

## Placing Migrant Entrepreneurship: Migrant Economy Debates through New Spatial Lenses

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### Abstract

The category of space is essential in migration studies and it is implicitly present in the literature about migrant entrepreneurs. However, there is a lack of understanding of how the shifting nature of space as a result of the transnational dynamics of late capitalism's work developments has affected the way migrant economies are framed and apprehended. Whilst initial debates tended to present a static, bidirectional, circumscribed notion of space considering migrant businesses within the logics of inclusion/exclusion in ethnic neighbourhoods, the latest approaches usually illustrate it as dynamic, ductile and liquid thanks to the influence of globalisation and the paradigms of mobility and circulation. This article seeks to synthesize and critically review mainstream literature on migrant entrepreneurship from a spatial perspective and reflect on the shifting nature of the ontology of space. It highlights the context in which each theoretical approach was coined with empirical case studies and points out its own limitations in dialogue with the evolution of migrant economies' debates. Finally, the conclusions present both a summary and a proposal for constructing a more accurate theoretical framework for the study of future migrant economies through new spatial lenses.

**Keywords:** space; place; migrant economy; transnationalism; globalisation.

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## 1 Introduction: Setting the Debate into Space

Over the last four decades, the academic debate on migrant entrepreneurship has been guided by the need to account for the transnational dynamics of late capitalism's work organisation. The accent has been placed upon the processes of socio-economic integration of migrants (Kaplan, 1997), on the one hand, and upon the relationship between local clustering of migrants businesses and workers and their international relations, on the other. However, global dynamics (like the overreaching flexible forms of employment and the increasingly fluid schemes of mobility) challenge the traditional understanding of migrant economies as being either locally circumscribed or anchored in a binary scheme of *here* (place of residence) and *there* (origin). Moreover, at the local level the presence of clusters of small businesses created and managed by migrants brings into the equation new *glocal* challenges (Robertson, 1995; Ritzer, 2007) — e.g., revitalization of deprived urban centres, introduction of new products of consumption, increasing religious and cultural diversity, complex fluxes of economic transactions, etc. (see Aytar & Rath, 2012). Accordingly, recent studies tend to highlight the mobility of these economic actors and their ability to bridge different geographical locations through transnational fields or diasporic scenarios. In this context, large post-industrial cities act as frantically dynamic hubs of fluidity and exchange, super-diversity and super-connectivity (Vertovec, 2007; Sassen, 2005) — e.g., modern airport terminals of major cities like Paris, London, New York or Barcelona are transited by over one hundred thousand people per day. In these same cities, and particularly in the settings newcomers establish their businesses, the social uses of the space can experience different stages of breakout (e.g., from a limited, primarily co-ethnic customer base to a wider, primarily non-co-ethnic customer base), resulting in different degrees of interaction between migrants and residents (see Allen & Busse 2016 in the case of Latino businesses in USA).

These processes of hyper-mobility stemming from globalisation reveal that space can no longer be taken as a static domain, but rather as a volatile, dynamic or liquid realm (Bauman, 1998; Soja, 1989; Güell, Parella & Valenzuela, 2015). Increasing flows of ideas, capital, goods and people transit at higher speed thanks to overreaching communication and transport technologies (see Appadurai, 1996). Whilst in the Seventeenth Century, place was subordinated to both space and time (Agnew, 2011), today it seems that *space is progressively conquering place* (Friedman, 2005). In other words, space has gradually tended to transcend the physical, immanent and static features of place; and this ontological turn that affects both *space* and *place* deserves particular attention (Gieryn, 2000; Agnew, 2011; Logan, 2012).<sup>1</sup>

Departing from the classical contributions of Anglophone sociology pioneered by the School of Chicago, we examine key theoretical notions like “middleman minorities”, “ethnic enclave”, and the more recent integrative approaches (i.e. *embeddedness and mixed embeddedness models*). All these concepts have been framed from the understanding of migrant economies operating in circumscribed and somewhat static physical spaces in given countries of reception. The *mixed embeddedness*, however, particularly focuses on the social positioning of migrant entrepreneurs and their chances of upward social mobility, taking into account a reticular component that includes both the co-ethnic social networks as well as the economic and institutional context of the host society in which migrant entrepreneurs interact.

Next, the paper examines the *transnational* and the *circulatory* models, two different paradigms that have noticeably influenced the understanding of the character of the migrant activities and their dynamics in the last decade.

Finally, we introduce the concept of “emplacement” which provides a more holistic way of considering the relationship between migrant economies and the spatial dimension in which they operate. Through this concept, attention is paid to the relationship between the economic, political and cultural positioning of cities within broader networks of power, on the one hand, and the ability of migrants to manage “space” and “place” for themselves, on the other (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013).

Our approach will be theoretical in scope. For this purpose we will review the main theories on migrant economies and use empirical data from several studies we have conducted during the last decade. We will try to show how theories of migrant businesses have been influenced, or even shaped, by a shift-

1. While *space* can be defined as the unlimited or incalculably great three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur, *place* refers to the specific portion of space normally occupied by anything.

ing comprehension of space. Accordingly recent theoretical approaches to this field propose a multi-scalar approach to space. Finally, we will propose some methodological remarks in that direction. This will be the main aim and contribution of our paper.

## 2 Early Conceptualisations of Migrant Economy

Space has been a key category in defining entrepreneurship in general and migrant entrepreneurship in particular. Notwithstanding the notion of space found in these theories it has evolved from a static conception based on fixed or *nodal places* to a very flexible and volatile one based on a hyper-fluid and a *reticular conception of post-space*. This evolution is reflected in the ontological and epistemological shifting of the notion of space supported by the different major theories and in the way migrant entrepreneurship has been historically approached.

Economic clustering, or the spatial concentration of economic enterprises, has shown to be a very successful model due to its ability to increase competitiveness and resilience, and reduce transactional costs. This model has been widely theorised by economists and sociologists, and adopted by economic policies in countries like Italy, Germany, France, Italy or Japan in the last decades (Vertakova & Risin, 2015).

During the 1920s and 1930s the influential sociology of the Chicago School, with prominent authors like Ernest Burgess or Robert Ezra Park, settled a pioneering approach to the relationship between space, migrants and employment. Strongly inspired by ecological metaphors, competition for resources among the different social sectors was interpreted as a key to natural selection (Gieryn, 2000, p. 464). Through the notion of concentric zones, both the processes of succession in urban spaces and the progressive distribution of different socio-economic niches (from a declining urban centre to enriched suburbs) were approached. Despite its apparent simplicity, some of its ideas can be successfully applied to contemporary space dynamics observed in cities like Barcelona (El Raval), London (Docklands Area) or Los Angeles (Downtown) (Davis, 1999; see Sassen, 1991 & 1994).

Spatial concentration has been a noteworthy variable in influential theories on entrepreneurship in general and in more specific theories like the dual labour market (Piore, 1972), the intermediary minorities (Bonacich, 1973), the ethnic enclave theories, or the vast literature on industrial districts (based mainly on the textile industry of Northern Italy and South-West Germany) (Markuse, 1996; Fernández & Su, 2004, p. 556). In the same vein, for the last four decades a substantial part of the academic debate on migrant entrepreneurs has focused on spatial concentration (of enterprises, residences, workers and employers) as a main and distinguished tenet (Güell, Parella & Valenzuela-García, 2015). However, as a critical remark, none of these theories provide a detailed account on the interaction between ethnicity (i.e., cultural traits) and space; an interaction that could influence entrepreneurs' values of entrepreneurship, perception of entrepreneurial opportunities, practical management strategies, and ultimately their business performances (Wang, 2013, p. 98).

Edna Bonacich's theory of the *middleman minorities* (1973) touches again upon spatial concerns. Middleman minorities refers to groups of traders (e.g. barbers, tailors, etc.) who moved from one place to another looking for business opportunities, selling products not provided by the local markets. Historically, there are several migrant groups who have developed an important economic activity around the small itinerant trade in many diasporic points, like Jewish, Chinese or Indian merchants (Bonacich & Modell, 1980). They have been categorised as distinct in nationality, culture, and sometimes race from both the superordinate and subordinate groups to which they relate (Bonacich, 1973; Light, 1972). Dominant elites used them as a buffer to deflect mass frustration and also as an instrument to conduct commercial activities in impoverished areas (Portes & Manning, 1986, p. 50). Later on, this concept was employed to account for the economic activity developed by migrant groups settled in cosmopolitan environment and mediated between the local society and other migrant minorities. A classic example is provided by the Korean economy in Los Angeles, which back in the 1980s embraced many companies operating in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of Latin Americans and African Americans, even employing non-Korean workers (Kaplan, 1997, p. 218). *Middleman minorities* tended to live outside the districts or neighbourhoods where they developed their main economic activity and focused on a type of business that did not imply being linked to the territory. In this sense, the mobility of middleman

minorities depending on market opportunities differs from other types of migrant economies that have been bounded to local determinants of the socio-economic and political structures. In other words, they do not share the same physical or socio-economic space.

The most influential theory on migrant entrepreneurship, the so-called theory of *ethnic economies*, emerged in 1970 with the aim of knowing how different migrant minorities adapted to the new economic context of North American multicultural cities (Kaplan, 1997) and to understand the new patterns of succession in a space of competing urban economies (Aldrich, 1975). Multicultural cities offered fertile ground for groups of various ethnic origins to start their business ventures. In turn, these business initiatives were considered both to provide ethnic minorities a springboard for economic progress and social integration and to revitalize low-income neighbourhoods (Wang, 2013).

An *ethnic economy* may be defined as an economic sub-system within the larger economy in which most of the capital, business ownership, workers, and customers are associated with a particular ethnic group. As a particular case of ethnic economy, the so-called *ethnic enclave economy* (Portes & Stepick, 1985; Light & Gold, 2000; Volery, 2007) places much emphasis on the clustering of businesses in a circumscribed physical territory. It is defined as a geographical concentration of migrant-owned businesses, which have a significant composition of co-ethnic workers (Portes & Stepick, 1985). Such concentration results in an identifiable migrant neighbourhood with a minimum *institutional completeness* (Kaplan & Li, 2006, p. 5).<sup>2</sup> Concentration limits transaction costs, facilitates access to key production factors (capital, distributors, work), and generates employment opportunities for other members of the enclave, as Wilson and Portes' classical study on Cubans in Miami shows (Wilson & Portes, 1980).

Nevertheless, further empirical studies attempted to modify the static view in favour of a more dynamic vision, showing different patterns of mobility away from the apparent spatial circumscription. Following the same case of Cubans in Miami (Portes & Jensen, 1989) and another one on Korean entrepreneurs in Los Angeles (Ettlinger & Kwon, 1994), well-off businessmen tended to stay away from the original enclaves. Moreover, the development of the enclave involved a spin synergy from the centre to the periphery that can be understood as an effect of the enclave's saturation and the opening of new spatial niches and opportunities (Zhou, 1998, p. 228). Contemporary case studies on Pakistani and Indian entrepreneurs in Barcelona (Valenzuela-Garcia, 2010 & 2013; Güell, 2012 & 2016) display this pattern.

Yet, it is worth mentioning another theoretical interpretation on ethnic enclaves which pointed out that space cannot be understood merely as a physical element, but as a social construct: a container for social relations which can extend over, and connect various, geographical locations in the city. Both capital and social resources circulate through migrant social networks at different nodal points arranged both horizontally (dominating an industry) and vertically (sharing providers) (Werbner, 1987 & 2001; Kaplan, 1997, p. 218; Zhou, 1998). These interconnections often go beyond a defined geographical site, creating a more extensive and dispersed social and economic space — i.e., connections between companies, suppliers and associated institutions such as universities, trade associations, etc. In other words: this perspective already questions the primacy of spatial agglomeration as the main condition for the existence of an ethnic enclave. The reality of the enclave could be regarded as a transitory or temporal situation in a process of integration into society and the wider labour market.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the so-called “ethnic economy” theory was very popular and produced a good amount of literature. However, after some time its main hypothesis — i.e., that ethnic enterprises and their workers benefit from clustering — started to be considered misguided. Besides the spatial metaphor, some authors criticize the same notion of ethnic or ethnicity in such theory and the way the concept has been constructed (see Solano, 2016a; Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013). According to Pécoud (2010), these theories have underestimated the degree of porosity of ethnic boundaries in relation to cross-group business interactions; the diversity within immigrant economies in terms of status, gender, class and generation; and the political and institutional context in which immigrant economies take place.

2. The concept of “institutional completeness” refers to the organizational influence of a minority group and the degree to which it can provide its members with all the services (and cultural, religious and social referents) to fulfil their immediate needs (Breton, 1964).

3. See Werbner (2001), however, for a critique to this position.

In the late 1990's another influential theory appeared, which accounted for the success and failure of migrant economic initiatives: the *mixed embeddedness* perspective. Its authors, Kloosterman and Rath, proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework for exploring migrant economies at the macro-, meso- and micro-level, relating the ethnic group characteristics (i.e., social, cultural or economic resources) and the opportunity structure available (i.e., the set of opportunities that can be exploited by individual entrepreneurs). As Kloosterman et al. put it:

We will show that the socio-economic position of immigrant entrepreneurs — and, consequently, also their prospects with respect to upward social mobility — can only be properly understood by taking into account not only their embeddedness in social networks of immigrants but also their embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement. We, therefore, propose the use of a concept, mixed embeddedness, which encompasses both sides of embeddedness to analyse processes of insertion of immigrant entrepreneurs. Complex configurations of mixed embeddedness enable immigrant businesses to survive — partly by facilitating informal economic activities — in segments where indigenous firms, as a rule, cannot (Kloosterman, van der Leun, & Rath, 1999, p. 256).

The mixed embeddedness model (Kloosterman et al., 1999), applied to European contexts, highlights the role of institutional, political, and socio-economic structures in the emergence and development of migrant economies. Through a multi-level analysis, the authors propose three approaches to explore the relationship between two interlinked variables: “access to markets” and “potential growth” (Kloosterman & Rath, 2002). Each level adopts a different conceptualisation of the spatial dimension of migrant economies. At the macro level, the connection between what can be provided by markets, on the one hand, and by the family, co-ethnic social networks and other organisations, on the other, tends to determine the niches in which immigrants' enterprises are placed. For instance, the opportunities to open a childcare business in some place are few if a family support system works efficiently within a given community.

At the meso level, the authors note that cities are gaining more importance in a context of global competition, where the erosion of trade barriers between countries promotes the growth of regional economies. Global cities, which host international companies, for example, generate unskilled jobs which are accessible to immigrants from less developed countries.<sup>4</sup> Urban and regional forces thus affect the structure of opportunities for potential employers and, by extension, the spatial distribution of migrant initiatives.

Within cities, at the micro level, the patterns of spatial distribution of the population are bounded to the structure of neighbourhoods. Urban migrant entrepreneurs are usually concentrated in neighbourhoods where there is a higher rate of foreign residents,<sup>5</sup> as the concentration of certain migrant groups in some urban districts creates opportunities to open businesses targeted to their communities. In turn neighbourhoods delineate the space where social networks and capital are developed, enhancing enclave economies. This correlation highlights the importance of social networks based on the proximity of co-ethnics and access to low-price commercial premises (Kloosterman et al., 1999, p. 4; Moreras, 2005, p. 137). These businesses are typically located in the lowest position of the structure of opportunities, where there are few entry barriers with respect to financial capital, skills and training, as a result of market changes in a globalised world. This may imply that in some cases these businesses are concentrated in peripheral or marginal urban areas.

As Wang (2013) notices, the coincidence of these factors (opportunity structure; group characteristics and strategies; mobilisation of resources; etc.) constitute a “strategic space”, a term that emphasises the importance of the interaction between entrepreneurs, ‘environments’ and “contexts”.

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4. The Taiwanese in the Canadian province of British Columbia, for example, have switched to the service sector in order to adapt to the needs of socio-economic demands in the region and stop exporting activities from the country of origin (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001).

5. In the case of Holland, for instance, immigrant entrepreneurship is not distributed equally in space, but is rather concentrated in the four largest cities (Kloosterman et al., 1999).

### 3 Spatial Configurations of Ethnic Entrepreneurship between Global and Local Logics: The Transnational Perspective

Although earlier authors already pointed out the dynamic and mobile dimension of ethnic entrepreneurship (Portes, Guarnizo & Haller, 2002), a formal theoretical transnational proposal on migrant entrepreneurs was only developed at the end of the Twentieth and the beginning of the Twenty-First century (Vertovec, 1999; Faist, 2000; Portes et al., 2002; Portes & DeWind., 2004; Landolt, 2008; Rusinovic, 2008; Miera, 2008; Besserer, 1999; Barros & Valenzuela, 2013). These proposals suggested the study of migrant entrepreneurship, not as a phenomenon that is encapsulated in a given nation state or a given locality, but rather as a border-crossing phenomenon, thereby avoiding what they called “methodological nationalism”.

Basically, transnational entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs who conduct border-crossing business activities. Research has shown that a significant proportion of immigrant entrepreneurs have become transnational, implying not only border-crossing entrepreneurial activities between the host and home countries, but also between these and/or a third country (Chen & Tan, 2009, p. 1080). In this sense, the notion of *transnational field* or *transnational space* (Levitt & Glick-Schiller 2004) refers to the existence of sustained networks of individuals and organisations across the borders of multiple nation-states (Faist, 2000). Zhou (2004) noted that when transnational entrepreneurship is linked to an existing ethnic economy, it becomes more competitive and viable and can exceed the limitations imposed by the host society to diversify activities and generate resources that might strengthen the institutional foundations of the economy itself. Landolt, Autler, and Baires (1999) categorised these transnational business initiatives *avant la lettre* into four types: *circuit enterprises* (that arise as a result of the migration process, such as transport and communications); *cultural enterprises* that meet the demand for cultural goods from the country of origin (music, movies, newspapers, etc.); *ethnic shops* for answering basic consumer needs with products from origin (like staple or clothes), and finally micro-enterprises created by *returning entrepreneurs* that bring with them ideas, products and services from the host country.

Ethnographic studies of Salvadoran migrants (Landolt et al., 1999), Dominicans (Itzigsohn, Dore Cabral, Hernandez Medina, & Vazquez, 1999) and Ecuadorians (Kyle, 1999 & 2000) show how their micro businesses can only be understood from the transnational point of view. Miera (2008) also illustrated the transnational orientation of Polish immigrants in Germany and the creation of a transnational space that allows labour mobility of co-ethnics, the exploitation of ethnic market niches and the creation of ethnic entrepreneurship in Poland through the adoption of German business matrices. Considering an extensive survey of Latin American transnational entrepreneurs living in the US, Portes et al. (2002) concluded that the social networks of transnational business owners have a larger geographical scope than “local” migrant business owners. Recently, Solano proposed to integrate the theory of mixed embeddedness and theories of transnationalism (Solano, 2016a & 2016b). In particular, he uses a scheme that adapts the mixed embeddedness approach to the case of transnational entrepreneurship, for Moroccan entrepreneurs in Milan and Amsterdam (2016a & 2016b).

It is noteworthy that transnational businesses seem to be usually managed by migrants with higher levels of training, expertise and/or resources, and that the transnational space does not necessarily tend to fade over time due to assimilation. In this regard, Rusinovic (2008) showed that second-generation migrants in the Netherlands still maintain old transnational businesses. In a nutshell, all these studies show that, beyond the apparent circumscribed setting, immigrant entrepreneurs are involved in fluid, dynamic and mobile processes beyond national, regional and local settings (Molina, Lerner, Lubbers, & Díaz, 2013).

### 4 “Circulation” and Geographical Dispersion as a Resource

Along the theories of transnationalism, the ‘circulation’ paradigm has played a prominent role in French migration studies since the 1990s, by focusing primarily on the dynamics of migrant entrepreneurs’ mobility (Cortés & Faret, 2009; Lévy, 1994 & 2001). As a main gateway of international trade, the French city of Marseille has been extensively studied under this perspective (Schmoll & Semi, 2013).

These scholars, mainly geographers, tried to surpass the dichotomy between local and global spaces that usually permeates migrant studies' debates, highlighting both the processes of circulation that cross-cut local-global realities and their spatial discontinuities. In this sense, the notions of relevance of motion, *circulatory migrations* and *territories*<sup>6</sup> are emphasised over that of *migration* (Tarrus, 1995; Ma Mung, Dorai, & Hily, 1998; Hily, 2009). Contrasting with the idea of *enclave* as an encapsulated reality with a fixed structure, they underline its flexibility, adaptability and continuous reorientation (Ma Mung, 1992 & 1996; Péraldi, Foughali & Spinosa, 1995; Audebert, 2007). The concept of "economic device" (*dispositif économique*), coined by Ma Mung (1992 & 1996), actually revisits the "enclave debate" by stressing migrant entrepreneurs' agency and decision-making. Migrants, under this perspective, are the main agents of space and, as such, they have the capacity to manage and control spatial dispersion (Cortes, 2009). These actors in fact employ both local and transnational strategies at once, and through social networking and multilocal links can move efficiently beyond boundaries and stay afloat (Audebert, 2007; Ma Mung, 2009). So, "there is a multitude of social actors overlapping, blurring the boundaries of race, ethnicity or nationality, enacting commercial activities through spatial mobility" (Schmoll & Semi, 2013, p. 389). In this view, the geographical distance and dispersion are not considered an obstacle but a resource that enhances social and geographical connections (inter-polarity) (Ma Mung, 2009).

From this perspective, Péraldi (2005) describes how new forms of migration and mobility from South to North are appearing in marketplaces of northern Mediterranean cities like Marseille, Istanbul or Milan. The image of migrant worker has been progressively replaced by "the commercial traveller, the smuggler or the long-distance trader" (Péraldi, 2005, p. 47). These trans-border commercial activities involve the development of pluri-ethnic, pluri-cultural and pluri-religious networks (Turkish, Maghrebi and African immigrants) that make economic transactions possible. These are supported by expectations of future reciprocal commitment, in which reputation and codes of honour are very relevant (Missaoui, 1995). These multi-local connections empower migrants for moving across borders, not only physically but also legally. Péraldi, Foughali and Spinosa (1995) use the classical notion of the *bazaar economy* (Geertz, 1978) to explain the nature of ethnic enterprises "being in/between two worlds" (Tarrus, 2000), a social institution present in all European cities and particularly in big commercial harbour cities like Marseille or Alicante<sup>7</sup> (see Péraldi et al., 1995).

Bertoncello (2009), investigating the case of Sub-Saharan entrepreneurs settled in Belsunce, showed how their commercial performance depend on mobility and their capacity to expand their businesses through different places, creating "circumstantial communities" or "ephemeral associations" along these routes (Bredeloup, 2013). In a similar vein, Tarrus (1992, 1995, 2000 & 2009), mainly interested in the patterns of cross-border commerce and transnational marketplaces, developed the notion of "circulatory territory", building on a rich ethnographic research in the Mediterranean area. He accurately describes the circulations of people and objects within and between Mediterranean cities, especially through the prism of informal trade and the social and spatial organisation of such mobility. According to Tarrus (2000), these territories are the expression of social links, characterised by instability. Circulatory territories are created thanks to the migrants' relations in the different places through which they circulate.<sup>8</sup> The actors' use of the spatial dimension of society along with the competences and knowledge associ-

6. Concepts such as "circularity" or "circular migration" have different meanings. Throughout this article we refer to the paradigm of migration routes, prevailing since the 1980s in migration studies in France, with the aim to analyze mobility in dynamic terms and leave the duality "here-there" (Hily, 2009). Since it shows some similarities with the transnational perspective, this notion has received widespread use in Anglophone literature (Gualda, 2012). One of the most common meanings is indicated by Newland (2009), where circulation is conceived as a non-permanent migration which involves migration from one country to another for various reasons (work, academic, survival, etc.) and usually implies recurrence of migratory movement (round trips, cyclic, seasonal or periodic stays, etc.).

7. For the Spanish case, the port city of Alicante, with its historical relationship with the Algerian city of Oran, has facilitated the development of a powerful 'bazaar economy' leveraging the growing role of the city in the mobility of Algerian between Europe and North Africa (Sempere, 2000).

8. The term "circulatory territories" can be connected with what Schmoll and Semi (2013, p. 380) calls "shadow circuits" (identified in Italian cities like Turin and Naples), considered as transit destinations, defined as partially invisible interactions within a circulatory territory, where invisibility constitutes a "strategic and relevant asset for people who rely, for better or worse, on borders." Both terms consider the invisibility as a strategic advantage for migrants, which can conflate into the mainstream side of globalisation.



ated to it forms what Lévy (1994 & 2001) called *spatial capital*, assumed to be even more effective than “weak” social capital to gain access to resources (see Granovetter, 1973).

## 5 Economic Emplacement of Immigrant Businesses: A More Holistic Approach

Nina Glick-Schiller and Ayse Çağlar pointed out that while the literature of transnationalism has overcome methodological nationalism, it still assumes that people from the same ethnic origin are homogeneous in terms of culture, values or achievements. Accordingly, they developed the concepts of “displacement” and “emplacement” as part of the transnational theoretical agenda intended to describe more precisely the wide range of mobilities, and the various forms of dispossession experienced by people forced to look for better living conditions without assuming an “ethnic lens”, i.e., the generic homogeneity of those with the same national origin (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013). The counterpart of the process of displacement is “emplacement”, i.e., the process oriented at rebuilding the networks of connections in the new place, interacting with the given network of opportunities and constraints.

The advantage of this conceptualization is that it conceives the “migration process” as a multi-scalar phenomenon connected both to global and local factors, without assuming the existence of “communities” or “cultural orientations” beforehand (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2016). The notion of emplacement refers therefore to the ability of migrants to find a place for themselves in a given locality within its power structures at different levels. Emplacement enhances the mixed-embeddedness’ perspective since, it is argued, scholars must examine the changing opportunity structures and barriers to entrepreneurial activity as they are configured by the continuing regeneration of urban space, governance and structures of capital accumulation (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 496). Migrant entrepreneurs’ identities, practices and relationships should be analysed as they are constituted within specific cities and points of time. Beyond specific neighbourhoods, institutions or activities, analyses need to focus on the relationships between cities and migrants and to encompass the ways city residents participate in multiple hierarchical networks and institutions of unequal power.

Emplacement is understood as the relationship between the continuing restructuring of a city within networks of power and migrants’ efforts to settle and build networks. From this perspective, by exploring urban-based entrepreneurial activities as a mode of emplacement, special analytical attention is given to the conjunction of time and place. Migrants’ local and transnational networks of connection are considered in relation to local institutions, structures and narratives, as they emerge at particular moments in the historical trajectory and multi-scalar positioning of specific cities (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 495). From the *emplacement* perspective, the notion of space becomes definitively dynamic and shifting, since all residents of a city mutually constitute and are constituted by the local, national and global processes that change over time (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 496). One of the advantages of this concept is that it avoids the use of the “ethnic” label, which assumes the pre-existence of a given community or a group differentiated from others, and focuses on the ways individuals and groups manage to insert themselves in a complex and dynamic structure of opportunities and constraints. In this vein, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar claim to go beyond methodological nationalism and ethnic lens (2016).

Ceccagno (2015) adopted an emplacement perspective to study Chinese entrepreneurship in Italian industrial districts. In particular, she investigated the structural factors that shaped opportunity structures and productive regimes in a specific locality and positioned migrants’ agency within such a perspective. Schiller and Çağlar (2013), using the example of Halle an der Saale in Eastern Germany they note that the synergies between urban regeneration and rebranding efforts and the emplacement of migrants in that city through locally situated and transnationally connected small businesses. Shin (2017) looks at how the territoriality of transnational enclaves is constituted by interactions among the lives and the discourses of three groups of ethnic Korean transnational migrants in London. The paper shows the importance of transnational practices and geopolitical relationships within and beyond transnational enclaves.

## 6 Migrant Businesses in Space: Towards an Integrated Theoretical Framework

In this paper we have summarized the development of the major theories on migrant entrepreneurship along the spatial line, showing a shifting from a static to a more dynamic and complex conceptualization. The mixed embeddedness approach, first, and *emplacement* theories, thereafter, propose a multi-scalar analysis to show the interconnectedness of socio-economic, political, cultural, and regulatory forces across multiple sites. Here we propose a summary of this changing comprehension of space and some methodological remarks in that direction.

Migrant businesses have received an enormous academic attention during the last four decades (see Aliaga-Isla & Rialp 2013 for a systematic review). Much of these analyses has been pivoting around the spatial variable. However, during this wide span both the local (urban patterns) and the international contexts (emerging processes of globalisation) have changed dramatically too. Global flows of people, capital and things have multiplied thanks to the extraordinary development of transport and communications. Dynamic and diverse migratory movements have definitely changed both original settings and the diversity and multicultural composition of urban centres, particularly in North America and Europe. The global expansion of capitalism and rapid technological advancement have contributed to speed up these processes, further *compressing* time and space (see Harvey, 1989) in the era of “super-connectivity” (Vertovec, 2007). As a consequence, theories of migrant economies have been forced to gradually shift the spatial ontology, from a static and circumscribed characterization of migrant economies to a more dynamic and flexible one.

Imbued by the general comprehension of entrepreneurial clusters, classical theories have paid particular attention to the concentration of ethnic businesses in neighbourhoods — particularly those with high levels of ethnic residential segregation, resulting in enclaves. In this regard, space has been central in the analysis of migrant businesses in relation to the evolution of neighbourhood morphologies and the socio-economic trajectories of both migrant employers and co-ethnic workers (Dijst & Kempen, 1991). Subsequent studies, however, have questioned the static nature of these contexts and both the notions of enclave and ethnicity linked to them (Garcés, 2011). These new perspectives, usually associated to the transnational approach, show that the *enclave* transcended the notions of *place* and physical *space*, in line with contemporary processes of capital expansion and the multi-scale flux of capitals, workers and ideas. Overcoming the local and circumscribed character of the enclave, these approaches underlined the international connections and the extensive and disperse character of these socio-economic spaces (Werbner, 2001). In this line, the notion of *social spaces* tries to incorporate the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon, the complex patterns of ethnic interaction beyond the enclave setting, and the spatial discontinuities that go beyond borders and boundaries, as the French scholars noted. Alongside the former theories, the transnational approach can also be understood as a reaction against the traditional static perspective of migrant entrepreneurship, considering the overreaching processes of globalization and mobility of the late 20th century.

These theoretical moves reveal a shifting comprehension of space and a more complex understanding of the context in which migrant businesses and migrant entrepreneurs operate. Current proposals go even further, challenging some of the traditional views of transnational entrepreneurship and proposing instead that transnational entrepreneurship today is more fluid than previous studies have suggested, and that these processes are better viewed as a continuum rather than a set of discrete business types (Bagwell, 2015). However, despite this progressive change in the notion of space that permeates the analysis of migrant economies, a coherent spatial framework and an appropriate methodology that accompanies this framework are still missing (Wang, 2013).

The analysis of the development of the theories on migrant entrepreneurship along the spatial line, provides us however with some concluding and critical remarks that may be useful for further theoretical conceptualizations:

First, migrant economies define a great myriad of cases, from local and circumscribed neighbouring groceries to transnational corporations articulated across extra-territorial, cross-bordering, social spaces. These spaces transcend frontiers and specific legal frameworks, displaying higher levels of complexity that were probably mostly absent four or three decades ago for migrant enterprises.

Second, for this reason, migration studies should adopt a more holistic approach, linking research on specific entrepreneurs' experiences to broader studies of social transformations connected with global trends (Vargas-Silva, 2012, p. 21).

Third, a better understanding of the relationship between *ethnicity* (i.e., culture) and *space* is needed, without losing a critical perspective — for example, a gender perspective is noticeably lacking in much of this research and the notion of *ethnic* and *ethnicity* that accompanies these studies is often misleading. Existing studies on migrant businesses usually focus on neighbourhood or local levels, but this approach presents limitations for the development of a coherent and spatially informed analytical framework in understanding not only the process of entrepreneurship (Yeung, 2009) but also how space, place, and race/ethnicity interact in the process of entrepreneurship.

Fourth, future studies should include a better articulation of concepts like “identity”, “resources” and “territories”, following pioneering imprints (Light & Bhachu, 1993; Ma Mung, 1996). In this sense, a more detailed analysis of the types of circulating capital and resources beyond a categorization that sticks the entrepreneur to a fixed social context would be recommended. At the same time, all of these resources included in the phenomenon, regardless of the name we use to call them (e.g., “ethnic”, “migratory”, “mobile”, “circular”, “transnational”, etc.), generate urban transformations and social changes that demand further analysis in their own right.

Fifth, as Wang (2013) pointed out, this new spatial framework requires that social, cultural, political, and institutional forces at different scales be simultaneously considered, from individual entrepreneurs and firms, the local community, regional labour markets, to national and global contexts. Some of the latest proposals (Wang, 2013; Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2016; Solano, 2016b) find a common methodological ground and urge to apply a multifocal or multi-scalar ethnographic approach which delineates how movements are constituted at different scales (smooth flows at one level can be disruptions or encapsulations at another), how migrants' scale-making projects intersect with states' scale management, and how we can locate multiple sites analytically. In doing so, multi-scalar ethnography enables an explanation of why some mobility is more consequential than others, and identifies strategic sites where critical engagement can be grounded (Xiang, 2013, p. 282).

We probably owe the mixed embeddedness approach to have shown the different degrees of economic integration of migrants businesses (micro, meso and macro levels) beyond the socio-cultural traits of the ethnic group. Further, as Ceccagno (2017, p. 85) has recently shown, both mixed embeddedness and emplacement conceptual frameworks stress the embeddedness of migrant agency, on the one hand, and the complexity surrounding the processes of migrant entrepreneurship, on the other, proposing a multi-level approach that highlights the role of institutional, political, and socio-economic structures in the emergence and development of migrant economies. This allows to explore migration across different socio-spatial levels, rather than focusing solely on macro-level studies of migration trends, which have tended to dominate migration studies (Williamson, 2015). According to this view, entrepreneurs have consistently shaped (and are in turn shaped) by these institutional environments, and the interaction between these poles influences entrepreneurs' values, perceptions, management strategies, and performance. In a nutshell, social, cultural, political, and institutional forces at different scales need to be simultaneously considered (Wang, 2013), which also implies the introduction of interdisciplinary points of view and multi-layered spaces, since entrepreneurs may follow logics of connectivity beyond the scope of neighbourhoods, cities and nation-states (Hoerder, 2012).

Yet a change of perspective is not enough to move on in the field of migrant studies without a new multi-scalar methodology, and this is where a combination between a multisite ethnographic fieldwork and the analysis of transnational social networks promises advances in the field. As Wen and Tan (2009) showed, social network analysis allows us to understand both entrepreneurship's local and transnational networks and their interactions; formal and informal institutional embeddedness; and the interaction between structure and resources in *glocalised* networks.

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