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INTRODUCTION



Globalizations from below: understanding the spatialities, mobilities and resources of transnational migrant entrepreneurs across the globe

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ABSTRACT

Transnational corporations have been long recognized as the building blocks of global system theory and their impact is widely acknowledged and studied. By comparison, we have insufficient understanding of transnational practices ‘from below’. We argue that focusing on transnational migrant entrepreneurship is a novel opportunity to gain insights into the social and economic processes of ‘globalization from below’. Such processes refer to the dynamics and practices initiated by actors outside the hegemonic socio-economic spheres who, using various resources, move people, goods and ideas across national borders to create small-scale enterprises thus connecting distant places and people around the world. This special issue brings together a transdisciplinary group of researchers who examine the spatialities, mobilities and resources of transnational migrant entrepreneurs in Asia, Europe, North Africa, South America and the USA. The rich empirical base, coupled with diverse research methods, provides new insights into the phenomenon to scholars, policymakers and practitioners.

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1. Introduction

Transnational corporations have been long recognized as the building blocks of global system theory (Sklair, 2000) and their economic impact is widely acknowledged and studied (e.g. United Nations, 2017). By comparison, we have scant understanding of transnational economic practices ‘from below’ and few theories exist about how ‘from below’ contributes to economic globalization (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Mathews & Alba Vega, 2012). We define ‘globalization from below’ as the processes and practices initiated by actors outside the hegemonic economic and social spheres who, using various resources, move people, goods and ideas across national borders to create small-scale enterprises (formal or informal), thus connecting distant places and people around the world.

In this special issue, we argue that studying transnational migrant entrepreneurship is a novel opportunity to gain insights into the economic and social processes of globalization from below, moving beyond the perspective of global power elites and corporations. Focusing on transnational entrepreneurship as a case of ‘globalization from below’ offers nuanced and robust inroads to understand the diversity of spatial mobilities and connections created through and by migrants

as they establish and build businesses in their receiving countries, their origin countries, and places beyond, as well as the resources they use for such purpose. By analysing such mobilities, spatialities and resources we can gain a much richer understanding of the complexity of globalization from below.

We see transnational migrant entrepreneurs as individuals with a history of migration, who use knowledge and resources, acquired over their life course, to develop and engage in business practices that span two or more countries (Riaño et al., 2022; Solano, 2020; Webster & Haandrikman, 2017; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2022). Such resources include but are not limited to mobility expertise, the ability to identify opportunities in diverse localities, business know-how, and social networks. Individuals with migration experience include those who have moved to live outside their countries of origin, who formerly lived abroad but have returned to their countries of origin, and/or who live their lives by moving regularly between countries (Riaño, 2023).

Transnational migrant entrepreneurship has emerged in the context of contemporary social and technological transformations, which have greatly intensified the cross-border movement of people, ideas, objects, and capital, thus creating new pathways for migrants to organize and perform their entrepreneurial activities across transnational spaces (Ambrosini, 2012; Portes et al., 2002). Indeed, a variety of cross-country initiatives by individuals with migration experience have emerged in recent decades and transnational migrant entrepreneurship is a rapidly growing field of research (e.g. Drori et al., 2009; Muñoz-Castro et al., 2019; Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020) among scholars in business, economics, geography and other social sciences (Sandoz et al., 2021).

Transnational migrant entrepreneurship includes, on the one hand, tertiary-educated migrants who make use of their international knowledge and networks to develop economic activities that connect places of origin, places of destination, and beyond (e.g. Brzozowski et al., 2019; Portes et al., 2002). On the other hand, it includes migrants with secondary or primary education and limited economic capacities who make the most of their abilities to cross state borders to trade and create businesses that involve diverse localities across countries (Åkesson, 2016; Bagwell, 2015; Solano, 2020), developing diverse forms of translocality (Brickell & Datta, 2011; Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013). For example, the activities of low-income African migrants who are constantly on the move to trade goods between European countries have been described as ‘globalization from below’, ‘new cosmopolitanisms’, and ‘underground globalizations’ (Tarrius, 2014). In a more recent example, Tudoroiu (2021) demonstrates tensions between ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ by examining the entrepreneurial practices of Chinese entrepreneurs running businesses overseas, for instance in Ghana. This complex relation, Tudoroiu reminds us, exposes the diversity and complexity of migrant entrepreneurship at both the individual and societal levels.

‘From below’ activities by transnational migrant entrepreneurs are not as visible as those of transnational corporations because they are carried out on a smaller scale, with lower capital and often with the main support of personal networks (Mathews & Alba Vega, 2012; Portes, 2000). In contrast to the already much-discussed migrant or ethnic minority entrepreneurs, transnational migrant entrepreneurship is characterized by the frequency and intensity of cross-border business activities that involve grass-root initiatives and negotiations by people navigating across multiple geographical scales (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Mau, 2010; Portes et al., 1999; Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021; Tarrius, 2002; Riaño et al., 2022).

This special issue examines the role of transnational migrant entrepreneurship as a form of globalization from below, by focusing on the multiple geographical scales and spatial mobilities in which entrepreneurial activities are inherently embedded. As a compilation, this special issue brings new thinking to *Globalizations* by examining the ways transnational migrant

entrepreneurship is both impacted by and contributes to varying globalization processes. Migrant entrepreneurship is an entry point to understand and explore the plurality and diverse scales interwoven in economic and social globalization. While globalization is a phenomenon shaped, influenced and produced by multifaceted actors, we turn to those who are not hegemonically identified as important agents in a globalizing world. We move beyond the perspective of transnational corporations to understand the transnational business initiatives of migrants of diverse educational backgrounds, migratory contexts, and spatial mobility experiences. In doing so, we move from singular to plural understandings of global processes, thus bringing new thought to theories of economic globalization and expanding them to include the diversity of social processes and interconnections that shape today's world.

This special issue brings together a vibrant group of researchers from diverse disciplines including anthropology, geography, political science, and sociology who examine the issue of globalization from below in a variety of geographical contexts across the world including Colombia, China, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan and the USA. The rich empirical base, coupled with a diverse range of research methods, provides new insights into the phenomenon to scholars, policymakers and practitioners as they engage with these complex topics.

2. Globalization from below: research advances and gaps

The perspective of 'globalization from below' is relatively under-explored and contributions to its study are still scarce. Portes (2000) was one of the first authors to take an interest in the subject. In contrast to transnational corporate capitalism, he emphasized two key components of migrant transnationalism: the active agency of migrants and their transnational practices, which generate processes of globalization that undermine state authority. For Alan Smart (1999), brokerage across borders offers risky opportunities that attract particularly those with little capital but higher risk tolerance. The term is also used by Tarrius (2002) to describe the strategies of poor migrants who cross national, local and continental boundaries in an effort to access the benefits of globalization from which they have been excluded. From the perspective of a world economy of poor-to-poor, Tarrius (2014) examines the circulatory territories of nomad traders in the Mediterranean area whom he calls 'transmigrants', who travel thousands of kilometers, often from home to home, for a few months or a few years, with the support of their associates and relatives, to sell contraband products or services by circumventing the laws of the countries they cross (*idem*, 2014).

Using a similar theoretical basis to Tarrius, Peraldi focuses on long-distance trading migrants (2005, p. 48) who are transnationally connected to trade networks and marketplaces. Focusing on the case of Marseille, France, he analyses the development of a 'bazaar economy' constituted by a network of trade actors negotiating and operating between legality and illegality, formality and informality (Peraldi, 1999, p. 7). In a similar vein, Schmoll (2005), follows the transnational trading networks of Tunisian migrants who operate in Naples and who develop 'shadow circuits' of trade within a circulatory territory in which migrants act as traders and intermediaries for diverse goods and services. These studies have the great value of placing the spatial mobility of cross-border traders at the center of their studies and of showing how migrants with scarce resources contribute to globalization from below by means of informal strategies.

Moreover, inspired by initial research on Hong Kong's informal sector and on Hong Kong-run industrial enterprises in China, Smart and Smart (2005) propose the term 'petty capitalists' to characterize 'individuals or households who employ a small number of workers but are themselves

actively involved in the labor process' (*idem*:3). They suggest that 'petty capitalists' may be more useful than the popular term 'entrepreneur' because it emphasizes the meaningful experience of small-scale actors and their ambiguous position between capital and labor, cooperation and exploitation, family and economy, tradition and modernity, friends and competitors. Articles from the special issue edited by Smart and Smart (*idem*), examine how small firms in Europe, Asia, and Latin America have been compelled to operate and compete in a fast-moving transnational economic environment. In doing so, the authors aim to understand the dynamics and place of petty capitalism in a globalized capitalist economy. They contend that the greater facility with which goods, money and ideas currently move around the world has made it possible, and sometimes necessary, for very small firms and individuals to engage with global markets. Mathews and Alba Vega (2012, p. 1) highlight the informal dimension of 'globalization from below' thus describing it as 'the transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal transactions, often semi-legal or illegal transactions, often associated with the 'developing world' but in fact apparent across the globe'.

This collection of work on globalization from below advances our understanding of the phenomenon in terms of its importance as a form of adaptation by migrants (Portes et al., 2002), the emergence of transnational shadow circuits of trade by people excluded or marginalized from dominant forms of globalization, and the development of global capitalism thanks to the actions of petty capitalists. It also highlights the importance and magnitude of migrant activities in shaping globalization processes at all scales. At the same time, some questions remain open: To what extent can the actions of transnational migrant entrepreneurs be considered only as a form of economic adaptation? It seems to us a wider scope of these processes such as the possible desire of these small entrepreneurs to be economically independent, to innovate, to contribute to their communities of origin, and to maintain social and cultural links with other places around the world should receive more attention. Moreover, there seems to be in some cases a homogeneous view of transnational migrant entrepreneurs as poor people who carry out illegal trade actions across national borders (Portes & Martinez, 2019). Many of these discussions overlook issues of heterogeneity within migrant entrepreneurship, for example in terms of formality, informality, gender, racialization, education and class (Riaño, 2023).

Further, we argue that actors of globalization from below are a heterogeneous group whose resources and social position vary from survival situations to those who have enough resources to lead a good life. Also, their actions and practices are not only informal but may be combined with formal practices – not to mention the spectrum of activities within those categories. There is a wide range of situations: from individuals transporting goods across borders in their suitcases (Riaño, 2023) to digital professionals who move services, money and knowledge on a larger scale and without necessarily traveling themselves (Yamamura & Lassalle, 2023). Moreover, most studies do not sufficiently explore the diverse types of spatialities inherent in the activities 'from below' of transnational migrant entrepreneurs: what kind of spaces do they involve, what locations do they connect and what kind of mobilities of goods, people, services, capital and ideas take place between the different locations?

To address these gaps, this special issue explores the relationship between transnational migrant entrepreneurship and globalization from below in *three ways*. First, we want to advance conceptual approaches that uncover the diversity of *spatialities* and transnational connections created by migrant entrepreneurs beyond the spatial binary 'country of origin' and 'country of destination' (Mitmasser, 2022). The multiple embeddedness of migrants' entrepreneurial practices across local, regional, and transnational geographies needs more consideration (Valenzuela-Garcia

et al., 2018). Scholars have argued that transnational entrepreneurs not only connect their countries of origin and the countries to which they have migrated but have the potential to socially and economically connect to other countries (Solano et al., 2022), given their mobility experiences and resulting global connections (Sandoz et al., 2021). Moreover, the diversity of connections with different locales across the globe and the ways and forms of these connections are still poorly understood (Brickell & Datta, 2011; Sandoz et al., 2021; Webster, 2017).

Second, we look at the variety of physical *mobilities* involved in the transport of goods and capital and the movement of people across national borders (Riaño et al., 2022). Despite the development of digital communications, there can be no transport of goods and capital without movement, and therefore no trade (Cresswell, 2010; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Thus, understanding the different forms of mobility involved is essential to understanding how transnational migrant entrepreneurs contribute to globalization from below.

Third, we want to increase our understanding of the different kinds of *resources* with which transnational migrant entrepreneurs are endowed. As we argued above, there is a variety of situations of advantage and disadvantage among transnational migrant entrepreneurs in terms of their resources including economic capital, social capital, education, migration experience, spatial mobility capital, and legal capital (Moret, 2018; Nowicka, 2013). As other authors have shown (Portes & Martinez, 2019), most research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship still fails to consider seriously the impact of unequally distributed forms of power in migrant cross-border business-making processes. This is very important because the experiences of migrants, and the strategies they use to develop their transnational businesses depend in large part on the type of personal resources they have (Riaño et al., 2022). Focusing on this dimension enables us to highlight the heterogeneity among transnational migrant entrepreneurs and the drivers behind their successes and failures.

3. Approaching globalization from below: spatialities, mobilities and migrant resources

Mobilities, spatialities and migrant resources are the three dimensions guiding the papers included in this special issue to bolster our understanding of globalization from below through the specific case of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. To explain our approach, we describe in the following paragraphs our understanding of each dimension, their scientific importance, and the kinds of empirical questions that result from them.

3.1. Spatialities

Geographers have drawn attention to ‘the fact that social life necessarily happens in certain *spaces and places*’ (Sharp, 1999, p. 261). Ley (2010, p. 4) emphasizes ‘the continuing importance of geography in transnational migration’ for reasons of (a) spatial differentiation (the social fields of transnational migrants are ‘not a uniform surface of sameness but acutely differentiated’), (b) the fact that ‘time–space compression has not exhausted the role of distance’, and (c) because ‘place matters as migrants embody the cultural traits of their regions of origin in moving across the social field’ (*idem*, 2010: 4). This means that the question of the spaces *where* and across which transnational migrant entrepreneurship takes place, and the modes in which space is implicated in the constitution and conduct of cross-border business activities needs to be given the attention it deserves (Riaño et al., 2022). While it is true that several studies mention the importance of context

for the analysis of entrepreneurship (e.g. Welter, 2011), many lack a spatial dimension. We need to give attention to geographical location, distance and spatial differentiation (Riaño, 2023; Sandoz et al., 2021; Webster & Kontkanen, 2021; Yamamura et al., 2022).

In practice, in the literature, the use of ‘context’ refers to dimensions such as the socio-cultural (expectations, norms), the economic (wealthy, poor), the political (stability, instability) and the institutional (existing, lacking, inadequate policies), which are undoubtedly very important, but not sufficiently operationalized to understand the geographic and material dimensions of space. For instance, the mixed embeddedness approach, one of the main theoretical frameworks used by social scientists to discuss the impact of contexts on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, uses social dimensions of analysis without reference to geographic location and spatial differentiation: it combines the micro-level of an entrepreneur’s resources with meso-level opportunity structures and macro-institutional frameworks (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2022). While the lack of conceptualization of the spatial context in transnational entrepreneurship has been pointed out and scales as a geographical dimension have been introduced (Yamamura et al., 2023), it is also important to further explore the role of other spatial factors such as geographic *location* (e.g. central, peripheral, Global North, Global South), spatial *distance or proximity* (e.g. far, near), place *size* (population, area), *mobility infrastructure* (abundant, lacking) and degree and characteristics of *connectivity* (quality of transport, internet, roads) to- and with other places in the world (Riaño et al., 2022). Addressing these latter dimensions of spatiality opens the door to grasping the different kinds of socio-spatial *connections* between places that migrants create through their cross-border trade activities. Using this perspective empirically means answering more nuanced research questions, which center on *spatiality* in transnational practices.

3.2. Mobilities

The general term mobility refers to ‘the long-term movements of migration and the shorter-term, circulatory movements involved in everyday life such as travelling to and from work, shopping, visiting friends and going on holiday’ (Bowly 1999, p. 168). Mobility thus refers to movement across geographical space and time, and it is central to cross-border activities. Understanding the patterns and impacts of a range of spatial movements is significant to understanding globalized societies, as authors of the ‘mobility turn’ have shown (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000). We argue that applying a mobility lens to the study of transnational migrant entrepreneurship can advance our understanding of globalization from below: ‘focusing on the complexity of mobility and immobility patterns involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship would not only deepen our understanding of how entrepreneurs create transnational spaces but also challenge static and ethnic biases in the field’ (Sandoz et al., 2021, p. 9). Further, using a mobilities perspective also allows understanding that the transnational engagement of migrant entrepreneurs often transcends the origin–destination binary (Mittmasser, 2022).

Using a mobilities lens involves paying attention to ‘the multi-scalar movements of transnational migrant entrepreneurs (e.g. home, neighborhood, city, region, international), the different material means used to move (e. g. telephone, computer, streets, cars, trains, boats, planes), and the diversity of mobility patterns embodied (e.g. linear, circular, cyclical, pendular, onward, repeated returns)’ (Sandoz et al., 2021, p. 9). Furthermore, we need to pay attention to the growing role of digital technologies in the cross-border activities of migrant entrepreneurs involved in processes of globalization from below, as they transform their relationship to mobility, immobility and distances

(Harima & Baron, 2020). Paying attention to mobilities means asking what kinds of mobilities and immobilities take place in physical and virtual spaces, what kinds of flows and mobilities of people, capital, goods and knowledge between one or several countries arise, how policies enable or hinder such spatial mobilities, what are the different types of scales involved in cross-border trade (e.g. local, regional, national, transnational), and what levels of capital are involved in such transnational movements (e.g. low, moderate, higher) (Riaño, 2023).

3.3. Resources

Bourdieu's work on the different forms of capital has been considered a cornerstone for explaining social divisions and inequalities in any society (Moret, 2018; Nowicka, 2013). By using a social inequalities perspective on globalization processes (Beck, 2007; Weiss, 2005), we are interested in understanding the diverse situations of advantage and disadvantage that emerge among transnational migrant entrepreneurs depending on their different capitals or situated personal resources. Such resources can include economic capital (e.g. money, property), social capital (e.g. social contacts and networks) and cultural capital (e.g. education, languages), but also encompass factors relating to geographical or spatial issues (e.g. migration experience, spatial know-how) as well as legal and administrative aspects (e.g. nationality or type of permit and the rights that derive from it) (Riaño et al., 2022). Inquiring about resources means asking what kinds of resources the business activities of transnational migrant entrepreneurs use, what kinds of situations of advantage and disadvantage emerge among transnational migrant entrepreneurs depending on their different resources, how used resources connect with the different types of experiences of migrant entrepreneurs and the strategies they use to conduct their businesses, and how micro-level experiences are connected with globalizations from below.

4. How the papers in the special issue advance our understanding of spatialities, mobilities and resources

The six papers in this special issue advance our understanding of *spatialities, mobilities, and resources* in several ways.

In her article 'Orange Bras, *Petit* Capitalism and E-entrepreneurs. On the Backroads of Globalization between China and Taiwan', Beatrice Zani (2022) explores the multiple forms that capitalism and globalization from below can take in the digital age. Focusing on WeChat, an online space for sociality and commerce, she shows how Chinese women engage in petty capitalist practices and contribute to globalization from below through the digitized, networked, and transnational circulation of commodities. Zani conducted a multi-sited ethnography in China and Taiwan in both physical and digital space. Her in-depth examination of day-to-day lives alongside complicated economic and political systems highlights the importance of bringing the agency of migrants to the center of globalization studies. Through the biographies of Chinese women entrepreneurs in Taiwan, we learn that the history of small transnational enterprises is rooted in *spatial trajectories and multi-scalar mobilities* of rural-urban migration, which are followed by international migration. The *resources* that Chinese women use to create small businesses that connect communities in China and Taiwan are social, digital and locational. Their knowledge of global supply chain processes learnt in multinationals in China is a key resource for their transnational businesses.

Their multi-sited networks of family members, co-villagers, and previous factory colleagues interact to create a small-scale transnational commerce, in the shadows of multinational corporation's business. By showing the significant links between Chinese women's migratory and professional paths and the *commercial geography* of the products they sell in Taiwan, Zani contributes to this special issue and shows that the 'social life' of such objects is embedded in their biographies. Her case highlights the ways women build and maintain networks and connections across *spatialities* – between countries and locations. Importantly, the gendered inequalities highlighted in the women's biographies underscore the urgent need to recognize multiple forms of globalization and their effects.

The article 'Migrant Entrepreneurs in the 'Farm of Europe': The Role of Transnational Structures' by Ignacio Fradejas-García, José Luis Molina and Miranda Lubbers (2023), focuses on the transnational *mobilities* resulting from the activities of Romanian entrepreneurs, which connect two distant *spaces*: the agro-industrial district of Almería (Roquetas del Mar, a city in southern Spain) and Bistrița-Năsău, a rural area in Transylvania (Romania). Using ethnographic fieldwork and social network analysis, the authors show that Romanian entrepreneurs use various forms of *circulation* to connect places across national borders. To do so, they use the social and material *resources* available in both Spain and Romania. To reduce their operating costs and compensate for their lack of capital, they benefit from the mobilization of cheap labor from Romania to Spain, which was made possible by Romania's entry into the European Union (EU) in 2007. The article shows how the seasonal mobilization of a cheap labor force from Romania explains the occupation of a specific economic niche by transnational migrant entrepreneurs, which provided them with a competitive advantage to develop their businesses in Spain and expand into new markets nationally and internationally. Fradejas-García et al. (2023) contribute to this special issue by bringing to light how Romanian entrepreneurs use transnational social connections to provide labor mobility without the intervention of states, supranational institutions or international companies, which opened avenues for informal solutions beyond and despite state regulations.

Globalization from below by Romanian entrepreneurs encompasses both informal (mobile) traders who move products along illegal circuits beyond states and corporations and more specialized, formal and scaled-up entrepreneurs who make use of their personal networks on a transnational scale to provide labor. This article shows how the development of globalization from below is closely linked to globalization from above, that is, to the connections that exist between formal and informal agricultural production.

The article by Laure Sandoz, Christina Mittmasser, Yvonne Riaño and Lorena Izaguirre (2022), entitled 'Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs: Understanding their Dependencies, Fragilities, and Alternatives' develops an analytical framework to explore the complex web of *spatial and social interconnections* of transnational entrepreneurship 'from below'. Combining biographical and semi-structured interviews with ethnographic research, the authors examine under what conditions reliance on other people and places becomes an empowering or limiting factor for transnational entrepreneurs in Colombia, Spain and Switzerland. The paper highlights a range of *resources* related to social networks, geographic location, spatial mobility and institutional support to conduct their transnational businesses. Beyond diverse national regulations, gender also plays an important role in facilitating or restricting mobility, such as women with care responsibilities or women at particular physical risk when travelling in politically unstable places. These factors structure the ability of migrant entrepreneurs to use, build and maintain mutually beneficial *connections* in different locations and over time.

The authors empirically identify different configurations of risk and precariousness; while some entrepreneurs start from an advantageous socio-economic and locational position, with multiple options, and are able to use reciprocal dependencies productively, others are trapped in precarious situations and struggle with the fragility of their social and geographic positionality. However, the authors also show how some previously precarious entrepreneurs manage to develop alternatives to improve their livelihoods and fulfil their personal aspirations. In general, migrant entrepreneurs have unequal access to resources depending on their gender, their nationality, the geographic location of their place of residence, their relative access to digital technologies and the level of institutional support they receive. Thus, the authors contribute to this special issue by showing how entrepreneurs located in different geographic locations use their resources creatively to access new opportunities and how the specific power geometries, spatialities and mobilities on which they depend limit their ability to achieve their personal goals.

In their article ‘The Transnational Dimension of the Pakistani Ethnic Economy in Barcelona’, Berta Güell and Sonia Parella (2023), expose the *spatialities* that underline such an economy. The city of Barcelona has become a nodal point in the transnational social space of the Pakistani diaspora. Despite being rather invisible, Pakistanis stand out for their entrepreneurial activities, especially in the food and telecommunications sectors. The authors analyze the transnational dimension of Pakistani firms in Barcelona through the lens of the ‘transnational mixed embeddedness approach’ articulating the macro, meso and micro analytical levels and the *local/national and transnational territorial levels*. Many of the Pakistani-led entrepreneurial activities share attributes of globalization from below, such as self-employment (in the case of some small traders), and ease of access thanks to the support from the community and family/ethnic property of businesses. Moreover, they tend to operate in small-scale unregulated markets, they are labor-intensive, and entrepreneurs usually obtain the needed skills outside the formal educational system.

Pakistani entrepreneurs use a variety of *resources* to create and maintain their businesses and contribute to globalization from below. Their transnational strategies are facilitated by a favorable opportunity structure at the local level in Spain. In other words, if there was no institutional context in Barcelona to support migrant enterprises, economic transnationalism would not be feasible either. The circulation of capital among the Pakistani community’s transnational networks and the low barriers to entry in markets involving transnational transactions (e.g. mobile telephony or food imports and exports) facilitate the development of their businesses across national borders. The authors contribute to this special issue by showing how migrant entrepreneurs can be situated on a ‘transnational embeddedness continuum’ depending on the interplay of agency and micro-sociological processes, which involve within-group differences and meso-market and macro-structural factors.

The article by Giacomo Solano (2023), ‘Social Networks for Cross-border Entrepreneurial Activities: A Comparison between Moroccan Transnational and Domestic Migrant Entrepreneurs’ uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the use of social networks by Moroccan entrepreneurs living in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and Milan (Italy). Solano studies globalizations from below with an emphasis on the role of individuals, as well as how transnational migrant entrepreneurs take advantage of the possibilities offered by globalization processes and rely on *transnational connections* to develop a competitive advantage despite limited resources. Solano argues that Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs have more heterogeneous, geographically dispersed and territorially articulated support networks compared to Moroccan entrepreneurs whose business activities are limited to national borders. Transnational entrepreneurs take advantage of their ability to build

and maintain contact with people in several places. In contrast, those operating within national borders tend to mobilize resources within their dense, homogeneous and locally based networks.

Social networks are a key *resource* for Moroccan entrepreneurs in conducting transnational business activities. Without such contacts, they would not have had the financial resources necessary to launch or internationalize their businesses. This demonstrates how globalizers from below, with relatively limited (financial) resources, can carry out activities that transcend national borders thanks to key contacts. These contacts enable transnational entrepreneurs to develop their businesses and reduce their initial investments, both in terms of financial resources and access to the necessary information. Thus, the case of Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs contributes to this special issue by showing how globalizers from below mobilize the resources at their disposal to overcome their 'subordinate' position on the world stage. In other words, their power lies in their social networks.

Finally, Yamamura and Lassalle's paper (2023) 'Transnational Networks and Mobilities of IT migrant Entrepreneurs in a Globalizing World' extends the idea of networks and global connectivity of transnational entrepreneurship beyond social connectivity. In contrast to other works on transnational entrepreneurship which tend to solely focus on the transnational entrepreneurs themselves, this paper opens the debate towards the transnational connectedness of entrepreneurial ecosystems in which they are embedded. While previous research on the Maltese case has shown special constellations of proximities (Yamamura & Lasalle, 2022), this paper focuses on the transnational connection of the Maltese IT hub, the Silicon Valetta, with other entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as the Californian Silicon Valley but also beyond. Based on qualitative interviews with institutional and economic actors, this paper discusses how *spatiality* changes from densely networked proximities to proximity at a distance to other ecosystems. Conceptually, it furthers the view on the connectedness between industry-specific entrepreneurial ecosystems and introduces the concepts of intra- and cross-categorical transnational connections. The spatial *mobilities* of these actors beyond national borders contribute to the vibrant interconnected entrepreneurial ecosystems within the industry where they activate different *resources* for their entrepreneurial endeavors. In other contexts, such connections have been observed as also transcending geographical scales (Yamamura, 2023). Such a crucial industry-specific perspective of entrepreneurial ecosystems reveals how actors are transnationally connected and how transnational entrepreneurship 'from below' and its associated mobilities contribute to the overall global economy. While this case is focused on the IT industry, similar dynamics of resource allocation and mobilities which connected entrepreneurial ecosystems beyond spaces and scales could be also found in other industries.

5. Globalizations from below by transnational migrant entrepreneurs

The articles in this special issue reveal that, while operating from the local to the global scale, transnational migrant entrepreneurs produce a plurality of forms of globalization from below, combining formal and informal labor relations and diverse spatial mobilities. Demonstratively, they are a heterogeneous group ranging from self-employed individuals who operate on a micro-scale in unregulated markets and obtain their business skills outside the formal education system, to entrepreneurs who employ people, operate on a larger scale, work in more regulated markets, and obtain their business skills through formal education.

Regarding *spatialities*, the articles included in this special issue make it clear that transnational migrant enterprises are rooted in multi-spatial trajectories and multi-scalar mobilities, which may

combine both internal mobility and international migration(s). Those with fewer economic resources, such as Chinese female entrepreneurs, often come from rural provinces and have migrated to larger cities. International migration may result from different situations, such as binational marriage, forced displacement or the search for better economic opportunities abroad. It takes mostly place to urban centers - e.g. Amsterdam (Netherlands), Barcelona (Spain), Milan (Italy), San Antonio (Venezuela), Taipei (Taiwan), Zurich (Switzerland) -, but, it does involve rural areas (e.g. Roquetas del Mar in southern Spain) or specific industrial hubs, such as Silicon Valley and Valletta (Malta) where migrants can seize opportunities within a specific niche (e.g. agribusinesses or IT businesses). Some migrants develop their small transnational businesses in the countries where they have migrated while others return to their countries of origin (e.g. Cúcuta, Colombia) and try to run their businesses from there. Entrepreneurs with more economic resources generally come from urban environments, are able to select their residence location based on lifestyle reasons and live in places with good opportunities for their transnational businesses.

The articles in this special issue show why it is necessary to study transnational migrant entrepreneurship at all geographical scales to appreciate the emerging forms of globalization from below. The spatial trajectories of the goods and products people trade between countries and places are embedded in their multi-scalar biographies: from rural workers to laborers in local or multinational firms to owners of transnational businesses. Furthermore, these articles reveal why it is important to examine the role of the geographic locations where migrant entrepreneurs are located for their businesses. Geographically central locations such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Milan, Taipei and Zurich, with good rail and air connectivity to other central locations, offer many advantages for migrants' production and transnational trade activities. On the contrary, places like Cucuta, on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, offer advantages for the creation of transnational companies due to the geographical proximity to Venezuela, but at the same time limit such activities due to the city's peripheral location within Colombia, its poor infrastructure and the life-threatening situation that small entrepreneurs face due to existing geopolitical conflicts. Spatialities, such as core and peripheral contexts, can therefore facilitate or restrict transnational mobilities and transnational commerce.

The *mobilities* of transnational migrant entrepreneurs are also embedded in their personal biographies, ranging from internal mobilities within a state to international and transnational mobilities. The goods and products they move between two or more countries circulate through physical and virtual spaces. For example, Chinese women entrepreneurs import low-value goods from China that are difficult to find in local markets in Taiwan using both a social media app (WeChat) and physical means such as suitcase traders and containers managed by transnational delivery companies. In contrast, other transnational entrepreneurs, such as the suitcase traders who trade between Colombia and Venezuela, have very limited capital and need to transport their products by foot or using carts, bicycles, and motorbikes. Generally, entrepreneurs located in cities of the Global North have greater resources and can use digital management technologies to move their products. Furthermore, gender also plays an important role, as entrepreneurs with household and care responsibilities for minors or disabled persons - usually women - have fewer travel options than entrepreneurs without such responsibilities. Moreover, the mobilities of transnational actors connect entrepreneurial ecosystems with each other, creating novel opportunities and spatial constellation in transnational entrepreneurship as is the case discussed in the IT industry context.

The social and geographical positions of the entrepreneurs facilitate or hinder the possibilities of transnational mobility. The nationality of the entrepreneurs also plays an important role since those who have the nationality of an EU country can move and trade products between European

countries more freely. On the other hand, state mobility policies and the geopolitical situation of countries are important for cross-border mobility. For example, the presence of a borderland between China and Taiwan becomes an advantage for the transnational businesses of Chinese women entrepreneurs. Romanian entrepreneurs active in Spain benefited from Romania's accession to the European Union as they were able to freely bring cheap labor from Romania to work in their agribusinesses in Spain. The transnational strategies of Pakistani entrepreneurs are facilitated by a supportive institutional context in Barcelona without which economic transnationalism would not be feasible either. On the contrary, the geopolitical tension between Colombia and Venezuela and the armed conflict in the border area between the two countries creates risky work conditions for small cross-border entrepreneurs.

Regarding *resources*, articles in this special issue reveal the necessity to bring migrant agency to the center of globalization studies. Globalization from below would not be possible without the manifold resources that transnational migrant entrepreneurs use to move their businesses forward. These include social, cultural, digital, spatial, legal, and locational resources. For example, Chinese migrant women in Taiwan face discrimination in the Taiwanese labor market but their marriage to a Taiwanese citizen helps them to set up their own businesses. Migrants in Europe who marry European citizens have similar advantages. Furthermore, migratory biographies are a resource including the entrepreneurs' knowledge of business possibilities available in different countries as well as the business skills learnt along the way. Importantly, all migrant entrepreneurs rely on multi-sited networks of family members, 'ethnic' groups, and previous company colleagues. Chinese women rely on the networks of colleagues that they acquired while working in multinational companies in China. Romanian entrepreneurs succeeded in developing their businesses thanks to their Romanian networks but also to the local contacts that they obtained while working in Spain as agribusiness workers. Entrepreneurs living in Colombia, Spain and Switzerland rely on their spatial experience crossing borders and on a web of social networks that facilitate their access to new economic spaces, financing opportunities, moral support and knowledge. Pakistani entrepreneurs in Barcelona benefit from the circulation of capital among the Pakistani community's transnational networks and the low barriers to entry in markets involving transnational transactions. Moroccan entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan conducting transnational businesses would not have had the financial resources necessary to launch or internationalize their businesses without the support of strong ties with family members and trusted acquaintances.

In summary, *transnational spatialities, mobilities and resources* interact to generate a competitive advantage for small-scale entrepreneurs, despite their relatively limited resources, thus making them able to establish small-scale and transnational business activities, in conjunction with the globalization from above produced by large companies and multinationals.

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