant entrepreneurship – an interplay between evolving embeddedness in networks and opportunity creation (Figure 3). We present our findings on the processes of embeddedness and effectuation by referring to the narratives provided by the participants. We present our findings on

embeddedness (section 4.1.1) and opportunity creation (section 4.1.2) at the initial phase of migration. We then present our findings on subsequent phases of migration, identifying proximation and re-proximation to networks used by migrant entrepreneurs to access additional resources and markets (section 4.2). Finally, we present the non-predictive (i.e. effectual) nature of opportunity creation (section 4.3). In Table 2, we present an overall picture covering a detailed description of access to resources, embeddedness in networks and phases of the entrepreneurship process.

#### **4. Findings**

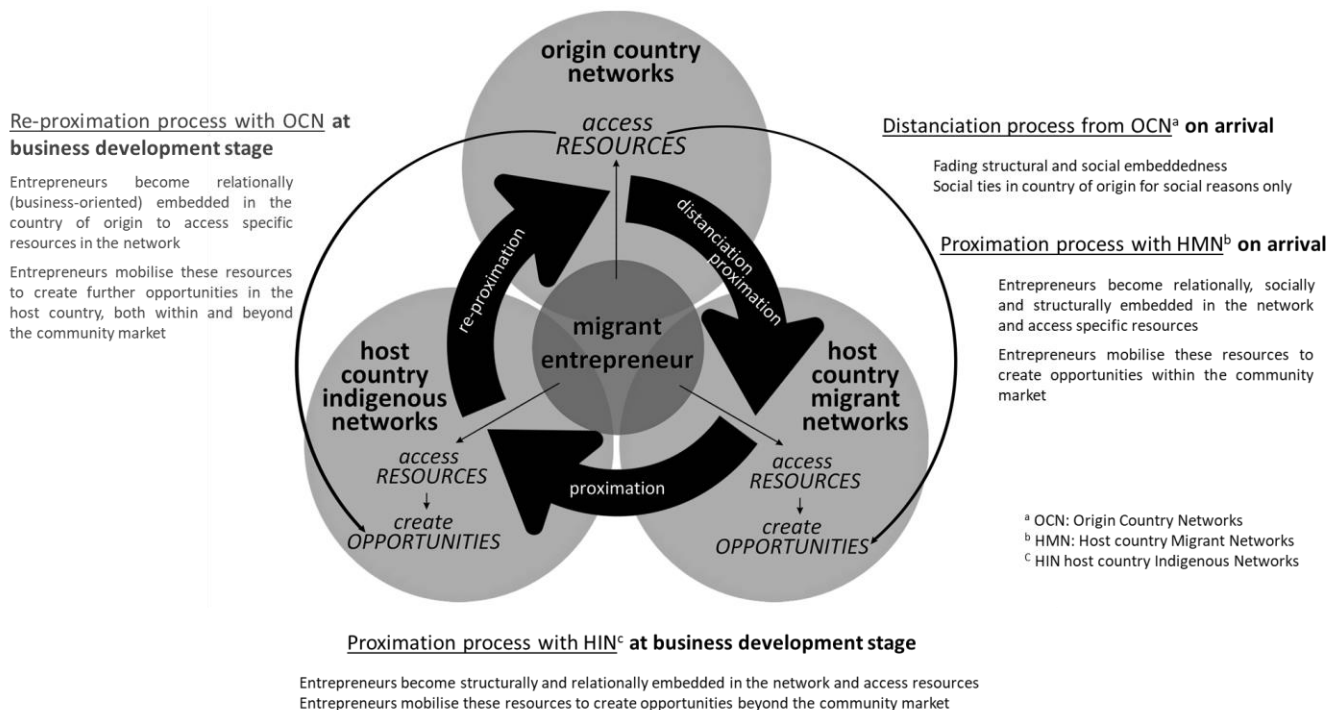
Our findings highlight the crucial processes associated with migrant entrepreneurship: the dynamic embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs in different networks and effectual opportunity creation in different markets. The relationship between these processes is displayed in Figure 3 and summarized in Table 2.

At different phases of migration and opportunity creation, such as arrival/start-up and business development, migrant entrepreneurs simultaneously de-embed from networks in their origin country and become embedded in migrant Polish host country networks. We capture this process using notions of *proximation* and *distanciation* (Nicholson et al., 2013). These suggest that embeddedness in a specific network increases or decreases over time. This helps to capture the evolving position of entrepreneurs in networks, in which they become proximate to host country Polish and indigenous networks and simultaneously distanciate themselves from origin country networks. At the arrival phase (top right in Figure 3), entrepreneurs relationally and structurally de-embed (distanciate) from the origin country networks whilst relationally and socially embedding (proximate) with actors in the host country migrant networks (developed in section 4.1.1). Most migrant entrepreneurs then proximate to host country indigenous

networks (section 4.2.1). Some later purposefully *re-proximate* to origin country networks (section 4.2.2).

These processes are non-linear – that is, proximation, distanciation and re-proximation often take place at the same time. Migrant entrepreneurs simultaneously embed in and transition from several overlapping networks, providing themselves with a vantage point from which to create opportunities in different markets. Overall, the framework conceptualizes how migrant entrepreneurs access resources from three different types of networks (i.e. the host country migrant networks, the host country indigenous networks, and the origin country networks), enabling them to create opportunities within and beyond the migrant community market.

Figure 3. Framework of migrant entrepreneurship: evolving network embeddedness, resources and opportunity creation



## **4.1. The initial phase of embeddedness in host country migrant networks**

### **4.1.1. Arrival: becoming embedded in host country networks**

We start the analysis at the arrival phase of physically leaving Poland and entering the UK (top right, Figure 3). Participants provided accounts of how they felt extreme relational isolation in the host country in the early stages of migration and a lack of embeddedness, a consequence of not knowing anyone in Glasgow before migrating.

“I did not know anybody in Glasgow before coming here. Actually, I did not know anybody in the UK” (Natan, garage).

Most participants discussed entry into a host country migrant network as their primary means of socializing. They became structurally embedded in this network, through institutions such as Polish churches, soon followed by increasing relational embeddedness with its members for emotional support.

“It [the Polish community] was really helpful at the beginning. I did not know anyone here and I met people who helped me a lot. They told me where to go, where to find a job, where to find books, where to learn English. These are people I met at the very beginning. I was surprised, especially because of the image I had of Polonia [the name of the Polish diaspora]. To me, they were strangers – but they helped me.” (Wawrzyniec, bookshop)

Initially, participants started to interact with members of the Polish migrant community in Glasgow (host country migrant network), which appears natural for many migrants (White & Ryan, 2008). A phase of relational and social proximation in the host country migrant networks began: “[We] only meet Polish people. At church, at the [Polish] Klub, or after school for social events with the families” (Nadia & Joanna, restaurant). That is despite the fact that

entrepreneurs were not relationally, socially, nor structurally embedded in the host country's Polish migrant networks prior to migration.

The analysis suggests that, when Polish migrants move to the UK, it involves a reduction in *structural* embeddedness in the origin country networks – (e.g. “to be honest, I do not really know what the business situation is in my industry in Poland” (Leonard, IT), and “[I do not have many] links with my former business partners [in Poland]. They do their own thing now” (Bogdan, construction). Nevertheless, at first they maintained *social* embeddedness in the origin country networks, for example through the use of social media, when they “Skype every week with my parents and my friends. We do all the social events on Skype” (Roman, construction). In contrast, early interactions with Scots, i.e. with members of the host country indigenous networks, were initially limited (e.g. buying from a shop, interacting with landlords or employers).

#### **4.1.2. Initial opportunity: creating opportunities through the host country migrant networks**

“I could not speak English. I mean, I know a few words: ‘Yes. Please. How are you?’ [in English]. When I arrived here, I could not really speak and, you know, I met mostly with Poles. So, in our business, we sell to anyone, but our clients are mostly Poles.” (Wawrzyniec, bookshop)

With low relational, social, and structural embeddedness in the host country's indigenous networks, migrants lack knowledge of the indigenous market. This is often amplified by poor English proficiency and lack of confidence. Opportunity creation therefore initially occurs within the Polish community market. As Polish migrant entrepreneurs begin to become socially, structurally, and relationally embedded in the host country's migrant networks (bottom left, Figure 3), they gain access to specific resources that they can use to enter the



community market of co-ethnics: cultural understanding of the needs of fellow migrants, labour, advertising channels, access to relevant business connections and information, and access to specific products or services locally or internationally.

The community market is the primary market for most of the entrepreneurs interviewed (Table 1) and consists of Polish migrants who arrived in the UK after 2004, complemented by migrants with other Central and Eastern European backgrounds, e.g. from the Czech Republic or Slovakia. Their proximation to the host country's migrant networks means that the migrant entrepreneurs have easier access to this market, due to their ability to provide the appropriate products or services to the community, e.g. the right brands or types of Polish sausages, or the right magazine or software. Proximation with the host country's migrant networks often starts with the social dimension of embeddedness. As all the participants noted, "Here in Glasgow, I am with Polish people all the time. It is like a Polish village [laughter]. We go to the pub together and we help each other" (Norbert, driving school). Access to the relevant social media and social groups enables them to build a reputation locally within the community, and thus facilitates entrepreneurial action within the community market:

"I advertise my business in different places. I use the webpage, emito, and the migrant magazine. Actually, I now print this magazine myself. I have access to other businesses, other customers from the community" (Leonard, IT)

Importantly, the creation of a new venture depends on origin *and* host country resources and competences, accessed through the evolving social, structural, and relational embeddedness that entrepreneurs have in different networks. Migrant entrepreneurs combine resources from the networks in which they become embedded and resources from their origin country networks, from which they are progressively de-embedding. Initial import prices encourage

entrepreneurs to look for alternative solutions in the host country. This reliance on available resources exemplifies the two principles of effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001).

Migrant entrepreneurs get *socially* embedded in the host country migrant networks (in the Polish community networks in Glasgow, through Polish church, Polish Klub or via Internet fora) and *relationally* embedded (through initial professional business connections). *Structural* embeddedness is the slowest dimension to develop. Structural embeddedness consists of embeddedness in the host country's institutions, such as schools, the local business environment, and government institutions. It also encompasses informal institutions, such as the local business culture or understanding of UK regulations. Increasing structural embeddedness within the host country's networks represents the end of the arrival phase triggered by initial emigration, and triggers the decision to settle as migrants and start a new venture:

"I was looking at the regulation for start-ups and I discovered that it was actually quite favourable to new businesses. I mean, everything was simple and quite encouraging. There was really very little paperwork. This helped me in deciding" Leonard, IT.

## **4.2. Expanding beyond the host country migrant networks**

### **4.2.1. Becoming embedded in the host country's indigenous networks: bridging agents and proximation processes**

Importantly, host country migrant networks are locally based and not well connected to host country migrant networks in other UK cities. This limits the pool of available resources ('bird in hand') in these networks and encourages migrant entrepreneurs to engage with host country indigenous networks, following the 'crazy quilt' principle. Over time, Polish migrant entrepreneurs become embedded further (at least structurally) within the host country's

*indigenous* networks (bottom right, Figure 3). This comes through incremental settlement decisions, whereby the migrant household increasingly commits to settling in the host country. Starting with structural embeddedness with local businesses and institutions (such as schools), they continue with social, structural, and relational proximation with the host country indigenous networks. In this respect, specific bridging agents play a role in the process of proximation and thus increase structural embeddedness in the host country indigenous networks:

“Yes, actually, concerning the registration... My [Scottish] coach from upstairs has helped me with everything. He made everything easy for me, and he helped me a lot with all the registration and the paperwork at the beginning. He is still helping now.” (Bartłomiej, boxing school)

In some cases, British spouses act as bridging agents, facilitating relational and social proximation in the host country’s indigenous networks and, from that, additional resources for entrepreneurs to access, such as advice, language support, and access to suppliers. For instance, Magdalena and Iwan (both legal advisers) were relationally embedded in the host country’s indigenous networks prior to starting up a business, through both having a British spouse. They were consequently (simultaneously) embedded in the host country’s migrant networks and in the host country’s indigenous networks.

Migrant entrepreneurs becoming embedded in the host country’s indigenous networks, progressively serving a local clientele beyond the community market (e.g. Chrystian, delicatessen) which they access through geographic proximity and via structural and relational proximation to the host country’s indigenous networks. They then span the boundaries of the host country migrant networks (Table 2, fourth column; Figure 3), engaging in market diversification locally, a decision often triggered by proximation to host country indigenous networks.

“We are trying to reach more and more locals with the advertising, the flyers. I have my neighbours. They are locals [Scots]. They helped me with the flyer, the translation etc. Really, they helped me with the language. Now I can distribute these flyers in the neighbourhood, in the next blocks. I hope I can attract more locals.” (Natan, garage)

Such a process of opportunity creation is indicative of the processual development within Sarasvathy’s (2011) ‘crazy quilt’ principle of selected engagement with networks and stakeholders to access new resources.

“With our second business [a coffee place] we really focus on the local customers. This gives us something more. At the moment, this one [the delicatessen] is profitable and the new one requires development. But this will work hopefully and we hope we can do more afterwards. Here, we provide all the products in English now, to attract more locals.” (Chrystian, delicatessen)

Again, the process of opportunity creation is incremental and iterative, and relies on resources accessed through embeddedness in the different networks (Table 2, fourth column). Resources accessed from the host country’s indigenous networks include: access to a broader set of relationships, increasing understanding of local customers (in the neighbourhood, as for Natan, garage), and improvement of English language skills (enabling the labelling of products in English, e.g. Natasza, delicatessen). This shows a shift from sole reliance on the host country’s migrant networks to wider access to the host country’s indigenous networks and their resources. Proximation is achieved through bridging agents, such as spouses (as presented above for legal advisers), neighbours (Natan, garage), or coaches (Bartłomiej, boxing school),

or through increasing structural embeddedness in the host country's indigenous networks (e.g. Chrystian, delicatessen).

At this phase of proximation with the host country's indigenous networks, the position of the entrepreneur is evolving and is situated within different network spaces at the same time. Moreover, embeddedness in these networks is not fully achieved. We then observe that bridging agents often intervene. Relational proximation to an individual leads to social proximation too. Whilst social embeddedness in the host country's migrant networks remains a constant, relational proximation in the host country's indigenous business networks begins, often leading to joint social embeddedness in both the host country's migrant networks and the host country's indigenous networks. We find that migrant entrepreneurs make use of the 'crazy quilt' principle of mobilizing resources accessed in the different networks in which they have become embedded over time. Opportunity creation happens in both the community market – using resources from the host country's migrant networks – and beyond, using selected resources from the host country's Polish and indigeneous networks. It follows non-predictive strategies, but nonetheless leads to business development and diversification (e.g. Chrystian, delicatessen; Bartłomiej, boxing school; or Barbara, hairdresser).

#### **4.2.2. Re-proximation with the origin country networks**

The last phase of the process presented in Figure 3 (top left) reveals that some entrepreneurs (e.g. Chrystian, delicatessen; Roman, IT) look for additional networks from which to leverage new resources. They use their vantage point to create opportunities, by re-embedding in the origin country networks (Table 2, fourth column).

"I can work from anywhere in the world as long as I have a computer and a desk. I am starting to provide services to Polish businesses in Poland as well, especially the ones interested in a development in the UK." (Roman, IT)

The process of re-proximation to the origin country networks for business purposes is evident, with entrepreneurs looking for sourcing opportunities in Poland for the next phase of their business development (such as Chrystian, delicatessen, who “looked for new partnerships directly in Poland”). Because of reduced costs and good product quality, re-proximating relationally with business partners in Poland means that migrant entrepreneurs can avoid intermediaries and increase their competitive position in the host country. Resources accessed through these networks are mobilized to strengthen the new venture’s position, both within and beyond the community market in the host country (Figure 3). This re-proximation provides access to resources from the origin country’s networks, which entrepreneurs use to create further opportunities in the host country, targeting the community and indigenous market.

### **4.3. The effectual nature of entrepreneurial activities**

#### **4.3.1. Non-predictive strategy**

We proceed further with our analysis by exploring how the process of becoming embedded in different networks leads to opportunity creation (Table 2). Identifying the key constraints and enablers faced by migrant entrepreneurs (second column), we focus on two different phases of business development: the initial phase (third column) and the later phase (fourth column). Migrant entrepreneurs access resources such as marketing knowledge and access to specific products or markets through their embeddedness in different networks. They start with the origin country’s networks and initially become socially, relationally and structurally embedded in the host country’s Polish (migrant) networks (third column).

Table 2. Embeddedness and the opportunity creation processes

Type of business	Enablers and constraints of the host country's networks	Initial phases (top right Figure 3)	Later phases (left Figure 3)
		Means accessed through embeddedness in the host country's migrant network (HMN) and the origin country's networks (OCN)	Opportunity creation: Becoming embedded in the host country's indigenous networks (HIN) and/or once more becoming (re)embedded in the OCN
Tomasz, Computer shop	Lack of market knowledge Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge <sup>a</sup> (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to specific products (from Poland/OCN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural and social embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Natan, Garage	Lack of English proficiency Lack of market knowledge Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through relational and social embeddedness
Chrystian, Delicatessen	Lack of market knowledge	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to specific products (structural embeddedness in the OCN) Service specificity (not accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (individual, structural and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural, relational and social embeddedness – creation of opportunities beyond the community market Additional sourcing opportunities identified back in the OCN
Wawrzyniec, Bookshop	Lack of market knowledge Lack of English proficiency Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to specific products (structural embeddedness in OCN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Magdalena, Legal advice	Resources in the host country (legitimacy, access to bridging agent)	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN)	Understanding/relevant qualifications in the UK (due leading to individual and structural embeddedness in HIN)

		Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN)	Access to HIN through bridging agents (spouse) (relational embeddedness)
Iwan, Legal advice	Resources in the host country (legitimacy, access to bridging agent)	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural and social embeddedness in HMN)	Understanding/relevant qualifications in the UK leading to individual and structural embeddedness in HIN Access to HIN through boundary agents (spouse) (relational embeddedness)
Natalia, Hairdresser	Lack of market knowledge	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels structural embeddedness in HMN Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Bogdan, Construction	Lack of English proficiency	Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Market knowledge – supply-side (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to team (individual, structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN).	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness - creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Rafał, Body-shop	Lack of English proficiency Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural and relational embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through relational and structural embeddedness – creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Leszek, Hairdresser	Lack of market knowledge Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (individual, structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural and relational embeddedness in HMN) Labour (individual, structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness - creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Nadia & Joanna, Restaurant	Lack of market knowledge Lack of experience in the sector	Access to specific products (structural embeddedness in OCN) Access to advertising channels (structural and relational embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in the HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness – creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Roman, construction	Lack of English proficiency	Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Market knowledge – supply-side (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to team (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN).	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness - creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Janina, Hairdresser	Lack of market knowledge	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness



	Lack of experience in the sector	Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) – partial Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	
Bartłomiej, Boxing school	Lack of English proficiency (overcome)	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Service specificity (less accessible to other entrepreneurs, due to relational and structural embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural, relational and social embeddedness
Leonard, IT	Lack of market knowledge (partial) Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (relational, social and structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (individual, structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN through structural embeddedness - creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Stefan, Garage	Lack of English proficiency (overcome) Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Proximation to HIN (structural and social) - creation of opportunities beyond the community market
Barbara, Hairdresser	Lack of market knowledge Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Norbert, Driving school	Lack of market knowledge Lack of English proficiency Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Natasza, Delicatessen	Lack of market knowledge Lack of English proficiency Lack of experience in the sector	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to specific products (structural and relational embeddedness in OCN) Access to advertising channels (structural embeddedness in HMN) Labour (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	No proximation to HIN
Roland, IT	Lack of market knowledge	Market knowledge (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN) Access to advertising channels (structural, relational and social embeddedness in HMN)	Considering the creation of opportunities in OCN

<sup>a</sup> Acquired through embeddedness in networks. Not measurable knowledge. It describes a form of understanding the needs of the community, based on shared experience and shared culture.

Opportunity creation and the opening of new ventures are often reported as a response to dissatisfaction with initial jobs in the UK in low-skilled and low-paid occupations. Given the fact that many Polish migrants hold degrees and/or had managerial roles in Poland prior to migration, these occupations do not satisfy their aspirations in the longer run. This was bluntly expressed by one participant: “There in Poland, I was like the queen, and here I am a cleaner” (Natasza, delicatessen). The start-up process is often spontaneous, highlighting that entrepreneurs identify opportunities only *after* accessing the resources available to them in the networks in which they are currently embedded. In relation to Sarasvathy’s question of “who do I know?” (2001), they are not embedded in relevant networks on arrival. In addition, in many case, their knowledge and skills are not relevant to the sector in which they start up. Therefore, we suggest that the resources accessed through the origin country’s networks are not initially deployable in the host country. Their qualifications, some of their experiences and also the business networks in which they were embedded in Poland are not useful in the UK. Hence, there would seem to be a drive towards entrepreneurship among migrants so that they can achieve full potential and regain a more suitable status. Nevertheless, origin country education and the capabilities derived from it can be key to entrepreneurial action (“I knew how to do a balance sheet” Janina, hairdresser). Almost all participants reported a non-predictive and spontaneous strategy, and the absence of business planning and benchmarking. Instead, Polish migrant entrepreneurs have a vague business idea that they set up quickly, starting up with the resources they have ‘at hand’:

“She had this idea. I think it came on that day when we talked about it together. We talked about it and we decided to set up our business. It was really quick. Start-up? Overall? 4 days [...] We did not do any analysis. No benchmarking whatsoever. We had our savings, a few thousand pounds, and

we had our community here to find information for us on the different platforms.” (Leonard, IT)

However, in many cases, the opportunities remain poorly visible. In addition, most entrepreneurs do not engage in formal marketing (considering pricing, choice of location, product/service range, labelling, advertising, etc.) or planning activities. Instead, they rely on the resources available:

“You know, I worked in a construction team before here. I had those savings. I made good money. And the Poles like to save; somehow, they like not to spend too much, but they also like their cars. We had the money; we looked for a place next to a lot of traffic and we just starting repairing cars.” (Stefan, garage)

The cases demonstrate that opportunity creation is a non-predictive strategy. Among migrant entrepreneurs, starting up is based on a ‘gut feeling’, and on a reaction to external events, such as a bad day at work (Leonard, IT). Decisions are influenced by household migration and settlement objectives, and depend on the resources available from the networks in which the entrepreneurs are embedded at the particular point in time. This leads to an adaptive form of effectuation, adopted by migrant entrepreneurs whilst they become embedded in different networks.

Although a few entrepreneurs have a vague idea of what they want to achieve, most learn by doing, using the resources at hand. Mobilizing these resources (‘bird in hand’), some entrepreneurs engage in diversification (Table 1), offering additional (Polish) products and services to the community market, such as opening a beauty salon beside a hairdressing salon (Janina, hairdresser) or offering a wider range of martial art classes (Bartłomiej, Boxing

School). This process is facilitated by becoming relationally embedded in the host country's migrant (Polish) network in the initial phase after arrival (bottom right, Figure 3).

#### **4.3.2. Evolving embeddedness and opportunity creation**

At the same time as migrant entrepreneurs proximate to the host country migrant (here, Polish) networks after arrival, there is evidence of declining relational and structural embeddedness (i.e. distancing) in origin country networks. This suggests that the origin country networks become used mainly for social purposes, and that the resources available to entrepreneurs from the host country migrant networks (first) and host country indigenous networks (later) are those used to create the opportunities migrant entrepreneurs seek, initially within the community market, and later (for some) beyond this (see Table 2). For most migrant entrepreneurs, it is through proximation to the host country migrant networks that they create opportunities for their businesses in the community market.

Indeed, to gain knowledge of the community market, most migrants initially draw resources from increasing social, structural, and relational embeddedness in the host country migrant networks. They do so to access specific products, suppliers, or advertising channels, thereby accessing a set of available resources ('bird in hand') that they can mobilize to engage in opportunity creation through non-predictive and effectual strategies. Whilst becoming embedded in host country migrant networks at the initial stage, some entrepreneurs target the local indigenous population with non-ethnic services (as in the case of Bogdan and Roman, construction). They nonetheless still rely on host country migrant networks for information, to find customers (often acting as subcontractors to other Polish businesses), and for labour. However, increasing structural embeddedness in host country indigenous networks enables migrant entrepreneurs to create further opportunities beyond the community market, emphasizing the importance of the 'crazy quilt' principle.

## **5. Discussion and implications**

### **5.1 Embeddedness as a process: towards a dynamic framework of migrant entrepreneurship**

Migration is transitional and dynamic by nature (Ryan, 2011) and involves movement between locations, social groups, and institutions (Faist, 2000; White & Ryan, 2008). Such a dynamic lens applies to the entrepreneurial activities of migrants too. This paper complements previous studies in the field of migrant entrepreneurship (e.g. Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Waldinger, 2005) and business networks research in the field of marketing (e.g. Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Bizzi & Langley, 2012). We view migrant entrepreneurship as a dynamic, embedded, and effectual activity. To do this, we link processes of embeddedness and opportunity creation in a framework of migrant entrepreneurship.

The concepts of proximation and distanciation (Nicholson et al., 2013) offer a way to visualize the motion and flow of migrant entrepreneurs in different networks (that is, origin country, host country migrant, and host country indigenous). The concepts allow for a dynamic view of embeddedness and for the capture of simultaneous distanciation and proximation, which, separately or in combination, lead to a novel perspective on opportunity creation and market advantage for migrant entrepreneurs. The later phase of proximation when migrant entrepreneurs purposefully re-connect with origin country networks, creating new contacts in those networks, can be captured with the concept of *re-proximation*. By making selected use of embeddedness, proximating, disatanciating and re-proximating into different networks, migrant entrepreneurs create specific opportunities in the host country that were not visible to entrepreneurs who did not undertake a similar journey.

To summarize, we identify three types of embeddedness which affect opportunity creation for migrant entrepreneurs: *social* and *structural* (including institutional) (Kloosterman

& Rath, 2001) and *relational*. Migrant entrepreneurs remain proximate to business networks in their origin country through *relational* embeddedness, whilst structurally and socially distancing from them. We further find that embeddedness in the host country's indigenous networks starts with the *structural* dimension, and only later moves on to relational embeddedness with specific indigenous host country individuals, often facilitated by bridging agents, such as spouses and neighbours. Eventually, social embeddedness within groups takes place. This concept of the process of embeddedness complements previous discussions on embeddedness in community groups (Waldinger, 2005) and business networks (Hohenthal et al., 2014). It emphasizes the role of multi-dimensional embeddedness in opportunity creation (Aldrich & Waldinger, 2005; Kloosterman, 2010; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). The paper thus contributes to debates on network embeddedness, by adopting a multi-dimensional and dynamic view of embeddedness (Andersen & Medlin, 2016; Bizzi & Langley, 2012) and applying it to migrant entrepreneurship research. In our conceptual framework (Figure 3), we conceptualize migrant entrepreneurship as the interplay of dynamic *processes* of embeddedness and related opportunity creation (Bizzi & Langley, 2012; Nicholson et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2018).

## **5.2 Opportunity creation and migrant entrepreneurship**

Our findings also show the effectual nature of opportunity creation in migrant entrepreneurship. Effectuation supposes that goals, targets, and objectives emerge during the process, rather than being specified in advance. They are based on the resources available and affordable loss ('bird in hand') and on the engagement of the entrepreneurs in networks and partnerships with stakeholders ('crazy quilt') (Chandler et al., 2011; Maine et al., 2015; Sarasvathy, 2001). Evidence of non-predictive strategies among migrant entrepreneurs is reinforced by their reliance on resources 'at hand'. The entrepreneurs find resources within the networks, both

those in which they were originally embedded (origin country networks) and those in which they are becoming embedded on arrival (host country migrant networks). While the relevance of resources from the origin country networks decreases, host country migrant networks increasingly provide resources for migrant entrepreneurs to create opportunities locally, in the host country. In later phases of business development, migrant entrepreneurs increasingly leverage resources from other networks – both by embedding in host country indigenous networks and by relationally re-proximating with relevant origin country networks – to create opportunities, making use of evolving and conjoint embeddedness in different networks and of ad-hoc partnerships ('crazy quilt'). This paper expands our understanding of migrant entrepreneurship by making an explicit link between network embeddedness and opportunity creation. Our theoretical framework conceptualizes how evolving embeddedness in different networks enables migrant entrepreneurs to access resources, which they use to create opportunities.

By applying effectuation theory to migrant entrepreneurship (Dew et al., 2009; Sarasvathy, 2001), we are able to provide evidence of the associated principles of 'bird in hand' and 'crazy quilt' in the process of embeddedness. Thus, our framework helps to conceptualize the role that an evolving embeddedness in networks has in opportunity creation. Through this integrated perspective, the framework highlights that opportunities are created in an iterative way, by entrepreneurs using resources drawn from their evolving embeddedness in different networks.

### **5.3. Practical implications**

The findings have important implications for policy, particularly in the light of the rhetoric surrounding *Brexit*, the Presidential campaign in the USA, and vigorous political discussions across Europe on immigration. Our findings point the way to a more nuanced and multi-

dimensional understanding of the contributions of migrants to urban economies and societies. The role of bridging agents emerges as important for creating both structural and relational embeddedness for migrant entrepreneurs, enabling proximation to host country networks and therefore playing a role in the economic and social integration of migrants. Networks provide resources to migrant entrepreneurs, which they use to create opportunities in the host country. This enables entrepreneurs to create sustainable ventures and therefore to integrate more fully in the host country and contribute to local economic development. Agencies should further support the link between migration and entrepreneurship, through providing access to wider networks to migrants. This action will foster the internationalization activities of migrant entrepreneurs embedded in networks in different countries. There is also potential for migrants returning to their origin country who have achieved high social embeddedness in the host country's indigenous networks to act as bridging agents between the host country indigenous networks and the origin country networks. This would help new migrant entrepreneurs to access to different networks in both countries and create additional opportunities.

Entrepreneurial support agencies need to liaise and coordinate the activities of various migrant associations and networks, in order to identify the specific needs of migrant entrepreneurs and the resources to which individuals have access to, and those they lack (Mwaura et al., 2018). The aim is to encourage and support entrepreneurship among the migrant population. Proximation with host country migrant networks is necessary, as well as access to host country indigenous networks (including business networks and institutions). Bridging agents, spouses or individuals who have been living in the host country for a long time and who have achieved relational, social and structural embeddedness in different networks, can help agencies to reach communities and therefore to make the link between institutions of support and migrant entrepreneurs. By identifying and mobilizing bridging



agents, policy-makers could more efficiently support the proximation of migrant entrepreneurs with relevant indigenous networks, and therefore, access to further resources and markets.

#### **5.4 Limitations and further research**

The limitations of this research stem first from the nature of qualitative research, including the retrospective nature of accounts given during interviews. We partly addressed these by interviewing eight entrepreneurs a second time about eight years later. The particular focus of the study on migrant entrepreneurs from Poland living in Glasgow limits the generalizability of the findings. However, such a contextualized understanding of migrant entrepreneurship is considered methodologically appropriate (Vershina & Rodionova, 2011), since it provides a rich account of experience as migrants and entrepreneurs and is suited for theory development (Langley, 1999). Similar research conducted in other locations and among other migrant groups would provide useful comparative perspectives.

Research could also further explore the *re-proximation* processes revealed in our findings, and hence the possibility of leveraging resources to create opportunities in origin countries. Finally, our findings raise a socially sensitive but inclusive agenda that would merit further research. It concerns the policy implications of the potential facilitating role of individual bridging agents. We argue that, as a result of their *relational, social, and structural* embeddedness both in the host country's indigenous networks and in the host country's migrant networks, such bridging agents could play a role in liaising between policymakers and migrant communities (including entrepreneurs). Policies could be implemented more effectively, if there was cooperation with bridging agents to access migrant entrepreneurs, and assess their needs and their potential contributions to local economic development and entrepreneurial vibrancy.

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