# Migrants pursuing the entrepreneurial “dream” in Switzerland: Cross-border trajectories and unequal opportunities

A thesis submitted to the Institute of Geography of the University of Neuchâtel

for the degree of PhD in Social Sciences

**Christina Mittmasser**

Under the supervision of

Prof. Etienne Piguet, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Assoc. Prof. Yvonne Riaño, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Doctoral committee members:

Prof. Petra Dannecker, University of Vienna, Austria

Prof. Joris Schapendonk, Radbound University, Netherlands

Dr. Natasha Webster, Stockholm University, Sweden

Defended on February 22nd 2023

unine
Université de Neuchâtel

**Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines**
Espace Tilo-Frey 1
CH - 2000 Neuchâtel
Tél. +41 32 718 1700
secretariat.lettres@unine.ch

**IMPRIMATUR**

La Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Neuchâtel, sur les rapports de M. Etienne Piguet, co-directeur de thèse, professeur, Université de Neuchâtel ; Mme Yvonne Riaño, professeure associée à la retraite, Université de Neuchâtel ; Prof. Petra Dannecker, Head of Institute of International Development, University of Vienna, Autriche ; Prof. Joris Schapendonk, Associate Professor at Institute of Geography, Radbound University, Pays-Bas ; Dr. Natasha Webster, Researcher at Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University, Suède autorise l'impression de la thèse présentée par Mme Christina Mittmasser en laissant à l'autrice la responsabilité des opinions énoncées.

Neuchâtel, le 22 février 2023

Le doyen
Louis de Saussure

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this dissertation not only took time and endurance. It would not have been possible without the support of the people around me.

First of all, I would like to thank my research participants for sharing their intimate stories, helping me to make sense of their experiences, and inspiring me to think beyond clichés. I am particularly grateful to the team behind the organisation I collaborated with for giving me access to their daily work, sharing their expertise during many discussions, and making my research time very enjoyable.

Special thanks go to my supervisors, Yvonne Riaño and Etienne Piguet, for their confidence in my ideas and for their valuable feedback, support, and encouragement along the way. It was a privilege working with them and learning from their experiences on both a professional and personal level. I also wish to thank the members of the jury, Petra Dannecker, Joris Schapendonk, and Natasha Webster, for agreeing to review my thesis. I considered their detailed comments and thoughtful suggestions extremely helpful during the final stages of this work.

It is often said that a PhD is a lonely undertaking, but this does not apply to my journey. I am fortunate to have been surrounded by great colleagues and collaborators throughout my years at the University of Neuchâtel, especially at the Institute of Geography and nccr – on the move. During numerous events and exchanges over coffees and beers, I was able to discuss my work in the company of amazing people. Thank you all!

In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Laure Sandoz. Sharing an office and working together over the last four years was a true pleasure. She was there whenever I needed her, she listened to my struggles, and she supported me from the initial ideas for my thesis to the very end. Her companionship was crucial to my research trajectory as well as to my personal well-being in Switzerland. I would also like to thank Isabella Stingl for the great experience of writing a paper together, which was accompanied by many interesting discussions and mutual encouragement. I also extend my thanks to the comic author Jean Leveugle. When I first had the idea of creating a comic based on my research, I did not know what I was getting into. Jean's kindness, curiosity, and creativity turned the process into an incredible experience.

Throughout my time as a PhD student in Switzerland, I was lucky enough to have friends around me, who listened, helped out, made me smile, and gave me a hug on the difficult days. My heartfelt thanks go to Anna, Alisa, Birdy, David, Doris, Emmanuel, Luca, Lucas, Mathis, Paul, Oliver, Salomon, Saro, Sophie, Stephi, Theo, and many more. It means a lot to me to have you in my life!

Ich möchte mich nun auch bei meiner Familie und meinen langjährigen Freund:innen in Österreich bedanken. Vor vier Jahren entschied ich mich für ein Doktorat in der Schweiz. Und mir ist klar, diese Entscheidung hatte nicht nur Konsequenzen für mich selbst. Viele Beziehungen mussten auf Distanz geführt werden, was so manche frustrierenden Momente mit sich brachte und ein spezielles Ausmass an Vertrauen und Hingabe erforderte. Ein besonderer Dank gilt meiner Mutter, die mein ganzes Leben lang eine wahrhaftige Superheldin für mich war und ist; meinem Vater, für all die Liebe, die er seinen Töchtern schenkt; sowie Nadine, Lisi, Gerhard, Kurt, Anna, Elli, Indi, Corni, Seema und Silly. Danke, dass ihr trotz der 600km, die meist zwischen uns liegen, immer für mich da seid!

Finally, I would like to praise TEAM DPD, namely Evi, Kali, and Andi. My PhD journey involved many doubts, insecurities, and moments of stress. I could not have held on without you. You are the essentials of my "wolf pack", the crocodiles defending my safe space, and the cherry pie to my everyday life, "both wonderful and strange" (Cooper 1991). Thank you!

# SUMMARY

In public discourse, entrepreneurship is often celebrated as an opportunity for migrants to mobilise resources from their country of origin and achieve independence and success. Yet, this risks reducing migrant entrepreneurs to their national origin, economic potential, and individual efforts. It thus tends to invisibilise the multi-sitedness of mobile biographies and the unequal opportunities different groups of migrants face in pursuing the entrepreneurial "dream". Current scientific debates mirror these issues. This thesis seeks to offer a more nuanced view by examining the complex cross-border trajectories of migrant entrepreneurs and the conditions under which they can use resources that result thereof. It contributes to the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship by providing new avenues to understand the dynamic and unequal spatialities of the phenomenon. It thus challenges individualistic and neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship, and migrant "integration" more generally.

On a theoretical-conceptual level, this dissertation takes inspiration from different perspectives, such as the mobilities paradigm, intersectional and time-geographic approaches towards inequalities in transnational fields, feminist scholarship, and theoretical debates around structure and agency. Methodologically, it builds on a qualitative case study in Zurich between 2018 and 2020. It consists of 34 biographic interviews, using geographical maps, with different individuals who have migration experience and conduct entrepreneurial activities across national borders. The aim was not statistical representation, but to contrast a variety of situations. Because most participants have multiple migration experiences, are in their early stages of entrepreneurship and female, this study provides insights into understudied groups. The interviews are complemented by ethnographic observations within a migrant-run organisation promoting entrepreneurship. Following participatory approaches, research was conducted *with* rather than *on* the organisation in order to create a space for mutual learning.

The analyses presented in this dissertation nuance and challenge current debates on migrant entrepreneurship. First, by exploring the complex trajectories of research participants, it reveals that most of them are connected to multiple countries where they previously lived and/or explore new ones for their entrepreneurial projects. This underlines that reducing migrant entrepreneurs to their national origin does not correspond to the dynamic spatialities of migration processes and thus risks reproducing ethnic biases and stereotyping. Second, this thesis highlights that transnational resources do not automatically lead to entrepreneurial success and that migrants are not a homogenous group. In particular, female and non-European research participants who arrive through family reunification and asylum channels, and who encounter barriers to directly entering the Swiss labour market, also struggle to access local and distant spaces for their entrepreneurial activities. Their difficulties do not indicate a lack of courage or competences and, moreover, not only stem from their migration experiences, but

rather emerge from different spheres of individuals' livelihoods, such as family situation and socio-economic position, as well the intersection of different forms of exclusions. Finally, this research points towards the creative strategies of research participants to overcome challenges over time, both at the individual and collective level. The latter is illustrated through the migrant-run organisation under study, which challenges deficit-oriented views on migration and creates a sense of community to counter experiences of loneliness. However, its promotion of entrepreneurship resonates with the neoliberal logic of focusing on the individual's responsibility for professional success. The thesis underlines that when structural conditions remain unaddressed, there is a risk that inequalities and precarities are replicated within the pursuit of the entrepreneurial "dream".

The results of this doctoral research are presented in four articles published in peer-reviewed journals, as well as a comic booklet. The aim of the latter was to move beyond traditional forms of scientific communication, to value the knowledge different people shared during this research, and to create new spaces for critical thinking on migrant entrepreneurship beyond academia.

**Keywords:** Migrant Entrepreneurship, Switzerland, Transnationalism, Trajectories, Unequal Opportunities

# RÉSUMÉ

Dans le discours public, l'entrepreneuriat est souvent célébré comme une opportunité pour les migrant.e.s de mobiliser des ressources de leur pays d'origine et d'atteindre l'indépendance professionnelle et la réussite. Pourtant, ce discours risque de réduire les entrepreneur.euse.s migrant.e.s à leur origine nationale, à leur potentiel économique et à leurs efforts individuels. Elle tend ainsi à invisibiliser la multi-localité des biographies mobiles et l'inégalité des chances auxquelles sont confrontés les différents groupes de migrant.e.s dans la poursuite du « rêve » entrepreneurial. Les débats scientifiques actuels reflètent ce discours. Cette thèse cherche à offrir une vision plus nuancée en examinant les trajectoires transfrontalières complexes des entrepreneur.euse.s migrant.e.s et les conditions dans lesquelles ils et elles peuvent utiliser les ressources qui en découlent. Elle contribue au domaine de l'entrepreneuriat migrant transnational en fournissant de nouvelles pistes pour comprendre les spatialités dynamiques et inégales du phénomène. Elle remet ainsi en question les discours individualistes et néolibéraux sur l'entrepreneuriat, et plus généralement sur « l'intégration » des migrant.e.s.

Sur le plan théorique et conceptuel, cette thèse s'inspire de différentes perspectives, telles que le paradigme des mobilités, les approches intersectionnelles et spatio-temporelles des inégalités dans les domaines transnationaux, les études féministes et les débats théoriques sur la structure et l'agentivité. Sur le plan méthodologique, elle s'appuie sur une étude de cas qualitative réalisée à Zurich entre 2018 et 2020. Elle consiste en 34 entretiens biographiques, réalisés à l'aide de cartes géographiques, avec différents individus qui ont une expérience de la migration et mènent des activités entrepreneuriales au-delà des frontières nationales. L'objectif n'était pas la représentation statistique, mais de contraster une variété de situations. Étant donné que la plupart des personnes participants à la recherche ont des expériences de migration multiples, qu'elles en sont aux premiers stades de l'entrepreneuriat et qu'elles sont des femmes, cette étude donne un aperçu de groupes peu étudiés. Ces entretiens sont complétés par des observations ethnographiques au sein d'une organisation gérée par des migrant.e.s qui promeut l'entrepreneuriat. Suivant des approches participatives, la recherche a été menée *avec* plutôt que *sur* l'organisation afin de créer un espace d'apprentissage mutuel.

Les résultats présentés dans cette thèse nuancent et remettent en question les débats actuels sur l'entrepreneuriat migrant. Tout d'abord, en explorant les trajectoires complexes des personnes participant à la recherche, ce travail révèle que la plupart d'entre elles sont liées à plusieurs pays où elles ont vécu précédemment et/ou en explorent de nouveaux pour leurs projets entrepreneuriaux. Ceci souligne que réduire les entrepreneur.euse.s migrant.e.s à leur origine nationale ne correspond pas aux spatialités dynamiques des processus migratoires et risque donc de reproduire les préjugés et stéréotypes ethniques.

Deuxièmement, cette thèse souligne que les ressources transnationales ne conduisent pas automatiquement au succès et que les migrant.e.s ne constituent pas un groupe homogène. En particulier, les participantes à la recherche féminines et non-européennes, qui arrivent par les voies du regroupement familial et de l'asile et rencontrent des obstacles pour entrer directement sur le marché du travail suisse, luttent également pour accéder à des espaces tant proches que distants pour développer leurs activités entrepreneuriales. Leurs difficultés ne sont pas liées à un manque de courage ou de compétences et, de plus, ne découlent pas uniquement de leur expérience de la migration. Elles émergent plutôt de différentes sphères de vie des individus, telles que leur situation familiale et leur statut socio-économique, ainsi que de l'intersection de différentes formes d'exclusions. Enfin, cette recherche met en évidence les stratégies créatives des participant.e.s à la recherche pour surmonter les défis au fil du temps, tant au niveau individuel que collectif. Ce dernier point est illustré par l'organisation étudiée qui remet en question les opinions déficitaires sur la migration et crée un sentiment de communauté pour contrer les expériences de solitude. Cependant, sa promotion de l'entrepreneuriat résonne avec la logique néolibérale qui met l'accent sur la responsabilité de l'individu dans sa réussite professionnelle. La thèse souligne que lorsque les conditions structurelles ne sont pas abordées, il existe un risque que les inégalités et les précarités soient reproduites dans la poursuite du « rêve » entrepreneurial.

Les résultats de cette recherche doctorale sont présentés dans quatre articles publiés dans des revues à comité de lecture, ainsi que dans une bande dessinée. L'objectif de cette dernière était de dépasser les formes traditionnelles de communication scientifique, de valoriser les connaissances que différentes personnes ont partagées au cours de cette recherche et de créer de nouveaux espaces de réflexion critique sur l'entrepreneuriat migrant au-delà du milieu universitaire.

**Mots-clés :** Entrepreneuriat migrant, Suisse, Transnationalisme, Trajectoires, Inégalité des chances

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PART I: THESIS FRAMEWORK**


1. INTRODUCTION ..... 3
2. STATE OF THE ART AND OVERALL RESEARCH INTEREST ..... 9
3. ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES ..... 17
   3.1. Studying complex cross-border trajectories and their impacts ..... 17
   3.2. Going beyond individualistic discourses and investigating socio-spatial dependencies ..... 20
   3.3. Exploring counterspaces to experiences of social and economic exclusion ..... 23
4. METHODOLOGY ..... 27
   4.1. Overall research design ..... 27
   4.2. The interviews ..... 31
      4.2.1. Selecting research participants: A maximum variation approach ..... 31
      4.2.2. Biographic interviewing with geographical maps ..... 41
      4.2.3. Analysis: Coding procedures and typologies ..... 48
   4.3. Collaborating with an organisation ..... 53
      4.3.1. An ethnographic and participatory approach ..... 53
      4.3.2. In the field: Insights into a research partnership ..... 56
      4.3.3. Interpretations in dialogue ..... 60
   4.4. Working in a team and writing a thesis by articles ..... 63
   4.5. The comic project ..... 67
5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ..... 77
   5.1. The trajectory paper ..... 77
   5.2. The dependency paper ..... 84
   5.3. The counterspace paper ..... 96
6. SYNTHESIS AND OUTLOOK ..... 107
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 117

**PART II: COLLECTION OF ARTICLES**

ARTICLE 1 .......... 137
ARTICLE 2 .......... 163
ARTICLE 3 .......... 191
ARTICLE 4 .......... 217

**ANNEX**

INTERVIEW GUIDE .......... 243
THE COMIC .......... 247

# PART I: THESIS FRAMEWORK

# 1. INTRODUCTION

*"When migrants become start-uppers"*[1] *(Farine 2019)*

*"Successful migrants: The path to entrepreneurship"*[2] *(Valda 2020)*

*"Migrants create 275,000 jobs in Switzerland" (SWI swissinfo.ch 2010)*

These headlines from Swiss newspaper articles feature success stories of migrants who created their own businesses and organisations after arriving in Switzerland. They promote entrepreneurship as an opportunity for migrants to use their various resources and skills, to overcome barriers they face in accessing the labour market, and to contribute to the local economy. This echoes a broader discourse among humanitarian, political, and economic actors across the globe. For example, the International Organization of Migration underlines that "migrants' entrepreneurship is perhaps one of the most obvious illustrations of their agency for their economic inclusion" (IOM 2019, p. 203). Another report by an international organisation states:

> *The diversity that migrants and refugees bring to host economies creates value because people with different experiences, ways of thinking and social contacts can contribute new knowledge, ideas and approaches to problem-solving, thus helping to introduce new products and processes and grow markets through entrepreneurship or as employees in existing organizations. (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 10)*

Within this discourse, migrants are envisioned as "catalysts for economic growth" who have "access to transnational networks and information about markets in countries of origin" and can thus lower the "costs of integration" (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 10).

At a time when individuals with migration experience are recurrently framed as economic burdens associated with labour market deficits and unemployment, the vision of migrants becoming entrepreneurs sheds light on their potential contributions to society and resourcefulness related to their migration experiences. Yet, this discourse also portrays simplistic views of migration. On the one hand, it reduces the concerned individuals to their identities as migrants and their national origins. Thereby, it ignores the complexity of mobile biographies, which often evolve in multiple countries over time, and it fails to recognise other markers of individual identities. This potentially reinforces stereotyping and exclusionary dynamics. On the other hand, this discourse reduces migrants to their economic potential

[1] Translation by the author.
[2] Translation by the author.

and focuses on success stories. This risks reproducing the utilitarian idea that migrants need to contribute economic benefits in order to be welcome in a host country, thus invisibilising the multiple obstacles and frictions that entrepreneurial migrants experience due to structural inequalities and different forms of exclusion.

This dissertation seeks to provide a more nuanced picture of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship in Switzerland. I use the notion of the entrepreneurial "dream" to highlight that while entrepreneurship is promoted and desired by various actors, not everyone is in a position to become a publicly celebrated figure. I question how this "dream" actually unfolds in the lives of individuals and who is able to pursue and fulfil it. Overall, I examine *how the entrepreneurial careers of migrants relate to complex cross-border trajectories and under which conditions they can use resources that result thereof*. The general aim of this dissertation is thereby twofold.

First, I aim to unpack the cross-border dimensions of migrant entrepreneurship. My dissertation thereby contributes to the fields of transnationalism, social geographies of mobility, and in particular transnational migrant entrepreneurship (e.g. Portes et al. 2002; Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020). In recent decades, this burgeoning literature has highlighted that globalisation processes have led the entrepreneurial activities of migrants to extend increasingly beyond national borders. Yet, by focusing on the engagement of migrant entrepreneurs in their country of origin (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 33; Muñoz Castro et al. 2019, p. 569), this field of research follows a home/host country bias and mirrors the public discourse, reproducing stereotypical images and ethnic framings of the phenomenon (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Heis and Dannecker 2022; Verduijn and Essers 2013). In this thesis, I try to overcome this bias and engage with the complexity of *cross-border trajectories*. Rather than reducing individuals to their country of origin, I study the diverse mobilities migrant entrepreneurs conduct over time and the variety of places that are involved in their business activities. This also reflects my critical stance towards the term "migrant", which I continuously try to challenge in this dissertation.

Second, I aim to engage with the *unequal opportunities* migrants experience with regard to cross-border entrepreneurship. In Switzerland, only 8.42% of foreign workers were self-employed in 2020,[3] compared to 14.03% of Swiss workers (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2022a). Yet, scholars increasingly highlight that migrants are not a homogenous group and we need to examine the conditions that enable or disable migrant entrepreneurship more carefully (Dannecker and Cakir 2016; Haandrikman and Webster 2020; Portes and Martinez 2020). Research has shown that discriminatory practices and discourses of otherness create inequalities among migrants trying to apply their qualifications and skills in the Swiss labour market, especially with regard to gender/family situation,

[3] Self-employment does not necessarily align with the definition of entrepreneurship, yet quantitative data mostly refers to the notion of self-employment (see Sections 2 and 4.2.1.).

nationality/legal status, and socio-economic position (Bachmann 2016; Riaño 2021a; Sandoz 2020). My objective is therefore to provide a more in-depth understanding of the obstacles which different groups of entrepreneurial migrants experience in Switzerland and the differentiated strategies they apply to overcome them. Thereby, I do not reduce individuals to their migrant identity, but also recognise other aspects of their lives. Moreover, I aim to examine the resources, networks, and support structures migrants rely upon to fulfil the entrepreneurial "dream". Overall, this allows for a problematisation of the heroisation of migrant entrepreneurs and the idea that a migratory background automatically leads to success. It thus enables me to challenge individualistic and neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship—as well as "integration" more generally—that require individuals to overcome constraints on their own.

Methodologically, this thesis builds on a qualitative case study conducted between 2018 and 2020 in Zurich. This case study consisted of two interrelated subprojects. On the one hand, I conducted 34 biographic interviews (Denzin 1989a; Rosenthal 2004), using geographical maps, with individuals with migration experience who were developing or conducting cross-border entrepreneurial activities. Thereby, I did not strive for statistical representation, but to contrast a variety of situations and to observe how intersecting social markers of difference—such as gender, nationality, and socio-economic position—impact the entrepreneurial careers of interviewees. Because most participants had multiple migration experiences, were in their early stages of entrepreneurship, and were female, my research thus provides insights into understudied groups. On the other hand, I conducted ethnographic observations within a migrant-run organisation providing support to entrepreneurs. Thereby, I aimed to better understand the context in which migrant entrepreneurship is promoted and the collective actions shaping the field. Following participatory approaches of feminist geographers (Caretta and Riaño 2016), I developed a long-term collaboration with the organisation's team. Aiming for dialogical engagement and reciprocity, I tried to conduct research *with* rather than *on* the organisation and to create a space for mutual learning (Riaño 2016). With these two empirical subprojects, my dissertation seeks to achieve an understanding of the subjective meaning of migrant entrepreneurship based on individual and collective accounts from different actors, namely migrant entrepreneurs themselves and a migrant-run support organisation, as well as my own experiences in the field.

This doctoral thesis takes the form of a cumulative dissertation and consists of four articles (see table 1). One is single-authored, while the other three were written in collaboration with other researchers. This partly relates to the fact that my PhD is embedded in a larger project entitled "Migrant Entrepreneurship: Mapping Cross-Border Mobilities and Exploring the Role of Spatial Mobility Capital", referred to as IP32. The project is led by my supervisors Y. Riaño and E. Piguet and is incorporated within *nccr – on the move, National Centre of Competence in Research for Migration and Mobility Studies,* funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The questions raised and

approaches used within my dissertation and IP32 overlap and complement each other. During my fieldwork, my data analysis, and the writing of my articles, I collaborated intensely with the IP32 team, including L. Sandoz and L. Izaguirre, as well as I. Stingl, a researcher from the University of Zurich. Therefore, I do not perceive myself as a solitary thinker, and would rather like to underline the "cooperative nature of research processes, and the importance of the discussion, exchange, and confrontation of ideas" (Sandoz 2019, p. 25).

This cumulative design allowed me to unpack the cross-border dimensions and unequal opportunities within migrant entrepreneurship by engaging with different materials and perspectives. The four articles which emerged during the process thus feed into the overarching aim of this dissertation in different ways. To begin, I conducted a literature review on transnational migrant entrepreneurship with the IP32 team. Article 1 provides an overview of existing knowledge and theoretical debates and points towards avenues for future research. I then approached my empirical material from different analytical perspectives, aiming to tackle the research gaps identified in the literature. I first used a *trajectory perspective* (Article 2) building on the mobilities paradigm (e.g. Cresswell 2006; Schapendonk et al. 2021), as well as biographic, intersectional, and time-geographic approaches towards inequalities in transnational fields (e.g. Dutta 2016; Moret 2020; Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019). This allowed me to analyse how the entrepreneurial careers of my research participants relate to complex cross-border trajectories and transcend the home/host country binary. I then mobilised a *dependency perspective* (Article 3), inspired by the literature on globalisation from below (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012; Portes 2000) and feminist approaches (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015; Webster 2020). During this process I set my research into dialogue with data gathered by my IP32 colleagues in Spain and Colombia. Together, we examined the different resources and strategies our research participants rely upon and tried to better understand the conditions under which different groups of migrants can engage in cross-border entrepreneurship. In parallel, I explored the efforts of the studied migrant-run organisation promoting entrepreneurship (Article 4). Together with I. Stingl, I investigated how and to what extent the organisation sought to challenge the socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland. We thereby build on debates around structure and agency and mobilised a *counterspace perspective* (Hassanli et al. 2020; Pande 2018). This allowed me to further explore the conditions that enable or constrain the entrepreneurial "dream" for migrants, leading to unequal opportunities. I also created a comic booklet on migrant entrepreneurship in order to give voice to my research participants, to acknowledge their contributions to my research, and to communicate my findings to an audience beyond academia. As stated in Table 1, all four of the articles and the comic have been published.

| 1 | The review paper | **A Review of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship: Perspectives on Unequal Spatialities**<br><br>Co-authored with Laure Sandoz, Yvonne Riaño & Etienne Piguet (IP32). Published in 2022 in *ZFW - Advances in Economic Geography,* 66 (3), 137–155 (De Gruyter). https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004 |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | The trajectory paper | **“Because You’ve Lived in Different Places All Your Life” – How Mobility Trajectories Create Cross-Border Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Migrants in Switzerland**<br><br>Single-authored. Published in February 2022 in *Geoforum,* 129, 161–171(Elsevier). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.12.018 |
| 3 | The dependency paper | **Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs: Understanding Their Dependencies, Fragilities, and Alternatives**<br><br>Co-authored with Laure Sandoz, Yvonne Riaño & Lorena Izaguirre (IP32). Published in December 2022 in *Globalizations* (Taylor & Francis) – Special Issue: Globalizations from Below: Understanding the Diverse Spatial Mobilities and Connections of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs across the Globe. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2157149 |
| 4 | The counterspace paper | **Migrant Counterspaces: Challenging Labour Market Exclusion through Collective Action**<br><br>Co-authored with Isabella Stingl. Published in December 2021 in *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales (REMI)* 37 (1-2), 229–249 (Open Edition Journals, University of Poitiers) – Special Issue: Labour and Migration in the Age of Borders. https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.18507 |
| 5 | The comic | **LIVING THE DREAM? The Odyssey of a Migrant Entrepreneur [Comic in ENG, FR, and GER]**<br><br>Co-authored with Laure Sandoz, Yvonne Riaño & Jean Leveugle. Published in October 2022 on Zenodo (Open Access). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7142549 |

*Table 1: Overview of publications*[4]

[4] In addition to these, I published two other articles during my time as a doctoral student. One is a contribution to a peer-reviewed book (Mittmasser 2022) which is based on a conference paper, and later developed into Article 2. The other article was co-written with my team and published in a peer-reviewed journal (Riaño et al. 2022). I decided not to include it in this dissertation, but explicitly refer to it in Section 4.4.

Before the articles and the comic are presented (Part II and Annex), I introduce the overall framework of this thesis (Part I) and highlight the thread which ties the articles together. I elaborate on the genealogy of the research process, discuss personal reflections and doubts, and mobilise additional sources that did not make it into the scientific articles. In Section 2, I provide a state of the art of the research field I locate my dissertation in and present my research interests. I thereby refer to the review paper, but also define relevant terms and engage with the use of the "migrant" label in my dissertation. In Section 3, I outline the analytical perspectives I used in the empirical papers, the theoretical and conceptual tools these emerge from, and how they interconnect. The emphasis of the research frame is on the methodological section (Section 4). Here, I outline how I selected and interacted with my research participants, describe which considerations preceded data collection and which emerged from my fieldwork, and reflect on my positionality and the setbacks I encountered. I explain how being embedded in a larger research project and writing a cumulative thesis affected my doctoral research, and I discuss the process behind developing the comic. Then, I present the findings of my research in Section 5 and discuss them in line with the three empirical papers and the overarching aims of this thesis. Finally, I elaborate on the relevance of my dissertation and implications for future research in the conclusion.

# 2. STATE OF THE ART AND OVERALL RESEARCH INTEREST

With this dissertation I aim to contribute to research on *transnational migrant entrepreneurship*. In this section, I present the state of the art of this field, including definitions of relevant terms, main topical areas, and research gaps that remain. I build on a systematic literature review I conducted with the IP32 team at the beginning of my doctoral research (Sandoz et al. 2022) (Article 1). We reviewed 155 scientific journal articles published on the topic since 2009 by using a combination of automated and manual selection methods and content analysis characterised by a collaborative iterative process and the identification of key themes. Our methodology and the content presented below is discussed in more detail in the full paper (see Part II). This section also includes further elaborations that stem from my own reflections on the literature and which are crucial to understanding the approaches taken in this dissertation.

*Defining the field of research*

The literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship highlights that migrant entrepreneurs increasingly transfer goods, services, capital, and ideas across national borders for business purposes. This is grounded in contemporary social and technological transformations, as well as migrants' transnational life trajectories. In the past, research on migrant entrepreneurship has followed a certain static bias and mostly focused on migrant businesses in a single-sited national context, mainly inner-city enclaves in migrants' residence countries. The shift towards the transnational perspective enables scholars to understand how multiple locations can be connected through entrepreneurial activities (Drori et al. 2009; Garrido and Checa 2009; Valenzuela-Garcia et al. 2018).

The term "transnational entrepreneurship" was, among others, popularised by Portes et al. who applied it to "self-employed immigrants whose business activities require frequent travel abroad and who depend for the success of their firms on their contacts and associates in another country" (2002, p. 287). "Entrepreneurship" and "self-employment" are often used synonymously, especially in quantitative works which rely on available statistics (Ahmad and Seymour 2008, p. 5).[5] Yet, some scholars view self-employment as a simplified form of entrepreneurship (Szarucki et al. 2016, p. 600). The latter is mostly defined as the process of creating a business or organisation which introduces new goods,

[5] The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2018), for example, mobilises data from the Swiss Labour Market survey. Here, the self-employed are defined as those who work for themselves (within "Einzelunternehmen", "Kollektivgesellschaften", "Kommanditgesellschaften" or informal businesses) as well as employees who own a large part of the capital of a "Aktiengesellschaft" (AG) or "Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung" (GmbH) in which they work. Only the main income-generating activity is taken into account.

services, or ideas to the market, but it is also used in a broader sense to refer to certain practices such as identifying opportunities, innovating, risk-taking, and generating economic value (Ahmad and Seymour 2008, p. 7). I adopt this processual approach, but do not define entrepreneurship based on economic success. I rather view it as a complicated process without a definite beginning or end (Gartner 1988).

Scholars in the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship not only build on the transnational approach that emerged in the 1990s, which highlights migrants' continuous relations to their countries of origin (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992). They also draw from economic and business-oriented research on international entrepreneurship (Drori et al. 2009; Elo et al. 2018) as well as sociologically oriented research on ethnic and diaspora economies (Rath and Swagerman 2011; Waldinger et al. 1990). These terms and categories are often hard to distinguish as knowledge is dispersed across disciplines and the field only recently started to become more unified (Harima and Baron 2020). In my dissertation, I mostly refer to transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs). I underline that TMEs, compared to ethnic entrepreneurs, do not necessarily sell products related to a specific ethnicity and might simultaneously engage with multiple ethnic groups within their entrepreneurial activities. In this sense, I follow scholars who have argued that ethnic lenses and ethnicity-centred epistemologies contribute to the stereotyping of migrant entrepreneurs (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Heis and Dannecker 2022; Verduijn and Essers 2013). Compared to international entrepreneurs, TMEs are characterised by their migration experiences, which are simply defined as a change of residency from one country to another (Drori et al. 2009).

*Challenging the "migrant" label while using it*

I am aware that using the term "migrant" is problematic as it is first and foremost a political category derived from nation-state logics. Focusing on individuals with migration experience thus risks normalising their perception as an exceptional group in alignment with sedentarist biases, in which the absence of migration is perceived as the norm or even the ideal (Schapendonk et al. 2021, p. 3245). Dahinden (2016), in her plea for a "de-migranticization" of research, famously argued that the uncritical adoption of state-produced categories within research contains the risk of reproducing inequalities and forms of inclusion and exclusion. Similarly, Sievers at al. (2022) criticise the differentiation between migrants and non-migrants within research:

> *Through this categorisation, national borders are maintained that no longer exist as a result of migration. (...) In other words, migrants are not strangers per se, but are made strangers through the incessant repetition of these narratives. (...) [They] are part of a long tradition of "othering" people who are not seen as part of the respective nation, Europe, or the West (...). The view of*

*the Others (…) degrades them to second-class citizens, who are assumed to lack European values and therefore need Western re-education—formerly in the colonies, today in integration courses (...). This devaluation of Others serves above all to confirm the national, European, or Western self (…).(Sievers et al. 2022, pp. 9–10; translation by the author)*

In the context of this dissertation, using the term "migrant" and focusing on individuals with migration experience was a pragmatic decision I made at the beginning of my research in line with the larger project I was embedded in. At the time, it made sense to me as I was specifically interested in the opportunities and constraints that result from moving across borders and my aim was to contribute to the discourse on migrant entrepreneurship. I decided to maintain this approach as it allowed me to explore when and how the "migrancy" of individuals becomes a form of agency and under which conditions it represents a barrier. When I speak of "migrancy", I relate it to specific subjective experiences of spatial movement across national borders as well as to wider political dimensions with regard to "the confrontation of difference and the construction of otherness (racialisation and the politics of ethniciation)" (Harney and Baldassar 2007, p. 195):

*(…) the lens of migrancy forces us to put the migrant – and her/his trajectories of movement through space and time – squarely at the centre of analysis; but the migrancy perspective also suggests that this movement is entangled in the demands of capital and politics (…). (Harney and Baldassar 2007, p. 196)*

Therefore, in this dissertation the term "migrant" is not considered an objective and static category, but rather a socially and politically constructed label that individuals—who move across borders—may subjectively identify with or which may be attributed to them by others in specific contexts (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Silvey and Lawson 1999). I thus try to not reduce individuals to their national origins but am equally interested in migrants' connections and mobilities across multiple countries as well as the realities related to other markers of identity, for example, their gender, family situation, or socio-economic position. Thus, my doctoral research aims to challenge the use and meanings of the label "migrant" while simultaneously using it, which is highlighted throughout the document. I will discuss the methodological implications of using this term with regard to selecting research participants in Section 4.2.1.

*Beyond static and deficit-oriented conceptualisations of migrant entrepreneurship*

The review I conducted with the IP32 team led us to identify five major topical areas within the literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship (Sandoz et al. 2022, pp. 3–7). The first topical area focuses

on specific business advantages of TMEs. This aims to empirically test the extent to which migration experiences can constitute an asset for entrepreneurial activities. The interest in economic opportunities that emerge from migration differs from the initial research on migrant entrepreneurship, which mostly framed the phenomenon as necessity-driven and in reaction to disadvantages migrants face within the labour markets of current residence countries. This was repeatedly criticised as static and deficit-oriented (Elo et al. 2018, p. 123). Scholars increasingly called for a "reconceptualization of migrants from an economic burden to a source of economic activity" (Baklanov et al. 2014, p. 68) and a shift to a more opportunity-oriented approach. The second area of research identified attempts to understand the motivations and determinants that lead migrants to engage in transnational businesses. This concerns the study of individual attitudes and skills, especially in business and management studies, but also a consideration of TMEs' social positions and the unequal distribution of resources, as emphasised by social scientists. The third topical area examines the composition of TMEs' social ties and networks, and predominantly assesses the potential utility of migrants' contacts in their country of origin and diasporic groups in cross-border business activities. The fourth area of research focuses on TMEs' economic impact on the places where they conduct business in terms of resource flows, knowledge transfers, investments, and employment creation. The fifth area of research examines the role of local environments in supporting or deterring transnational migrant entrepreneurship. This strand is particularly shaped by the theoretical framework of "mixed embeddedness" (Kloosterman et al. 1999), which has a long tradition in migrant entrepreneurship research, as well as efforts to highlight the complex interactions between TMEs and the places where they are active.

Despite an apparent willingness to move beyond static and deficit-oriented conceptualisations of migrant entrepreneurship, my colleagues and I identified specific research gaps which, in our view, need to be addressed in future research (Sandoz et al. 2022, pp. 8–10). First, we observed that the range of *locations* selected by scholars for their studies is in most cases limited to countries of the Global North, focusing on migrants who move from low-income countries in Asia, Africa, or South America to high-income countries in Europe or North America. This downplays the diversity of current migration patterns, such as North-North and especially South-South trajectories. Second, we found that there is scant research on the diversity of *connections* that TMEs create between locations across national borders. Most researchers focus on the engagement of TMEs in only two places: their countries of origin and their countries of current residence. This home/host country bias reduces TMEs to their national origin and "migrancy", which risks reinforcing ethnic framings, stereotypes, and discriminatory discourses. They thus portray an incomplete picture of the spatiality of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship and reproduce a simplistic view of transnationalism that does not correspond to the complexity of mobile biographies, which often include onward movements. Third, there is insufficient attention given to the diverse *mobilities* TMEs conduct. While travelling and/or moving goods, services,

capital, and ideas across borders has long been identified as crucial to TMEs' activities, little attention is paid to the specifics of these movements and their implications.

Moreover, many authors, especially in the business and management fields, overemphasise the idea that transnational resources constitute a competitive advantage and automatically lead to economic success (e.g. Elo and Vincze 2019; Stoyanov et al. 2018). This tendency has been framed as "celebratory enthusiasm for migrant transnationalism" (Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019, p. 166). To some extent, it aligns with public discourses romanticising migrant entrepreneurship and heroising the people concerned as "actors of development" and "catalysts for economic growth" (UNCTAD et al. 2018, pp. 4 and 10). It thus corresponds with utilitarian and functionalist theories focusing on the benefits of migration (de Haas 2014, p. 7). This reproduces the idea that migrants need to contribute economic benefits, to the exclusion of those who are not in a position to do so.

More generally, the celebration of entrepreneurs as heroes relates to gender-biased and ethnocentrically determined ideologies with regard to entrepreneurship (see also: Hamilton 2013; Webster and Haandrikman 2017):

> *[T]he term entrepreneur evokes the images of the hero – the historical literature of America about the "first" white-male European who "discovered" and "conquered" the land of opportunity, symbolizing the heroic representation of the positive American male model of aggressiveness, assertiveness and the conqueror of Mother Nature. The impact of this representation on present-day discourses on entrepreneurship is undeniably potent (...). (Ogbor 2000, p. 617)*

The notion of the entrepreneurial hero, or heroine, is thus linked to neoliberal discourses on individualisation and the idealisation of self-responsibility, self-improvement, and independence (Mancinelli 2020, p. 419; Sontag 2018, p. 28). This aligns with the myth that an individual's hard work, creativity, and risk-taking will always be rewarded appropriately and equally, which suggests that those who do not become successful are not active enough or even lazy (e.g. Lentz 2017).

These elaborations can be directly linked to societal discourses on migrant "integration" and policies designed to foster this. The popular slogan of "promoting and requiring" ("fördern und fordern"), which is at the core of Swiss migration policies (Kurt and D'Amato 2021, p. 76), claims that integration is a two-way-process in which migrants and their host societies share the responsibility of achieving it. Yet, many scholars (e.g. Bachmann 2016; Goksel 2018; Mexi et al. 2021; Piñeiro 2015) have emphasised that most integration narratives and measures target the migrant individual, who is required to behave in a certain way and to prove their ability to contribute to the economy, thereby achieving independence. They are thus often based on "techniques of responsibilization in which selection is oriented to picking 'active', self-reliant and entrepreneurial subjects likely to stimulate economic growth without significant

state intervention or expenditure" (Walsh 2011, p. 866).[6] Research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship often mirrors neoliberal discourses focused on the activation of individuals by following an "individual-level approach to entrepreneurship which is concerned primarily about how prospective entrepreneurs go about acting" (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020, p. 46) and the "premise that it is fundamentally undertaken and driven by individuals" (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020, p. 50).

By focusing on the opportunities that emerge from migration, research thus often invisibilises the potential precarities that entrepreneurship entails (e.g. Berwing et al. 2019; Schmiz 2013; Trehan et al. 2020). Thereby it also tends to treat TMEs as a homogenous group (Portes and Martinez 2020, p. 1992) without paying attention to the structural inequalities that create different barriers for different groups of TMEs. Authors increasingly call for more research on the obstacles encountered by women (Dannecker and Cakir 2016; Haandrikman and Webster 2020) and refugees (Desai et al. 2021) or the impact of class and socio-economic position (Cederberg and Villares-Varela 2019). Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei underline that while interrogating dimensions that differentiate TMEs many studies focus on their motivations and social status but ignore other dimensions such as unequal access to mobility and space (2020, p. 1969). For example, (im)mobility regimes create hierarchies among individuals and thereby also different opportunities to move, settle, and work for different categories of people (e.g. Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Massa 2020; Seo and Skelton 2017). In addition to empowering views that shed a positive light on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, there is a need for more research that addresses persistently unequal power relations in these regards.

*Exploring dynamic and unequal spatialities*

Overall, research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship lacks a deeper engagement with the diverse geographical locations, connections, and mobilities involved, beyond static and ethnic framings of the phenomenon. Moreover, it lacks a nuanced exploration of how migrants' entrepreneurial activities relate to structural inequalities that transcends neoliberal discourses and success stories of entrepreneurship. I respond to these gaps by studying the complex cross-border trajectories of migrant entrepreneurs and the unequal opportunities they face. I do not reduce these entrepreneurs to their national origins but am equally interested in their engagements in other countries. I also do not view migrants as a homogenous

[6] Beyond these neoliberal underpinnings, the notion of "integration" contains other problematic connotations and is therefore a rather contested concept within migration studies. Saharaso (2019), for example, raises the question of who needs to integrate into what and thereby criticises the idea that the society into which migrants should integrate consists of a homogenous group. To some extent, the concept of "integration" "reproduces a colonial, nation-state centred vision of society" (Favell 2019, p. 1) which thus "serves to govern diversity and monitor Otherness, and reinforces a discourse of the normalcy, superiority, and privileges of the 'white, enlightened, progressive, Western citizen" (Klarenbeek 2019, p. 1). While not engaging with these issues to a great extent, they are the reason why I use quotation marks when referring to "integration".

group but try to understand how the conditions they face are related to other markers of identity, for example their gender, family situation, or socio-economic position.

Therefore, I follow the call to study the dynamic and unequal spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship as put forward by myself and my co-authors in Article 1. We propose directing specific attention towards the spatialities which arise when migrant entrepreneurs move and develop connections across multiple locations, as well as the structural inequalities which shape these spatialities. This call is based on a certain conceptualisation of spatiality which I shall now clarify. Prominent geographers, such as Massey (2005, 2009) and Lefebvre (2005), have long argued that despite its material basis, "space is not merely a container where human action takes place" and cannot be "reduced to physical structures and the geometry of location and size" (Riaño 2017). They envision spatiality rather as a social product that is produced by individuals and groups through daily practices, discourses, and interactions. As it constitutes "a complexity of networks, links, exchanges, connections, from the intimate level of our daily lives (…) to the global level" (Massey 2009, p. 16), spatiality has a relational character and is thus entangled with power relations. These create hierarchies between different actors and places, yet can also be contested and (re)composed. Spatiality thereby has a processual nature and is constantly being made, (re)appropriated, and transformed by individual agency and collective actions (Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016, p. 135; Riaño 2017).

This conceptualisation of space mirrors my research interests. By following a processual understanding of space, I am interested in how migrant entrepreneurs create, use, and transform different spaces to their own advantage beyond the home/host country binary. Viewing space as entangled with power relations underlines that resources are unequally distributed across social groups and places. This enables me to explore why not every migrant can build a cross-border entrepreneurial project in the same way. The emphasis on social interactions within space thus highlights that individuals are embedded in broader social networks, allowing me to move beyond individualistic views on entrepreneurship and unpack collective actions in my field of research.

# 3. ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis questions how the entrepreneurial careers of migrants relate to complex cross-border trajectories and under which conditions they can use resources that result thereof. The cumulative design of this dissertation allowed me to approach this question from different perspectives. I was interested in how different actors experience the phenomenon, namely the entrepreneurs themselves as well as a migrant-run support organisation. I thus used different conceptual and theoretical tools to make sense of the experiences of these different actors. In this section, I outline these tools in more detail. I use three different perspectives—*trajectories*, *dependencies*, and *counterpaces*—to deepen the reflections presented in the previous section and mirror the three empirical papers of this dissertation and their interlinkages.

## *3.1. Studying complex cross-border trajectories and their impacts*

In Article 2 of this cumulative dissertation I employed a *trajectory perspective*. Overall, this perspective rejects a static view on migration as a secluded one-time event and instead engages with the processual nature of mobile biographies and their differentiated impacts over time. Conceptually and theoretically this perspective is inspired by the mobilities paradigm (e.g. Cresswell 2006; Schapendonk et al. 2021), the application of Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory in migration studies, and biographic, intersectional, and time-geographic approaches to social inequalities in transnational fields (e.g. Dutta 2016; Moret 2020; Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019). In this section, I summarise these inspirations to provide a deeper understanding of my interest in trajectories.

As outlined in the previous section, most researchers in the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship focus on the engagement of migrants in their country of origin and current residence country. This home/host country bias risks reproducing ethnic framings of migrant entrepreneurship and ignoring different forms of movements across various places. In trying to overcome this bias, I was greatly inspired by the mobilities paradigm (Cresswell 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006) which has been rarely used in the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. This approach was originally developed in reaction to sedentarist biases in the social sciences, which, in alignment with nation-state logics, have long tended to treat sedentariness as the norm and movement as exceptional and problematic. Mobility scholars consider spatial mobility, simply defined as movement in geographical

space, as a constitutive characteristic of human life affecting multiple social processes. They thus aim to position mobility at the centre and as a point of departure in research. The mobilities paradigm has been applied intensely in migration studies over the last two decades (e.g. Camenisch and Müller 2017; Faist 2013; Favell 2008). Researchers have criticised the reduction of migrants to their places of origin and the conceptualisation of migration as a single movement from one country to another, focusing instead on the diversity of individuals' mobilities. A rich illustration of these advancements is the work of Moret (2018) on the post-migration movements of European Somalis. She distinguishes between different types of mobility practices: 1. Star-shaped mobility (frequent travel to country of origin and third countries); 2. Pendular mobility (simultaneously residing in two places, which may or may not include the country of origin); 3. Secondary movement (onward migration to a third country); 4. Temporary returns (to country of origin); 5. Definite return (to country of origin); and 6. Immobility. Moret's work illustrates how the mobility paradigm can enrich the transnational approach by incorporating multiple local geographies beyond home and host countries, diverse forms of movements in terms of their frequency and duration, and non-movements. This demonstrates how the mobility lens "makes it possible to look at migrants' biographies and life trajectories in the long term. It adds temporality to spatiality" (2018, p. 15).

Building on these arguments, Schapendonk et al. developed the concept of *im/mobility trajectories*, defined as "open spatial-temporal processes" which evolve "across various places" and "do not necessarily follow a linear directionality" (2021, p. 3246; see also Schapendonk 2018). These scholars refer specifically to the notion of immobility, underlining that mobile biographies may also include situations in which individuals are "stuck" in a place, or moments in which they seek local anchorage. They thereby respond to the critique that the mobility paradigm often romanticises movement and ignores how political and social structures shape who is allowed to move and stay (Cresswell 2010; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). They thus conceptualise im/mobility trajectories as the "outcome of multiple intersections of individual aspirations, social networking, policy interventions, and mobility regimes" (Schapendonk et al. 2021, p. 3246). In my thesis, I use this concept to gain a more in-depth understanding of why and how individuals move across different places over time.

More generally, the trajectory perspective used in this study also builds on the long tradition in social sciences that uses individual life stories to examine broader social phenomena (e.g. Dutta 2016; Wingens et al. 2011). Biographic approaches are perceived as a valuable tool for the study of migration because they allow researchers to avoid pre-established variables and a utilitarian ontology of the self, and instead achieve a more nuanced understanding of migration as it is experienced and perceived by individuals (Iosifides and Sporton 2009, p. 103). The reconstruction of personal life trajectories shall thus provide a contextual understanding of subjective experiences and perceptions. The objective is to grasp not only the evolution of individual motivations and actions, but also the social, political, and

material circumstances that influence their lives over time. Biographic approaches thereby address key theoretical debates within sociology, human geography, and anthropology, especially regarding the intersections between the individual and the social, as well as structures and agency. This allows us to understand how individuals are embedded in broader social structures and affected by the power relations that constitute society.

In this sense, I was especially interested in the differentiated impacts of cross-border trajectories on the entrepreneurial careers of migrants. Following my critique of the literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship in Section 2, I did not want to fall into the trap of romanticising resources that result from living in different countries and viewing migrants as a homogenous group. Therefore, I especially drew from migration scholars who apply an *inequality lens* (e.g. Anthias 2007; Nowicka 2013; Paul 2015; Skaptadóttir 2019). Many of these mobilise Bourdieu's capital theory (1986), arguing that a person's position in society depends on their economic capital (money and material goods), cultural capital (skills and competences acquired through education and socialisation), and social capital (resources derived from social networks). According to this theory, an individual can accumulate and mobilise different forms of capital over time, but also convert one form of capital into another. Yet, the accumulation, mobilisation, and convertibility of these different forms of capital is shaped by societal structures and hierarchies.

Migration scholars have put Bourdieu's capital theory in a transnational context and theorise how certain resources are potentially transferable across national borders with the notion of *migrant capital*. Saksela-Bergholm et al. define this as a set of "resources that are available to members of migrant communities as a result of migration", such as transnational social networks (2019, p. 164). They emphasise that in order to overcome a "celebratory enthusiasm for migrant transnationalism" it needs to be examined in relation to broader social processes and power relations, stating that "it is not enough to assess the existence of transnational resources. Instead, the question that needs to be addressed is how and via which processes the existing transnational social ties (…) can be mobilised as a resource by specific social actors in a given social context" (Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019, p. 168). Thereby, these scholars build on intersectional understandings of social inequalities (e.g. Crenshaw 1989; Nash 2008), which consider that categories of difference—such as gender, nationality, age, class, and race—and their intersections influence an individual's opportunities to productively use certain resources. They draw attention to the fact that individuals may hold different social positions in different places and times and resources may be valued differently depending on the logics of these places and temporalities. They also underline that migrants may thus gradually develop different strategies to counter structural constraints. Erel and Ryan (2019), for example, remind us that in order to understand gains, losses, and reorientations of migrant capital we need to be sensitive to both spatial and temporal dynamics. This also aligns with *time-geographic approaches* to social inequalities (e.g. Axelsson et al. 2017; Monteith and Camfield

2019), which try to understand how moments in the past influence the present and how different spatialities and temporalities intersect.

Despite their conceptual value, works that use the concept of migrant capital often focus on transnational social networks as main migratory resources as well as their use after migrating and settling in place. In my work, I aimed to broaden this lens by engaging with a variety of resources, competences, and strategies that result from moving across and living in different places. Moreover, I sought to understand individuals' ongoing mobility practices and how these are linked to social inequalities. Here I built on the work of Moret (2020), who argues that migrants accumulate diverse technical and cognitive skills over the course of their mobile biographies. She speaks of *mobility capital*, which "allows some people to cross borders rather easily (…) and carry out activities in different places" (2020, p. 236) and can eventually be transformed into socio-economic advantages. Yet, inspired by other scholars (e.g. Beck 2007; Cresswell 2010; Kaufmann et al. 2004), she also draws attention to the fact that access to mobility and the ability to be mobile is unequally distributed, as it depends on the evolution of personal circumstances regarding family situation, health, education, and financial means, as well as societal structures and political changes. Moreover, she underlines that having the ability to choose not to move as well as control over future movement is essential for the conversion of mobility capital into other forms of capital. Moret inspired me to not only examine migrants' different capacities to move across borders, but also their options in accessing local spaces. After all, spatial mobility might be a strategy to mitigate and compensate for the shortfalls of certain locations (Rérat 2018, p. 104).

Article 2 presents the results of using a *trajectory perspective* and the conceptual and theoretical tools presented in this section. I show how the TMEs I interviewed in Zurich mobilised resources and competences that emerged from their complex cross-border trajectories and highlight which obstacles they experienced during the process. The elaborations in this chapter are also relevant to Article 3, which, however, primarily builds on a different approach and is presented in the next sub-section.

### ***3.2. Going beyond individualistic discourses and investigating socio-spatial dependencies***

One of the aims of this dissertation is to understand the conditions under which migrants can fulfil the entrepreneurial "dream". It is therefore necessary to examine the unequal opportunities they face in this undertaking. Article 3 of my dissertation, co-written with my colleagues from IP32, L. Sandoz, Y. Riaño and L. Izaguirre, tackles this by investigating the socio-spatial resources and strategies different groups

of transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs) rely upon. More specifically, it uses a *dependency perspective*, which is inspired by the literature on globalisation from below (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012; Portes 2000) and feminist approaches (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015; Webster 2020). In this section, I outline this perspective in more detail.

The starting point of our interest in dependencies was the critique of the celebratory enthusiasm for transnational resources, as well as the long tradition of heroising and romanticising the figure of the "self-made" entrepreneur and his/her independence. As shown in Section 2, these tendencies stem from individualistic discourses which attribute the responsibility for success or failure directly to the individual (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020, p. 50). This ignores that despite having transnational resources and a certain degree of autonomy, TMEs rely on stable connections in both private and professional spheres to create viable businesses and are thus deeply embedded in power relations which might constrain their success (Sandoz 2021; Solano 2020). The dependency perspective contrasts the notion of independence and underlines that TMEs are not simply free economic agents. Overall, my colleagues and I define a dependency as a "relationship in which one or more social actors are reliant on another social actor" (Jeanes 2019).

Dependency theory has a long legacy in the context of cross-border relations and globalisation. It originally emerged as a critique of theories of modernisation and development which insist that non-Western countries would inevitably follow Western economic advances. Prebisch (1950) and Frank (1975) famously used the notion to argue that the flow of resources between low-income countries to wealthy countries would create dependencies and enrich the latter at the expense of the former. Dependency here refers to the "the inequality of power and forms of economic domination that characterises the relations between rich and poor countries" (Calhoun 2002). While this theory shares many characteristics with our approach, it focuses on the relationships between countries. We were rather interested in the "micro-politics of power" (Massey 2009, p. 22) as they manifest within the everyday lives of individuals. Here, we built on the literature on *globalisation from below* (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012; Portes 2000), which shows that globalisation is not only driven by powerful political institutions and large transnational corporations, but also by ordinary people. This perspective allowed us to uncover the cross-border connections built by small-scale entrepreneurs, as well as the impacts of global inequalities on their daily activities. We thus drew from feminist scholars who have long argued that the power of an individual is profoundly shaped by the intersection of markers of difference, such as gender, race, and class, which are linked to specific systems of oppression, such as patriarchy, racism, and capitalism (e.g. Crenshaw 1989; Nash 2008). Following this *intersectional approach*, my colleagues and I aimed to understand how different forms of structural inequalities influence individuals' abilities to act according to their aspirations.

Central to our understanding of dependencies is that we do not necessarily view them as per se negative or strictly economic, but rather as a primary aspect of all human life and connected to emotional and social aspects of the livelihoods of individuals. Here we were particularly inspired by feminist scholars who build on a prominent school of feminist theory called the *ethics of care* (e.g. Hankivsky 2006; Held 2005; Robinson 2006). These scholars contest perceptions of the individual as independent, self-interested, and prioritising economic growth, efficiency, and profit-making over other values such as equality and care. Feminist scholars rather underline the emotional significance of relationships and their vital role for forming identities and meaning in human lives (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Webster 2020). Souralová (2015), for example, applied these ideas in her in-depth study on post-migratory care arrangements in the Czech Republic. She studied the triadic relationships between nannies, mothers, and children and used the notion of mutual dependency to describe them. By moving beyond the conceptualisation of paid caregiving as an exploitative economic exchange between rich white and poor racialised women, Souralová offers a new take on the phenomenon. She highlights that while an economic rationale still exists, it is characterised by multiple interdependencies which require reciprocal giving and receiving.

Following this literature, my colleagues and I not only sought to understand the economic and profit-driven motivations of entrepreneurs but were equally interested in their intimate and social aspirations, such as stability, recognition, reconciling professional and private spheres, and contributing to specific communities. We contrasted utilitarian ideas that reduce migrants to their economic potential with a view of them as human beings with diverse emotions, attachments, and responsibilities. Yet, this focus on the everyday lives of individuals does not mean that we only explored social relationships and dependencies between human actors. We rather aimed to capture the diversity of local and transnational connections that TMEs rely upon. Inspired by the work of other scholars (e.g. Liswoska and Stabuskawsju 2014; Portes 2000; Schäfer and Henn 2018; Solano 2020), we distinguished between dependencies on social networks, geographical locations, spatial mobility, and institutional support, but are equally interested in their entanglements.

Despite understanding dependencies as an indispensable feature of society and ideally beneficial for all parties involved, our analysis still aimed to draw attention to the power dynamics that characterise them. We built on the argument that whether a person can profit from a relationship depends on the socio-economic and symbolic power of the actors involved (e.g. Massey 2009; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003; Souralová 2015). When power is utilised in a manner that diminishes the benefits of less powerful actors while enlarging the profits of more powerful actors, unequal dependencies emerge. These might be limiting and entail fragilities and risks which can only be navigated if other options are available. Following these arguments, Article 3 explores how *dependencies* (on social networks, geographical location, spatial mobility, and institutional support) interact with *fragilities* (the level of risk and

vulnerability associated with these relations) and *alternatives* (available strategies to mitigate risks and expand options) in the lives of TMEs.

Applying the *dependency perspective* to my own data allowed me to gain more differentiated insights into the unequal opportunities migrants experience with regard to entrepreneurship. It significantly contributes to the aims of this thesis as it enables a view of migrant entrepreneurship which does not reduce migrants to their "migrancy" and economic potential but sheds light on other aspects of their lives. It thus contrasts individualistic narratives of entrepreneurship. To deepen reflections on collective actions in the field, I thus studied a migrant-run organisation supporting entrepreneurs. In the next section, I present the conceptual and theoretical tools I used to explore its activities.

### *3.3. Exploring counterspaces to experiences of social and economic exclusion*

In my doctoral research, I not only engaged with the realities of transnational migrant entrepreneurs themselves but also investigated a migrant-run organisation that promotes entrepreneurship in Zurich. I was motivated to study this organisation in order to contest individualistic views on entrepreneurship (see Section 3.2) and to explore collective actions beyond the strategies of individual entrepreneurs. I thus tried to understand to what extent the organisation affects the conditions that enable or constrain cross-border migrant entrepreneurship.

Article 4, which is co-written with I. Stingl, presents the results of this part of my research. It uses a *counterspace perspective* to question to what extent the studied organisation challenges the socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland. This question might appear broader than what I have presented so far in this dissertation. This can be explained by the fact that during my fieldwork I realised that countering labour market barriers is a crucial incentive for the studied organisation and its participants. As mentioned in Section 2, framing migrant entrepreneurship as a response to socio-economic exclusion is often criticised as deficit-oriented within the literature (Elo et al. 2018, p. 123). Yet, I decided to explore this aspect further in my analysis as it emerged as a central theme in my field. I thus focused on the agentic strategies of migrants to transform power relations—which does not necessarily lead to a deficit-oriented approach, as I demonstrate in this section.

Overall, the counterspace perspective can be embedded in a long tradition of theorising the interplay between *structure* and *agency*. Structure refers to a set of rules and power geometries that govern society, while agency represents the autonomy of individuals and groups and their abilities to make choices, act,

and resist (Caillol 2018, p. 649). Giddens (1984), in his structuration theory, famously argued that both structural forces and individual social agents impact the constitution of society and that they are highly interlinked. In a similar vein, Foucault argues that "there are no relations of power without resistances" (1980, p. 142) and thereby highlights individuals' capacities to change modes of governance. Migration scholars increasingly build on these ideas and examine migrants' active responses to structural constraints:

> *An approach that emphasises migrants' agency is often viewed as a challenge to the powerful paradigm of migrants' victimisation, marginalisation, and exclusion (...) [and] an attempt to overcome the often one-sided emphasis on the hardships experienced by migrants. (Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016, p. 129)*

All the papers in this thesis can be situated within this discourse. While Articles 2 and 3 mostly explore the subtle forms of agency conducted by individuals, Article 4 rather investigates migrants' collective actions. It thereby builds on studies examining organised forms of agency such as trade unions and civil society organisations (e.g. Caggiano 2019; Martin 2011; Wills 2008).

More specifically, the counterspace perspective draws from geographically inspired research underlining the spatial dimension of agency (e.g. Caillol 2018; Etzold 2016; Seo and Skelton 2017). We thereby conceptualised the migrant-run organisation under study as space. Following the understanding of space outlined in Section 2, the focus was not on the materialities of this space, e.g. physical and virtual places where the members come together, but rather on the social practices and symbolic meanings that constitute this space (e.g. Riaño 2017). To examine how the studied organisation challenges the socio-economic exclusion of migrants, we specifically mobilised the concept of *counterspace*s. Following Lefebvre (2005), these can be defined as "alternative spatial systems, arrangements, practices, and norms that indicate the points of possible rupture in the present system" (Pande 2018, p. 781). This approach has been used in a variety of contexts. For example, it was applied in critical race theory to examine the racial marginalisation of students (e.g. Case and Hunter 2012; Solorzano et al. 2000) as well as in studies on LGBTQIA+ communities (e.g. Cerezo and Bergfeld 2013; McConnell et al. 2016) and migrant communities (e.g. Bendixsen and Wyller 2019; Pande 2018). We were particularly inspired by Hassanli et al. (2020) who applied the concept in their analysis of a cultural festival in Australia. They argue that this festival operates as a counterspace which challenges deficit-oriented notions of migrants, forges self-enhancement, and creates sources of empowerment. It not only validates "the oppression narrative (i.e. experiences of rejection and marginalisation)", but also fosters "a resistance narrative (i.e. celebrating identities and showcasing capabilities and achievements)" which leads to "reimagined narratives (i.e. a sense of affirmation and acceptance)" (Hassanli et al. 2020, p. 12).

Pande argues that counterspaces are thus "not just instrumental for migrants' survival" but have the potential to affect and redefine societal perceptions and politics (2018, p. 783).

These accounts show the transformative potential of counterspaces. However, my co-author, I. Stingl, and I did not want to fall into the trap of idealising and romanticising them. After all, "human action is highly differentiated in the scope and scale of its effects; and (…) some actions and some agents matter rather more than others" (Gregson 2005, p. 29). Here, we followed authors who caution against over-celebrating the individual's abilities to change landscapes of exclusion (Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016; Mitchell 2011). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011), for example, speak of "constrained agency" and call for an understanding of agency as relational to and embedded in broader societal structures. Similarly, Katz pushes for nuances in this discussion and offers a categorisation of three forms of agency (2004, pp. 244–257): the first form is called "resilience" and refers to small acts of getting by, coping, and adapting; the second form is "reworking" and is defined as the effort to improve one's position within existing power relations; and the third form is "resistance", which aims to challenge and reshape existing structures and lead to regaining control and transformation. Katz thus argues that the third form is the hardest to find.

Distinguishing between these different forms of agency not only draws attention to the various intentions and consequences of counteractions, but also to the unequal opportunities individuals face to change and transform societal structures according to their different positionalities. In this context, it is thus important to mention that structure and agency cannot always be distinguished easily, as individuals and organisations internalise societal discourses and structures and thereby reproduce them within their everyday practices. From a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault 2008), many scholars have for example explored how subjectivities are reconstituted under neoliberalism, showing the emergence of the neoliberal subject and "entrepreneurial self" (e.g. Bröckling 2016; Peters 2001; Scharff 2016; Teo 2018). Yet, such analyses often risk being paternalistic and undermining individual accounts, experiences, and choices (Parsell and Clarke 2019). Adopting societal discourses and structures might also be a conscious choice to improve living conditions within a setting that cannot be changed easily. This is, for example, underlined by Martin (2011), who studied migrant organisations acting as labour market intermediaries in Chicago:

> *Working within the system, rather than against it, is a legitimate decision that many organizations make strategically. These organizations subscribe to the idea that there is upward mobility in the labor market and they would rather see their clients thrive in the economy as it currently exists, than fight what could be a losing battle in trying to change neoliberalism and precarious work. (Martin 2011, p. 2948)*

Martin thereby argues that organisations' efforts need to be dismantled as contradictory while acknowledging that "the potential to (…) advocate for progressive change is in constant tension with the neoliberal patterns of state" (2011, p. 2934). We found this take particularly inspiring in our analysis of the migrant-run organisation promoting entrepreneurship.

Overall, Article 4 questions to what extent the migrant-run organisation under study constitutes a counterspace to the socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland and offers a critical analysis of its differentiated effects. With regard to the overarching aim of this thesis, the counterspace paper particularly highlights the role of support structures and to what extent they create conditions that enable the entrepreneurial "dream", as well as the ambivalences that occur in the promotion of entrepreneurship and how these relate to the unequal opportunities migrant entrepreneurs face.

# 4. METHODOLOGY

## *4.1. Overall research design*

In the field of migrant entrepreneurship, the application of various methods has advanced substantially in recent years. However, most studies still rely on quantitatively collected data, which are often disconnected from the reality of migration experiences (Vershinina and Cruz 2021, p. 508). Increasingly, scholars call for qualitative methodologies that draw on migrants' micro-practices of the everyday and adopt a "a view of migrant communities as dynamic and evolving, recognizing the importance of migrant individuals, their voices, their heterogenous stories and their embedded agency" (Vershinina and Cruz 2021, p. 511). In my doctoral research, I followed these calls as I outline in detail in this section.

My work builds on a qualitative case study between 2018 and 2020 in Zurich, Switzerland, which provides an interesting context of study. More than 45% of Zurich's approximately 434,000 inhabitants are foreign-born (Stadt Zürich 2020). The region also holds the highest rate of business creation in Switzerland (Kyora and Rockinger 2020, p. 38), as its outreach to the global economy, entrepreneurial infrastructure (co-working spaces, universities, networking events), and urban customer base makes it an attractive location for entrepreneurs. The city thus states that migrant entrepreneurs play an important role in the local economy and contribute innovatively in diverse sectors, such as IT, fashion, art, and gastronomy (Stadt Zürich 2021). In recent years, support organisations have launched several entrepreneurial programmes to celebrate, encourage, and aid migrants in creating businesses and social projects (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 144).

All these actors contribute to constructing what I call the entrepreneurial "dream" in this thesis. I view this as an imaginary scenario that is promoted in multiple settings and which individuals may strive for but not be able to achieve under all conditions. Here I do not directly refer to the "American dream", which has been defined as the "dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunities for each according to ability or achievement" (Adams 1931, p. xii). This is a narrative specific to the United States and its migration history. It shares, however, certain characteristics with my understanding of the entrepreneurial "dream". They both are connected to neoliberal discourses on personal responsibilities and freedoms, and thus the myth that hard work and creativity will always lead to success and be rewarded fairly. According to this logic, those who do not succeed must not have sufficient courage or skills, a perspective which needs to be viewed critically given the structural inequalities that exist in society (see Section 2; Lentz 2017).

Overall, I aimed to better understand how the entrepreneurial "dream" actually unfolds in the dynamic biographies of individuals and who can pursue and fulfil it. I thus formulated the following research question: *How do migrants' entrepreneurial careers relate to complex cross-border trajectories and under which conditions can they use resources that result thereof?*

The case study I conducted to respond to this question consisted of two interrelated projects. On the one hand, I carried out 34 biographic interviews, using geographical maps, with transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs). Here the focus was on the cross-border trajectories of TMEs and the obstacles different groups of TMEs encounter. Compared to other studies, my sample is unusual for several reasons. First, the majority of my interviewees had multiple migration experiences. Second, I not only interviewed established entrepreneurs, but also those who were in the process of creating business to gain insights into entrepreneurial careers beyond the success stories. Moreover, I included individuals with very different profiles and socio-economic characteristics in order to contrast their experiences. On the other hand, along with the interviews with TMEs, I conducted ethnographic observations within a migrant-run organisation providing support to entrepreneurs in Zurich. The aim was to better understand the context in which migrants are encouraged to become entrepreneurs and the role of collective action in the field. I developed a collaborative relationship with the organisation's team, which significantly guided my research interests during my PhD. It seemed only logical to engage with the organisation as I considered its members to be experts in my research field and hoped to learn from their experiences.

In contrast to quantitative approaches that reduce social realities to a series of observable and atomistic entities and strive for objective variable-oriented explanations, qualitative inquiry aims to understand ("verstehen") the complexity of a social phenomenon by putting the emphasis on subjective meaning-making and social intersubjectivity (Iosifides and Sporton 2009, p. 101). Qualitative research, and in particular the biographic, ethnographic, and collaborative approaches that I used in this study, are often criticised as inadequately systematic, scientific, and generalisable. Critics point to a lack of methodological certainty and value-free knowledge, as qualitative researchers study the experiences of a limited number of people, are embedded in the field, and build relationships with research participants. When establishing the research design for my doctoral project, I questioned if generalisable and value-free knowledge was possible. Significant inspiration in this regard came from the framework of *critical qualitative inquiry* (Denzin 2017, p. 8), which rejects the idea of an "objective truth" and artificial moral distance between the researcher and the communities under study (Denzin 2017, p. 10). Following this stance, this dissertation adopts a constructivist ontological and interpretative epistemological perspective (Grix 2002). I thereby view social phenomena, such as migrant entrepreneurship, neither as singular nor objective, but as socially constructed, reproduced, and changed by actors who make sense of their experiences and by the broader structural contexts in which their lives are embedded. Concretely, this work attempted to achieve a better understanding of the subjective meaning of transnational migrant

entrepreneurship based on individual and collective accounts from different actors, namely a group of TMEs themselves and a migrant-run support organisation, as well as my own experiences in the field.

The two empirical subprojects, the biographic interviews with TMEs, and the research collaboration with the support organisation are presented separately within this chapter in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. The aim is to show in detail how I approached and interacted with these different actors and how I analysed the data gathered. Yet, these subprojects were not independent from, but rather complemented each other. Thereby I followed the methodological principle of triangulation (Flick 2009, p. 445), broadly defined as integrating, combining, and mixing different methods and data. This was originally designed as a strategy to increase the "validity" of research findings; however, the conceptualisation stems from a (post)positivist understanding of social reality, viewing it as something that can be objectively measured by the application of various methods. Triangulation has been challenged extensively by scholars following a constructivist-interpretative stance, and in response the conceptualisation was extended, with scholars arguing that "while validity of measurement cannot be claimed, methods can be triangulated to reveal the different dimensions of a phenomenon and to enrich understandings of the multi-faceted, complex nature of the social world" (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006, p. 48). In my study I followed this understanding and combined different methods in order to provide a more nuanced view on the topic of migrant entrepreneurship from various perspectives. The data generated through using different methods allowed me to contextualise and deepen certain aspects of my analysis.

My early reflections on my own ontological and epistemological stance also led me to engage further with *feminist methodologies* and in particular feminist geographic literature (for an overview see Autor*innenkollektiv Geographie und Geschlecht 2021; Laliberte et al. 2010; Staeheli and Martin 2000), which then guided my research approaches. This literature proves to be very sensitive to the spatial complexity of individual biographies and collective actions, as well as to the power relations that shape them. It is particularly concerned with the aspect of gender but also other social markers of difference and their intersections. Inspired by social constructivists, feminist geographers argue that differences between individuals and groups are not "naively given to us as unmediated parts of reality" (Dixon and Jones 2006, p. 49). Instead, they emerge through discourses and everyday social practices, and thus affect the spatial dimension of society and the relationships between individuals and groups. Following these arguments, I was specifically attentive to how actors perceive and experience transnational migrant entrepreneurship differently taking into account that they do not act independently from societal structures and that inequalities exist between them due to gender, family situation, region of birth, legal status, and socio-economic position. This was also motivated by my intention to explore the realities of my research participants beyond their "migrancy" and follow intersectional approaches (e.g. Crenshaw 1989; Nash 2008).

Feminist geographic literature also offers tools to address the question of power in academic research itself and the fact that knowledge is always marked by those who produce it. Based on the work of others (e.g. Haraway 1991; Harding 1991; McDowell 1992), Rose (1997) for example advocates for situating knowledge production. This involves a continual exploration of how researchers' positions in society and multiple roles in the field affect data collection and analysis (Madge 1993, p. 296) and points towards uncertainties in interpretations (Miles and Crush 1993, p. 86). In this sense, I tried to constantly reflect on my own positionality as a woman with a tertiary education who has Austrian citizenship, does not have children, and is employed at a university. The chapter does not include a specific subsection on this topic, as I see it as crucial to all steps taken during this study. I thus point to my own reflections and the emotions I felt while conducting this research, as well as their processual nature, throughout the chapter.

Feminist geographers also urge researchers to create spaces in which the relationships that are developed during research—as well as the methods and interpretations—can be challenged and contested (Gilbert 1994, p. 90). They build on postcolonial critics and the argument that Western academics risk reproducing colonial logics if they view research participants as unable to think for themselves. To overcome these patronising practices, they thus call for the application of participatory methodologies. Participation is often used as a mere "buzzword", but if taken seriously it can trigger collaborative processes of knowledge production, in which communication is not unidirectional and benefits are mutual (Caretta and Riaño 2016, p. 2; see also Askins 2018; Phillips et al. 2012). The research collaboration I built with the support organisation under study is motivated by these calls. I aimed to ensure that my research mattered to the people under study and that I created a space for mutual learning. I thus tried to achieve an intersubjective understanding of migrant entrepreneurship and strengthen the dialogue between different perspectives.

Apart from my engagement with the studied organisation, an intersubjective understanding of my data was also strengthened through continuous exchanges with other researchers. My collaboration with I. Stingl—with whom I co-wrote Article 4—is presented in more detail in Section 4.3.3. In Section 4.4 I present how my dissertation was embedded within the IP32 project and how working as part of a team affected my doctoral research and the design of my dissertation. At the end of my time as a doctoral student I worked intensely with the comic author Jean Leveugle. I was motivated to start this collaboration after debates among feminist geographers on the purpose of social research inspired me to share my own interpretations and insights on migrant entrepreneurship in a creative way. Therefore, I decided to create a comic booklet that would make my research accessible to (and possibly challenged by) a broader public readership. I present this project in Section 4.5.

## *4.2. The interviews*

### *4.2.1. Selecting research participants: A maximum variation approach*

Overall, I interviewed 34 individuals. An overview of the characteristics of the research participants is presented in Table 1 of Article 2 (see Part II). In selecting my interviewees I was inspired by the theoretical sampling approach of *Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 45) and the strategy of purposive sampling, which aims to include a variety of information-rich cases and achieve maximum variation in order to understand shared patterns as well differences within a heterogenous group (Patton 1990, p. 170). I thereby did not strive for any statistical representation, but to include individuals who were as different as possible with regard to social markers of difference—such as gender, family situation, nationality, legal status, and socio-economic position—to explore how different actors perceive and experience transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Before elaborating on how I chose and accessed my interview partners, I present three vignettes that exemplify my sample:

***Vignette 1: Ana Stoyanova***[7]

*Ana was born in the 1970s in a small town in what is now called the Republic of North Macedonia. After finishing a law degree and working for a human rights organisation, she managed a private clinic in the capital, Skopje. There, she met and married her Swiss partner. Ana was about thirty years old when she followed her husband to Tajikistan, where he worked for an international organisation while Ana gave birth to and raised their three children. In 2009, they moved to France before settling in Switzerland, close to Zurich, in 2011. Ana started looking for jobs in Switzerland in 2017 but could not find a position that suited her professional skills. Unsatisfied with this situation, she decided to create her own business importing textiles, handicrafts, and other items produced by socially disadvantaged women in North Macedonia and Tajikistan and selling them online and at fairs in Switzerland. At the time of the interview, Ana travelled regularly for her business activities to build collaborations with humanitarian organisations. The family remained dependent on her husband´s income, but Ana hoped that this would change in the future (interview conducted 17.09.19).*

[7] All names are fictive (See Section 4.2.2).

***Vignette 2: Janina Banis***

*Janina was born in the 1980s in Lithuania, where she obtained a master's degree in information system engineering. She worked for a company before creating her own business offering IT services to have more freedom. Eager to explore opportunities in other countries, she decided to leave Lithuania. Janina lived for one year in Frankfurt (Germany) and for three years in Rotterdam (Netherlands), where she also ran her own IT business. In 2015 she moved to Zurich. She never perceived herself as a migrant and found it easy to settle in. Janina first started to work part-time as IT support for a real-estate company. Yet, together with a "friend of a friend" she soon founded another IT business, which allowed her to quit her job. When interviewed, Janina was trying to establish a Swiss client base while also completing jobs for foreign costumers, most of whom were based in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. Janina didn´t need to travel internationally, as she could communicate with business partners virtually. When she felt like it, she visited other European cities to participate in training and networking events (interview conducted 09.09.19).*

***Vignette 3: Emilio Martínez***

*Emilio was born in the 1990s in Colombia, where he completed a bachelor's degree in photography. He then opened a café with his wife in Bogotá. Due to political instabilities and their humanitarian activities, Emilio and his family had to leave Colombia in 2016. They applied for asylum in Switzerland. After living in different refugee shelters, Emilio and his wife moved to an apartment in the countryside close to Zurich, where their first child was born. At the time of the interview, Emilio was still waiting for his residence permit. In this unstable situation, he could not find employment but was motivated to find creative solutions. With a Colombian friend and his wife, he developed the idea of a business fostering the fair trade of emeralds between Colombia and Switzerland. They joined an entrepreneurial programme for migrants and refugees in 2019 to gain knowledge about the start-up process. However, due to Emilio's ongoing asylum procedure, he was unable to officially launch the business. He could not travel to Colombia, which would be crucial to their project. When interviewed, Emilio and his team were still trying to advance the business by networking with possible clients in Switzerland (interview conducted 23.08.19).*

While these three vignettes mirror my aim to portray heterogenous voices and achieve maximum variation in my sample, they also share similarities. Thereby, they illustrate central criteria and reflections that guided my sampling procedure.

*Who is a migrant?*

The first criteria I used to select my interviewees concerns their migration experience. They all share the experience of moving to Switzerland from another country. As discussed in Section 2, focusing on individuals with migration experience risks normalising their perception as an exceptional group and reproducing nation-state logics and exclusionary discourses (e.g. Dahinden 2016; Sievers et al. 2022). For me it was a pragmatic choice because I was interested in how the experience of moving to another country and the "migrancy" of individuals shape entrepreneurial careers, and thus aimed to contribute to the research and discourse on migrant entrepreneurship. I attempted to solve certain issues that emerged from this pragmatic approach through specific conceptual tools and methodological decisions, as I show in this section. I then discuss the implications further in Section 5.1. when presenting the results of my research.

With regard to using the term "migrant", it is important to note that I do not refer to migration as a simple movement from one country to another followed by "integration" into the host society. This mirrors nation-state and sedentarist epistemologies, in which the absence of migration is perceived as the norm or even the ideal (Schapendonk et al. 2021, p. 3245). I rather conceptualised migration as a trajectory that might consist of a variety of spatial movements across borders over time (see Section 3.1). This contrasts existing research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, which often reduces individuals to their national origins and does not dedicate attention to the multi-sitedness of cross-border trajectories (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 33; Muñoz Castro et al. 2019, p. 569). Following these reflections, I purposely included interviewees who had lived in multiple countries throughout their lives, such as Ana and Janina. Overall, 28 out of 34 interviewees had changed their country of residence more than once.

Moreover, I do not understand the terms "migrant" and "migrancy" as objective and static categories, but rather as socially constructed labels which individuals either subjectively identify with or have attributed to them by others in specific contexts and times (see Section 2). I thus did not use state-produced and ethnicity-centred categories for selecting research participants. I thereby followed scholars (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Heis and Dannecker 2022; Verduijn and Essers 2013) who have underlined that grouping entrepreneurs along these categories contributes to replicating the foreign/native divide and subsequent stereotyping. Instead of identifying migrants based on a specific nationality, legal status, or ethnicity, I selected individuals based on the fact that they were born outside of Switzerland. As I was mostly interested in how the experience of moving shapes entrepreneurial careers, I could have also included individuals who were born in Switzerland but who had lived temporarily in other countries. At the time of fieldwork, however, I decided not to include so-called "returnees", as my sample was already very heterogenous.

Overall, my sample consisted of individuals with very different national, legal, and ethnic backgrounds, who were perceived very differently by society and the state. Some interviewees had unstable legal status in Switzerland and were labelled as "refugees", such as Emilio. Others had a stable residence permit or even Swiss citizenship. Some were not perceived as migrants at all, but rather as "expats", as is often the case with individuals born in EU countries, such as Janina. This mirrors specific racialised discourses of otherness in the Swiss context that emphasise cultural differences, especially between non-Europeans and Europeans, and frame the first as burdens to society while the latter are perceived as beneficial (Fischer and Dahinden 2017). These discourses are visible in populist anti-immigration movements such as the "minaret initiative" or the "mass immigration initiative", which regularly result in referendums (Ackermann and Freitag 2015; Manatschal 2015). It is thus important to underline that EU/EFTA citizens face different conditions under which to settle and work in Switzerland than others. This results from the fact that, similar to other European countries, Switzerland applies a selective immigration policy which grants free movement to EU/EFTA citizens while limiting admission to others. Non-EU/EFTA citizens can only enter Switzerland if they are sponsored by a company or can prove that their economic activity will be beneficial to the Swiss economy. This makes immigration to Switzerland very difficult for non-Europeans, especially those from Africa, South America, and Asia, who often need to legitimise their stay by requesting a student visa, family reunification, or asylum. They thus encounter more difficulties mobilising their qualifications and skills within the Swiss labour market due to discriminatory employment practices and processes of othering (Riaño 2021a; Sandoz 2020).

For my doctoral research, I interviewed 14 individuals born in European countries and 20 born in non-European countries. Contrasting their experiences was particularly important for me, not only because of the discourses of otherness and their implications described above, but also because individuals born in non-European countries seemed to face more barriers with regard to self-employment than others. In Switzerland in 2018, 9.1% of workers born outside the EU were self-employed,[8] compared to 10.3% of EU-born and 12.4% of Swiss-born workers (OECD and EU 2019, p. 165).[9] In this context, it is also important to note that whether or not migrants are legally allowed to start a business depends on their legal status, which is determined by their nationality. EU/EFTA citizens can become self-employed rather easily. Those who already reside in the country with a temporal (B) or permanent (C) permit do not face any legal restrictions for self-employment. Those who have not yet received a residence permit must register at their local canton and prove that they will be able to sustain a livelihood with their self-

[8] The report of the OECD and the EU (2019), quoted in the introduction, mobilises data available from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey. It defines the self-employed as "those who work in their own business, farm or professional practice and receive some form of economic return for their labour. This includes wages, profits, in-kind benefits or family gain (for family workers). (…) the business could have profit motives or be a non-profit or social enterprise" (OECD and EU 2019, p. 22).
[9] Swiss self-employment rates in 2018 were below the EU average (13.7% of those born in another EU country, 13.1% of those born outside the EU, compared to 14.9 % of those born in the reporting country; OECD and EU 2019, p. 162).

employed activity. In the case of non-EU/ EFTA citizens, only holders of a C permit or the spouses of holders of a C permit or Swiss citizens have a legal right to create a business. In theory, all others have to submit an application to the cantonal authorities and the State Secretary of Migration (SEM). The decisive factor in the assessment—in addition to the necessary professional and financial requirements—is credible proof that the self-employed activity will have a positive and sustainable impact on the Swiss labour market ("Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, FNIA" 2005, Art. 19, 23, 24 and 38), although in practice there are some exceptions. Spouses of B permit holders, for example, do not have to file an application for an authorisation of their self-employed activity (SEM 2021a, p. 30).

At this stage, it needs to be underlined that statistics with regard to self-employment rates have changed over time. In 2020, two years after I started my PhD, it was still 9.1% of individuals born outside the EU that were self-employed in Switzerland. Yet, it was only 8.9% of those born in the EU (OECD and European Commission 2021, p. 112), which is almost 1.5% lower than two years earlier. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office thus reports that the self-employment rates of workers with an EU/EFTA nationality (8.35%) and those with a nationality of a so-called "third country" (8.56%) were almost the same in 2020.[10] Yet, they are both significantly lower than the self-employment rate of workers with Swiss nationalities (14.03%) (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2022a). I cannot fully explain why the percentage of self-employed among individuals born in the EU has dropped, nor why the self-employment rate of "third country" nationals is now slightly higher than EU nationals. One reason might be the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly created challenges for the self-employed. These shifts could also be explained by the fact that the rate of naturalisation is higher among the self-employed and thereby they are changing legal status (Piguet 2010, p. 151). The fact that individuals from non-European countries continue to create businesses can thus be tied to the promotion of entrepreneurship via support organisations to individuals with refugee status (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 144) as well as legal changes that were implemented with regard to the self-employment of foreigners in Switzerland. Since 2019, the authorisation requirement, which applied to almost all non-EU/ EFTA citizens without long term residence permit (C) who wanted to become self-employed, no longer applies to recognised refugees (B permit) and those who are temporarily admitted (F permit), most of which are non-EU citizens. These individuals only need to report their self-employed activities via a form. Those who are still waiting for a decision in their asylum procedure (N permit) are, however, not allowed to pursue self-employed activities (SEM 2021b). Overall, this thesis does not offer a quantitative analysis of self-employment statistics and policies over time. It consists of a qualitative study focusing on the experiences of individuals in different situations, most of which were interviewed in 2019.

[10] For the definition of self-employment by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office see Footnote 5.

My inclusive approach in terms of national and legal backgrounds of individuals allowed me to examine to what extent different groups constructed by society and the state share similarities, but also the different kinds of opportunities and constraints they experience in terms of their entrepreneurial careers and cross-border activities. In this context, I also tried to explore whether being perceived as migrant and/or identifying as such is a constraint, as well as when, how, and for whom it becomes a form of agency. Yet, during the fieldwork my open approach sometimes created irritations. Informants frequently asked me to be precise about which kinds of migrants I was including in my study, for example whether I was interested in "expats" or "refugees". Here I briefly refer to a particularly memorable situation:

> *[Name of informant] told me that she contacted a friend to ask her whether she wanted to take part in my study. The friend was born in Italy, had lived in Switzerland for many years and had a successful professional career. She had worked as a communications manager at a Swiss bank. Recently, she had launched her own business in the field of communications. She allowed [name of informant] to forward her contact to me. Yet, she also stated that she did not think she was an ideal participant for the study, as she did not perceive herself as a migrant. She explained that she did not leave her country out of need and didn´t like the concept as it leads to populism. This started a heated debate among the two women on whether being a "migrant" reflects a certain vulnerability or not. [Name of informant] was rather irritated and almost angry about this conversation. In her view, it reflected the privileges of her friend. (Edited fieldnotes, 26.08.19)*

Experiences like these raise questions about whether the term "migrant" is per se a negative label and whether it should be used for recruiting participants for a study like this, considering its vagueness and the political discourse associated with it. Such situations could be used to argue for a further "de-migranticization" of social research, put forward by Dahinden (2016). I decided to maintain my approach but avoided using the term in certain situations. I sometimes used the phrase "individuals with mobility experiences", which seemed more neutral and inclusive. Yet, in the field, this definition also proved imprecise, as some people did not associate it with crossing borders. This shows that terminology in migration research can be challenging with regard to polarisation around the topic and the risk of reproducing exclusionary discourses.

*Who is an entrepreneur?*

The second criteria I used to select my interviewees concerns their entrepreneurial career. They all share the experience of undertaking or aiming to undertake an entrepreneurial project. As outlined in Section 2, I thereby followed conceptualisations of entrepreneurship which define it as the process of creating a business or organisation which introduces new goods, services, or ideas to the market (Ahmad and

Seymour 2008). The vignettes presented above illustrate that my interviewees are active in a variety of fields, including retail, technology, community building, gastronomy, and consulting. I decided not to limit my study to a specific economic sector, as I was not interested in the specificities of particular professional activities so much as the opportunities and constraints that emerge from cross-border trajectories more generally. I included anybody striving to create a business or organisation, whether formal or informal, with or without employees, as long as they aimed to generate an income.

The examples given at the beginning of this chapter also demonstrate that I included individuals at very different stages of entrepreneurship. While public discourses often focus on established entrepreneurs, half of the individuals I interviewed were within the first two years of their entrepreneurial career. I was thus not only interested in those who were already running a successful business, such as Janina, but also those who could not yet sustain a livelihood with their business, such as Ana; those who were struggling to get an entrepreneurial project going, such as Emilio; and those who had ceased operations due to insurmountable difficulties. I thereby adopted a processual approach which does not define entrepreneurship based on economic success or as a fixed state of existence, but rather as a complicated process without a definite beginning or end (Gartner 1988). It is also why I chose to speak of the entrepreneurial "dream": to underline that it might only be something that is envisioned for the future. This reflects my aim to provide more differentiated insights into entrepreneurial undertakings beyond heroisation and success stories. I rather tried to understand the challenges that characterise the process of becoming an entrepreneur.

*Who is a transnational entrepreneur?*

The third criteria I used to select my interviewee partners concerns their cross-border business activities. I included individuals whose entrepreneurial activities extend beyond national borders, building on classic definitions of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. For Portes, who was one of the first scholars to define the term, depending on contacts in other countries and frequent travel abroad are central characteristics (2002, p. 287). During my fieldwork, however, I realised that not all transnational entrepreneurs travelled to other countries on a regular basis. For example, Janina did not need to travel because she was able to conduct transnational business using digital technology. At the time of the interview, she considered travel exhausting and preferred to spend her time in Zurich. In contrast, Emilio would have preferred to travel for business, but could not freely do so due to his asylum status. Following these observations, I became more interested in the different capacities and aspirations involved in moving (or not moving) across borders. Therefore, I did not limit my study to individuals who regularly travelled but decided to adopt a broader definition of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. In this context, I was guided by mobility scholars who argue for a focus not only on the movement of people

but also of other entities, such as goods, services, capital, and ideas (Hannam et al. 2006, p. 5). Moreover, due to my interest in overcoming ethnic biases and a focus on migrants' national origins, I did not limit my study to entrepreneurs who were active in their country of birth and purposely included those who conducted business activities in other countries, such as Janina and Ana. To some extent, my approach thereby mirrors the definition of transnational entrepreneurship put forth by Drori et al.: "By traveling both physically and virtually, transnational entrepreneurs simultaneously engage in two or more socially embedded environments, allowing them to maintain critical global relations that enhance their ability to creatively, dynamically, and logistically maximise their resource base" (Drori et al. 2009, p. 1001).

*Access to the field*

To assure maximum variation, I accessed research participants through various channels. I first used the internet and social media platforms to identify locations where migrant entrepreneurs are active. Next, between winter 2018 and fall 2019, I conducted fieldwork in these locations, which included visiting events, co-working spaces, markets, fairs, and shopping districts. This allowed me to acquire insight into different forms of migrant entrepreneurship and get in touch with potential interviewees. One major point of entry into the field was participating in events hosted by organisations that support migrant entrepreneurs; I eventually collaborated with one of these (see Section 4.3). I researched the websites of these organisations, which offered insights into past and present participants of entrepreneurial programmes and their business projects. The entrepreneurs I accessed via such organisations had very different profiles, but most had obtained a tertiary education and were engaged in entrepreneurship following challenges entering the regular labour market in Switzerland. Most were still in the early stages of business creation, and thus used their migration background as part of their branding and to access support structures.

To extend my research beyond the participants of these organisations, I attended events in Zurich's broader entrepreneurial and start-up scene. For example, I joined the meetings of an informal networking group for entrepreneurs which I learnt about through "Meetup", an application that allows users to organise events for people with similar interests. The host of this particular group had moved to Switzerland more than twenty years ago and since then had followed an entrepreneurial career. In creating the group, he wanted to facilitate an exchange between entrepreneurs in Zurich. After we corresponded via email, he allowed me to participate in their weekly gatherings. During each of the four times I attended, I introduced myself and my research interests to the participants, who then gave me permission to stay and actively participate in the discussions. The conversations within this group gave me insights into entrepreneurial discourses in which a migration background was rarely addressed as a constraint, as illustrated in this fieldnote from one of the meetings:

*A young man, who created his own consulting company for fitness coaching, elaborated on the need for entrepreneurs to address problems that people already have. He talked about a past attempt to create a business that did not succeed because there was no need in the market for it. I asked him whether he thought that the fact he was not born in Switzerland played a role in this. He responded that if you have the right solution to a problem and the necessary drive, it does not matter where you come from. Two other participants jumped in and elaborated on the specificities of doing business in Switzerland, which you have to make yourself familiar with as a foreigner, and the need to learn German. The conversation then quickly took a different direction as participants started discussing networking practices. (Edited fieldnotes, 19.07.19)*

Many participants of the group, such as the one mentioned in these fieldnotes, perceived their skills and motivations as determinants more relevant to their entrepreneurial success than their position in society. I viewed this as partly related to certain privileges they enjoyed. Most had a university education and were active in the technology sector or consulting, which are per se very internationally oriented. Some were already established in the local economy, whereas others had moved to Switzerland recently for lifestyle and professional reasons and wanted to learn more about entrepreneurial opportunities in Zurich. My own reflections on their discussions significantly shaped my research and motivated me expand my activities to other settings.

In order to reach entrepreneurs in less privileged situations, I decided to further engage with the retail (e.g. textiles) and gastronomy sectors. I therefore conducted fieldwork in different shopping districts of the city. I drew from research on ethnic businesses in Zurich (Pitsch 2014; Rebsamen 2008) and used brochures created to guide tourists on shopping and gastronomy tours through different parts of the city, not limited to migrant businesses. As I visited dozens of shops and had informal conversations with their owners, I recruited interview partners whose profiles were different from those active in the start-up sector and those supported by migrant organisations. This strategy, however, did not always prove to be successful. In contrast to the above-mentioned groups, who seemed happy to share their stories and reflect on their entrepreneurial careers with me, the business owners I met when visiting shops were often more hesitant. They frequently told me that they were too busy to participate in research projects. Moreover, in a district that is known for its large population of migrant-run businesses, some individuals explained that researchers repeatedly approached them and that they were tired of these requests. I thus felt a certain discomfort while walking the streets and trying to recruit participants who had migration experiences, as this can be related to practices of "racial profiling" and reminded me of the problematic behind focusing on migrants in my study.

Finally, I used my personal networks and social media platforms such as LinkedIn to identify and directly contact potential interview partners. I also applied the technique of "snowballing" (Atkinson and Flint 2004), asking informants and interviewees to put me in contact with other potential research participants. Snowballing is often described as an effective tool to access "hidden populations". In my

case, it allowed me to engage with individuals who did not have a public profile as entrepreneurs yet. I thus not only considered snowballing as a "safety net or a fall-back alternative" when other means were not available, but as a "particularly informative procedure" (Noy 2008, p. 331), as it provided insights into the networks of interviewees and made the research process more dynamic and interactive. As Patton states, "[b]eing open to following wherever the data lead is a primary strength of qualitative strategies in research" (1990, p. 179). Yet, the strategy of snowballing led to the overrepresentation of certain groups because interviewees often forwarded me to individuals whose profile was similar to theirs, as I elaborate in detail below. My approach can thus be interpreted as opportunistic as I sometimes had to follow the "criteria of convenience" (Flick 2009, p. 121) and make on-the-spot decisions. Often, I interviewed individuals rather spontaneously without having prior information about their lives or socio-economic characteristics.

*Sampling biases*

Despite achieving a certain degree of variety, the sample clearly consists of biases. First, most interviewees (29 out of 34) had obtained a university education. This is related to the access points I chose to enter the field of migrant entrepreneurship and the difficulties I experienced when trying to recruit entrepreneurs with lower education levels, but also mirrors my own positionality as an academic researcher and the resulting network. This is a clear limitation of this study and shaped the analysis of the empirical material. A certain level of education may lead to privileges, specifically when an individual's skills are demanded by others. Yet, in the context of migration it may also lead to processes of dequalification and unemployment (Riaño 2021a; Sandoz 2020), as in the case of Ana, who faced challenges applying her skills in the Swiss labour market. The frustrating experience of one's qualifications not being valued by employers and society at large and how this can motivate individuals to engage in entrepreneurship became central aspects of my analysis, especially with regard to individuals who participated in entrepreneurial programmes for migrants.

Second, around two thirds of my interviewees (23 out of 34) were women. I was particularly motivated to include female entrepreneurs, as they remain understudied in the field of migrant entrepreneurship (Haandrikman and Webster 2020, p. 6). In Switzerland, women—and especially non-Swiss women—are less likely to become self-employed and their specific challenges still remain to be understood.[11] Yet, the overrepresentation of women not only stems from my motivation to represent female entrepreneurs, but also from the fact that I identify and am perceived as a woman by others. I had the

[11] Self-employment rates in Switzerland in 2021 with regard to gender: 15.4% male workers compared to 10.8% female (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2022b). Among individuals with Non-Swiss nationality: 11.8% male compared to 9.2% female (Swiss Federal Statistical Office 2022a).

impression that it was easier for me to connect with women than with men. Moreover, many female informants and interview partners forwarded me to other female entrepreneurs. They seemed to be particularly well-connected to each other, which relates to the fact that there are many networking initiatives specially targeted at female entrepreneurs but also that social networking is gendered in general.

Third, the majority of interviewees had a relatively stable legal situation[12] and had lived in Switzerland for more than five years.[13] This can be partly explained by the fact that having a temporary residency permit and having arrived only recently is a clear obstacle to entrepreneurship in Switzerland (Piguet 2010, p. 170). Yet, it does not mean that individuals in unstable legal situations do not engage in entrepreneurial activities. Emilio illustrates such a case. However, the small representation of these kinds of individuals in my sample made it difficult to explore the role of legal challenges and the state to a great extent in my doctoral research.

#### *4.2.2. Biographic interviewing with geographical maps*

Most interviews took place in the summer and fall of 2019 at cafés in Zurich which I visited beforehand to make sure that they offered the necessary privacy. Ten interviews were conducted in German, the rest in English. The average interview length was 81 minutes. My objective during the interviews was to reconstruct the cross-border trajectories of TMEs and to gain a contextual understanding of their experiences and perceptions. Thereby, I was mainly guided by biographic methods focusing on life stories and personal narrations (Denzin 1989a; Dutta 2016; Rosenthal 2004).

Biographic methods are an interesting tool for migration researchers (Wingens et al., 2011), as they facilitate linking different events in multiple places and times and their subjective meanings. To some extent, they can provide a mobile and multi-sited perspective (Marcus 1995) on migratory processes, as they allow the researcher to follow people through different spaces and times: “Biographical narrations are mobile and multi-sited not in terms of ‘being there’, but in terms of travelling in inner topographies” (Sontag 2018, p. 39). Thereby, the researcher acquires a glimpse into participants’ perspectives of their past, present, and future in different places. In this context, however, it is important to note that “narratives themselves are produced in particular times and places” (Laslett 1999, p. 392). One has to be aware that a biographical narration is always a reconstruction of the past from the perspective of the

[12] 11 interviewees had a temporary residence permit (B), 11 had a permanent residence permit (C), 10 had acquired Swiss citizenship and 2 were still waiting for an asylum decision (N permit).
[13] 26 out of 34 interviewees had lived in Switzerland for more than 5 years.

present, and may represent a "conscious, or even unconscious, strategy for self-presentation, a legitimization of moves and counter-moves and of projections for the future" (Knudsen 1990). Yet, people may remember very well how they perceived situations in the past and we should not neglect their analytical capacity to reflect. Thereby, biographical methods can reveal long-term processes of meaning-making, but also shifts and contradictions in individuals' own interpretations and understandings of their life stories.

Researchers applying biographical methods mostly follow the methodology of the narrative interview (Hermanns 1995), raising a "generative narrative question" which introduces the broad topic of the study and stimulates an independent narration of the interviewee (Flick 2009, p. 178). The aim is to produce a very "detailed biographical narrative with the least possible interventions by the researcher" (Iosifides and Sporton 2009, p. 102). In my study, I combined this technique with the method of the "problem-centred" interview (Witzel 2000), allowing for a more active participation of the researcher and the collection of biographic data more focused on a particular topic. I used an interview guide that consisted of narrative stimuli and specific questions focused on my research interests (see Annex). The questions were adapted to each interviewee and became more and more focused during the research process. I thereby pursued a processual approach (Flick 2009, p. 90), which gives priority to the field and the data under study. For this purpose, I created field notes after each interview. I documented the major characteristics of the interviewee, how I first connected with them, the context in which the interview took place, thoughts on which questions worked well and which did not, as well as remarks on off-record conversations. These field notes also consisted of reflections on the impact of my own positionality, preliminary interpretations, and ideas on which cases to select next.

In the interviews, I used geographic maps, which was inspired by visual methodologies used in geography and feminist research (Rose 2016). In geography studies these have long been a major research tool: "We have only to think of its specialization in mapping and landscape interpretation, and its emphasis on observation in the field, to realize that geography draws on the vision as a primary sensor" (Jung 2014, p. 987). While many scholars use visual tools for pedagogical purposes, I was particularly inspired by those who apply visual methodology at the stage of data collection. In most cases, research participants are asked to produce visual data— paintings, videos, or photos—which then serve as supplementary to verbal data (e.g. Buhr 2021; McIntyre 2003; Wang 1999). As Jung states, "[t]hese multi-sensory data not only triangulate each other, but also provide the research subjects with better chances to express themselves more accurately" (2014, p. 987). Visual methods can enable research participants to actively participate in the production of knowledge and take control of what is represented in the data. They can therefore be located within feminist approaches which promote the active participation and self-reflection of research participants, and thus aim to close the gap and redistribute the power between researcher and researched (e.g. Askins 2018; Caretta and Riaño 2016).

In practice, the interviews were guided by the following steps: To begin, I shared my interest in how interviewees' entrepreneurial careers related to their migration history and presented the geographic map of the world printed in an A3 format. As a conversational entry point, I asked interviewees to sketch their cross-border trajectories on the map and tell me more about when they moved, where, and why and how they ended up in Switzerland. This usually stimulated a relatively lengthy narration in which interviewees independently shared their educational, professional, and family histories, their reasons for migrating and their arrival in Switzerland. When the interviewees stopped, I posed follow-up questions seeking further details. After gaining a general overview of the interviewees' trajectories, I told them that I would like to learn more about their entrepreneurial project and how it developed from the initial idea to the current moment, which usually evoked another lengthy narration. Afterwards, I asked research participants to mark places on the map that were important to their businesses and tell why these places were relevant. The purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of how interviewees' entrepreneurial activities related to their past trajectories and to what extent they could mobilise resources acquired in different spaces and times. I also asked them about moments and people that were key to developing their business and to describe problems they encountered and how they solved them. These questions usually led to relatively exhaustive descriptions of the cross-border activities of the research participants and the opportunities and constraints they experienced. I thus prepared four sets of further questions: First, on the role of mobility for the business activities of the interviewee; second, on the role of social and institutional networks; third, on the specificities of Switzerland/ Zurich as a locality for migrant entrepreneurship; and fourth, on the interviewees' evaluation and subjective perception of their entrepreneurial careers. The interview finished with a set of standardised questions of socio-demographic information about the research participant.

The geographic maps used in the interviews allowed me to draw attention to the dynamic spatialities and the different mobilities embodied by my interviewees. I suggested using different colours for different kinds of movements but ultimately left it up to the interviewees to choose the colouring and design of their maps. Moreover, I told them to use the maps as freely as they wished, for example by adding notes and sketching possible future mobilities. I encouraged them to refer to the maps during their narrations with the purpose of gaining insights into how they subjectively perceived the complex mobility patterns that constituted their trajectories. I was aware that the application of this mapping tool could be both advantageous and disadvantageous. I always mentioned that we could use the internet if needed, as not everyone was able to locate places on maps. It turned out that the interviewees proved to be rather confident in this regard. Only a few asked me to draw on their map. During many interviews, the maps were used in a very simplistic way and only when I asked research participants to do so, while during others they became a major point of reference and discussion. The interviewees presented in the vignettes below serve as examples of how the maps were used:

***Vignette 4: Sonja Lechner***

*Sonja was born in the early 1980s in Austria and as a child moved to Zurich with her mother. For her undergraduate studies in Social Anthropology, she moved back to Austria. Right after, she started a PhD examining Indigenous communities. During this period, she spent eight months in Brazil and almost three years in Taiwan to carry out fieldwork for her thesis. In 2013, she settled in Zurich, where she started a business selling second-hand luxury clothes and textiles produced by Indigenous communities in Asia and South America. At the time of the interview, the business consisted of two stores, one in Zurich and the other in Salzburg. Cross-border mobility was essential to these entrepreneurial projects. Sonja travelled to Taiwan every year to maintain her networks and import new products, but also Indonesia and Colombia. Moreover, she visited Salzburg every other month to meet her business partner and move products between the two shops. She thus planed to extend her cross-border mobilities even further, for example to the US.*

*Figure 1: Map drawn by Sonja Lechner*

*Figure 1 depicts the map used in the interview with Sonja. Her past cross-border trajectory is marked in black. The mobilities she conducted in the present for her business are marked in blue and red. The future mobilities she envisioned are marked in yellow. When discussing her mobility practices, she underlined that her Austrian passport offered extensive mobility rights, allowing her to cross borders without restrictions. She also highlighted the personal freedom she enjoyed due to not having any children (interview conducted 15.08.19).*

***Vignette 5: Camilla Gomez.***

*Camilla was born in the 1960s in Colombia. In the mid-90s she moved to Amsterdam. She did not have a residence permit and sustained her livelihood with sex work. She was caught by the police and brought back to Colombia. Shortly after, she managed to come back to Europe. She was on the move, between Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, confronted with another deportation to Colombia in between. In the late 90s, she moved to Zurich, where she had a child and got married. After divorcing her husband and working in the cleaning sector for a while, she started selling clothes on the streets. About 10 years ago, she opened her own shop. The clothes Camilla sold were from different places: Colombia, the US, Turkey, and different countries in Europe. Camilla used to travel often to visit business contacts, but at the time of the interview she tried to travel only once a year.*

*Figure 2: Map drawn by Camilla Gomez*

*Figure 2 depicts the map used in the interview with Camilla. Her past trajectory is marked in black. She has thus numbered her repeated movements between places. The mobilities she conducted for her business activities are marked in red. When discussing her mobility practices, Camilla underlined that she faced many (im)mobility restrictions throughout her life. Sometimes she was not allowed to cross borders, sometimes she had to move as she was illegalised by migration regimes. After legalising her residence in Switzerland through marriage, she could follow her (im)mobility aspirations more easily, but still encountered difficulties due to financial limitations and care responsibilities (interview conducted 20.08.19).*

Overall, the geographic maps created by interviewees visualise the relationship between their past cross-border trajectories and present entrepreneurial activities and highlight their complexity beyond the simplistic view of migration as a linear movement from one country to another.[14] Yet, the maps not only served as a visual illustration, but also focused the interviews and my own analytical thinking. With interviewees like Sonja and Camilla the maps functioned as an incentive to reflect on different aspects that enabled or constrained their (im)mobilities. They thus encouraged interviewees to elaborate on their own perceptions of being on the move or staying in place. Some, for example Camilla, discussed their preferences of remaining immobile, as they were tired of moving all the time. Emilio Martínez, whose story was presented at the beginning of Section 4.2.1, noted about his map, "I would like to delete all the lines in this map, all of the borders. But I cannot do that. That's the only thing I would like to add." He elaborated that he would like to travel, but as an asylum seeker he cannot move freely and is more affected by borders than others. The geographic maps allowed me to dig deeper into different capacities and aspirations concerning (im)mobility. Thereby, the discussions I had with interviewees while using the tool of geographical maps clearly affected my interpretations.

After the interviews, I recurrently tried to explore how my own positionality affected my relationships with research participants, inspired among others by the work of feminist geographers (e.g. Rose 1997). A particularly important aspect seemed to be the fact that neither myself nor my interviewees were born in Switzerland. This established a sort of common ground. Interviewees often initiated informal exchanges on our experiences of arriving in Switzerland before or after the interview. They sometimes noted that they felt safe talking to me about certain negative experiences as they did not fear that I would perceive this as a critique. I could thus relate to many aspects of being an entrepreneur, as academia is increasingly shaped by neoliberal discourses and practices (e.g. Laketa and Côte 2022; Lipton 2020; Lipton and Mackinlay 2017; see also Section 4.4 and 4.5). That being said, I still detected certain hierarchies between us, some related to my own set of privileges. Despite not being born in Switzerland and only holding a temporary residence permit, I was never affected by status-related constraints or racialised discourses in either my professional or private life and did not face any mobility restrictions due to my European passport. Moreover, I spoke the official native language, was in a stable financial situation, and did not have children to care for while pursuing a professional career or crossing borders. I often reminded myself that I could never fully understand the struggles of interview partners who did not share these privileges. I could only do my best to create a space in which we could reflect on their difficulties together and then use my opportunities as a researcher to make certain issues more visible. In this sense, my attachment to the university also seemed to give me the legitimacy to ask certain questions, as most interviewees appeared to perceive me as an expert on migration issues and a potential advocate to policymakers. In some cases, they even articulated that they felt honoured to be of interest

[14] For further examples see Figure 1 in Article 2. All maps are accessible online: https://tabsoft.co/2VagVpT.

to a researcher or felt appreciated and heard through my interactions with them. While being motivated to give them the feeling of being listened to, I also tried to not give them false hopes and underlined that there are limitations to how my research project could affect the challenges they were experiencing.

I also encountered other forms of power relations in my research that related to my age and occupation as a PhD candidate. Most research participants were older than me and had professional experiences in a variety of academic and practical fields. I had the impression that some of them perceived me as a student and therefore performed a sort of teacher role. Some conversations, not exclusively but more often those with male research participants, made me feel intimidated and patronised, which created insecurities as well as tensions between myself and certain interviewees. I sometimes also had the feeling that interviewees tried to advertise their business to me and perceived me as a potential client or enabler of new contacts. In such situations, I had to underline the purpose of our conversation and clarify my role as a researcher. Moreover, the self-promotion practices during the interviews also had methodological implications. In my first encounters, I realised that many participants were used to embedding their entrepreneurial career in their overall trajectories, seeming to repeat nearly automatic narratives rather than spontaneously react to my questions and reflect on their biography and the constraints they encountered. This is related to the fact that in the field of entrepreneurship, biographical narrations and storytelling are popular tools for marketing (Sontag 2018, p. 39). In these moments, I tried to redirect the narrative by referring to topics that did not seem obvious to the interviewee. To move beyond storytelling practices that focus on stories of success, I asked critical questions on frictions and struggles in their entrepreneurial careers.

In most cases, however, I perceived my exchanges with research participants as beneficial to my own reflections. Many of them analysed and contextualised their experiences in a rather academic way, and I actively used their expertise and perspectives in my own interpretations. Following feminist approaches (e.g. Caretta and Riaño 2016), I tried to conduct my research as a dialogue rather than a unidirectional process of data collection, while being aware that I had the final power over the interpretation of the material gathered. This encouraged me to keep in touch with the research participants and continuously contextualise my analytical thinking. In this context, I would also like to mention that at the beginning of my thesis I planned to use multi-sited ethnographic methods (Boas et al. 2020; Marcus 1995) and follow some of my interview partners across borders in a second phase of fieldwork. However, the restrictions put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow me to move forward with these plans, though I still tried to reach out to my interview partners from time to time. For example, I forwarded a blog post I co-wrote with L. Sandoz on transnational migrant entrepreneurship during the pandemic (Sandoz and Mittmasser 2020) to all my research participants and asked them to comment and tell me about their own struggles during this time. I engaged more intensely with some interview partners, sending them my interpretation of their interviews and paper drafts and

asking for feedback. Yet, only a very small number of research participants responded to my requests. Applying participatory methods and creating collaborative relationships takes time and energy, which I was not able to invest fully during the pandemic. I needed to establish a new work environment and was struggling with the isolation caused by working remotely. Many of my research participants were also severely affected by the pandemic and needed to prioritise other responsibilities. Therefore, I decided to focus on following collaborative approaches in my research partnership with the organisation rather than with the interviewees.

Finally, there are some ethical considerations with regard to biographical interviewing and studying the life stories of individuals. Prior to my activities in the field, I was required to seek approval from the university's ethical committee and reflect on issues such as anonymisation and data management. Following the approach I outlined for this committee, I briefed research participants about my project and the implications of their participation before I started the interview. I asked them for permission to record the interview and to inform me whenever they did not want to answer a question or disclose any sensitive or potentially harmful information. Moreover, I confirmed that I would anonymise the content of the interview as much as possible when communicating my findings. I then asked them to sign a consent form. The research participants rarely raised any concerns regarding their participation, recording the conversation, and using the material for scientific purposes. Some of them even encouraged me to use their real name, which I mostly related to their motivation to promote their entrepreneurial project. When using the material in my writing, such as biographies of specific interviewees, I still used a fictive name in order to prevent any unintended consequences and treat all my interviewees equally. I thus avoided including details that were not essential for my analysis, such as concrete geographical locations or specific information about families and other members of their network. However, I could never fully guarantee that the interviewees remained unidentifiable in my research output without compromising the value of my data. For example, by describing the entrepreneurial activities of individuals together with their migration history, certain interviewees can be identified, given that they have rather public profiles on social media and elsewhere online. Biographical analyses were thus at the core of my study. I always tried to be open about this fact to my research participants.

#### *4.2.3. Analysis: Coding procedures and typologies*

The biographical interviews I conducted were recorded and then transcribed by research assistants who signed a non-disclosure agreement. For the analysis of the transcripts, together with the geographical

maps and fieldnotes I collected, I was guided by *Grounded Theory* coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This refers to the practice of attaching concepts to the data and thereby identifying key themes, patterns, and meanings in the text. This involves a constant comparison of cases and concepts. I first coded each interview transcript separately. Following the procedure of "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 113), I combined inductive and deductive approaches, meaning that certain codes emerged directly from the data while others were inspired by the literature, exchanges with other researchers, and preliminary interpretations during fieldwork. During the process I wrote down questions, ideas, and associations of my codes in memos. In a second step, mirroring the process of "axial coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 114), I selected categories that seemed most relevant to the research questions I raised, developed subcategories, and related them to each other. In a third step, I focused on the core categories that emerged and on finding further evidence for emerging theories in line with the procedure of "selective coding" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 115).

During this process I also created detailed case descriptions inspired by the method of biographical case reconstruction developed by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2004, p. 261). I wrote a sort of vignette in which I summarised the cross-border trajectories as well as the educational, professional, and family history of interviewees. I pointed towards moments and places that seemed particularly relevant and critical to my interview partners, as well as key turning points in their biographies (Riaño et al. 2015). I also described the nature of each interviewee's cross-border activities, elaborating on the people, goods, services, capital, and ideas that were moving and the different locations involved. I then summarised the opportunities and constraints the interview partners experienced. These vignettes allowed a case-specific analysis of each interviewee, exploring how individuals' trajectories are shaped by different decisions, events, networks, and their social roles, but also by societal structures in different times and places. In the process, the case descriptions reached a higher level of abstraction. I thus imported these descriptions into a chart and contrasted different cases using the emerging categories. This was not always easy due to the diversity of my sample. It was challenging to compare the experiences of the interviewees given the different stages of entrepreneurship they were in and their different realities with regard to certain socio-economic characteristics. However, my aim was not to conduct a strict comparison, but to show that patterns of similarities in this diverse group of interviewees could be detected—such as cross-border mobilities within entrepreneurial projects—along with patterns of differences, due to the way our society is organised and constructed.

One major aspect of the analysis concerned the dynamic spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship and specifically to what extent and via which mechanism they extend beyond the home/host country binary. Here, I was particularly interested in the relationship between past cross-border trajectories and present entrepreneurial activities. I investigated whether my interviewees were active in their country of birth, whether they extended to other countries where they lived in the past,

and whether they explored new places that did not mirror their past trajectory. Within this process, I engaged intensively with the geographic maps that were created during the interviews, as they illustrated the different forms of cross-border activities that I identified. Specific attention was thus directed to the resources and competences that enabled my interviewees to start entrepreneurial activities in these different places, and to what extent they were accumulated during their past cross-border trajectories.

The second major aspect of the analysis concerned the conditions that create unequal opportunities for my interview partners. In a first step, I deepened my analysis concerning the resources that they depend on to pursue the entrepreneurial "dream". I was specifically interested in how interviewees accessed both local and distant places that were essential to their entrepreneurial activities. The role of social networks, geographic locations, spatial mobility, and institutional support thus became major categories of analysis. In a second step, inspired by feminist and intersectional approaches (e.g. Crenshaw 1989; Nash 2008), I paid specific attention to how socially constructed markers of difference and their intersections created inequalities among the interviewees. During the process of analysis, the family situation, gender, legal status, nationality, and socio-economic position of the interviewees appeared to be the most relevant factors, as specific intersections of these markers could lead to constraints such as care responsibilities, mobility restrictions, or a lack of financial resources. With regard to the category of spatial mobility, the reflections of my interviewees concerning their different capacities to (not) move across borders, often encouraged by the practice of drawing on the geographical map, were central to the analysis. I thus questioned to what extent interviewees could overcome certain constraints and by using which strategies. Access to digital communication tools, mobilising intimate networks, and acquiring new collaborations abroad became important categories in this regard.

On the basis of this analysis, I also created different typologies. These can be defined as "organized systems of types" (Collier et al. 2012, p. 217) and usually describe typical situations that refer to empirical material but are not necessarily observable in its pure form. Therefore, they are often criticised as simplifying, stereotyping, and polarising the phenomenon in question. Yet, "[t]his particular interpretation is one that treats typologies as the end rather than as a means" (Torr 2008, p. 149). Typologies should not be considered as static, encompassing all cases. They can "never fully capture any aspect of social reality in its entirety because they are socially constructed abstractions" (Torr 2008, p. 160), but when regarded as ideal types (Weber 1949, p. 92) they can be a valuable means for representing how and why differences between cases exist. My approach mirrored Kluge's (2000) procedure of constructing typologies: 1. Development of relevant analysing dimensions (based on research questions, theoretical knowledge, and coding of empirical data); 2. Grouping cases and analysis of empirical regularities (guided by the contrasts between cases using attributes of the developed dimensions of analysis); 3. Analysis of meaningful relationships and type construction (considering further attributes, confronting individual cases with their type, and searching for contradicting cases); 4.

Characterisation of the constructed types (describing the typical along with the dimensions of analysis and illustrative cases). One typology I constructed in the course of analysis relates to the dynamic spatialities embodied by my research participants and gives an overview of three different forms of cross-border entrepreneurship (see Article 2). Another typology concerns the different dependencies that affect the entrepreneurial activities of migrants and thereby directly link to the power relations that shape the process (see Article 3).

My dissertation is a thesis by articles. These portray the major results of my analysis with regard to the categories and typologies mentioned above. However, they clearly do not mirror all themes that emerged during the interviews and the process of interpretation, despite that they were equally important to my analytical reflections. One such theme concerned the motivations of interviewees to become entrepreneurs and their visions for the future. During the process of analysis, I often engaged with the categories "imaginaries of social change" and "imaginaries of success". Below I present a memo that I wrote when interpreting the interviews:

***Category: Imaginaries*** *(Edited Memo Dec 2019)*

*Subcategory: Imaginaries of social change (Contributing to a better future)*

- *Creating visibility and spaces of inclusion for migrants, women etc. in Switzerland*: illustrated by projects of interviewees, such as city tours guided by refugees, networking platform for non-Swiss mompreneurs, employment platform for migrant women, collaborative space for neighbourhood
- *Fostering development and supporting vulnerable populations in country of origin and other places:* e.g. producing under fair working conditions, facilitating fair trade, empowering Indigenous communities, supporting women and handicrafts projects
- *Promoting sustainability to oppose neoliberal market logics and climate change:* e.g. including small local famers in production, eco-friendly and sustainable fashion, upcycling

*Subcategory: Imaginaries of success (Becoming an entrepreneur)*

- *Accomplishing economic "integration"* – having an economic purpose after migrating
- *Being independent of others* (in contrast to former employment that was not satisfying, dependency on Welfare State or partner)
- *Bringing innovation and new ideas to the economy/society*

More than two thirds of my interviewees aim to create a business or organisation that has a social impact. In this context, common practices of the state and the economy are often framed as immoral because they exclude/exploit certain groups of people and/or have negative impact on the environment. The

entrepreneurial project is then presented as a contrast to these practices. This raises the question to what extent morality becomes a selling point and vulnerability is used as branding, and why.

Imaginaries of social change, but especially imaginaries of success were often discussed by the interviewees in relation to their experiences within the Swiss labour market. It seems to me as if they felt pressure to underline their economic potential and willingness to contribute to the Swiss economy and to achieve financial independence. They clearly represent themselves in contrast to the narrative of the migrant as economic burden. A core motivation for my interviewees thus seems to be wanting to feel valued in the Swiss society. Do imaginaries of social change and success emerge as a reaction to their experiences of exclusion? The quotes below illustrate these thoughts:

*One thing was the social aspects of it. The second thing was – just to be very honest about the situation – to save my own ass. Because I applied for countless jobs, and it's a freaking No all the time (...). (interview conducted 28.08.19)*

*You would not imagine how I left in Syria after the war and when I travelled to Lebanon. And the opportunity that Switzerland offered to us. It's like giving a life again and rescuing us from an unknown future. And I would like to pay back what they offered me (...). Because if [name of business] becomes big, it will employ a lot of people. And it will help and support the local economy. And also, I will be independent and not on social help anymore. Also, it will help many other refugees arriving here to find work, because it´s connecting with Arabic countries and with other countries as well. (interview conducted 06.09.19)*

The memo shown above not only illustrates the process of coding and interpretation. It directly links to my intention to speak of the entrepreneurial "dream". Under the category "imaginaries" I analysed the self-representation and self-marketing of interviewees as impactful and successful entrepreneurs (of the future), but also looked closer into how the entrepreneurial "dream" emerged from their trajectories. Often such imaginaries can be linked to experiences of exclusion, as well as social constructions of who is considered to be a "good" migrant. In that sense the question emerged of whether such imaginaries were being used as a "selling point", whether they reflected the personal aspirations of individuals, or whether they could be understood as an internalisation of narratives that exist in society. I am aware that there are no simple answers to such questions. Yet, these reflections portray my critical approach to the heroisation of migrant entrepreneurs and simplistic success stories that focus on the "self-made" individual without considering broader societal and economic structures. They were thus crucial to my understanding of my data and the phenomenon of migrant entrepreneurship.

## 4.3. Collaborating with an organisation

### 4.3.1. An ethnographic and participatory approach

I start by introducing the organisation I collaborated with during my research in more detail. I use the pseudonym Migrant Entrepreneurship Switzerland (MES), as agreed upon with the organisation's core team members to protect them from any negative consequences of participating in my study. MES was founded in 2015 and since then has offered a bilingual (German and English) entrepreneurship programme to "persons with a refugee or migrant background". It hosts workshops on business creation regulations in Switzerland, writing business plans, marketing, public speaking, and networking, as well as coaching and mentoring sessions with local professionals. MES also organises public events for anyone interested in entrepreneurship and migrant inclusion in Switzerland. Each year, around twenty individuals take part in the programme. In terms of nationality, gender, and business sectors, the group is usually very diverse. The majority moved to Switzerland for family reasons or due to a humanitarian crisis in their former country of residence. Most hold a university degree, but experienced situations of skills mismatch or unemployment after arriving in Switzerland and therefore decided to create their own business or social initiative. At the time of my research, the core team responsible for organising these programmes and events consisted of eight migrant women, some of whom were also founders of the organisation. MES is financed by grants offered by the canton and municipality, private donations, and partnerships with larger corporate firms such as banks and insurance companies. Apart from MES, there is one other organisation in the same city which offers entrepreneurial training for migrants. I decided to focus on MES in my doctoral research as it was created and is now managed mainly by migrants and is therefore a more grass-roots organisation. Some of the founders consider themselves to be migrant entrepreneurs and were able to provide insights on the topic from their personal experiences. The engagement with the organisation thus allowed me to move away from the focus on "co-ethnic communities" which is often prioritised in this field of research, and instead direct my attention to "co-migrant communities" (Vershinina and Cruz 2021, p. 510).

My methodological approach to studying this organisation was ethnographic and thereby "predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups" (Marcus 1995, p. 99). It is difficult to find one consensual definition of what ethnographic research entails. The term refers to a combination of a range of different methods, such as direct participation and observation, interviewing, and document analysis (Denzin 1989b). It can be described as an "embedded and embodied social inquiry" (Wacquant 2015, p. 4) which requires the establishment and maintenance of relationships with people in the field. Ethnographic research thereby has a processual character.

Ethnographers embed themselves in the field, observing from a member's perspective but also influencing the observed due to participation. Over time, they increasingly become insiders, continually specifying research questions and adapting their methodological techniques (Flick 2009, p. 226).

My research mirrors this processual approach. In the first phase, from November 2018 to June 2019, I started communicating with MES. I established relationships with some of the team members, attended events to gain first impressions of how they operated, and did a preliminary analysis of documents they shared with me in order to understand its objectives. In the second phase, from July to September 2019, I intensified my engagement. I took on the role of volunteer, which allowed me to understand the daily routines of MES. I then conducted 14 interviews with former participants, mentors, and coaches in the entrepreneurial programme and participated in internal team meetings and public events. In the third phase, over the course of 2020, I kept my role as a volunteer, but to a lesser extent and from a distance. During the COVID-19 pandemic I increasingly applied digital ethnographic techniques (Hine 2015; Kozinets et al. 2014), which in principle share the characteristics of classical ethnographic approaches but are used to study digital interactions. I conducted participant observations at online events and on social media platforms used by MES. This last phase included organising an online workshop in November 2020, in which I discussed my preliminary research interpretations with the team. All in all, my engagement with MES lasted for more than two years.

Openness towards research interests and outcomes are essential features of a processual ethnographic approach (Flick 2009, p. 226), which also applies to my research with MES. I engaged in a constant back-and-forth between data collection and interpretation, following an iterative process in which I tried to undertake and reflect on my research simultaneously (Becker 1998). At the beginning, I mostly aimed to contextualise the biographic interviews I conducted with TMEs and learn from the expertise of the support organisation. During my engagement, however, I became more interested in the objectives, strategies, and effects of MES and the team members' collective work. I realised that they were not only trying to support future migrant entrepreneurs, but also to contribute to constructing the entrepreneurial "dream" in the Swiss context and thus challenge the socio-economic exclusion of migrants in a broader sense. I started questioning to what extent individual and structural constraints can be resolved through collective mobilisation and promoting entrepreneurship. By the end my focus was clearly on the organisational level, while also considering the lived experiences of individuals within and beyond this collective setting.

Another characteristic of ethnographic research is the central role of reflexivity, especially concerning the dilemma of increasing participation in the field while maintaining a certain distance (Flick 2009, p. 231). As previously elaborated in Section 4.1, I followed feminist geographers urging researchers to situate the production of knowledge and create spaces of mutual learning (Caretta and Riaño 2016; Rose

1997). During my first encounters with MES in fall 2018 and spring 2019, I was already starting to question my own positionality with regard to its team members. I sensed little hierarchy between us and did not necessarily stand out as an outsider. From the beginning I was invited to actively participate in events and conversations instead of simply observing. Therefore, I immediately felt perceived as part of the collective. Several team members had completed higher education and were very enthusiastic about engaging in academic discourses and creating a collaboration between the organisation and the research community. The fact that MES is mainly run by migrant women and I was mostly perceived as a migrant woman myself probably also played a significant role. Along the three axes of difference—education, gender, and nationality—I was similarly positioned to the core team members, even if I did not share their experiences of exclusion from the Swiss labour market and racism. Yet, despite being considered beneficial to the organisation from the beginning, I still felt in a position of power. After all, I was deciding what to question and how to interpret situations. I therefore began to reflect on what kind of relationship I wanted to create with the organisation.

The feminist geographic literature outlined above inspired me to apply participatory approaches in my own study and to conduct research *with* rather than *on* the organisation. I was aware that "full participation often remains an ideal" (Caretta and Riaño 2016, p. 3) as it is constrained by conflicting interests, time limitations, and other practicalities. Without claiming a fully systematic and universal participatory approach, my aim was to create a research partnership with MES guided by the following six principles introduced by Riaño (2016, p. 4): reciprocity, mutual learning, mutual recognition, dialogical engagement, personal transformation, and access to academic spaces. Following these principles, I started to volunteer for the organisation. I attempted to communicate clearly about the partnership between myself and the organisation throughout my engagement. Trying to ensure that my research activities would benefit not only my doctoral project, but also the organisation itself, I involved the team members in all stages of my research, from specifying research questions to data collection and analysis. I thus perceived them not only as powerful gatekeepers controlling access to my field of study, but also as experts who could challenge my decisions and interpretations. Eventually, I organised a collaborative workshop on the central arguments emerging from my analysis. In the next section, I give closer and more practical insights into the fieldwork I conducted within MES and the evolution of our partnership.

#### *4.3.2. In the field: Insights into a research partnership*

In the first phase of my collaboration with MES, from November 2018 to June 2019, I started attending the organisation's public events. This included an information session in February 2019 which introduced the different entrepreneurial programmes, opportunities to volunteer in the organisation, and a so-called storytelling session in which former participants shared anecdotes from their migration and entrepreneurial experiences. I had several meetings with the co-founders of the organisation to learn more about their work and negotiate my engagement. We agreed that our cooperation should include mutual benefits for both sides and decided that I would join the team as a volunteer. This allowed me to partake in the organisation's daily activities in order to access expertise and networks, but also to contribute to their work on a more practical level and adapt my research to the organisation's needs. We further discussed the ethical implications of our collaboration. One of the co-founders asked me to sign a Volunteering Confidentiality Consent form in which I agreed on the responsible and confidential treatment of sensitive information about MES and its participants that I would be privy to. They also signed an informed consent form confirming that they would voluntarily take part in my research project. The form clearly stated that as a volunteer I would also conduct observations relevant to my research project. Following this exchange, I received documents familiarising me with MES: an annual report of its activities in 2018, elaborating on the objectives and conception of the entrepreneurial programmes; an evaluation of the impact of its programmes on participants; and an internal analysis of its operations with informed reflections on the programmes, recruitment of participants, and fundraising activities. These documents gave me deeper insights into the objectives, challenges, and future goals of the organisation.

In July, I started officially volunteering for MES. I invested an average of 15 hours per week, following the rhythm of the other team members. They met once a week in a co-working space, where they usually started the day with a joint team meeting lasting about two hours. They discussed the state of the programmes, fundraising activities, collaborations with other organisations and firms, and how they would share the workload and distribute tasks. Then the team members either worked independently or had smaller meetings on specific topics, as well as informal gatherings during lunch and coffee breaks. For the rest of the week the team members worked from home, cafés, or other co-working locations due to childcare responsibilities and a lack of permanent workspace. To facilitate their work the MES team used an instant messaging app to communicate and share documents. I was granted access to this tool as well as to shared folders with documents of the organisation and the team's WhatsApp groups.

Between July and September 2019, I had several tasks. First, I did desk research for MES and summarised my findings in shared documents. One topic that I was asked to engage with concerned

"highly skilled" migrants in Switzerland. This included identifying the needs of different communities, creating an overview of research findings, and mapping relevant state and non-state actors. I sought examples of skill assessment tools, including best practices from other countries, and documented whether and in what form these were offered by non-profit organisations and state-run institutions in Switzerland. Second, I was asked to attend strategy development meetings in which the team members discussed possible future projects. They encouraged me to engage in these discussions and give them feedback based on my research. Third, I was included in the organisation of a series of events on storytelling and migration. Together with another team member, I was responsible for choosing the topic and framework of the sessions, recruiting speakers, managing the budget and catering, and preparing handouts for participants. Fourth, I took part in writing a grant application to an "integration" scheme of the canton concerned with volunteer opportunities for migrants within MES. The idea was to create a programme to manage volunteerism within the organisation more efficiently and to better navigate between the needs of the organisation and the needs of volunteers. Finally, I was also given small administrative and practical tasks, for example, to translate documents from English into German. I also participated in workshops, training sessions, and public events of the entrepreneurial programme and supported the team in preparing the rooms and welcoming participants, mentors, and coaches.

My observations of participants at events, as well as the meetings and informal conversations I had with the MES team members during my time as a volunteer provided crucial insights into the organisation's work. From the beginning, I was rather critical about the promotion of entrepreneurship and MES's argument that it could be a solution to labour market barriers and discriminatory hiring practices towards migrants. I often felt discomfort while participating at events where participants "pitched" their entrepreneurial projects. By being there, applauding and showing enthusiasm, I was celebrating the entrepreneurial activities of migrants, which made me afraid that I contributed to reproducing certain narratives of what it means to be a "good" migrant. I began questioning to what extent showcasing migrants' skills and resources lead to pressuring migrants into proving their economic potential and thereby aligned with exclusionary logics of the nation state. Yet, through my direct discussions with the team, I began to develop a more nuanced, sometimes less critical, view of the organisation's work. I observed how well it was perceived by its participants given that it provided a space where people could exchange and receive encouragement. I also learned that the team members themselves had a critical view of entrepreneurship and its promotion. They often discussed the differentiated impact of the entrepreneurial programme on the livelihoods of participants and questioned their own definition of success. If a formerly unemployed migrant was able to leverage the knowledge acquired in the entrepreneurial programme to create a sustainable and profitable business or social project where they could apply their skills, this was clearly considered a successful outcome. Nonetheless, the organisation took into account that not every participant had the same starting conditions. Therefore, MES developed

an impact model with a holistic definition of success which equally considered the effects of their work at the personal and societal level. If participants became better connected within local communities, were more likely to attend local events, and felt more confident about their skills and resources, for example in order to apply for jobs, this was also considered to be a success. The team thus planned to establish a programme focused on supporting highly qualified migrants' attempts to access the regular labour market, rather than encouraging them to create businesses. In this context, the team members often discussed the limits of the entrepreneurial "dream" for migrants in Switzerland and the challenges certain groups of migrants faced in this regard. Their views on this issue clearly impacted my own analytical thinking as I tried to learn from their expertise and experiences.

A further example that illustrates my evolving perception of the organisation during my ethnographic and participatory engagement concerns the issue of funding. At the beginning I was very critical about the fact that MES collaborated with large firms such as Swiss banks and insurance companies, which could potentially influence the objectives and strategies of the organisation given their financial and symbolic power. Through discussions with MES team members, I understood that they perceived such collaborations as a strategy to not only engage with migrants themselves, but also affect the attitudes and hiring practices of major economic actors. This strategy was related to their understanding of inclusion as a two-way process, in which the responsibility of "integration" did not fall solely on the migrants themselves. The collaboration with corporations was also necessary in order to finance the organisations' activities and generate income to pay team members' salaries. In this context, they recurrently elaborated on the difficulties of running a non-profit organisation, not only in terms of funding, but also with regard to bureaucratic procedures, reconciling their professional and private spheres (including care responsibilities), and being perceived as foreigners in Switzerland themselves. My evolving perception of certain practices illustrates what it meant for me to conduct research *with* rather *on* the organisation. It is somehow easy to be critical as an outsider, but while collaborating with the team members I became more familiar and empathetic with their subjective understanding of migrant entrepreneurship and the rationalities behind their work. Viewing them as research partners rather than research subjects made me take the perceptions and positionality of the team members seriously and encouraged me to nuance certain interpretations while still remaining critical and trying to uncover the pitfalls of promoting the entrepreneurial "dream" to migrants.

Apart from my presence at events and my interactions with the team, I had many informal conversations with present and former participants of the programme over the course of my time volunteering at MES. The team members granted me access to WhatsApp groups created for their alumni and encouraged me to use this to find interview partners for my study. When I joined, I introduced myself to the participants of the group, posted a short description of my study and asked the participants to contact me if they were willing to be interviewed. Several team members also shared which former participants operated cross-

border businesses and might therefore be of interest to my research. I also went over the interview guidelines with two of the team members, who made suggestions for questions that would also be valuable for the organisation, mainly concerning the impact of their entrepreneurial programme. I agreed to include their questions as this was a way for me to give something back to the organisation given how much they supported my research. Overall, I conducted 14 interviews with migrants who participated in the MES programme or had another role within the organisation (see Part II – Table 1, Article 4). I summarised these interviews and forwarded a preliminary analysis with anonymised content to the MES team. In all encounters with participants of the programme, I underlined that I was acting as a researcher and volunteer for the organisation at the same time, so they could take into account that the results of my study were shared with the organisation. I had the impression that participants mostly perceived me as a researcher. Yet, I also noticed that they rarely raised concerns about the organisation and were very enthusiastic about its work, which could be attributed to me being a volunteer and therefore part of the team, but also to the positive perception of the impact of the organisation.

After three months of volunteering, the team and I agreed that I would continue my involvement in a less intensive way and from a distance. Naturally, joining events and meetings became more difficult when I returned to my work at the university and started to focus on analysing my data and writing papers. I planned to return to the field in spring 2020 and volunteer at MES again, which the team had already agreed to. Yet, by then circumstances had changed and the pandemic had restricted my fieldwork plans. I did not feel comfortable travelling to engage in face-to-face meetings. Moreover, the organisation had moved most of its activities online, interacting via Zoom. At this point I decided to pursue digital ethnographic strategies. From early 2020 onward, I regularly participated in online team meetings, workshops, and events, for example the closing event of the entrepreneurial programme where participants pitched their entrepreneurial projects. I followed the online platform MES used to organise its internal communications. This allowed me to continue volunteering, which by then mostly consisted of translating documents, giving feedback on strategy development based on my research insights, and supporting the development of a survey for former participants. My digital ethnographic encounters certainly did not have the same quality as previous face-to-face interactions. Yet, my ongoing engagement still enabled me to better understand how the organisation improved their programmes over time and tried to address the problems their participants face. I also started to follow the organisation's WhatsApp groups more intensively. I focused on the chat group MES used to communicate with former programme participants. In 2020, it consisted of around 80 members who regularly shared opportunities for networking and funding, as well as information relevant to entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic. They asked each other for advice, for example in terms of digital marketing, and reported on the development of their entrepreneurial projects. They also shared updates on their professional careers, family situations, legal status, and social activities. This chat group illustrated how MES provided

continuous support and tried to create a sustainable community where members could support each other.

In spring 2021 I was no longer playing an active role in the organisation but remained in regular contact with the MES team. As I prioritised other responsibilities related to my PhD over my volunteering role, I sometimes had the impression that I was disappointing the team and felt guilty. I communicated these tensions, yet the team members reacted very empathically and reassured me that there was no need to take on tasks when my situation didn't allow for more intensive engagement. Overall, my partnership with MES afforded me significant insights into the field of migrant entrepreneurship, the perspective of support organisations and their impact. Creating this collaborative relationship was clearly facilitated by my own positionality as a female migrant to Switzerland, my willingness to contribute to MES's work, and the team members' academic backgrounds and motivation to discuss their strategies and difficulties with researchers. They often articulated that they appreciated my engagement and benefited from the collaboration we built. Yet, I also constantly needed to reflect on the double role I had within MES. On the one hand, I acted as a member of the organisation and became friends with the team members. On the other hand, I acted as a researcher observing, studying, and criticising the organisation and the promotion of the entrepreneurial "dream". This double role clearly affected my interpretations and analysis, as I explain further in the next section.

### *4.3.3. Interpretations in dialogue*

During my fieldwork at MES I gathered extensive field notes, not aiming for structured protocol sheets, but for "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) of the situations and conversations I participated in. At the beginning, I mostly used these notes to contextualise the biographic interviews I conducted and to better understand how the support and encouragement of such organisations affected their careers and livelihoods. I only started to engage more deeply with the data I had collected about the organisation itself when, in February 2020, I began to communicate with another researcher, namely I. Stingl. At that time, she was conducting her PhD on refugees' experiences accessing the labour market in Switzerland at the University of Zurich. One of MES's team members, who was interviewed by her and realised that our research interests overlapped, put me in contact with her. Over the course of our individual fieldwork, we both became interested in the strategies and effects of the organisation in its efforts to challenge the socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland, which led to the idea of co-writing a paper. I. Stingl and I exchanged our respective empirical material, including a selection of my field notes from my time spent volunteering at MES in summer 2019 and excerpts from the 14 interviews I

conducted. I. Stingl shared her field notes from participating in the organisation's training workshops and public events, as well as excerpts from a semi-structured interview with one of the co-founders of the organisation and interviews with three other former participants of the entrepreneurial programme. This empirical material was complemented by the organisation's web presence and documents that were shared with us.

For the analysis, we formulated two research questions: 1. What are the strategies of the organisation to challenge socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland? 2. What are the effects of these strategies and which difficulties and ambivalences can be observed? We analysed the data using a thematic coding approach (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove 2019). Similar to a code, a theme can be understood as the subjective or underlying meaning of data and thus ties similar pieces of data together. After a preliminary review of the material, we determined broad themes in our analysis which corresponded to our research questions, such as "challenging migrant downgrading", "showcasing migratory potential" or "acknowledging needs beyond the economic sphere". By further engaging with the data, we refined these themes and developed subcategories. As we were not living in the same city, we worked using shared online documents, which can be considered memos, in which we exchanged explanations of the codes and related ideas, questions, and associations. In parallel, we started to engage more intensely with the literature on counterspaces and the tension between structure and agency (see Section 3.3). We used this literature to question and complicate our interpretations and subsequently elaborated on connections between this literature and our own material in our online memos. We also organised virtual meetings to discuss our interpretations every few weeks. On the basis of this analysis, we wrote a first draft of Article 4.

Our joint analysis and writing brought many benefits, as we could learn from each other and enhance our motivations through a creative division of labour. It also facilitated an intersubjective understanding of our data. It was interesting to see how differently we interpreted certain issues. To some degree, we attributed this to the different relationships we had with MES. At this stage, my collaboration with its team had already lasted for more than a year and I was acting as an insider to the organisation. In parallel to the analysis, I still conducted participant observations, which allowed me to complement, verify, and challenge our interpretations. My insider's perspective and close contact with the team members thus enabled me to point towards the rationalities behind certain practices and the limited possibilities of the actors involved. Yet, it also made me less critical towards certain issues. In contrast, I. Stingl did not play an active role in the team and perceived herself as an external observer. Therefore, she developed a more critical stance towards the organisation's activities and could point towards inconsistencies in their strategies. Negotiations of our different perspectives and interpretations facilitated an analysis that neither romanticises nor excessively criticises MES, but rather provides a nuanced discussion on how the organisation's impact is situated within its own objectives and constraints.

I. Stingl and I wanted to give the MES team members the opportunity to challenge our interpretations. First, we asked one of them to read the paper and give us feedback. After she examined whether our analysis reflected the real experiences of people involved in the organisation, she also offered to proofread our draft in terms of language, as she is a native English speaker with an academic background. This gave us the opportunity to pay her for the time she invested. In a second step, we decided to hold a collaborative workshop with the team members. For its conceptualisation, we followed the example of *Minga* workshops designed by Y. Riaño. "Minga" refers to an "ancient practice of collective community-building work in Andean countries; it means 'building together' in Quechua" (Riaño 2016, p. 5). These workshops facilitate the collaborative production of knowledge and provide an opportunity to research participants to access academic insights and, most importantly, contest researchers' interpretations. Following this approach, we shared our findings not only to allow the organisation to use them for developing future strategies, but also to receive feedback from those whom we considered experts in our research field.

The collaborative workshop took place in November 2020 and lasted about three hours. We originally planned to hold it at the University of Zurich, but one week before the event we decided together with the organisation to conduct the workshop online via Zoom due to a critical situation related to the pandemic. Six members of the organisation agreed to participate. They received the first draft of our paper in advance to prepare critical remarks. We started with a welcoming session, where we did a round of introductions and clarified our expectations of the workshop. Following the design of Minga workshops (Riaño 2016), we framed it as a space for mutual learning. We also asked for permission to record the session. I. Stingl and I then presented the central arguments of our paper. This included our critical discussion of the organisation's activities, which according to our analysis strongly focused on the individual level and the personal responsibility of migrants for success in their professional careers, and thereby risked reproducing neoliberal logics and avoiding more structural issues in relation to the socio-economic exclusion of migrants. During the discussion we encouraged open criticism of our interpretations and elaborations on how our findings could inform future activities. We also raised specific questions regarding the impact of MES in terms of short- and long-term effects and the possibilities for team members to address structural issues. In order to give the team members some time and space among themselves to discuss these questions without us present, we divided the participants into two groups, creating break-up rooms within Zoom. We also asked them to make notes on a virtual whiteboard. Below I present a selection of the team members' comments:

> *We don't always have the capacity to change everything everywhere. It is legitimate to just do something to solve a small issue.*

*Unrealistic dreams – fair enough to some extent. we are very aware of this, but nevertheless, the goal is not to build start-ups but to build people. (...) The goal goes beyond just starting a business; rather – to building a community, supporting newcomers' integration and socio-economic independence.*

*[MES's] journey: from viewing our programmes as a way to help anyone looking to find a job to the realisation that entrepreneurship isn't for everyone and requires a certain skill set. We need to define it further – what those skills are and how can we develop them. (notes on virtual whiteboard, workshop 02.11.20)*

After around thirty minutes, both groups reported back to us. The team members agreed with many of our interpretations and shared more insights on how they explain some of the ambivalences we discovered. They elaborated on the difficulties of running the organisation as migrants in Switzerland without long-term funding and used the discussion to highlight recent developments already addressing some of issues we discovered. Yet, the team members also contested some of our interpretations. They particularly addressed the tension between scientific discourse and practice, confronting us with the fact that it is easy to criticise without offering solutions.

Overall, the collaborative workshop was more than an informative event to thank the organisation for giving us deep insights into their work. It was a further step in conducting research *with* rather *on* the organisation. I. Stingl and I were able to use the contestations of the team to nuance our arguments. After revising the first draft of our paper with regard to their critical input, we believe that our analysis represents MES in a more accurate way. Yet, it is important to highlight that the analysis is still a product of our own reflections and influenced by our own positionalities. With regard to the publication of our work and the issue of anonymisation, the organisation agreed that we could use the pseudonym Migrant Entrepreneurship Switzerland (MES) and would not mention the city where they operated in the article we published in the peer-reviewed journal. Despite the fact that the organisation and the team members might still be identifiable by our descriptions, the organisation gave us permission to publish our research.

## *4.4. Working in a team and writing a thesis by articles*

My dissertation is embedded within a larger research project referred to as IP32. In this section, I introduce IP32 and elaborate on its entanglements with my thesis. The project was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation as part of the *National Centre of Competence in Research for Migration and Mobility Studies* (*nccr – on the move*) and based at the Geography Institute of the University of

Neuchâtel. My supervisors, Prof. Y. Riaño and Prof. E. Piguet, led the project, while L. Sandoz and L. Izaguirre were employed as postdoctoral researchers. Below is an abstract of the project, which was running between 2018 and 2022:

***IP32 Project Summary***

***Migrant Entrepreneurship: Mapping Cross-Border Mobilities and Exploring the Role of Spatial Mobility Capital***

*Social and technological transformations, including highly diversified migrant populations and facilitated international travel and communication, have intensified the phenomenon of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship. Studying cross-border migrant entrepreneurship offers a unique opportunity to understand the shift from long-term and permanent migration to increasingly more temporary and fluid mobilities, thus advancing our empirical and theoretical understanding of the Migration-Mobility Nexus.*

*This project maps the diverse cross-border mobilities of first-generation migrant entrepreneurs and examines whether spatial mobility constitutes an asset or not for migrant entrepreneurship, and under what conditions. It uses mixed methods, including case studies from Switzerland, Spain, and South America, to explore the different capacities for spatial mobility among migrant entrepreneurs. We also question whether and how spatial mobility can be transformed into social and economic capital.* ("nccr – on the move" 2022)

The IP32 project had a significant influence on some of the decisions I made throughout my doctoral research. With regard to the methodological design of my study, it was my own initiative to engage with a migrant-run support organisation (MES) and look closer into its strategies and effects. Yet, the decision to do qualitative interviews with migrant entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds was made by the team leaders when setting up the project. Subsequently, this became an empirical subproject of my thesis. I was communicating continuously with the IP32 team regarding these interviews. Before entering the field, I had several meetings with Y. Riaño and L. Sandoz, who were planning their IP32 fieldwork in Colombia and Spain at the time. We jointly developed certain sampling strategies, such as the focus on cross-border businesses and the maximum variation approach. We formulated some of the interview guideline questions together in order to generate data that we could collaboratively analyse for joint-paper projects. During the process of analysis, the collaboration was crucial to my own reflections. We organised several meetings in which we presented cases that seemed particularly interesting and

discussed how they related to our common analytical ideas derived from the literature and how the empirical material should be coded. In these meetings, we contested our interpretations and further developed certain codes into categories and typologies that were later used in our joint papers.

Moreover, being embedded in IP32 encouraged me to write a thesis by article. The University of Neuchâtel provides the option to compile co-authored articles into a cumulative thesis. Only one article must be single authored. This reduced the pressure in terms of research output for my thesis, as I was already co-writing articles for the IP32 project. The cumulative design thus allowed me to develop different subprojects and engage with different perspectives. Yet, this approach clearly also had disadvantages. First, one could argue that writing a variety of articles made it more difficult to maintain consistency within the dissertation. Second, given that the form of scientific articles is guided by neoliberal, masculinist, and white epistemic premises, they offer limited space for contradictions and doubts (e.g. hooks 1991, 2015; Lipton and Mackinlay 2017). I tried to overcome these issues by writing an extensive framework, elaborating on the thread that ties the articles together, and discussing reflections which remained invisible. I thereby also hope to underline that the articles offer diverse glimpses into transnational migrant entrepreneurship, but also that they relate to different moments of the research process and therefore provide a genealogy of my understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The fact that I was embedded in a larger project and co-wrote several articles with the IP32 team directed my research in specific directions. For example, together with the IP32 team I decided to do a systematic literature review of transnational migrant entrepreneurship before entering the field. I planned to use this as a state-of-the-art entry point as well as the first article of my dissertation. Writing this article certainly focused my research on the transnational and spatial mobilities aspects of migrant entrepreneurship. The neoliberal premises behind promoting migrant entrepreneurship therefore moved to the background, at least in the beginning of my doctoral research. If I had prioritised this focus, I would have probably mobilised different literature to a greater extent, such as studies on the "entrepreneurial self" and internalisation of neoliberal discourses (e.g. Bröckling 2016; Peters 2001). Yet, I would like to highlight that a dissertation is always a process and cannot engage with all types of literature relevant to a certain topic. In the end, I believe that I have managed to combine my different research interests and hope that this framework makes the links explicit and shows the evolution of my thinking.

Apart from the above-mentioned review paper (Article 1), the IP32 team and I co-wrote two other papers. One is entitled "Spatial mobility capital: A valuable resource for the social mobility of border-crossing migrant entrepreneurs?" (Riaño et al. 2022). In this paper, we propose using the concept of *spatial mobility capital* to analyse the team's data that was collected in Spain, Colombia, and

Switzerland. We argue that a migrant entrepreneur's ability to use spatial mobility as a resource for upward social mobility depends largely on three intersecting factors: the individual's social position, their location in geographical space, and their strategies. It is not part of this thesis as I see it as the major output of IP32. The main ideas were thus developed by the team leaders while designing the project before my engagement. Yet, the joint analysis of the data with a focus on the link between spatial and social mobility influenced certain arguments I make in this dissertation.

In contrast, I did include a paper I co-wrote with L. Sandoz, Y. Riaño and L. Izaguirre into this thesis. The ideas for this paper—which explores dependencies that define transnational migrant entrepreneurs' options (see Article 3)—emerged during my doctoral research and through conversations with my colleagues and are thus directly linked to the overarching aims of this dissertation. We combined material gathered in Switzerland, Spain, and Colombia (see Table 1, Article 3). L. Sandoz contributed the fieldwork she carried out in Barcelona (Spain), including interviews with 22 TMEs in different sectors. Y. Riaño conducted fieldwork in Cucuta (Colombia), including interviews with 30 TMEs who had returned from Venezuela. While jointly analysing our data, we did not attempt to conduct a strictly comparative study of the three countries but rather to gain an understanding of the kinds of dependencies that arise in diverse socio-spatial contexts.

It is evident that I collaborated intensely with other researchers throughout my dissertation, from developing my research design to analysing the data and writing articles. As Sandoz notes, "[a]cademic competition encourages researchers to insist on the originality of their work, which often hides the cooperative nature of research processes" (2019, p. 24). In my work, I aim to underline the great value of joint reflection and contesting each other's interpretations. While this may seem contradictory to the idea of a PhD dissertation as the work of one individual researcher, I believe that it is an equally valid approach. The fact that my arguments emerged and evolved in relation to and in exchange with my colleagues strengthened them and increased their quality. When working with other people it is necessary to defend and adapt one's ideas and negotiate compromises, which is not always easy. Yet, the practice allowed me to gradually develop a more intersubjective and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study. This also mirrors one of this dissertation's analytical perspectives, namely the dependency perspective (see Section 3.2.), which I used to approach my data on migrant entrepreneurship. This perspective emphasises that individuals are never truly independent and that dependencies are not necessarily constraining. In this spirit, I would also like to point out that collaborating with a team made me feel less isolated and insecure about my work. As claimed by feminist geographers (Laketa and Côte 2022), mutual support can reduce stress and pressure in the neoliberalised academic workplace, which I clearly experienced during my research.

### *4.5. The comic project*

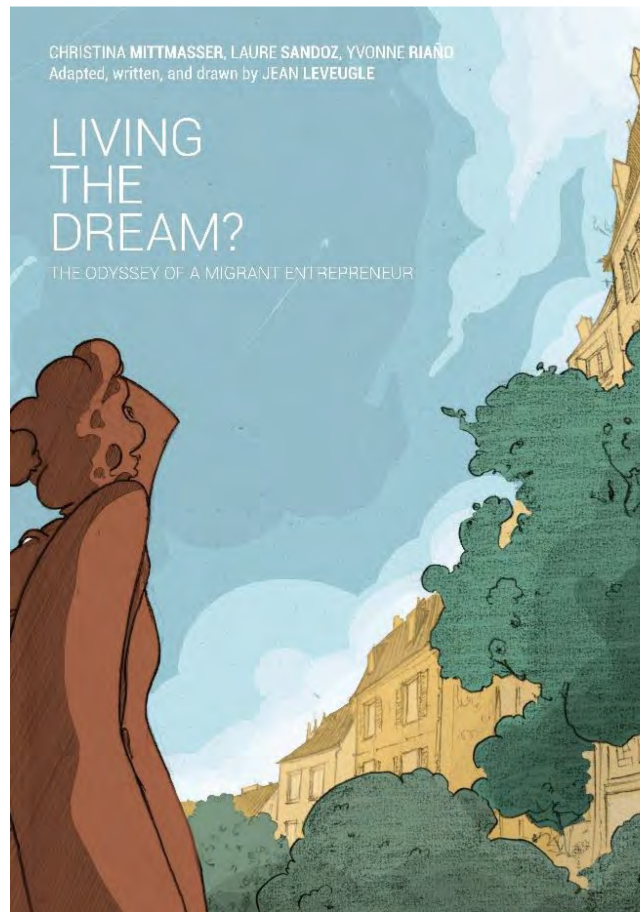



*Figure 3: Mittmasser et al. 2022: Living the Dream? (Titlepage)*

Towards the end of writing my thesis, I started to reflect on how to best disseminate the findings of my research. Feminist geographic literature (e.g. Caretta and Riaño 2016; Rose 1997) made me aware that research is not only marked by those who produce it, but there is also the danger that it disappears into academic obscurity. I therefore felt motivated to find a creative way to share my findings, to honour the knowledge passed on to me during my research, and to provide my research participants and the broader public with an opportunity to challenge my interpretations. With these intentions in mind, I decided to create a comic, which was published in October 2022 as an A4 booklet entitled "Living the Dream? The Odyssey of a Migrant Entrepreneur". The original version is in French but it was also translated into English and German. The full English version is included in this dissertation's Annex. It is available freely online as well as in print. In fall 2022, the comic was presented at migrant support organisations' events in Zurich and Geneva, as well as at the University of Neuchâtel. This project was financed by the *nccr – on the move* and the University of Neuchâtel's Geography Institute. The content of the comic and

the process of creating it reflects some of the issues I encountered during my research and my overall epistemological thinking and methodological approaches. It thus allowed me to deepen certain reflections and was valuable to writing the framework of this thesis.

A major inspiration with regard to finding creative ways to communicate my research was the feminist writer bell hooks and her critiques of academic output. The following are two excerpts from her essay "Theory as liberatory practice", which highlights her contributions to criticising traditional forms of scientific communication:

> *Work by women of color and marginalized groups of white women (for example, lesbians, sex radicals), especially if written in a manner that renders it accessible to a broad reading public, even if that work enables and promotes feminist practice, is often de-legitimized in academic settings. Though such work is often appropriated by the very individuals setting restrictive critical standards, it is this work that they most often claim is not really theory or is not theoretical enough. (hooks 1991, p. 4)*
>
> *Within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, we have already witnessed the commodification of feminist thinking (just as we experience the commodification of blackness), in ways that make it seem as though one can partake of the 'good' that these movements produce without any commitment to transformative politics and practice. In this capitalist culture, feminism and feminist theory are fast becoming a commodity that only the privileged can afford. It is fast becoming a luxury item. This process of commodification is disrupted and subverted when feminist activists affirm our commitment to a politicized revolutionary feminist movement that has as its central agenda the transformation of society. From such a starting point, we automatically think of creating theory that speaks to the widest audience of people. I have written elsewhere and shared in numerous public talks and conversations that my decision about writing style, about not using conventional academic formats, are political decisions motivated by the desire to be inclusive, to reach as many readers as possible in as many different locations. This decision has had consequences both positive and negative. (hooks 1991, p. 9)*

From this perspective, feminist geographers have increasingly argued for more creative practices in geography studies and to explore the potential of collaborating with the arts:

> *Scholars of creative geographies have noted the possibilities of creative practices to engage audiences beyond the academy, to make the production of academic scholarship or research and writing more enjoyable, to cultivate new publics for some of the pressing concerns of our time, or perhaps even to slow down scholarship so as to lead more fulsome and healthy lives.*
> *(de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, p. 319)*

When scientists co-produce creative work one must remain vigilant to issues of positionality and power. Yet, these endeavours can potentially create new spaces for critical and reflexive

thinking, and draw "attention to the presence or absence of certain voices, practices, or ways of knowing" (de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, p. 305).

Following these reflections, I decided to create the comic booklet. Inspired by other researchers (e.g. Fall 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Makaremi and Parciboula 2019; Ravalet et al. 2014), I wanted to transform my research into a visual story. After all, "data makes a story more credible and a story makes data less boring" (Robin et al. 2021). Visual storytelling thus allows researchers to switch from academic language to a more accessible form of communication. It allows us to create understanding and empathy for the complex living conditions of the people concerned. A touch of humour also makes reading "serious" subject matter more attractive (Barberis and Grüning 2021; Farinella 2018). Therefore, graphic art forms such as comics are increasingly perceived as a valuable tool for transferring scientific knowledge to a wider audience, where it can be challenged and reinterpreted in the public sphere.

As I had no experience in the graphic arts domain, I started a collaboration with the comic author Jean Leveugle in the fall of 2021. He runs a studio in France named "Les Savoirs Ambulants", which mediates knowledge through illustration and has experience working with researchers to create comics. I again worked closely with the IP32 team, especially L. Sandoz and Y. Riaño, who became co-authors of the comic as we developed the storyline together. The initial idea was to use data from all three of IP32's case studies in Spain, Colombia, and Switzerland. However, we soon realised that it would be too challenging to cover three years of research in three countries in one short story. Since the initiative was mine, we were based at a Swiss university, and the Swiss public would be our main audience, we decided that the comic would be mostly based on the data I had gathered in Switzerland. We shared our preliminary ideas and the scientific papers produced over the course of our research with the comic author and then collaboratively developed the storyline further. J. Leveugle particularly supported us in distilling our findings into a simple story and bringing them to life through dialogues and illustrations. We had numerous exchanges during the work as we refined the script (similar to a theatre script, without illustrations) and storyboard (simple illustration, without details or colour). He contested some of our interpretations and contributed his aesthetic and creative ways of thinking.

Overall, we created characters who are in principle fictive but are based on central observations I made in the field. My aim was to tell the stories of migrants pursuing the entrepreneurial "dream" in Switzerland and to shine a light on their creative strategies as well as the challenges that characterise their journeys. I decided that the comic would portray three key elements of my research: 1. The cross-border activities of migrant entrepreneurs and how they take advantage of their diverse mobility experiences; 2. The obstacles certain migrants encounter in relation to entrepreneurship and the inequalities they face based on family situation, gender, legal status, nationality, socio-economic position etc.; and 3. A critical reflection on success stories and common narratives in the field of migrant

entrepreneurship. The latter was particularly important for me as I wanted the comic to raise critical questions, such as whether migrants need to be innovative and successful entrepreneurs in order to be welcome in Switzerland and how the promotion of entrepreneurship relates to individualistic and neoliberal ideas of "integration". I saw the comic as a chance to show that the phenomenon of migrant entrepreneurship and its analysis can enable reflections on broader societal issues. I wanted to use the comic to engage further with the notion of the entrepreneurial "dream", which was very crucial to my analytical thinking, but which did not receive much attention in my scientific articles. The comic shows how this "dream" emerges in migrants' biographies in different ways, who promotes and encourages it, and for whom and under which conditions a successful entrepreneurial career is actually possible.

Figure 4: Mittmasser et al. 2022, Living the Dream? (p.2)

Together with J. Leveugle and my team, I decided to focus on the story of one migrant entrepreneur who was particularly illustrative of my research. The character at the centre of the story, Luisa, is a Colombian fashion designer based in Zurich who created a business after facing difficulties finding a job in Switzerland commensurate with her qualifications (see fig. 4). She was able to take advantage of

her experiences and networks in Bogota, as well as in Paris, where she studied, to operate her business across national borders. Her journey entails many challenges, such as care responsibilities for her two children and limited access to the local community. In the end, she is able to run her business successfully, not only thanks to her courage, skills, and cross-border connections, but also due to the support of an organisation and the legal and financial stability provided by her Swiss partner. To show that entrepreneurship is a process that can stretch over years with many ups and downs along the way, we decided to tell the story in four parts over the course of eight years, from 2016 to 2022.

In the story, Luisa engages with other migrants who had already created or who wanted to create their own businesses in Switzerland. In the first part, the reader learns of João Oliveira, who appears in a news report on TV that Luisa watches. João has successfully created an IT start-up which enables the transfer of capital and ideas across borders. His entrepreneurship is celebrated as a true model of successful "integration". This causes Luisa to raise critical questions about such narratives and her own position within them. In the second part, Luisa meets Carim (see fig. 5), who has requested asylum status in Switzerland after fleeing the war in Syria. He aspires to create his own IT business in collaboration with his contacts in the Middle East. Yet, he cannot create a business and or freely travel due to his legal status in Switzerland. In the third part, Luisa meets Carim again. While he has the legal option to pursue his entrepreneurial "dream", he still cannot start his business as it would be too much of a financial risk for his family, who spent all their savings fleeing the war. Her encounters with Carim make Luisa reflect on her own privileges and the resources needed to become a successful entrepreneur.

In the third part, Luisa also meets Susana. She offers a critical take on the idea of the "self-made" entrepreneur being motivated only by economic profit, as she has just created a cooperative offering cleaning services while aiming to ensure better working conditions in the field. In contrast to the others, Susana's character is not based on one of my research participants, but uses elements of real examples of cleaning cooperatives created by migrants in Switzerland ("Autonomía-Kooperative" 2022; Kynd 2021; Landolt 2022). Another crucial character is the member of a support organisation. The idea was to show how these actors can help migrant entrepreneurs, for example by guiding them through bureaucratic procedures, and also that such organisations offer spaces where migrants can exchange information and support each other.

*Figure 5: Mittmasser et al. 2022, Living the Dream? (p. 10 and 11)*

In the process of creating the comic, we encountered several challenges that my team and I needed to discuss and navigate. As these challenges illustrate my overall approach to the phenomenon of migrant entrepreneurship and difficulties that also emerged in my research, I briefly outline some of them here. First, we needed to engage with the question of whom we wanted to give voice to. Initially, we planned for one or several researchers to appear in the comic and engage in a dialogue with migrant entrepreneurs—to reflect on their experiences and raise critical questions. After several debates, we dropped this idea not only due to limited space but also because we did not want to fall into the trap of portraying migrants as unable to reflect upon their own experiences, while researchers provide a critical analysis of the lived realities of others (e.g. Caretta and Riaño 2016). We perceived a risk of reproducing colonial logics by taking analytical capacity away from the people concerned. We decided to give the full voice to the protagonist, who then played the double role of telling her own story while also reflecting on it in relation to the experiences of others. The comic therefore not only portrays concrete situations and encounters, but also Luisa's inner reflections (see fig. 5 and 6). At the end of the story, she speaks to a large audience at a public event where she summarises her critical thoughts and underlines the inequalities that shape different entrepreneurial journeys. This decision is still problematic to some extent as it obscures the voices, interpretative power, and positionalities of

researchers. Yet, we made this compromise in order to not centre the attention on researchers, but rather on the migrants themselves.

*Figure 6: Mittmasser et al. 2022, Living the Dream? (p. 6)*

The second crucial discussion point that came up concerns the issue of representation and visualisation of characters. We did not want to portray migrants as a homogenous group but rather wanted to show their diversity in terms of nationality, skin colour, and other aspects. Yet, we were also aware that by insisting on this diversity the comic might focus too much on the characters' ethnic identities. We therefore perceived a risk of reproducing ethnic biases and stereotypical images and tried to not reduce the characters to their country of origin, physical appearance, or business activities, but to rather go beyond the clichés of classic migrant businesses that capitalise on ethnic symbols. Moreover, it was important for us that the protagonist was a woman, as the majority of my research participants identified as female and women are still underrepresented in the field of migrant entrepreneurship. Our aim was to show that many female entrepreneurs struggle with reconciling their professional and private lives

due to unequal distribution of unpaid care work in our society (see fig. 6). While this risks reproducing certain gender clichés it is also an important element of my research findings. Yet, we also tried to avoid socially constructed clichéd images of femininity, for example by being attentive to how characters are visualised with regard to their clothes or make-up.

Third, we had to find a balance between portraying the characters as agentic, resourceful actors and a critical reflection on the heroisation of migrant entrepreneurs. On the one hand, we wanted to draw attention to the neoliberal and exclusionary patterns behind celebrating migrant entrepreneurs as "good" migrants. Therefore, we tried to not depict them as economic hero(in)es, and to nuance simplistic success stories by drawing attention to the obstacles certain people experience during their entrepreneurial journey. On the other hand, we did not want to portray the characters as victims, as we saw the danger of reproducing the patronising narrative of the migrant as an economic burden. We thus aimed to take the personal aspirations, creative strategies, and positive experiences of migrant entrepreneurs seriously, and to be careful not to deconstruct them as an internalisation of societal discourses. Overall, the comic should provide a more critical view on migrant entrepreneurship while honouring the value of the research participants' accrued knowledge and respecting their subjectivities.

I do not claim that we found a perfect solution to all these issues. They are not only multi-layered and perceived differently by different actors, but also continuously contested and in the making. For me, creating this comic was a learning experience as it was the first time I was involved in developing such a project. I did my best to portray the lived realities of migrant entrepreneurs in a nuanced way by building on my own reflections and exchanging with others. We requested critical feedback on the work in progress from our colleagues, friends, and family members as well as the support organisation I collaborated with. As most of its team members have migration experiences and work closely with migrant entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds, I asked them to review the comic's initial script. Four team members agreed to share their opinions. They pointed to elements which they perceived as too simplistic, exaggerated, or missing, and offered suggestions on how to improve the script. While we could not take all their ideas into account, the discussion showed us how the storyline was received, and which aspects needed to be improved.

Overall, the comic was not a participatory project in a strict sense, but rather a product of my own thinking as well as the reflections of the other people who worked on it. It is important for me to highlight that I do not perceive it as an "objective truth" about migrant entrepreneurship, but rather as one way of interpreting it. The comic is my contribution to a broader debate among different actors and shall serve as starting point for further discussions. I hope that it offers a critical perspective on the topic, but also that it will be challenged and contested by a broader audience. The following quote by feminist writer

Rebecca Solnit underlines this standpoint, not only with regard to the comic, but as it pertains to my overall research:

> *This is a kind of criticism that (…) does not seek authority. It seeks instead to travel with the work and its ideas, to invite it to blossom and invite others into a conversation that might have previously seemed impenetrable, to draw out relationships that might have been unseen and open doors that might have been locked. This is a kind of criticism that respects the essential mystery of a work of art, which is in part its beauty and its pleasure, both of which are irreducible and subjective. The worst criticism seeks to have the last word and leave the rest of us in silence; the best opens up an exchange that need never end. (Solnit 2014, p. 94)*

In line with this sentiment, I would like to end this section with a critical note on the enthusiasm for creative products in science. As other scholars have noted, institutions risk instrumentalising them by producing "end-oriented practices as opposed to critical open-ended potentials in science (…)" (de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, p. 319). In this sense, greater attention needs to be paid to the politics of creative geographies (e.g. Bagelman and Bagelman 2016; de Leeuw et al. 2017; Marston and de Leeuw 2013). While some institutions welcome creative output but limit its disruptive potential by embedding it in neoliberal values, such as innovation and success, other institutions dismiss it as a distraction from "real science" and do not provide the time and resources needed for building collaborations between scientific and artistic work. Scholars need to engage with such reflections and avoid uncritical practices of creative production. After all, they should not "sit too neatly within the strictures and structures of the neo-liberal university or searches for happiness therein" (de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, p. 319).

# 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I present the results of my doctoral research. As my dissertation is a cumulative thesis, I outline my findings along with the three empirical articles I wrote (see Part II). Here, I summarise and then move beyond the content of these papers. They offered limited space in which to explore the issues which arose during my research and were crucial to my understanding of migrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, they were mostly already published at the time of writing this framework. To a certain extent, I have developed a more critical perspective on certain aspects over time. I have identified gaps and found new ways to approach the material. I thus elaborate on how the articles can be situated within broader debates on migrant entrepreneurship and the overarching aims of this dissertation.

## *5.1. The trajectory paper*

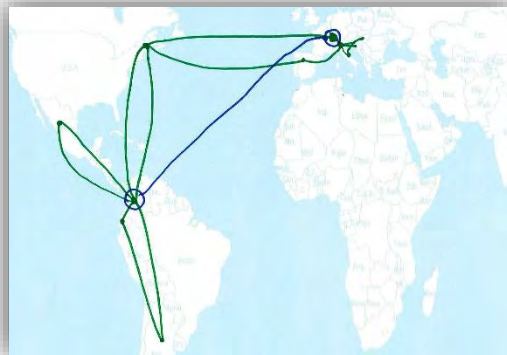
***"Because you've lived in different places all your life" – How mobility trajectories create cross-border entrepreneurial opportunities for migrants in Switzerland*** *(single-authored)*

Article 2 builds on the trajectory perspective, inspired by the mobilities paradigm and biographic, intersectional, and time-geographic approaches towards inequalities in transnational fields (see Section 3.1), to analyse the interviews I conducted with 34 TMEs in Zurich. It emphasises the need to study the phenomenon of transnational migrant entrepreneurship beyond the home/host country bias and to overcome the heroisation of individuals concerned by offering a more nuanced analysis.

*Moving beyond the home/host country bias*

In this article I take a closer look at the im/mobility trajectories of interviewees and how they evolve along multiple places over time. While indeed almost all interviewees are active in their origin and current residence countries, most also use contacts, materials, and support in additional countries and continue to broaden their geographical scope over time. Moving both physical and virtually, they mobilise private and professional networks established while studying, working, or caring for a family in multiple places, and learn how to access spaces for producing, selling, and fundraising in these environments. To explore locations where they have not lived before, they use international networks

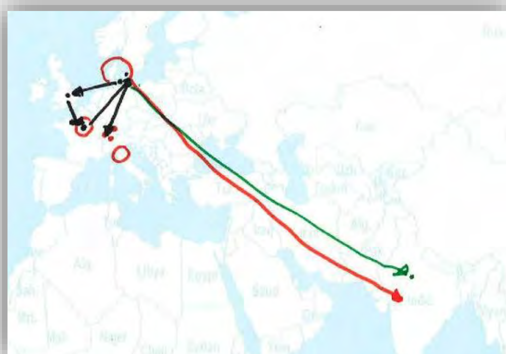
and competences accumulated over the course of their trajectories, such as language proficiencies, intercultural communication, flexibility, and the confidence to travel abroad. Based on this analysis, I present three different types of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship: classic transnational entrepreneurship (activities in country of origin and destination), extended transnational entrepreneurship (activities in multiple former residence countries), and explorative cross-border entrepreneurship (activities in countries never lived in before) (see fig. 7). These types illustrate contrasting relationships between past trajectories and the entrepreneurial projects of interviewees in terms of their spatialities and temporalities. They are differentiated in regard to the number of places currently involved in business activities and whether or not the interviewees have lived in these places in the past. The geographic maps established during the interviews allowed me to visualise these contrasting relationships. The different types rarely exist in a pure form, as most interviewees illustrate more than one type over time.



**Classic transnational entrepreneurship**

TYPE 1: Entrepreneurial activities in country of origin and destination (n=32)

The map depicts the story of a female interviewee who was born in Colombia and lived in the US, Mexico, and Argentina before moving to Switzerland (marked in green). Her entrepreneurial project aimed to facilitate the fair trade of Colombian emeralds to Switzerland. Thereby, she was active in two localities (marked in blue), her country of origin and current residence country (interview conducted 27.08.19).



**Extended transnational entrepreneurship**

TYPE 2: Entrepreneurial activities in multiple former residence countries (n=16)

This female interviewee has lived in Denmark, the UK, France, India, and Switzerland (marked in black and green) and incorporated several of these localities in her entrepreneurial project. She imported clothes from Denmark, France, India, and Italy (marked in red) and sold them in a shop in Switzerland. Her business activities thereby (mostly) mirrored her complex mobility trajectory (interview conducted 21.08.19).

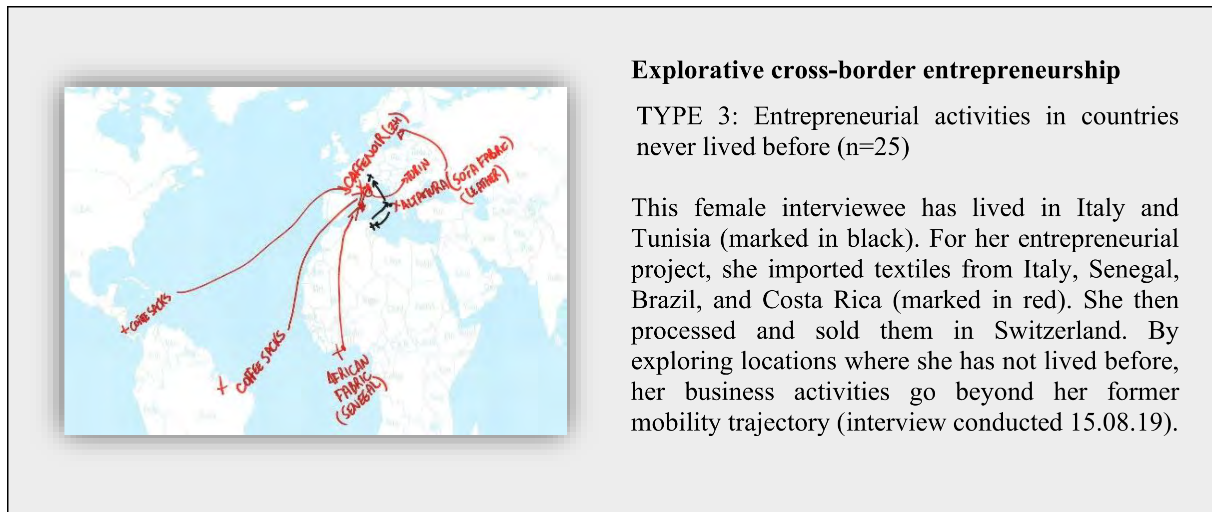



*Figure 7: Three types of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship*[15]

My analysis shows that although these interviewees use resources related to their mobility trajectories for entrepreneurial purposes, their identities should not be reduced to their "migrancy" in the traditional sense. Focusing on national origin and networks in the country of birth not only risks reproducing ethnic biases and stereotyping, it also does not correspond to the complex nature of contemporary migration processes, which often include onward movements and connections across various locations and groups. Furthermore, it obscures the variety of competences that result from moving across borders and migrants' agency to transcend simple and linear trajectories over space and time. The trajectory perspective allowed me to demonstrate that the spatialities created through migrants' cross-border activities are clearly more complex than the home/host country binary and existing ethnic framings of this phenomenon.

One of the central claims I make following these findings is to broaden the conceptualisation of transnational migrant entrepreneurship and frame it as cross-border migrant entrepreneurship instead. Yet, there is potential to go even further with this claim. My interviewees were not born in Switzerland and have changed countries of residence in the past, often multiple times, and are also mobile in the present for their business activities. In my research, I differentiated between these different forms of mobilities to explore how they relate to each other, but I am doubtful whether this differentiation actually makes sense. In the end, it could be argued that this still mirrors nation-state epistemologies that frame certain migrants as burdensome and others, who move temporarily, as beneficially mobile. Combined with racialised discourses of otherness, this differentiation (re)produces social inequalities (see Dahinden 2016; Favell 2008; Schapendonk 2017; Sievers et al. 2022). Complicated questions, such as whether the framework of migration is useful for research and what the label "migrant" implies (see

[15] This figure resembles Table 2 in Article 2 (see Part II).

Section 2 and 4.2.1), also need to be addressed in the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. A focus on spatial mobilities, whether they occur in the past or present, and whoever conducts them—individuals labelled as migrants or others—could be a possible avenue for research in the future, as they reproduce exclusionary discourses to a lesser extent. There is however the need to explore the inequalities that shape these movements, which is at the heart of the discussion that follows.

*Moving beyond celebratory enthusiasm for transnational resources*

I will now engage with my call to overcome the heroisation of migrant entrepreneurs. This portrayal corresponds to a utilitarian perception of migration and obscures the power relations that shape individuals' trajectories and options. It thus aligns with a dated view of migrants as a homogenous group. In Article 2, I highlight that the variety of resources and competences that result from cross-border trajectories do not automatically result in entrepreneurial success. Gender, family situation, legal status, nationality, and the socio-economic position of interviewees are shown to be determining factors in this regard. Discriminatory practices related to these categories of difference create different opportunities to access distant and local spaces, which are important for the business activities of research participants. With regard to accessing distant spaces, I highlight the mobility restrictions faced by individuals in unstable legal situations, but also by entrepreneurs with children, a point particularly emphasised by female interviewees. If their entrepreneurial activities do not generate the same amount of income as their partner's job, they often take on the majority of the childcare responsibilities and therefore cannot travel on a regular basis for business purposes. In this context, moments of immobility mostly do not emerge from a lack of mobility aspirations but are linked to an unequal share of care work between men and women and a lack of affordable childcare options in Switzerland (e.g. Riaño 2021b), which leads to unequal opportunities for entrepreneurship. To continue their business projects despite these constraints, interviewees use virtual communication tools and intimate networks abroad to navigate their cross-border business activities to some extent.

Yet, the difficulties that interviewees experience in their entrepreneurial careers not only relate to limited capacities to move. The resources and competences accumulated along their cross-border trajectories are only useful as long as they are valued locally in Switzerland, which makes my interview partners dependent on access to local spaces. Female and non-European interviewees face particular barriers in this regard. These groups mostly arrived by requesting family reunification or asylum, and thereby did not directly enter the economic sphere in Switzerland. Their livelihoods in Switzerland are thus constrained by racialised discourses of otherness which emphasise cultural differences and traditional gender roles. These put migrants in different boxes with regard to their gender and nationality. This leads to differentiated perceptions of their value in society and creates unequal opportunities for them

in the labour market ( see also Section 3.2; e.g. Bachmann 2016; Fischer and Dahinden 2017; Riaño 2021a). Subsequently, female and non-European interviewees struggle to establish professional networks and accumulate capital which is crucial to business creation. In order to gain clients or funding in Switzerland, many interviewees rely on the support of non-state organisations or their partners. However, not all interviewees are able to establish sustainable collaborations based on this support. For many, the expansion to other locations and mobility practices are a strategy, among others, to compensate for their limited opportunities in the Swiss labour market and business environment. These mechanisms are illustrated in the biographies of two interviewees who faced difficulties accessing the Swiss labour market according to their qualifications before creating a cross-border business (see Article 2). They show that mobile biographies of certain individuals are not only complex and turbulent in terms of their spatialities, but also in relation to their professional careers. The trajectory perspective thereby allows us to see how spatial pathways merge with professional pathways, and how this process intersects with power relations.

*On professional turbulence during cross-border trajectories*

Overall, Article 2 highlights the multi-sited nature of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship and portrays the constraints different groups of migrants face in pursuing the entrepreneurial "dream" in Switzerland. These do not indicate a lack of competences or motivations but can be linked to power relations that shape migrants' options. Yet, the paper also has some limitations and does not show the full potential of exploring the phenomenon through a trajectory perspective. In the article, I used this lens to explore various mobilities and immobilities that characterise my interviewees' biographies. It could however be used more explicitly to refer to the turbulence and societal discourses that have shaped their professional careers. This becomes especially evident when looking at how the entrepreneurial "dream" emerges in their biographies. Many of the interviewees, especially non-Europeans and women, relate their entrepreneurship activities to forms of exclusions they experienced after arriving in Switzerland. These interviewees were partly motivated to create a business by the desire to feel valued in the Swiss society. For example:

> *I applied quite a lot and last year I also had a job coach and I worked on my CV and things like that. And on self-confidence, if you never get invited for many applied jobs, then you're starting to think, what's wrong with me, and so, yeah (…) I don't think I would have set up such a business in Belgium. (interview conducted 14.08.19)*

The interviewees often actively contested society's perception of migrants as economic burdens. In this regard, many underlined their economic potential and the social impact of their entrepreneurial undertakings, as well as their willingness to contribute to the Swiss economy and achieve financial independence (see also Section 4.2.3):

> *Because if [name of business] becomes big, it will employ a lot of people. And it will help and support the local economy. And also, I will be independent and not on the social help anymore. Also, it will help many other refugees arriving here to find a work, because it´s connecting with Arabic countries and with other countries as well. (interview conducted 06.09.19)*

Such narratives can be interpreted as self-representations of "good" migrants who can sustain their own livelihoods and are willing and able to contribute to the economy. They thus raise the question of whether the motivation to become and be received as a successful and impactful entrepreneur emerges out of necessity. With regard to my research participants, this motivation stems, at least to some extent, from professional turbulence and an internalisation of exclusionary discourses that frame certain migrants as economic burdens.

With regard to their professional trajectories, the "migrancy" of certain individuals can clearly be considered as a barrier in the Swiss professional sphere as it connects to certain deficit-oriented stereotypes and often leads to limited access to local networks, among other constraints. Yet, it can also be argued that this very "migrancy" constitutes a form of agency. As shown in the trajectory paper, some interviewees clearly profit from resources and competences they accumulated during migration. They can also use their "migrancy" to access support structures, such as the organisation offering entrepreneurial programs for individuals with migrant and refugee backgrounds (see Section 4.3). Some interviewees thus use it as a selling point or branding for their businesses. For example, one interviewee who sold Syrian crafts and furniture, argued that his lived experiences and connections in Syria were very valuable to his business activities, especially with regard to attracting collaborators, investors, and clients:

> *So, you have two people, one opens a restaurant and knows nothing about cooking and the other used to be a chef or a cook, and he opens a restaurant, so where would you go?*
>
> *For Syrian people (...) that's out of, not nostalgia, it's feeling that, you know, it's like light at the end of the tunnel, you know, we've suffered a lot, we've witnessed so many losses, cultural heritage and so on, losses. And it's good to see kind of a promise of a better future, of a beautiful image here and there. So, the way they interact is very emotional. And the way, let's say the Swiss community is interacting, is more of a, out of compassion, out of empathy. (interview conducted 28.10.19)*

Many interviewees market themselves as experts on a specific place or play with the emotionality related to their migrant identity (as illustrated in the above quote) which makes it an important resource for entrepreneurship.

Overall, these perspectives can be related to the popular debate in the literature of whether migrant entrepreneurship emerges out of necessity or opportunity (e.g. Bloh et al. 2020; Elo et al. 2018; see also Section 2). Any answer to this question clearly has to be nuanced. First, my interviewees clearly take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities and resources that result from their cross-border trajectories. Yet, one needs to be careful not to over-celebrate this. While it clearly counters the narrative of the migrant as economic burden, it also reinforces a utilitarian view of migrants which reduces them to their economic potential and suggests that being accepted in Switzerland conditionally depends on their economic output. It can thus make people feel pressured to become a successful and impactful entrepreneur in order to be welcome in Switzerland. This is problematic as entrepreneurship is deeply entangled with processes of neoliberalisation and does not always lead to upward social mobility and success, but might create further precarities due to high levels of competition and a lack of stable income (e.g. Berwing et al. 2019; Schmiz 2013; Trehan et al. 2020). Second, the fact that the question of whether migratory resources lead to entrepreneurial opportunities cannot be answered easily also reminds us that migrants are not a homogenous group. The trajectory paper highlights that a migrant's entrepreneurial success depends on a variety of factors, such as family situation, gender, legal status, nationality, and socio-economic position. These variables and their intersections create different opportunities for people to move across borders and access local spaces for entrepreneurial purposes. It thus becomes evident that all entrepreneurs, whether migrants or not, rely on certain resources—such as the availability of a supportive network—in order to conduct business. Article 3, the dependency paper, further follows this track and explores the various implications of such dependencies.

## *5.2. The dependency paper*

***Transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Understanding their dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives***
*(co-authored with Laure Sandoz, Yvonne Riaño & Lorena Izaguirre)*

Inspired by the lens of globalisation from below and feminist approaches, Article 3 mobilises a dependency perspective (see Section 3.2) to show that transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs) are not free economic agents but depend on diverse connections in local and transnational spaces. It questions under which conditions dependencies can be productive and beneficial, and under which conditions they can lead to fragilities and precariousness. The article thereby targets the second aim of my thesis: to understand the unequal opportunities migrants face in pursuing the entrepreneurial "dream". This brings my research into dialogue with data gathered by my colleagues in Spain and Colombia (see Section 4.4). We build on 86 interviews with TMEs in different socio-spatial contexts to underline the variety of situations in which cross-border entrepreneurial activities take place. The article clearly goes beyond the aim of my thesis as it contrasts different geographical locations and is not a strict analysis of the entrepreneurs I interviewed in Zurich. In this section, I discuss the dependency perspective more explicitly with regard to the data derived from my doctoral research and its overarching aims.

*Beneficial and fragile dependencies: A typology*

Overall, the analysis shows that dependencies are not constraining per se. All interviewees rely on *social networks*, *geographical location*, *spatial mobility*, and *institutional support* to some extent. Yet, these connections do not always enable TMEs to sustain livelihoods and/or fulfil personal aspirations. Whether or not entrepreneurs can profit from their dependencies is largely shaped by their social position and the power configurations they are embedded in. To highlight the unequal opportunities they face, the article presents a typology consisting of three types of situations. This typology departs from the analytical framework of dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives we developed based on the literature discussed in Section 3.2. While it sheds light on the inequalities arising between different categories of people, it should not be considered as static. Moreover, a certain heterogeneity, nuances, and contrasts clearly exist within each type.

The first type refers to *entrepreneurs who manage to use dependencies productively while also having alternatives*. These individuals have certain advantages: Thanks to a supportive partner or previous

employment they are economically secure, which reduces the pressure to financially profit from their entrepreneurship in the short term. They can also rely on their private networks not only for financial support, but also for expertise and practical help which allows them to build their entrepreneurial project rather easily and without the need to collaborate with or employ external people. This kind of support was underlined by an interviewee who ran an entrepreneurial project between Switzerland and Colombia:

> *I was sending all, thanks to my husband who said: "(…) Okay, you can invest the money that you earn", and I don't have to help him with the expenses here in Zurich, but I can send it to Colombia. (…) First of all, I mean of course (…) without that I wouldn't have a business at the moment. And then also he has a lot of knowledge in business, so he gives me really good tips. (…) And from my family in Colombia I have no money but support from the everyday things that are happening there. (…) I call my mom to help me, my sister, whomever. Yes, I did receive support from all my family and all the friends I had before moving out of Colombia (…). The people are really, I mean you call and ask for help and they really jump and stay. (interview conducted 23.09.9)*

This example illustrates the value of being supported by a partner who is well established in Switzerland, as well as intimate networks in other countries. The majority of interviewees who are in this type of situation thus have European nationality or a stable residence permit in Switzerland. Therefore, they can mostly travel freely, connect with others, and access support structures. Many of them also have a certain skill set connected to a higher level of education which is considered valuable by others. In this position, they feel able to build mutually beneficial relationships which do not contain fragilities. This is also related to the fact that they have alternative options in the form of regular employment if their enterprise does not lead to the desired outcome. Maintaining a certain degree of autonomy, these entrepreneurs can engage in projects outside of conventional employment without taking too many risks.

The second type refers to *entrepreneurs struggling with fragile dependencies in situations of precariousness*. These individuals are constrained by economic difficulties, family care responsibilities, unstable legal situations, and/or mobility restrictions. They have little power to develop more stable alternatives. Under such conditions, dependencies are often unbalanced, include risks, and can eventually lead to exploitation. This is especially the case for interviewees who do not possess savings and have a family relying on their income. Some depend on the Swiss welfare system, which is a rather unbalanced relationship. Despite the fact that it allows them to survive, it limits their control over their personal and professional opportunities and thus creates barriers in the process of their entrepreneurship. They are reluctant to officially register their business as they are afraid of losing access to social assistance. At the same time, interviewees in such situations, who often come from non-European countries and did not enter Switzerland through labour market channels, face difficulties finding regular employment, which leaves them with few alternatives to improve their livelihoods.

One interviewee, whom I called Luca Awad in Article 3, explained why he has not officially registered his business, as follows:

> *Why, because I'm still on the social help. And their rules say that they want to ensure equal opportunity to everybody they assessed. So, if I registered the company (...), they would give me a period of six months to be real independent. And they may cover at least minimum wage. So, I would be quitting from the social help. Which is very, very, very hard on a start-up and it's a very short time. They told me during this time, I have to submit with a Buchhalter [accountant] every month and after six months they will study the situation. In case it's a profitable, and it's improving, they might expand it for another six months. In case they say no, so no. And in both situations, I have to quit the social help. (...) It's a little bit risky, because of, I have family. And my family is big, it's not small, me and my wife, we have three kids now. So, we're five. (interview conducted 06.09.19)*

Luca emphasised that entrepreneurship, which especially at the beginning does not guarantee a stable income, requires taking risks and endangering the financial security of his family. Moreover, while he was dependent on social assistance, Luca could not leave Switzerland freely, which would have been important for building and maintaining professional cross-border connections:

> *So, it's just, because I'm still under the social help and they are aware if I will travel, or technically about the expenses. So, I will invest from that part of which is offered for me. But after that, if I work and if I have my own money, then it will be, the freedom would be much more. But now, yes, I can travel, but ok, under certain circumstances of course. (interview conducted 06.09.19)*

Luca's situation illustrates how different forms of dependencies are entangled. He relies on financial aid from the state (*institutional support*). At the same time, he has a family who relies on him to sustain a livelihood (*social networks*). These dependencies make it difficult for him to travel internationally (*spatial mobility*) and use resources he accumulated in the past in places outside of Switzerland (*geographical locations*). These entanglements point towards the ambiguity of financial support that comes with conditions and restrictions. It can trap people in long-term dependency on the state. This is a relevant observation for policymaking, as it shows the importance of acknowledging the transnational resources of migrants and creating the conditions under which they can fruitfully exploit them for both their livelihood and well-being. It thus underlines that under certain conditions dependencies, and the entrepreneurial "dream" more generally, can lead to fragilities and reproduce precarities.

The third type of situation refers to *entrepreneurs who develop alternatives to overcome precariousness*. The stories of the interviewees show that entrepreneurs are not necessarily trapped in Type 2 but may manage to resolve precarious situations over time by developing creative strategies to cope with

asymmetric power relations and cultivate alternatives. Such strategies may include informality (if formal or legal activities are impossible); expanding to new locations and networks (if existing connections are constraining); employing labour abroad as well as digital technologies (if personal mobility is not possible or desired); improving legal status through marriage or formal employment; or using relevant institutional support structures. Camilla's story (see Section 4.2.2), is a good illustration of such a trajectory:

***Vignette 5.1: Camilla Gomez***

*Camilla was born in the 1960s in Colombia. In the mid-90s, she moved to Amsterdam, where she did not obtain a residence permit and sustained her livelihood with sex work. Subsequently, she was on the move for years between Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, confronted with deportations to Colombia when caught by the police. In the late 90s she moved to Zurich. She married a Swiss man, achieved legal residency status, and had a child. After feeling exploited in her relationship and divorcing her husband, she started selling clothes informally on the streets. In this period, she was dependent on social assistance to cover her living costs. Yet, she wanted to create her own business to enable a better life and education for her daughter. She explained:*

> *Divorced. He treated me badly and I had to get social help (...). I said to social services: "I want to start a business. I don't want any odd job which they give out to people and I am not a person for social assistance. I am a person who can do many things." Then they told me: "Okay, if you want, if you can start a business, try to start your business, but we don't think you can do it." Okay, that's their opinion, and then I found a person who lent me money. I said: "Look, I have borrowed money (...)." And I worked, worked, worked and after one year I didn't need social assistance anymore.*
> *(translated from German, interview conducted 20.08.19)*

*Camilla opened her shop selling clothes and beauty products around 2010. At the beginning, she was collaborating mostly with contacts in Colombia and thus relied on the practical and moral support of her Colombian family. Yet, this relationship was not satisfactory for her. She explained:*

> *My family thinks life is always easy for people in Switzerland, in Europe. They go to the bank, they take money out, and then they have money and that's it. I used to hear a lot from my family, but now I almost lost my family because of money. (...) In the beginning, I sent a lot of money to Colombia, giving, giving, giving. But in Colombia nobody helped me and then I learned, this is no life. And then slowly, slowly I became more distant from my family.(translated from German, interview conducted 20.08.19)*

*At the time of the interview, Camilla was importing her products from different places, including the US, Turkey, and different countries in Europe. Having a business in Zürich was not always easy for*

*Camilla, especially due to the high rent for her shop and the high competition in Zürich. She sometimes considered closing her shop, but has been able to sustain her livelihood for years.*

The stories of interviewees who manage to build stability despite initially precarious situations sheds light on the courage of certain individuals in the face of adversity. Yet, these strategies still entail risks. They can lead to the improvement of living conditions, but also to their deterioration, depending on factors that are often unpredictable and out of the interviewees' control. In Camilla's story, a key moment for her business creation was receiving financial support from a friend. This served as a badge of credibility for Swiss social services, who agreed to prolong financial assistance during the first year of her entrepreneurial activity. For Camilla, this was clearly beneficial, but underlines the conditionality of state support und the unbalanced power configuration such individuals are embedded in. Camilla also serves as an example for migrants who feel pressured into sending remittances or otherwise contributing to the economy of their community of origin, which may result in undesired and constraining dependencies. It shows that relying on others can also be risky, especially when the entrepreneurs feel that their obligations exceed the benefits. This is also an important observation with regard to the large body of literature insisting on the solely positive impact of networks in TMEs' countries of origin (e.g. Chen and Tan 2009; Solano 2020).

Based on the typology presented above, I argue, together with the co-authors of Article 3, that understanding the diverse nature of dependencies—some productive, others unbalanced—contributes to a more holistic and nuanced view of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Overall, however, it could be argued that the dependency perspective is very broad and thereby touches upon numerous issues only superficially. In the article, we refer to different forms of dependencies and diverse aspects of the livelihoods of our interviewees, such as financial security, emotional wellbeing, and the freedom to travel and act. Each of these dimensions and the inequalities that exist among interviewees in these regards could be discussed more thoroughly through other conceptual tools. In the paper, we show for example that spatial mobility is an essential but unequally distributed resource for TMEs. Research participants with European nationality or a Swiss residence permit benefit from relative freedom and safe travel conditions, whereas others are restricted by selective mobility regimes or political instabilities. At the same time, some people rely on travelling internationally to exchange goods, money, services, and ideas, while others can use digital business management technologies or have other people travel on their behalf. Yet, this analysis remains rather superficial. The IP32 team and I explored this issue more in depth within another article we published (Riaño et al. 2022) by using the concept of *spatial mobility capital*, which offers a more systematic analysis of the value of spatial mobility for different groups of TMEs. Yet, I still argue that the dependency perspective has a lot of potential for

analysing the realities of TMEs, especially because it draws attention to the entanglements of different dimensions that are often exclusively explored separately. In this regard, I would like to highlight three aspects that show how the dependency perspective contributes to the overarching arguments of this thesis and enabled me to further nuance my interpretations. This also allows me to discuss further data and point towards issues which did not find space in the paper due to the combination of different case studies.

*On aspirations beyond economic rationales*

First, the dependency perspective highlights interconnections between individuals and the reciprocal and care-based dimension of these relations. Thereby, it encourages us to view migrant entrepreneurs not only as economic actors but as people with emotions and intimate relationships, who have responsibilities, obligations, and attachments shaping their aspirations, decisions, and opportunities. This becomes especially evident when looking at the motivations of my interview partners to pursue the entrepreneurial "dream" and is made explicit by an interviewee who moved to Zurich to live with his Swiss partner. To a certain extent, he created his business because he could not find employment according to his qualifications. In the interview, however, he tried to deconstruct the image of the entrepreneur motivated by personal ambitions for economic success. By distancing himself from this image, he underlined that he was rather motivated by emotional bonds and his wish to create a family in Zurich:

> *I think entrepreneurship is associated to personal ambition. You have the ambition to go further, to do bigger, to earn more, to be the boss, whatever. (…) And in my case, although I have ambitions in many respects, my professional path is not led by personal ambition. It was led by practical choices I had to do, to have the life that I wanted. If the personal ambition is that I wanted to live with my girlfriend and have a child, maybe… But I wouldn't say that that connects to entrepreneurship. So that's where I make the difference. I did have to make my own company, I did have to become independent, I did have to and I still have to look for my own work (…), but the part where I think I'm not the standard entrepreneur is because there is no personal ambition there. And I don't want to expand the company, I don't want to have more people, I don't want to earn more money. (interview conducted 24.05.19)*

Another example stems from an interview with a woman selling Colombian fashion products. In the quote below, she underlined her various motivations beyond economic rationales:

> *I didn't really need the money and I didn't feel pressure to deliver money home every month. (…) At some point I said: "Look, I have to do something with my idea because I have always wanted*

*to work on something that keeps me in touch with my origins." (…) I'm not the greatest saleswoman, but I knew that I should still pursue something. I found that fashion is a good way to form a different image of Colombia here, it's something that I can sell here and thereby also an occupation for me. (…) We experienced a small [financial] loss but considering all that I have achieved this loss is actually nothing because I have been able to build a big network. I have also (…) involved others and opened the doors for everyone. (translated from German by the author, interview conducted 28.08.19)*

These quotes resemble the statements of many other interviewees who are not motivated by making profit but rather by the wish to contribute to a community, better reconcile their professional and private lives, and/or to gain recognition within their networks and broader society. Yet, it is important to highlight that these motivations should not be interpreted as mere individual aspirations as they might still stem from structural forms of exclusion. In the previous subsection, I underlined that many interviewees relate their entrepreneurial "dreams" to turbulence they experienced in their professional trajectories and in this context often articulate the wish to feel valued in the Swiss professional sphere. Moreover, it became evident throughout this subsection that financial stability is crucial to fulfilling the entrepreneurial "dream" for many of my interviewees. These examples still remind us that entrepreneurship should not be analysed in purely economic terms and migrants should not be reduced to their economic potential. To underline this argument, I would like to refer to a quote of Annie Ernaux from her book "Les Années", an analysis of her own biography, as well as French society as a whole:

*The typical migrant was still imagined as a construction worker, standing in a hole in the road with a helmet on his head, or as a garbage man clinging to his cart, an existence that revolved solely around work. And this is what each of them was reduced to, even by well-meaning students within the obligatory discussion on racism as argument against xenophobia: We need them for the work that the French no longer want to do. (Ernaux 2019, p. 137; translation by the author)*

In the public discourse on migrant entrepreneurship, migrants might no longer be envisioned as construction workers, but rather as innovative entrepreneurs. Yet, they are still reduced to their economic contribution to the host society. In my study, and more specifically by applying the dependency perspective, I aimed to overcome this utilitarian view, acknowledge migrants' identities and needs beyond the economic sphere and show how their entrepreneurial careers are embedded within their emotions and relationships to others.

*On power relations beyond the topic of migration*

Second, I perceived the focus on dependencies as very productive since it allowed me to engage more carefully with the trajectories of my interviewees beyond their "migrancy". Rather than focusing on the

opportunities and constraints that emerge from migration, this approach highlights the obstacles entrepreneurs experience based on other markers of difference, such as their gender, family situation, and socio-economic position. It thereby draws attention to persistent power relations that shape our society beyond the topic of migration. For example, the dependency perspective enabled me to shed light on state practices towards those who are labelled as "poor" and the mechanisms of power related to the conditionality and restrictions of certain support measures. Through the story of Luca, I have shown that dependence on social assistance may create pressure and moments of "stuckness" and thereby potentially even reproduce precarities in the livelihoods of individuals.

Moreover, analysing my data through the lens of the dependency perspective enabled me to explore the gendered mechanisms that characterise entrepreneurial careers more explicitly, especially with regard to family life. Half of my interviewees have children and their stories often portray traditional representations of "femininity" and "masculinity" mirroring the patriarchal organisation of society (West and Zimmerman 1987). This can be related to specific sets of culturally defined behaviours and characteristics attributed to a certain gender which have also widely affected individuals' livelihoods in Switzerland:

> *"Femininity" is usually connected with domesticity and part-time paid employment, identifying women as caregivers, domestic workers and consumers. "Masculinity" represents men as breadwinners and being more suitable than women for certain spheres of paid employment and public life. Such ideas have structured many social practices and institutional arrangements in Switzerland, resulting in gender inequalities in the labour market and in other public spheres of society. (Riaño 2021b, p. 2)*

As mentioned in the previous subsection, particularly women in my sample reported that they felt constrained by childcare responsibilities. As women, they are still considered to be the parent most responsible for care work within the family. This can lead to a lack of time and energy to develop their entrepreneurship according to their aspirations. Yet, traditional gender norms also affect male interviewees. In this subsection, I presented the case of Luca who, as the man and father in the family, feels responsible for providing the income for his family. This reflects the representation of men as "breadwinner". Another example is Emilio Martínez, whose story is presented in Section 4.2.1 and Article 4. He was not legally allowed to work nor create a business due to his status as asylum seeker. He explained with regard to being a father:

> *And in the moment, I get my permission to work, I won't hesitate or wait to get any kind of income, because I like to earn my own money. And also, as a father, I think I would like to feel that pride, you know? Do something for my daughter and not sit around and wait for the check to come every*

*month. So, yeah. It's something I really, I really want to happen and I want to work. I like working. I think working is amazing. (interview conducted 23.09.19)*

This quote shows how being a father is connected to self-confidence and feelings of pride in the professional sphere. The traditional role of men as income-earners creates pressure to take on the main responsibility of sustaining the livelihood of a family. This became a barrier to entrepreneurship for many of my male interviewees, given that self-employment often does not provide a stable income in the beginning. Many female interviewees can realise their entrepreneurial project more freely. Despite the fact that they are constrained by childcare responsibilities, they can rely on their partner's income for financial security. They remain, however, financially dependent. Figure 8, a page of the comic I created based on my dissertation, highlights these gender clichés and how dependencies related to them are reproduced in entrepreneurship.

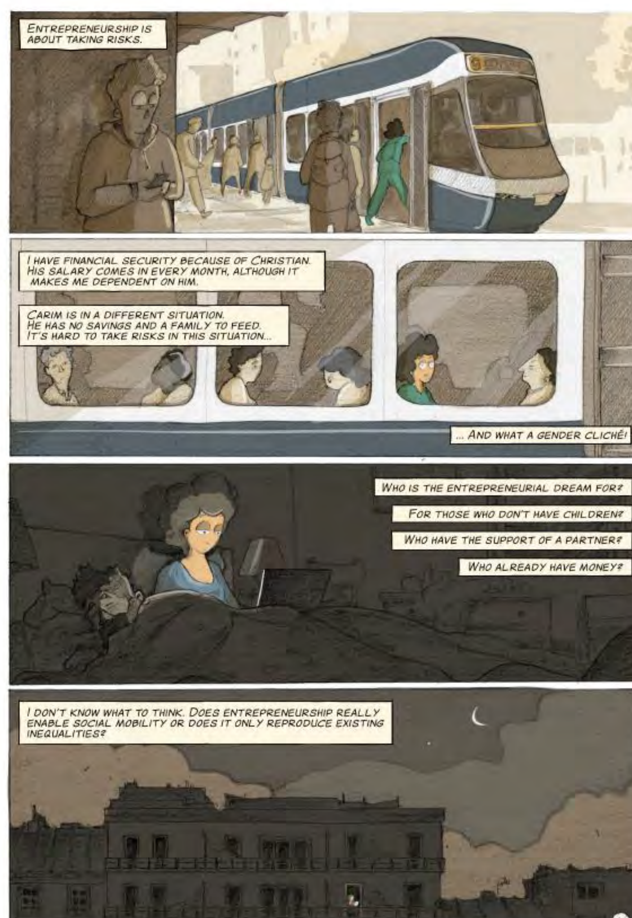



*Figure 8: Mittmasser et al. 2022, Living the Dream? (p. 17)*

Certain gender norms operate in restrictive ways for entrepreneurs. Yet, the stories of my interviewees also show that entrepreneurship has the potential to challenge traditional gender roles. Several men with children in my sample use the flexibility that comes with self-employment to take on more childcare work, which is often not possible in regular full-time employment. Their entrepreneurial activities may thus change certain shared responsibilities among couples, as when male entrepreneurs rely financially on their wives:

> *And I also have to admit and tell other people that maybe it was a bit easier for me because I had a Swiss wife. (…) That's why I say my wife, it's not that I love her so much but it's also, she's really an integral part of the company. (…) But she is also paying more, money-wise I would say she is paying more bills than me (…). (interview conducted 03.12.18)*

Moreover, several of the interviewed women see entrepreneurship as a way out of a full-time role as mother, which they took on while experiencing turbulence in their professional careers after moving to Switzerland and which led to financial dependence on their husbands. This is for example the case for one interviewee who, among other entrepreneurial activities, started an association for female entrepreneurs:

> *(Researcher): Okay, so you studied event management?*
> *(Interviewee): Yes, and art management. So, I was doing that, which means that when you move to another country, you lose contacts, and your network altogether. Because that's what it takes, like everywhere else. So, and uhm moving here was a cultural shock for me. Because in Hungary, women work. And here, my youngest was ten months at the time. My second one was about to start Kindergarten and my daughter was ten at the time. (…) And the harsh reality came then with the school system. (…) And the Krippenpreis [price for childcare] and all sorts of things. So, I've been doing this lifestyle for like four years, pretty much staying at home and still working as a consultant.*
> *(R): For people in Hungary?*
> *(I): Yes, yes, which was not a sustainable thing. So eventually I kind of stopped. And evidently, I came across a lot of women in the same situation. But I consider myself as kind of a doer. I saw a social problem that everyone is whining about. So, I thought, Okay, if there is something we can do about it, let's do something about it. And basically, that's why I started the organisation."*
> *(R): Okay. Can you explain it to me in more detail?*
> *(I): The social problem is seeing, I don't know, 100,000 women having skills, totally unused. This pissed me off. This is how it is. Realistically, social change should probably come from the top, to be a real change. However, I think there has to be some sort of pressure from below. So, for me, seeing this, that was just not right. Because the idea was that everyone has some sort of time capacity to work on something. (…) So, then, um, what's the point to live like this? Unless you want to be a stay-at-home mom and you're fine with it. That's also fine. I just think that it's really tough to see and um originally, I came up with the idea that so many people around me – I'm talking about entrepreneurs now – have ideas but they are not necessarily who can execute those ideas. (…) And what would happen to actually collect them? And they might want to do their own businesses instead of just applying for jobs or being in the box. Why not thinking a little bit out of*

*the box? To be realistic, I think a lot of businesses they fail, but at least you get some experience, you start something and you try. (interview conducted 28.08.19)*

This case exemplifies an experience of entrepreneurship which is profoundly gendered. Many of the interviewed women start their entrepreneurial careers with the motivation to have a purpose other than caring for a family. Yet, the potential of entrepreneurship in terms of overcoming traditional gender norms clearly needs to be addressed in a nuanced way. My research also shows that entrepreneurship does not necessarily lead to more financial independence in the short term and may potentially even reproduce financial dependence on male partners. At this point, it also needs to be highlighted that the gendered experiences of my interviewees are very heterogenous. Moreover, my focus here was on family life and entrepreneurs with children and I did not engage with representations of "femininity" and "masculinity" in other settings. I discussed gender roles in a binary way which only differentiates between men and women, focuses on heterogenous couples, and ignores other forms of gender and sexuality. This can be explained by the fact that I only engaged with cisgender, heterosexual individuals. It was not the primary aim of my dissertation to deconstruct gender norms in migrant entrepreneurship. Overall, these elaborations are meant to illustrate the power relations which shape my interviewees' trajectories and were made explicit through the dependency perspective. I thus call for an intersectional analysis which takes into account that migrant entrepreneurship is not only affected by experiences of mobility and "migrancy", but also by gender, family situation, socio-economic position, and the intersection of systems of power related to these markers of difference.

*Rejecting individualistic views of entrepreneurship*

My third argument on how the dependency perspective contributed to the overarching arguments of this dissertation relates to its potential with regard to rejecting individualistic narratives in the field. Through the various examples given in this subsection, it becomes evident that entrepreneurship cannot be undertaken by an individual acting alone. My interviewees rely on a variety of resources and contacts to fulfil their entrepreneurial "dream". Many of them thus call for more collective responses to forms of exclusions and collaborations in entrepreneurship, as for example the female interviewee quoted on the previous page. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that entrepreneurship includes taking risks and requires a certain degree of stability and support. On the other hand, this relates to the interconnectedness of individuals, who are always embedded in broader networks as well as persistent social inequalities.

This observation can help us to deconstruct the public discourse and research on migrant entrepreneurship, and thus connect it to broader debates on migrant "integration". Representations of

migrant entrepreneurs often reproduce images of the independent, “self-made” entrepreneur, who succeeds due to courage and competency and does not need any support from others. This narrative ignores that dependencies are an indispensable feature of society and that people rely on social networks to fulfil their “dreams”. It rather portrays an individualistic and neoliberal idea of “integration” in which migrants are required to activate themselves to become a functioning part of society and to achieve independence ideally without state intervention or support from others (see Section 2; e.g. Goksel 2018; Piñeiro 2015; Walsh 2011). This was observed by an interviewee who highlighted his frustration with the call for “integration” in relation to his own experiences in Switzerland:

> *(…) [A]s someone from an immigrant background, we're always required and asked to integrate. But on the other side, no one is asking the local community to include. And the same situation applies for the job market. You are required to know how to write a CV, I know how to write a CV. I know how to behave in an interview, I know how to present myself. But again, you need to make it clear to the employer that there is a pool of potential you're not tapping into. (…) Because many of the companies that I came across, you know, they claim that they welcome people from immigrant backgrounds and it's just parts of their PR campaign. At best, you know, offer them six three months internships and then, you know, let them go. (interview conducted 28.10.19)*

The quoted interviewee is clearly critical about the integration requirements directed solely towards migrants and the lack of effort from other actors and society at large. The dependency perspective I mobilised for my dissertation challenges this notion and underlines that “vulnerability, dependency, and need should be understood not as deficits or limitations, but rather as essential human qualities requiring an adequate political response” (Parekh and Wilcox 2020). With these elaborations, I aimed to highlight how the dependency perspective shaped my critical thinking about migrant entrepreneurship, but also to build a bridge to the next subsection, which presents Article 4 and further discusses the relationship between the promotion of migrant entrepreneurship, neoliberal discourses, and collective action.

## *5.3. The counterspace paper*

***Migrant counterspaces: Challenging labour market exclusion through collective action***
*(co-authored with Isabella Stingl)*

Article 4 examines the studied migrant-run organisation offering support to migrant entrepreneurs, referred to as MES, and questions to what extent it can counter socio-economic exclusion of migrants in Switzerland. It mobilises a counterspace perspective and draws from literature which cautions against romanticising agency and resistance (see Section 3.3). Methodologically, it builds on the ethnographic and participatory research I conducted within the organisation (see Section 4.3) and the fieldwork the co-author, I. Stingl, carried out.

Overall, we present three key motivations and strategies the organisation follows in its response to labour market barriers towards migrants mobilised by the state, employers, and society at large: (1) overcoming situations of skills mismatch and unemployment; (2) challenging deficit-oriented views and simplistic ideas of vulnerability; and (3) acknowledging needs and identities beyond the economic sphere. We explore to what extent these strategies can create a counterspace to socio-economic exclusion and offer a critical analysis of the differentiated effects and ambivalences in the collective actions of MES. I present this analysis in the section below while attempting to go beyond the content of the paper, depict more data, and offer a broader discussion of the organisation's efforts with regard to the overall aims of my thesis.

*Forging new professional subjectivities and individual resilience*

MES was created primarily with the aim to support migrants who face skills mismatch and unemployment in Switzerland. In order to overcome these situations, the organisation motivates migrants to create their own businesses or organisations, and thereby creatively use former work experiences and (in)formal qualifications as well as their transnational connections. MES envisions their participants as successful entrepreneurs of the future and thereby forges new professional subjectivities. It provides encouragement and training which is intended to help participants to fulfil their entrepreneurial "dream":

> *So, they have a programme, they have like every subject, they have kind of I think five different subjects, from starting, resilience, prototyping, soft and hard skills. So, this was amazing because*

*it was like a coverage of what you need to do or to have to be an entrepreneur and to run a start-up. So, everything was useful. For me the most useful part was probably the resilience part and the business idea. (interview conducted 27.08.19)*

MES seeks to strengthen participants' entrepreneurial competences. Thereby it encourages them to overcome internal barriers in order to use their resources in productive ways. While MES clearly evokes resilience among its participants, the focus on individual skills and motivations also aligns with neoliberal logics that promote individual responsibility for professional success (see Section 2; e.g. Goksel 2018; Piñeiro 2015; Walsh 2011). It thus resembles "integration" measures put forth by the state and cantons. As Bachmann (2016) argues in her analysis of official "integration" programmes in Switzerland, they are often designed to activate the individual participant and reduce their individual deficits. Thereby, they risk framing economic exclusion and unemployment of migrants as a lack of training, instead of addressing the structural conditions that exclude migrants from meaningful labour market participation (Bachmann 2016, p. 236). To some extent, MES follows this logic. In Article 4, my co-author and I point out that the main focus of MES's entrepreneurial programme is on its participants and not necessarily on broader societal structures with regard to socio-economic exclusion. MES, for example, rarely addresses public authorities or files legal proceedings against employers who engage in discriminatory practices. This reinforces lines of differentiation in terms of the established divide between migrants and non-migrants, where migrants are required to prove their skills and potential societal contributions in order to be considered "good" migrants and welcome in Switzerland. This contributes to the production of neoliberal subjects and "entrepreneurial selves" and thereby reinforces the internalisation and reproduction of existing power relations (e.g. Bröckling 2016; Teo 2018).

This is especially problematic because entrepreneurship does not provide a suitable alternative to regular employment for all migrants, due to constraints related to the legal, family, and financial situation of individuals, as well as the high risks associated with creating a business, as shown in the previous sections. Article 4 specifically highlights the situation of asylum seekers, who do not have the legal right to create a business in Switzerland before receiving a temporary residence permit (B). They can still take part in entrepreneurial programmes to gain professional contacts and training. Often, these participants seek to use the waiting period for their permit to prepare for a better future. A participant of MES, Emilio Martínez (see Section 4.2.1; Article 4), explained:

*Yeah, it's been already too long. It's been three years and we are not allowed to work or do any official studies or anything. But we are always looking for opportunities. So, we understood, okay we can't make any money. What can we do? (...) So, I was like, let's look for opportunities online, I don't know, a volunteership or something like that. Something interesting to do. And [my wife]*

*was like: "Hey, I found this! It's called [MES] and it's like a start-up incubator and they help you build a business." (interview conducted 23.09.19)*

Emilio, together with his wife and a friend, joined MES to work on his business idea while he was waiting for his legal status as an asylum seeker to change. This case study shows that MES encourages some participants to imagine a professional future that they are unlikely to realise —at least in the short term—due to structural conditions that constrain their options. The gap between their newly forged professional subjectivities and realities can thus become a source of disappointment and frustration.

*Progressive but contradictory paths towards inclusion*

While MES clearly focuses on the skills and resilience of their participants, it also needs to be emphasised that the team developed certain strategies to go beyond the activation of individuals. By showcasing migrants' diverse skills and potential contributions, especially through their social media presence and events where participants pitch entrepreneurial projects to a broader public, MES counters deficit-oriented views on migrants and simplistic ideas of vulnerability that exist in society. It presents migrants as resourceful individuals rather than vulnerable figures in need of support, which they hope will positively affect discriminatory hiring practices and exclusionary discourses towards migrants in the long term.

MES engages with large firms to establish volunteer programmes for their employees, who then act as mentors and coaches for the participants. Through these collaborations, MES not only gains funding, but also aims to convey their messages to powerful economic actors and encourage them to take action. MES thus motivates the firms they collaborate with to provide participants with opportunities for both entrepreneurship and regular employment. The organisation thereby aims to advance a more progressive model of inclusion, in which all parts of society need to take responsibility and act in order to change exclusionary structures. It also reflects the critical view of certain MES team members on entrepreneurship. Despite its potential for fostering independence and empowerment, they are aware that it is not possible for everyone and may create further precarities. In 2019, four years after its creation, MES established another programme with the aim of enabling access to the regular labour market. Once again, they collaborate with established economic actors who facilitate access and are encouraged to change the conditions certain migrants currently face. Yet, in the following note from the participatory workshop with MES it becomes evident that the focus is still on giving individuals the tools to succeed in the Swiss labour market:

> *We switched the start-up incubator narrative to be "talent incubator" - because the strong focus on start-ups was not so successful from a migration and development perspective (low durability of start-ups, income, etc.). Since mid-2019 we focused more overtly on talent/individual rather than businesses. (note on virtual whiteboard, workshop 02.11.20)*

This underlines that MES's strategies beyond the promotion of entrepreneurship still align with neoliberal ideas focusing on individual skills and the stimulation of economic growth. At this stage, it is, however, also important to view the efforts of MES from the perspective of their participants who aspire to gain skills and continue their professional careers in Switzerland, and thus feel in a better position to do so after participating in the entrepreneurial programme. Two of the interviewed participants, for example, stated:

> *Well, I've learned first of all, that I know, that my idea is valuable (...). And I also learned, how can I move from a position of being helpless, what can I do? Now, I know what I need, and I can ask for some help. (...) That's why, with [MES], when I got the letter of acceptance, I couldn't believe it, I couldn't even stand on my legs, it was at home, I had to sit down, I was just I don't know crying for some minutes. It was like the first time in 3 years, that someone said: "Yes, we want to have you on board." And before just rejections and I wrote 500 letters of applications. So, it was quite a change and these people are amazing. So, there I felt, because I'm a migrant, I have something valuable. Before, I didn't think this way. I thought so be it and now I feel yes, I have to share, I have my story and I'm part of this society. (interview conducted 10.09.19)*
>
> *(...) [P]eople are attracted to success. So, once they see that someone is doing something, you know, we love a crowd. When you see people gathering you just go there and take a look, see what's happening. We're really childish in that sense. In terms of self-esteem it's definitely building up at the moment, because, instead of trying to approach and knock at doors and asking, people are starting to approach you, ask you, trying to say: "Well, you have a really interesting project I would love to support or be part of." So, you know, it's a good feeling. (interview conducted 28.10.19)*

The accounts of individuals who argue that their well-being and options for professional fulfilment have increased due to these programmes legitimise the efforts of MES to some extent. This is also in line with Martin's (2011) conclusions in her study on migrant organisations acting as labour market intermediaries in Chicago. These organisations are in constant tensions with neoliberal processes, but still manage to improve the living conditions of individuals within the system. The author thus argues that such actors subscribe to contradictory practices, but do so consciously and strategically because they are aware that societal structures cannot be changed easily (Martin 2011, p. 2948). This analysis mirrors my interpretations and thus relates to Katz' elaboration on different forms of agency (2004, pp. 244–257). She argues that only rarely can we find acts of resisting and reshaping mechanisms of power, while we can identify different acts of coping and reworking through which people adapt to and improve

their position within existing power relations. Such differentiations draw attention to the fact that people have different capacities to change and transform societal structures.

*Constrained agency in collective settings*

With regard to the ambivalences identified within MES's work, we also need to acknowledge the limited opportunities of the migrant women who created and run the organisation. As a reaction to the critique articulated above, the team members highlithed their constraints as a migrant-run organisation:

> *Avoidance for the systemic issues - we do circumvent this topic. As a team of migrants and refugees - hard to know how to address the topics. (...) Can such a small programme really initialise change on a systemic level? (note on virtual whiteboard, workshop 02.11.20)*
>
> *Tackle structural constraints – a big fish to fry, for a grassroots, underfunded, migrant-led NGO… I´m afraid we do not have the tools, nor the time. (comment sent by MES team member after reading the first version of the counterspace paper, 02.11.20)*

These comments partly relate to the fact that most of the team members became engaged with MES following their own struggles accessing the Swiss labour market after arriving in Switzerland. In this sense, they can be framed as migrant entrepreneurs out of necessity who tried to overcome their own constraints through entrepreneurial activities. They thus do not have extensive experience running a non-profit organisation in Switzerland and face difficulties with bureaucratic procedures and securing funding from private and corporate sources. This results in short-term funding, low salaries, and a lot of volunteer time, conditions that do not necessarily enable a durable counterspace to socio-economic exclusion.

It is also important to point to the gendered mechanisms within the work of the organisation, which was not made explicit in the counterspace paper. The team behind MES consists of women only, and many of them face difficulties similar to the other female entrepreneurs interviewed for this dissertation. They struggle with childcare responsibilities while trying to continue their professional careers in Switzerland, in this case working for a support organisation. The fact that MES is run by women who invest many unpaid hours into the organisation mirrors the broader societal phenomenon of women undertaking unpaid care work for vulnerable groups. According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2021), the percentage of women engaging in volunteer work is higher than men (42.1% vs. 39.9%) and on average women invest more hours in volunteer work per week than men (4.4 hours vs. 3.8 hours). While men mostly engage in sporting associations, women are more likely to engage in social-charitable organisations. This highlights that, generally speaking, women in Switzerland not only take on more

unpaid care work within their families, but also for society at large, which corresponds to the realities of the MES team members.

There is much potential for exploring gendered mechanisms with regard to community work. The willingness to support, reassure, and emotionally engage with others are often considered feminine attributes and are thus in many cases not valued through remuneration in our society. In this context, Braun (2017), who studied volunteering efforts in support of refugees in Germany, underlines that "charitable practices are (…) inherently linked to an ideal of femininity" and tied to women's traditional roles within the institution of marriage and raising children (Braun 2017, p. 41). On basis of her research, she shows how German "welcome culture" is highly gendered, but also linked to patronising ideas. She builds on decolonial thoughts and points towards power relations with regard to the constructed difference between the "modern" "emancipated" female volunteer and the "oppressed" female refugee (Braun 2017, p. 39). I did not explore these aspects in my own research, because I did not focus on people who volunteer for charitable reasons within MES. I rather centred my research on the core team behind MES which mostly consists of migrant women facing struggles similar to those of their participants. I thus understood their efforts as a collective response to socio-economic exclusion, rather than charitable work. Here, my main aim was to underline the constraints of the team members related to their own positionalities as migrant women with care responsibilities who have difficulty securing funding for their own salaries. MES's efforts to motivate and support individual participants to become entrepreneurs, instead of tackling broader structural issues, can be read as a circumvention strategy that aims to improve the living conditions of migrants while still navigating the organisation's own constraints.

*Providing a sense of community*

Finally, there is a crucial element of MES's work which contrasts neoliberal logics, as well as regular "integration" programmes. The organisation acknowledges that the participants' well-being in the economic sphere is significantly shaped by their lives outside of it and therefore actively engages with their needs and identities beyond the labour market and entrepreneurship. For example, MES encourages participants to bring their children to workshops and even offers childcare in order to enable everyone to fully participate. The organisation thus builds sociability and interconnectedness, which becomes especially evident in the interviews with former participants. They highlighted the meaningful relationships created during their engagement with MES, which are valuable both professionally and personally, and refered to the organisation as a place of safety, belonging, and home:

*So, the most important part for me was the networking. Because, before [MES] I wasn't connected, I was really struggling to meet people and to, I don't know, to find a purpose. Once I went to [MES], I met curious people like-minded people, who are open to learn from others, who are open to meet others. Just, you know, it's just stepping from one circle to the other. (interview conducted 28.10.19)*

*I think it was really great and I've learned a lot from this, but I think the key component was the community and this real support. That you can connect with people that you need help from for example and that you feel like part of the family because it was small, and you can very well connect with other participants too. And I think what is essential is that the support is still there. We are alumni, I am an alumni and I still receive the messages from them (...). (interview conducted 09.09.19)*

*Before, I was just at home. And since I don't have connections to cooperate and I don't have anyone, I was at home and (...) I felt very lonely, like in a deep whole. And [MES] was just I don't know, the light in the tunnel. So, they helped, and people are so friendly, so nice. It's just, when I think of them, it makes me feel smile, wonderful! And they brought us, or they brought me at least, very interesting Swiss contacts, that I really trust, and I really like very much. (...) And another thing, [MES], themselves, they are I think multicultural guys, they put fingers on the table somehow to develop and to create this safety space, that you feel belonging and that you feel home, and you are welcomed. So, that's something precious, that I would encourage all the time (...). (interview conducted 10.09.19)*

MES clearly establishes a sense of community among its participants, which counterbalances dominant experiences of loneliness after arriving in Switzerland. The appropriation of material space remains ephemeral, as the buildings and spaces in which the organisation's activities take place vary greatly and many events and gatherings take place online, especially since the COVID-19 outbreak. Yet, following our observations and testimonials of participants, I. Stingl and I argue that the social interactions of the different actors involved in MES create a durable social space that allows people to share experiences of exclusion and work together to collectively improve their lives both within and beyond the economic sphere.

Overall, a response to the question of whether MES represents a counterspace to exclusionary dynamics towards migrants needs to be differentiated. We show that the organisation's intentions to actively reshape the power relations at stake do not fully align with its activities and their outcomes—at least during the period of this analysis. By strongly focusing on individual participants and their personal responsibility for professional success, MES runs the risk of working within the system rather than against it. However, the organisation serves as an important intervention in the prevailing reality of the socio-economic exclusion of migrants. The support it provides is crucial to developing professional careers for many participants, and thus transcends neoliberal logics as MES also serves as a space of belonging and community. These efforts correspond with my call to not reduce migrants to their economic potential and to reject an individualistic view of entrepreneurship, as argued in the previous

subsection on the dependency paper. In this sense, MES's activities can be viewed as transformative to some extent.

*Other forms of collective action and the question of responsibility*

My research deconstructs some limits of migrants' collective actions against socio-economic exclusion, at least with regard to the studied organisation. Yet, there are clearly other forms of collective action that do not focus on the promotion of entrepreneurship and/or challenge exclusionary logics in a more politicised way. One example worth mentioning here is a group of street traders my colleague, L. Sandoz, studied in Barcelona. The group launched a project raising awareness about the situation of illegalised and marginalised street traders with unstable residence status. Through collective mobilisation and open contestation of legal and social norms they generated a debate in Barcelona problematising their public image and acquired support by NGOs, activists, and some city authorities, who let them move forward with certain activities, such as a crowdfunding campaign and launching their own brand (Sandoz 2021).

Coming back to the Swiss context, I would also like to refer to the case of migrant women who created cleaning cooperatives ("Autonomía-Kooperative" 2022; Landolt 2022). A journalist states in a newspaper article that:

> *The urgency for self-organisation results from the high risk of poverty for cleaners. Accident and social insurance coverage is often inadequate or completely lacking in this sector. (...) According to SECO, the legally prescribed minimum wage of 19.20 Swiss francs is often undercut. (...)*
>
> *To ensure that working conditions (...) are better, the seven founding members have drawn up concrete rules. These include a guarantee of a gross wage of 30 francs per hour, social benefits, a say in the organisation of working hours, prevention and protection against sexual harassment, and language and professional support. (...)*
>
> *As members of the cooperative, the workers own the platform jointly and are self-organised. At the same time, they are employed through the cooperative, which gives them legal advantages, such as a right to unemployment insurance. The economic risk is borne jointly by all members, without any personal liability for the enterprise. Since the profit is not distributed to investors but reinvested in the cooperative, it is distributed more widely and remains in the community. (...)*
>
> *In short, [such cooperatives] (...) make an important contribution to the democratisation of the economy, because they allow those who will ultimately be affected—the workers—to decide their working conditions. (Kynd 2021; translation by the author)*

According to this excerpt, cleaning cooperatives strive for more collective forms of self-employment beyond the aim of making a profit and thereby go beyond the individualistic and economic narratives of entrepreneurship I problematise in this thesis. They focus on advocating for better working conditions, increased income, and social security benefits, thereby politicising broader structural issues which are also highlighted in the comic project (see Section 4.5 and fig. 9).

*Figure 9: Mittmasser et al. 2022, Living the Dream? (p. 18 and 19)*

Based on a case study in New York City, Komposch et al. (2021) have argued that worker-run cooperatives can reduce the precarity and economic exclusion of marginalised groups, and thus have empowering effects beyond the sphere of paid work. Yet, it remains to be studied more in depth to what extent such cooperatives can challenge broader societal structures. Moreover, Luisa, the protagonist of the comic project, underlines a critical issue in this regard in her comment on the cleaning cooperative: "It is mainly the migrants themselves who create solutions to fight inequalities" (see fig. 9). This links back to the discussion of "integration" and the question of who is required to change:

*(…) [F]rom a Black studies and anti-racist perspective the lens of integration is believed to put the problem wrongly, leading to a distortion of reality. Not immigrants and their (in)ability to integrate are the problem; the focus should be on racist structures of power and inequality in society. We should hence study not immigrants, but white society and constructions of whiteness, that create racial exclusions and patterns of inequality along racial lines, and how these intersect with other axis of inequality. (Saharso 2019, p. 1)*

Apart from providing a critical note on societies' responsibilities for countering exclusionary dynamics, this quote also raises the question of who should be studied within migration research. Focusing on migrants and their collective actions, as was the aim in this dissertation, clearly risks reproducing certain colonial and nation-state epistemologies (e.g. Dahinden 2016; Schapendonk et al. 2021; Sievers et al. 2022). Yet, I argue that it can still dismantle underlying structures that govern and constrain their actions, and thereby draw attention to who and what needs to change. Above all, my thesis emphasises the significance of three of these structures: 1. Racialised discourses of otherness, which not only create legal barriers for certain migrants but can lead to the perception of specific groups as less valuable or qualified than others and thus portray them as a burden to society; 2. The gendered organisation of our society, which creates specific responsibilities for women and men and thereby constrains their opportunities to fulfil their aspirations; and 3. Processes of neoliberalisation that put the responsibility of economic success on individuals and frame their constraints as a lack of skills and training instead of systematic exclusions. These structures not only affect the conditions under which migrants can achieve well-being overall, but also their opportunities to pursue the entrepreneurial "dream".

# 6. SYNTHESIS AND OUTLOOK

In public discourse, entrepreneurship is often celebrated as an opportunity for migrants to mobilise resources from their country of origin to achieve economic independence and success. However, this risks reducing migrant entrepreneurs to their national origin, economic potential, and individual efforts, and thus tends to invisibilise the multi-sitedness of mobile biographies and the unequal opportunities different groups of migrants face in pursuing the entrepreneurial "dream". Current scientific debates mirror these issues. Overall, the objective of my doctoral research was therefore to offer a more nuanced view by examining the complex cross-border trajectories of migrant entrepreneurs and the conditions under which they can use resources that result thereof. I aimed to contribute to the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship and open up new conceptual, methodological, and empirical avenues of inquiry that strengthen our understanding of the dynamic and unequal spatialities of the phenomenon. I thus tried to challenge individualistic and neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship, and the concept of "integration" more generally. In this section, I summarise my main contributions and point towards limitations of my study and implications for future research.

*Main conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions*

On a *conceptual level*, I have approached the topic through different lenses that have been rarely used in the field. Studies often focus on transnational migrant entrepreneurs' (TMEs) activities in their country of origin and current residence country (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 33; Muñoz Castro et al. 2019, p. 569) and thereby undermine the diversity of locations, connections, and mobilities at stake. This is connected to the application of conceptual tools that do not fully overcome static and ethnic biases. Taking inspiration from the mobilities paradigm (e.g. Cresswell 2006; Schapendonk et al. 2021) and using a *trajectory perspective*, I positioned dynamic spatialities at the centre of my research and unpacked the multi-sited geographies of TMEs' activities beyond the home/host country binary.

Current scientific debates also tend to undermine the constraints faced by different groups undertaking cross-border entrepreneurial careers (Portes and Martinez 2020). They thus prioritise an "individual-level approach to entrepreneurship which is concerned primarily about how prospective entrepreneurs go about acting" (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020, p. 46). To respond to these gaps, I mobilised biographic, intersectional, and time-geographic approaches towards inequalities in transnational fields (e.g. Dutta 2016; Moret 2020; Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019). I thus followed a critique which conceptualises the individual as an independent economic actor, as brought forward by feminist scholars (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015; Webster 2020) among others. Mobilising a *dependency perspective*

allowed me to uncover the diversity of resources and networks TMEs rely on in their professional and private lives and uncover the unequal opportunities that exist among this group.

Finally, I built on discourses of structure and agency to find a balance between the victimisation and heroisation of individuals and examine how migrants can counter the constraints they experience in different ways. The *counterspace perspective* (Hassanli et al. 2020; Pande 2018) allowed me to grasp the impact of collective action evident in my field of research and move beyond individualistic ideas of the phenomenon. Drawing from literature that urges us not to romanticise strategies of resistance (Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011; Katz 2004; Martin 2011), I paid close attention to the ambivalent and differentiated effects they have in tension with societal structures they are embedded in. Overall, these perspectives facilitated a relational understanding of how transnational and local spaces are dynamically created and maintained through the everyday practices of migrant entrepreneurs and thus offered a sense of how power relations within, between, and across social groups shape their lived experiences.

*Methodologically*, my research contributes to current debates in the literature by pushing for an approach that takes the heterogenous experiences and voices of migrant entrepreneurs seriously. I interviewed 34 individuals with migration experience developing or conducting entrepreneurial activities across national borders in Zurich. Through the application of biographic methods (Denzin 1989a; Iosifides and Sporton 2009; Rosenthal 2004) I explored the evolution of motivations, strategies, and subjectivities of my research participants, but also the social, political, and material circumstances that have influenced their lives over time. Combined with visual methods, namely the use of drawings on geographical maps, this enabled me to be particularly attentive to the multi-sited nature of my research participants' entrepreneurship and their differentiated aspirations and capacities to move across borders. I thus included individuals with multiple migration experiences who were at different stages of their entrepreneurial careers. This processual approach does not reduce research participants to a single reality in a particular space and time but facilitates a more holistic understanding of their experiences in multiple spatialities and temporalities. Moreover, I included individuals with very different nationalities, legal status, and ethnic backgrounds. Thereby I did not use state-produced and ethnicity-centred categories for selecting research participants, as this risks reproducing forms of exclusion and stereotypes of migrant entrepreneurs (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Heis and Dannecker 2022; Verduijn and Essers 2013). This allowed me to examine to what extent different groups constructed by society and the state face different kinds of opportunities and constraints. I also included migrants that were as different as possible with regard to other social markers of difference, such as gender, family situation, and socio-economic position, to explore how different individuals perceive and experience migrant entrepreneurship and move beyond the focus on their "migrancy".

I also conducted an ethnographic study of a migrant-run organisation promoting entrepreneurship in Switzerland. This is a novel methodological approach, as the literature usually draws attention to individual experiences (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020, p. 46). When studying collective aspects of migrant entrepreneurship, it thus mostly focuses on “co-ethnic communities” rather than on “co-migrant communities” (Vershinina and Cruz 2021, p. 510), and thereby reproduces ethnic framings of the phenomenon. The organisation I studied consists of individuals from diverse backgrounds, and thus allowed me to better understand the context in which the entrepreneurial “dream” for migrants is constructed and reproduced, as well as the role of support structures. Following feminist geographers' understanding of participatory research (Caretta and Riaño 2016; Riaño 2016), I conducted research *with* rather than *on* the organisation. Thereby, I aimed to overcome colonial logics within research, in which research participants are often viewed as unable to think for themselves, and where an artificial moral distance is created between researcher and research participants. The objective was to provide a space for mutual learning and actively contribute to my research field by embedding myself as a volunteer and discussing my approaches and interpretations with my research participants. Despite the spread of participatory methodologies in the social sciences, the collaborative dimension of research and its value is rarely acknowledged (Sandoz 2019, p. 24) and scholars in the field of migrant entrepreneurship have only recently started to explore them (Vershinina and Cruz 2021). I would like to encourage scholars to intensify such efforts. The collaboration with the studied organisation allowed me to learn from the expertise of its team members and nuance my own interpretations.

Finally, I followed the call of feminist and creative geographers (e.g. Caretta and Riaño 2016; de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017) to find a creative way to amplify the data I gathered using a medium that would transcend traditional forms of scientific communication, engage audiences beyond academia, and create new spaces for critical thinking on migrant entrepreneurship. Therefore, I created a comic booklet entitled “Living the Dream? The Odyssey of a Migrant Entrepreneur” with comic author Jean Leveugle and others. This project was a way to acknowledge the value of the knowledge passed on me during my research and to allow my research participants to challenge my interpretations. In this context, it is important to highlight that the comic was not a participatory project in a strict sense. I do not perceive it as the “objective truth” about migrant entrepreneurship, but rather as one more way of interpreting it. This mirrors the overall epistemological perspective (e.g. Gilbert 1994; McDowell 1992; Rose 1997) adopted in this thesis. I view social phenomena, such as migrant entrepreneurship, neither as singular nor objective, but as socially (re)produced and thus perceived differently by different actors according to the structural contexts in which their lives are embedded. In this sense, I tried to reflect on and point towards the fact that the outputs of this research were produced by an Austrian woman with a tertiary education in social sciences who does not have children, and who is employed at a university in Switzerland.

Regarding the *empirical findings*, this dissertation offers evidence for several arguments. First, I highlight that apart from activities in their origin country, most of my research participants are entangled in multiple countries, for example, where they have previously lived or explored new locations for entrepreneurial projects. For these multi-sited activities, they take advantage of their knowledge of different economic and institutional environments, professional and intimate contacts, and competences they have accumulated in different locations and at different times. Thereby, my research opposes the focus on the home/host country binary which dominates the literature. I thus argue that migrant entrepreneurs should not be essentialised to their experiences and networks in their country of origin. This does not correspond to the complexity of cross-border trajectories and thus risks reproducing ethnic biases and stereotyping (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Heis and Dannecker 2022; Verduijn and Essers 2013). The conceptualisation of transnational migrant entrepreneurship needs to be broadened by paying close attention to the dynamic spatialities of entrepreneurial endeavours. These results not only contribute to research on TMEs, but also provide more evidence to the growing body of literature on multi-sited transnationalism and post-migratory movements (e.g. Ahrens et al. 2016; Camenisch and Müller 2017; Moret 2018; Zufferey 2019) showing that migration is more complex than a single movement from one country to another.

Second, my research draws attention to the unequal opportunities migrants face in fulfilling the entrepreneurial "dream". The literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship often overemphasises the idea that transnational resources automatically lead to entrepreneurial success and thus treats TMEs as a homogenous group (Portes and Martinez 2020, p. 1992). In contrast, my research shows that depending on their nationality, legal status, gender, family situation, and socio-economic position, migrants experience different constraints with regard to cross-border entrepreneurship in Switzerland. In particular, female and non-European research participants who arrive through family reunification and asylum channels, and who encounter barriers to directly enter the labour market, also struggle to access spaces (both local and distant) needed for their entrepreneurial activities. They are constrained by care responsibilities, mobility restrictions, limited access to local networks, and/or a lack of financial resources. These difficulties do not relate to a lack of courage or competency but emerge from the socio-spatial dependencies TMEs are embedded in as well as specific mechanisms of power that limit their options. Many of these difficulties are thus not merely based on the "migrancy" of individuals, but on the intersection of different forms of exclusions. Racialised discourses of otherness clearly shape the entrepreneurial careers of certain migrants, but so does the gendered organisation of society. My research thereby underlines that not every migrant can utilise transnational resources for entrepreneurship in the same way. These findings counter the heroisation of migrant entrepreneurs evident in the literature, which risks reproducing the utilitarian idea that migrants should be required to benefit the economy of their host country, and which invisibilises the precarities that entrepreneurship

entails (e.g. Berwing et al. 2019; Schmiz 2013; Trehan et al. 2020). Furthermore, they contribute to the vast field of research on migratory resources, and attempts to overcome the celebratory enthusiasm for transnationalism (e.g. Erel and Ryan 2019; Moret 2020; Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019), as well as to literature on the unequal opportunities migrants face in Switzerland (e.g. Fischer and Dahinden 2017; Riaño 2021a; Sandoz 2020; Stingl 2021).

Third, my research highlights the strategies TMEs develop over time to counter the constraints they face. In this regard I attempted not to fall into the trap of focusing on migrants' hardships and thereby portray them as victims (Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016, p. 129), but rather to illustrate the creativity migrants demonstrate in overcoming obstacles. On the individual level, I underlined counter-strategies such as mobilising the support of intimate networks, using digital technologies, accessing supportive organisations, and expanding business activities to further locations. Yet, this dissertation also goes beyond the individual level to highlight collective forms of agency, illustrated by the studied migrant-run organisation. By providing entrepreneurial training and access to local networks, the organisation supports migrants in overcoming situations of skills mismatch and unemployment. It thus challenges deficit-oriented views of migration and simplistic ideas of vulnerability and creates a sense of community and belonging which counterbalances dominant experiences of loneliness after arriving in Switzerland. The organisation can to some extent be viewed as a counterspace to the socio-economic exclusion of migrants.

While acknowledging the efforts of individual research participants and the organisation, my dissertation also underlines that agency, on both the individual and collective levels, is constrained by the operations of power it seeks to overcome. Whether or not migrants can engage in cross-border entrepreneurship which provides economic self-sufficiency still depends on their position in society. When structural conditions remain unaddressed, there is a risk that precarities and existing power relations will be replicated within migrants' entrepreneurial activities. Particularly with regard to the studied organisation, I underline that the promotion of entrepreneurship follows the neoliberal logic of attributing the responsibility for professional success to the individual. It thereby mirrors societal debates and state measures with regard to migrant "integration" which require migrants to activate themselves, strengthen their skills, and achieve independence instead of tackling societal structures that exclude them from meaningful economic and social participation in the first place (e.g. Bachmann 2016; Piñeiro 2015; Walsh 2011). While pointing out the contradictory practices of the studied organisation's team, I also highlight that their options for systematically challenging societal structures are limited due to their own positionalities as migrant women. Working within the system to improve the living conditions of their participants seems a legitimate choice given that societal structures cannot be changed easily by everyone. These results not only provide a differentiated view on the topic of migrant entrepreneurship

but also contribute to nuancing debates on the potential of individual and collective strategies to initiate systematic change (e.g. Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016; Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2011; Katz 2004; Martin 2011).

Overall, my study shows that entrepreneurial attempts have different outcomes for different migrants. The experience of living in different places can clearly result in valuable resources for creating a business or organisation and improving one's livelihood. Yet, cross-border entrepreneurship is not a vehicle for social mobility per se and can also reproduce certain precarities or create new ones. I do not argue for the complete rejection of the entrepreneurial "dream" for migrants who wish to follow this path. After all, they are motivated to do so for different reasons, such as searching for stability, recognition, personal fulfilment, or reconciling their professional and private lives. Yet, the observed ambivalences need to be translated into adequate political responses and support measures that speak to individual aspirations and realities beyond the economic sphere and their "migrancy", as well as address the issue of unequal access to entrepreneurial opportunities. First, it is relevant to take family care responsibilities seriously by facilitating access to flexible and affordable childcare and to support new approaches that can lead to successfully combining entrepreneurship with family life. State institutions and support organisations thus need to address the economic limitations certain individuals face after moving to Switzerland, especially when other family members rely on their income. They can do so by providing financial assistance during the first phase of entrepreneurship which does not limit individuals' control over their personal and professional lives. Support organisations should invest in digital training which helps migrant entrepreneurs to develop and maintain their international professional networks virtually when mobility is not possible or desired. Established actors thus need to provide spaces for individuals with limited opportunities and create the right conditions for sustainable collaborations. The entrepreneurial "dream" is possible—but only when the differentiated realities of individuals within and beyond the economic sphere are taken seriously and the dreamer is not left alone.

*Limitations and avenues for future research*

Finally, I would like to point out some limitations of this study and their implications for future research. The first refers to the fact that this thesis is a synthesis of scientific articles and was thus embedded in a broader research project. This was certainly advantageous in the sense that it led me to combine different analytical perspectives and simultaneously test different conceptual and methodological tools. I could thus learn from others and progressively develop a more intersubjective understanding of the phenomenon under study. Yet, the decision to write papers in collaboration with other researchers—some of whom have studied the phenomenon in other geographical settings and from different angles—has certainly also created some fragmentation and an occasional lack of consistency and depth. Moreover, while the project I worked within encouraged me to focus on the transnational aspect of

migrant entrepreneurship, I simultaneously pushed my own interests in the neoliberal premises behind promoting migrant entrepreneurship. If I had focused on either of these topics, I could have probably engaged with certain perspectives that were novel to the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship more thoroughly. I referred, for example, to the literature on "entrepreneurial selves" and the internalisation of neoliberal discourses (e.g. Bröckling 2016; Peters 2001) in different sections of this document. While I was greatly inspired by this, I did not use it in a very systematic way. It would be interesting to explore further how the discourse on migrant entrepreneurship and actors in the field produce neoliberal subjects and thereby reinforce existing power relations. As argued by others (e.g. Foucault 2008; Scharff 2016; Teo 2018) and shown in this research, structure and agency cannot always be distinguished easily. Individuals and organisations internalise neoliberal discourses and thereby reproduce them within their everyday practices. Yet, here scholars need to remain vigilant against paternalistic analyses (Parsell and Clarke 2019). This thesis has shown that working within the system might also be a conscious choice to improve living conditions within a setting that cannot be changed easily. When it comes to the cross-border nature of migrant entrepreneurship, it would be interesting to push the application of the mobilities paradigm further by experimenting with mobile and multi-sited methods (Boas et al. 2020; Marcus 1995). This was originally the plan of the project I was embedded in but was not realised due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such methods could provide even more context to the diverse im/mobilities conducted by migrant entrepreneurs and strengthen our understanding of the choices made, the constraints experienced, and the emotions felt while moving or not moving.

The second limitation relates to the individuals studied in this dissertation. Due to the wide range of experiences present in the sample, there is certainly a possibility for generalisation. Yet, the majority of the research participants hold university degrees and stable residence permits in Switzerland. Regarding the first group, Harima and Baron note that in fact many studies on TMEs focus on individuals with higher tertiary education, "taking the assumption for granted that transnational entrepreneurship is a privilege for highly educated migrants" (2020, p. 18). Thereby, the field reproduces the classist idea that only people with recognised qualifications can contribute innovatively to society. Regarding the second group, even though this study only includes a limited number of individuals in precarious legal situations, I could still highlight some of their specific challenges. For example, I agree with other scholars who argue that "unclear information or a long wait to receive status decisions about asylum applications can raise uncertainty around starting a business, as the investment in a new business could be lost upon denial of an asylum claim" (Desai et al. 2021, p. 939). In my dissertation, the limited attention paid to these two groups was not a purposeful choice but a consequence of the sampling strategy of snowballing as well as difficulties accessing people with lower educational backgrounds and in unstable legal situations. Yet, I would like to motivate scholars to try to overcome these biases, to further diversify the image of the entrepreneur, and to better understand the constraints of the above-

mentioned groups. Moreover, I encourage scholars to investigate new and alternative forms of entrepreneurship. This thesis underlines that self-employment involves taking personal and financial risks, which is not possible for every migrant and requires alliances with others. Over the last few years there have already been responses to this issue in Switzerland, namely migrants creating cooperatives and thereby taking entrepreneurial risks as a collective ("Autonomía-Kooperative" 2022; Kynd 2021; Landolt 2022). Studying these initiatives and their implications was beyond the scope of this thesis but would be a promising avenue for future research.

Finally, I would like to highlight once again that my dissertation concentrated on the experiences and collective actions of migrants themselves. While I tried to challenge the label "migrant" and the reduction of individuals to their "migrancy" throughout my doctoral research, I still focused on individuals with migration experiences and categorised them as migrants. I am aware that this aligns with colonial and nation-state epistemologies (e.g. Dahinden 2016; Schapendonk et al. 2021; Sievers et al. 2022). This focus on migrants may thus create the impression of wrongly shifting responsibility onto the migrants themselves while undermining the operations of power which constrain their options (Saharso 2019). I believe that within my dissertation I could use these terms while still dismantling the underlying structures that govern and constrain migrants' actions, such as racialised discourses of otherness, the gendered organisation of our society, and processes of neoliberalisation. Yet, this thesis only offers limited insights into the concrete mechanisms of control and governance, for example, those employed by authorities related to the state, canton, and city. Whether or not migrants in Switzerland are legally allowed to start a self-employed activity depends on their nationality, family situation, and the legitimisation of their stay in Switzerland, and some need to submit applications and undergo assessment before starting a business. My research thus shows that the Swiss welfare system does not necessarily support migrants to become self-employed. I encourage scholars to study these procedures and the practices of the different actors involved in more detail and to question to what extent they (re)produce precarities and reinforce existing inequalities.

I would like to finish with a reference to Kohlberger (2022), who explored societal discourses about migrants and more specifically paradoxes that characterise current migration and asylum regimes of Western countries. One of the paradoxes she presents concerns the contradictory expectations towards displaced individuals seeking asylum. To some extent, they mirror what I observed in the field of migrant entrepreneurship. On the one hand, the displaced are expected to be vulnerable, weak, and in need of protection in order to earn protection and further support. On the other hand, they are expected to be beneficial to society through their resilience, independence, and productive economic contributions. Society thereby envisions a sort of "*Refugee Superman*, who succeeds in the seemingly impossible" in contrast to those who "exploit the social hammock" (Kohlenberger 2022, p. 112; translation by the author). Kohlberger elaborates that these contradictory expectations can be rarely met

by one person given the unequal opportunities that exist in our society. Moreover, she argues that as long as these paradoxes remain, civil society actors can hardly foster systematic change. Rather, they are forced to manage their consequences while reproducing them at the same time. This aligns with my analysis of the field of migrant entrepreneurship. I thus agree with Kohlberger's conclusion and call for political decision-makers and society at large to take on their share of responsibility in this regard:

> *I warn against the noble and yet overarching claim of wanting to bring these paradoxes (…) to their resolution. This is impossible and senseless in the current system, which is built on these paradoxical moments and consolidates them day by day. At least, however, the presentation and dissection of [different paradoxes] (…) should help to take such impossibilities into consideration and thus make the creation of alternatives conceivable. (...) Here it is important for political decision-makers as well as civil society and individual actors to take not less, but more responsibility. Not only the much-cited responsibility for the individual, but also and above all for the common good. (Kohlenberger 2022, p. 176; translation by the author)*

# 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ackermann, M., & Freitag, M. (2015). What actually matters? Understanding attitudes toward immigration in Switzerland. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *21*(1), 36–47. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12146

Adams, J. T. (1931). *The epic of America*. Bosten: Little Brown.

Ahmad, N., & Seymour, R. G. (2008). *Defining entrepreneurial activity: Definitions supporting frameworks for data collection* (OECD Statistics Working Papers No. 2008/01). https:///doi.org/10.1787/243164686763

Ahrens, J., Kelly, M., & Van Liempt, I. (2016). Free movement? The onward migration of EU citizens born in Somalia, Iran, and Nigeria. *Population, Space and Place*, *22*(1), 84–98. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1869

Anthias, F. (2007). Ethnic ties: Social capital and the question of mobilisability. *The Sociological Review*, *55*(4), 788–805. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00752.x

Askins, K. (2018). Feminist geographies and participatory action research: Co-producing narratives with people and place. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *25*(9), 1277–1294. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1503159

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2004). Snowball sampling. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *The Sage encyclopedia of social science research methods* (pp. 816–817). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Autonomía-Kooperative. (2022). *Autonomía. Die Plattformkooperative für Reinigung*. https://autonomia-kooperative.ch/. Accessed 9 October 2022

Autor*innenkollektiv Geographie und Geschlecht. (2021). *Handbuch feministische Geographien: Arbeitsweisen und Konzepte*. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Barbara Budrich. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1n9dk7q

Axelsson, L., Malmberg, B., & Zhang, Q. (2017). On waiting, work-time and imagined futures: Theorising temporal precariousness among Chinese chefs in Sweden’s restaurant industry. *Geoforum*, *78*, 169–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.12.007

Bachmann, S. (2016). *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationsprojekten*. Wiesbaden: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13922-3

Bagelman, J., & Bagelman, C. (2016). Crafting change and repurposing the neoliberal university. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, *15*, 2365–5392.

Baklanov, N., Rezaei, S., Vang, J., & Dana, L.-P. (2014). Migrant entrepreneurship, economic activity and export performance: Mapping the Danish trends. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *23*(1/2), 63–93. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2014.065309

Barberis, E., & Grüning, B. (2021). Doing social sciences via comics and graphic novels. An introduction. *Sociologica*, *15*(1), 125–142. https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.1971-8853/12773

Basch, L. G., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton Blanc, C. (Eds.). (1994). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. London: Routhledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203347003

Beck, U. (2007). Beyond class and nation: Reframing social inequalities in a globalizing world. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *58*(4), 679–705. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00171.x

Becker, H., S. (1998). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press.

Bendixsen, S. K. N., & Wyller, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Contested hospitalities in a time of migration: Religious and secular counterspaces in the Nordic region*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273773

Berwing, S., Isaak, A., & Leicht, R. (2019). Migrant self-employment in Germany: On the risks, characteristics and determinants of precarious work. In W. Conon & J. Schippers (Eds.), *Self-employment as precarious work: A European perspective* (pp. 186–215). Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788115032.00018

Bloh, J. von, Mandakovic, V., Apablaza, M., Amorós, J. E., & Sternberg, R. (2020). Transnational entrepreneurs: Opportunity or necessity driven? Empirical evidence from two dynamic economies from Latin America and Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2008–2026. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559996

Boas, I., Schapendonk, J., Blondin, S., & Pas, A. (2020). Methods as moving ground: Reflections on the 'doings' of mobile methodologies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 163–146. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i4.3326

Bork-Hüffer, T., Etzold, B., Gransow, B., Tomba, L., Sterly, H., Suda, K., et al. (2016). Agency and the making of transient urban spaces: Examples of migrants in the city in the Pearl River Delta, China, and Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Population, Space and Place*, *22*(2), 128–145. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1890

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470755679.ch15

Braun, K. (2017). Decolonial perspectives on charitable spaces of "Welcome Culture" in Germany. *Social Inclusion*, *5*(3), 38–48. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i3.1025

Bröckling, U. (2016). *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. London: Sage. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473921283

Buhr, F. (2021). Migrants' mental maps: Unpacking inhabitants' practical knowledges in Lisbon. In K. Nikielska-Sekula & A. Desille (Eds.), *Visual methodology in migration studies* (pp. 51–65). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67608-7_3

Caggiano, S. (2019). Migrant women and politicized experience: The place of gender in three social organizations in Buenos Aires and La Plata (Argentina). *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, *35*(3–4). https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.14316

Caillol, D. (2018). The spatial dimension of agency: The everyday urban practices of Filipina domestic workers in Amman, Jordan. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *25*(5), 645–665. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1472555

Calhoun, C. (2002). Dependency. In *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195123715.001.0001/acref-9780195123715-e-438. Accessed 16 October 2020

Camenisch, A., & Müller, S. (2017). From (e)migration to mobile lifestyles? Ethnographic and conceptual reflections about mobilities and migration. *New Diversities*, *13*(3), 43–57.

Caretta, M. A., & Riaño, Y. (2016). Feminist participatory methodologies in geography: Creating spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(3), 258–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116629575

Case, A. D., & Hunter, C. D. (2012). Counterspaces: A unit of analysis for understanding the role of settings in marginalized individuals' adaptive responses to oppression. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *50*(1–2), 257–270. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9497-7

Cederberg, M., & Villares-Varela, M. (2019). Ethnic entrepreneurship and the question of agency: the role of different forms of capital, and the relevance of social class. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(1), 115–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1459521

Cerezo, A., & Bergfeld, J. (2013). Meaningful LGBTQ inclusion in schools: The importance of diversity representation and counterspaces. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, *7*(4), 355–371. https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2013.839341

Chen, W., & Tan, J. (2009). Understanding transnational entrepreneurship through a network lens: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1079–1091. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00335.x

Coe, N. M., & Jordhus-Lier, D. C. (2011). Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour. *Progress in Human Geography*, *35*(2), 211–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132510366746

Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, *65*(1), 217–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912437162

Crawley, H., & Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(1), 48–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1989*(1), 139–167.

Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the move: Mobility in the modern Western world*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203446713

Cresswell, T. (2010). Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *28*(1), 17–31. https://doi.org/10.1068/d11407

Dahinden, J. (2016). A plea for the 'de-migranticization' of research on migration and integration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *39*(13), 2207–2225. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1124129

Dannecker, P., & Cakir, A. (2016). Female migrant entrepreneurs in Vienna: Mobility and its embeddedness. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, *41*(1), 97–113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11614-016-0193-y

de Haas, H. (2014). *Migration theory quo vadis?* (Working Paper No. 100). Oxford, UK: International Migration Institute (IMI).

de Leeuw, S., & Hawkins, H. (2017). Critical geographies and geography's creative re/turn: Poetics and practices for new disciplinary spaces. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *24*(3), 303–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1314947

de Leeuw, S., Parkes, M. W., Morgan, V. S., Christensen, J., Lindsay, N., Mitchell-Foster, K., & Russell Jozkow, J. (2017). Going unscripted: A call to critically engage storytelling methods and methodologies in geography and the medical-health sciences. *The Canadian Geographer*, *61*(2), 152–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12337

Denzin, N. (1989a). *Interpretive biography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Denzin, N. (1989b). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N. (2017). Critical Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *23*(1), 8–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416681864

Desai, S., Naudé, W., & Stel, N. (2021). Refugee entrepreneurship: Context and directions for future research. *Small Business Economics*, *56*, 933–945. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00310-1

Dixon, D. P., & Jones, J. P. (2006). Feminist geographies of difference, relation, and construction. In S. Atiken & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Approaches to Human Geography* (pp. 42–56). London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446215432.n4

Drori, I., Honig, B., & Wright, M. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurship: An emergent field of study. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1001–1022. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00332.x

Dutta, M. (2016). Place of life stories in labour geography: Why does it matter? *Geoforum*, *77*, 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.10.002

Elo, M., Sandberg, S., Servais, P., Basco, R., Cruz, A. D., Riddle, L., & Täube, F. (2018). Advancing the views on migrant and diaspora entrepreneurs in international entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 119–133. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0231-x

Elo, M., & Vincze, Z. (2019). Transnational intrapreneurship: Opportunity development in transnational teams in the Nordic periphery. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *36*(1–2), 103–125. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2019.096954

Erel, U., & Ryan, L. (2019). Migrant capitals: Proposing a multi-level spatio-temporal analytical framework. *Sociology*, *53*(2), 246–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518785298

Ernaux, A. (2019). *Die Jahre*. (S. Finck, Trans.). Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Etzold, B. (2016). Migration, informal labour and (trans) local productions of urban space - The case of Dhaka's street food vendors. *Population, Space and Place*, *22*(2), 170–184. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1893

Faist, T. (2013). The mobility turn: A new paradigm for the social sciences? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(11), 1637–1646. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.812229

Fall, J. (2020a). Fenced in. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *38*(5), 771–794. https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420933900

Fall, J. (2020b). “Dear Carl”: Thinking visually and geographically about public figures. *Geographica Helvetica*, *75*(4), 337–348. https://doi.org/10.5194/gh-75-337-2020

Fall, J. (2021). Worlds of vision: Thinking geographically through comics. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographie*, *20*(1), 17–33.

Farine, M. (2019). Quand les migrants deviennent startupers. *Le Temps*. https://www.letemps.ch/economie/migrants-deviennent-startupers?fbclid=IwAR1WOwMJV9ywNPoCN_Dn77kBN7H4Wylw5OnZEnWQD0vcG-no5UHQ5d-ko9s. Accessed 1 May 2021

Farinella, M. (2018). The potential of comics in science communication. *Journal of Science Communication*, *17*(1), Y01. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.17010401

Favell, A. (2008). *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free movement and mobility in an integrating Europe*. Malden: Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470712818.ch4

Favell, A. (2019). Integration: Twelve propositions after Schinkel. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *7*(1), 21. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0125-7

Fischer, C., & Dahinden, J. (2017). Gender representations in politics of belonging: An analysis of Swiss immigration regulation from the 19th century until today. *Ethnicities*, *17*(4), 445–468. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796816676844

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, FNIA. (2005, 2021). https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2007/758/en. Accessed 31 March 2022

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews & other writings. 1972-1977*. Brighton: Harvester Press.

Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*. London: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230594180

Frank, A. G. (1975). *On capitalist underdevelopment.* Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Fuller-Love, N., & Akiode, M. (2020). Transnational entrepreneurs dynamics in entrepreneurial ecosystems: A critical review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 41–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519881921

Garrido, A. A., & Checa, J. C. (2009). Theoretical overview of immigrant entrepreneurship. *Sociologia - Slovak Sociological Review, 41*(2), 199–221.

Gartner, W. B. (1988). “Who is an entrepreneur?” is the wrong question. *American Journal of Small Business*, *12*(4), 11–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/104225878801200401

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gilbert, M. R. (1994). The politics of location: Doing feminist research at "home." *The Professional Geographer*, *46*(1), 90–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1994.00090.x

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L. G., & Szanton Blanc, C. (Eds.). (1992). Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *645*(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33482.x

Glick Schiller, N., Çaglar, A., & Guldbrandsen, T. C. (2006). Beyond the ethnic lens: Locality, globality, and born-again incorporation. *American Ethnologist*, *33*(4), 612–633. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2006.33.4.612

Glick Schiller, N., & Salazar, N. B. (2013). Regimes of mobility across the globe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *39*(2), 183–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.723253

Goksel, G. U. (2018). *Integration of immigrants and the theory of recognition. 'Just Integration.'* Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65843-8

Gregson, N. (2005). Agency: Structure. In P. J. Cloke & R. J. Johnston (Eds.), *Spaces of geographical thought: Deconstructing human geography's binaries* (pp. 21–41). London: Sage. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446216293

Grix, J. (2002). Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research. *Politics*, *22*(3), 175–186. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00173

Haandrikman, K., & Webster, N. A. (2020). *Migrant, woman and business owner: A heterogeneous group with diverse needs*. Stockholm University. http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-186687. Accessed 23 November 2020

Hamilton, E. (2013). The discourse of entrepreneurial masculinities (and femininities). *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *25*(1–2), 90–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2012.746879

Hankivsky, O. (2006). Imagining ethical globalization: The contributions of a care ethic. *Journal of Global Ethics*, *2*(1), 91–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449620600677338

Hannam, K., Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). Editorial: Mobilities, immobilities and moorings. *Mobilities*, *1*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100500489189

Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203873106

Harding, S. G. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501712951

Harima, A., & Baron, T. (2020). Is this transnational entrepreneurship? Five cases in which it is hard to say 'Yes' or 'No': *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 12–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519887561

Harney, N. D., & Baldassar, L. (2007). Tracking transnationalism: Migrancy and its futures. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *33*(2), 189–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830601154088

Hassanli, N., Walters, T., & Friedmann, R. (2020). Can cultural festivals function as counterspaces for migrants and refugees? The case of the New Beginnings Festival in Sydney. *Leisure Studies*, *39*(2), 165–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2019.1666296

Heis, A., & Dannecker, P. (2022). The meaning of being a migrant entrepreneur: An intersectional approach to theory. In N. Faghih & A. Forouharfar (Eds.), *Contextual strategic entrepreneurship* (pp. 95–118). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86028-8_6

Held, V. (2005). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.44-0239

Hermanns, H. (1995). Narratives Interview. In U. Flick, E. Kardorff, H. Keupp, L. Rosenstiel, & St. Wolff (Eds.), *Handbuch Qualitative Sozialforschung* (pp. 182–185). München: Psychologie Verlags Union. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91570-8_4

Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. London, New York: Bloomsbury. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003085348

hooks, bell. (1991). Theory as liberatory practice. *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, *4*(1), Art. 2. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700280-11

hooks, bell. (2015). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. New York: Routledge.

IOM. (2019). *World migration report 2020* (No. PUB2019/006/L WMR 2020). Geneva: IOM. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020. Accessed 9 June 2020

Iosifides, T., & Sporton, D. (2009). Editorial: Biographical methods in migration research. *Migration Letters*, *6*(2), 101–108. https://doi.org/10.33182/ML.V6I2.69

Jeanes, E. L. (2019). *A dictionary of organizational behaviour*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780191843273.001.0001

Jung, H. (2014). Let their voices be seen: Exploring mental mapping as a feminist visual methodology for the study of migrant women. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *38*(3), 985–1002. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12004

Katz, C. (2004). *Growing up global: Economic restructuring and children's everyday lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00710.x

Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., & Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *28*(4), 745–756. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00549.x

Klarenbeek, L. M. (2019). Relational integration: A response to Willem Schinkel. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *7*(1), 20. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0126-6

Kloosterman, R., van der Leun, J., & Rath, J. (1999). Mixed embeddedness: (In)formal economic activities and immigrant businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *23*(2), 252–266. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00194

Kluge, S. (2000). Empirically grounded construction of types and typologies in qualitative social research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(1), Art. 14.

Knudsen, J. Chr. (1990). Cognitive models in life histories. *Anthropological Quarterly*, *63*(3), 122–133. https://doi.org/10.2307/3317404

Kohlenberger, J. (2022). *Das Fluchtparadox: Über unseren widersprüchlichen Umgang mit Vertreibung und Vertriebenen*. Wien: Kremayr & Scheriau.

Komposch, N., Pohl, N., & Riaño, Y. (2021). Worker cooperatives' potential for migrant women's self-empowerment. Insights from a case study in New York City. *nccr - on the move, Working paper series 29*. Neuchâtel. https://nccr-onthemove.ch/publications/worker-cooperatives-potential-for-migrant-womens-self-empowerment/. Accessed 23 November 2022

Kozinets, R. V., Dolbec, P.-Y., & Earley, A. (2014). Netnographic analysis: Understanding culture through social media data. In Uwe Flick (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 262–276). London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n18

Kurt, S., & D'Amato, G. (2021). The Swiss rationale of integration policies: Balancing federalism, consociationalism and direct democracy. In J. Franzke & J. M. Ruano de la Fuente (Eds.), *Local integration of migrants policy* (pp. 73–85). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50979-8_5

Kynd, K. (2021). Zürcher Reiniger:innen gründen Genossenschaft „Autonomía". *das Lamm*. https://daslamm.ch/autonomia-reinigerinnen/. Accessed 11 November 2022

Kyora, S., & Rockinger, M. (2020). *Swiss startup radar 2020/2021*. Lucerne: JNB Journalistenbüro GmbH. https://www.startupticker.ch/en/swiss-startup-radar. Accessed 6 July 2021

Laketa, S., & Côte, M. (2022). Discomforts in the academy: From 'academic burnout' to collective mobilisation. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2021.2014405

Laliberte, N., Derickson, K. D., & Dowler, L. (2010). Advances in feminist geography. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.116

Landolt, N. (2022). Was hat Sie am Genossenschaftsmodell überzeugt? Durch den Monat mit Adèle Villiger (Teil 1). *WOZ. Die Wochenzeitung*. https://www.woz.ch/2205/durch-den-monat-mit-adele-villiger-teil-1/was-hat-sie-am-genossenschaftsmodell-ueberzeugt. Accessed 9 October 2022

Laslett, B. (1999). Review: Personal narratives as sociology. *Contemporary Sociology*, *28*(4), 391–401. https://doi.org/10.2307/2655287

Lefebvre, H. (2005). *The production of space*. Maldon, Oxford, Carldon: Blackwell.

Lentz, M. (2017). A new American narrative. *Medium*. https://michaelentz.medium.com/a-new-american-narrative-8fa3aa6798ac#_ftn11. Accessed 8 July 2019

Lipton, B. (2020). *Academic women in neoliberal times*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45062-5

Lipton, B., & Mackinlay, E. (2017). *We only talk feminist here: Feminist academics, voice and agency in the neoliberal university*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40078-5

Liswoska, R., & Stabuskawsju, R. (2014). Institutional support system for the development of SME innovation. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, *16*(3), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIL.2014.064734

Madge, C. (1993). Boundary disputes: Comments on Sidaway. *Area*, *25*(3), 294–299.

Makaremi, C., & Parciboula, M. (2019). *Prisonniers du passage*. Paris: Steinkis.

Manatschal, A. (2015). Switzerland - Really Europe's heart of darkness? *Swiss Political Science Review*, *21*(1), 23–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12148

Mancinelli, F. (2020). Digital nomads: Freedom, responsibility and the neoliberal order. *Information Technology & Tourism*, *22*, 417–437. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00174-2

Marcus, G. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *24*, 95–117.

Marston, S. A., & de Leeuw, S. (2013). Creativity and geography: Toward a politicized intervention. *Geographical Review*, *103*(2), iii–xxvi. https://doi.org/10.1111/gere.12001

Martin, N. (2011). Toward a new countermovement: A framework for interpreting the contradictory interventions of migrant civil society organizations in urban labor markets. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *43*(12), 2934–2952. https://doi.org/10.1068/a4412

Massa, A. (2020). Borders and boundaries as resources for mobility. Multiple regimes of mobility and incoherent trajectories on the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. *Geoforum*, *116*, 262–271. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.01.007

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage.

Massey, D. (2009). Concepts of space and power in theory and in political practice. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, *55*, 15–26.

Mathews, G., & Alba Vega, C. (2012). Introduction: What is globalization from below? In G. Mathews, G. L. Ribeiro, & C. Alba Vega (Eds.), *Globalization from below: The world's other economy* (pp. 1–16). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203106006-6

McConnell, E. A., Todd, N. R., Odahl-Ruan, C., & Shattell, M. (2016). Complicating counterspaces: Intersectionality and the Michigan Womyn's music festival. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *57*(3–4), 473–488. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12051

McDowell, L. (1992). Doing gender: Feminism, feminists and research methods in human geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *17*(4), 399–416. https://doi.org/10.2307/622707

McIntyre, A. (2003). Through the eyes of women: Photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *10*(1), 47–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369032000052658

Mexi, M. M., Moreno Russi, P., & Guzman, E. F. (2021). 'Fortress' Switzerland? Challenges to integrating migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. In V. Federico & S. Baglioni (Eds.), *Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers' integration in European labour markets* (pp. 213–233). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67284-3_11

Miles, M., & Crush, J. (1993). Personal narratives as interactive texts: Collecting and interpreting migrant life-histories. *The Professional Geographer*, *45*(1), 84–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1993.00084.x

Mitchell, D. (2011). Labor's geography: Capital, violence, guest workers and the post-world war II landscape. *Antipode*, *43*(2), 563–595. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00855.x

Monteith, W., & Camfield, L. (2019). Business as family, family as business: Female entrepreneurship in Kampala, Uganda. *Geoforum*, *101*, 111–121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.03.003

Moran-Ellis, J., Alexander, V. D., Cronin, A., Dickinson, M., Fielding, J., Sleney, J., & Thomas, H. (2006). Triangulation and integration: Processes, claims and implications. *Qualitative Research*, *6*(1), 45–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106058870

Moret, J. (2018). *European Somalis: Post-migration movements, mobility capital and the transnationalisation of resources*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95660-2

Moret, J. (2020). Mobility capital: Somali migrants' trajectories of (im)mobilities and the negotiation of social inequalities across borders. *Geoforum*, *116*, 235–242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.12.002

Muñoz Castro, D. C., Santamaría-Alvarez, S. M., & Marín-Zapata, S. I. (2019). Transnational entrepreneurship: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, *23*(6), 559–583. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEIM.2019.102824

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, *89*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.4

nccr – on the move. (2022). *Migrant entrepreneurship: Mapping cross-border mobilities and exploring the role of spatial mobility capita*. https://nccr-onthemove.ch/projects/migrant-entrepreneurship-mapping-cross-border-mobilities-and-exploring-the-role-of-spatial-mobility-capital/. Accessed 9 November 2022

Nowicka, M. (2013). Positioning strategies of Polish entrepreneurs in Germany: Transnationalizing Bourdieu's notion of capital. *International Sociology*, *28*(1), 29–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580912468919

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *11*(4), 327–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305

OECD & EU. (2019). *The missing entrepreneurs 2019: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/3ed84801-en

OECD & European Commission. (2021). *The missing entrepreneurs 2021: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship and self-employment*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/71b7a9bb-en

Ogbor, J. O. (2000). Mythicizing and reification in entrepreneurial discourse: Ideology-critique of entrepreneurial studies. *Journal of Management Studies*, *37*(5), 605–635. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00196

Pande, A. (2018). Intimate counter-spaces of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. *International Migration Review*, *52*(3), 780–808. https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12325

Parekh, S., & Wilcox, S. (2020). Feminist perspectives on globalization. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive*, *Spring edition*. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/feminism-globalization/. Accessed 16 October 2020

Parsell, C., & Clarke, A. (2019). Agency in advanced liberal services: Grounding sociological knowledge in homeless people's accounts. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *70*(1), 356–376. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12346

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Paul, A. M. (2015). Capital and mobility in the stepwise international migrations of Filipino migrant domestic workers. *Migration Studies*, *3*(3), 438–459. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnv014

Peters, M. (2001). Education, enterprise culture and the entrepreneurial self: A Foucauldian perspective. *The Journal of Educational Enquiry*, *2*(2), 58–71.

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Standford University Press.

Phillips, L., Kristiansen, M., Vehviläinen, M., & Gunnarsson, E. (Eds.). (2012). *Knowledge and power in collaborative research: A reflexive approach*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203083673

Piguet, E. (2010). Entrepreneurship among immigrants in Switzerland. In OECD (Ed.), *Open for business. Migrant entrepreneurship in OECD countries* (pp. 149–175). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264095830-en

Piñeiro, E. (2015). *Integration und Abwehr: Genealogie der schweizerischen Ausländerintegration*. Zürich: Seismo.

Pitsch, G. (2014). *Afrikanisches Ethnic Business an der Langstrasse, ökonomische Zentren mit sozialer Funktion*. Stadt Zürich. Sozial Dienste. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/prd/Deutsch/Stadtentwicklung/Publikationen_und_Broschueren/Integrationsfoerderung/themen_a-z/Ethnic%20Business/Afrikanisches%20Ethnic%20Business.pdf. Accessed 31 March 2022

Portes, A. (2000). Globalization from below: The rise of transnational communities. In D. Kalb, van der M. Land, R. Staring, V. B. Steenbergen, & N. Wilterdink (Eds.), *The ends of globalization. Bringing society back in* (pp. 253–270). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Haller, W. J. (2002). Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(2), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088896

Portes, A., & Martinez, B. P. (2020). They are not all the same: Immigrant enterprises, transnationalism, and development. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1991–2007. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559995

Prebisch, R. (1950). *The economic development of Latin America and its principal problems*. New York: United Nations.

Rath, J., & Swagerman, A. (2011). *Promoting ethnic entrepreneurship in European cities*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12215

Ravalet, E., Vincent-Geslin, S., Kaufmann, V., & Leveugle, J. (2014). *Tranches de vie mobile. Enquête sociologique et manifeste sur la grande mobilité liée au travail*. Lausanne: Loco, Forum vies mobiles.

Rebsamen, S. (2008). *Ethnic Business in Zürich. Eine Bestandeserhebung in den Quartieren Langstrasse und Seefeld*. Stadt Zürich, Stadtentwicklung, Präsidialdepartment.

Rérat, P. (2018). Spatial capital and planetary gentrification: Residential location, mobility and social inequalities. In L. Less & M. Phillips (Eds.), *Handbook of gentrification studies* (pp. 103–118). Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785361746.00016

Riaño, Y. (2016). Minga biographic workshops with highly skilled migrant women: Enhancing spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(3), 267–279. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115614884

Riaño, Y. (2017). Conceptualising space in transnational migration studies. A critical perspective. In E. Youkhana (Ed.), *Border transgression. Mobility and mobilization of crisis* (pp. 35–48). Bonn University Press. https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737007238.35

Riaño, Y. (2021a). Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and nonmigrants. *Population, Space and Place*, *27*(5), e2456. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2456

Riaño, Y. (2021b). Highly skilled migrant and non-migrant women and men: How do differences in quality of employment arise? *Administrative Sciences*, *11*(1), 5. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11010005

Riaño, Y., Limacher, K., Hirsig, S., & Wastl-Walter, D. (2015). Shaping gender inequalities: Critical moments and critical places. *Equality, diversity and inclusion: An international journal*, *34*(2), 155–167. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2013-0112

Riaño, Y., Mittmasser, C., & Sandoz, L. (2022). Spatial mobility capital: A valuable resource for the social mobility of border-crossing migrant entrepreneurs? *Societies*, *12*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12030077

Robin, O., Leblanc, B., & Dumais, N. (2021). Teaching science communication with comics for postgraduate students. *Frontiers in Communication*, *6*, Art. 758198. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.758198

Robinson, F. (2006). Beyond labour rights: The ethics of care and women's work in the global economy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *8*(3), 321–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740600792871

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: Positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, *21*(3), 305–320. https://doi.org/10.1191/030913297673302122

Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed.). London: Sage.

Rosenthal, G. (2004). Biographical research. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 49–65). London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608191.d7

Rosenthal, G., & Fischer-Rosenthal, W. (2004). The analysis of biographical-narrative interviews. In U. Flick, E. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 259–265). London: Sage.

Saharso, S. (2019). Who needs integration? Debating a central, yet increasingly contested concept in migration studies. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *7*(1), 16, s40878-019-0123–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0123-9

Saksela-Bergholm, S., Toivanen, M., & Wahlbeck, Ö. (2019). Migrant capital as a resource for migrant communities. *Social Inclusion*, *7*(4), 164–170. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2658

Sandoz, L. (2019). *Mobilities of the highly skilled towards Switzerland: The role of intermediaries in defining "wanted immigrants."* Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21122-6

Sandoz, L. (2020). Understanding access to the labour market through migration channels. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(1), 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1502657

Sandoz, L. (2021). Localizing informal practices in transnational entrepreneurship. *Migration Letters*, *18*(2), 135–148. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i2.1177

Sandoz, L., & Mittmasser, C. (2020). Transnational entrepreneurs: Between vulnerability and solidarity. *nccr – on the move blog*. https://blog.nccr-onthemove.ch/transnational-entrepreneurs-between-vulnerability-and-solidarity/?lang=fr. Accessed 31 March 2022

Sandoz, L., Mittmasser, C., Riaño, Y., & Piguet, E. (2022). A review of transnational migrant entrepreneurship: Perspectives on unequal spatialities. *ZFW – Advances in Economic Geography*, *66*(3), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004

Schäfer, S., & Henn, S. (2018). The evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the critical role of migrants. A phase-model based on a study of IT startups in the Greater Tel Aviv Area. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *11*(2), 317–333. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy013

Schapendonk, J. (2017). Afrostars and Eurospaces. West African movers re-viewing «Destination Europe» from the inside. *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, (3), 393–414. https://doi.org/10.3240/88712

Schapendonk, J. (2018). On wayfaring and transporting: Understanding the mobility trajectories of African migrants in Europe. In F. Hillmann, T. van Naersen, & E. Span (Eds.), *Trajectories and imaginaries in migration: The migrant actor in transnational space*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351119665

Schapendonk, J., Bolay, M., & Dahinden, J. (2021). The conceptual limits of the 'migration journey'. De-exceptionalising mobility in the context of West African trajectories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *47*(14), 3243–3259. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804191

Scharff, C. (2016). The Psychic life of neoliberalism: Mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *33*(6), 107–122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276415590164

Schmiz, A. (2013). Migrant self-employment between precariousness and self-exploitation. *Ephemera*, *13*(1), 53–74.

SEM. (2021a). *Weisungen und Erläuterungen Ausländerbereich (Weisungen AIG), Kapitel 4 Aufenthalt mit Erwerbstätigkeit*. Bern: Schweizer EIdgenossenschaft, Staatssekrätariat für Migration. https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/auslaenderbereich.html. Accessed 12 February 2022

SEM. (2021b). Erwerbstätige aus dem Asylbereich. https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/themen/arbeit/erwerbstaetige_asylbereich.html. Accessed 17 February 2022

Seo, S., & Skelton, T. (2017). Regulatory migration regimes and the production of space: The case of Nepalese workers in South Korea. *Geoforum*, *78*, 159–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.02.001

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *38*(2), 207–226. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268

Sievers, W., Bauböck, R., Josipovic, I., Karabegović, D., & Shinozaki, K. (Eds.). (2022). *Jenseits der Migrantologie: Aktuelle Herausforderungen und neue Perspektiven der Migrationsforschung*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1553/978OEAW90493

Silvey, R., & Lawson, V. (1999). Placing the migrant. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *89*(1), 121–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/0004-5608.00134

Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2019). Transnational practices and migrant capital: The case of Filipino women in Iceland. *Social Inclusion*, *7*(4), 211–220. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2320

Solano, G. (2020). The mixed embeddedness of transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Moroccans in Amsterdam and Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2067–2085. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559999

Solnit, R. (2014). *Men explain things to me*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *69*(1–2), 60–73.

Sontag, K. (2018). *Mobile entrepreneurs. An ethnographic study of the migration of the highly skilled*. Opladen: Budrich UniPress. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvbj7k27

Souralová, A. (2015). *New perspectives on mutual dependency in care-giving*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315598055

Stadt Zürich. (2020). Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Stadt Zürich. Zahlen und Fakten. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/prd/Deutsch/Stadtentwicklung/Publikationen_und_Broschueren/Integrationsfoerderung/ABR/UeberDieAuslaenderInnen/ZahlenFakten2020.pdf. Accessed 8 February 2021

Stadt Zürich. (2021). Ethnic business. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/stadtentwicklung/integrationsfoerderung/integrationsthemen/projekte_und_studien.html. Accessed 23 August 2021

Staeheli, L. A., & Martin, P. M. (2000). Spaces for feminism in geography. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *571*, 135–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271620057100110

Stingl, I. (2021). Die Zeit als Gegenstand und Mittel des Regierens: Praktiken der Integrationsförderung im Kontext Arbeit und Migration. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, *109*(1), 44–63. https://doi.org/10.25162/gz-2021-0003

Stoyanov, S., Woodward, R., & Stoyanova, V. (2018). The embedding of transnational entrepreneurs in diaspora networks: Leveraging the assets of foreignness. *Management International Review*, *58*(2), 281–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-017-0336-9

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage.

SWI swissinfo.ch. (2010). Migranten schaffen in der Schweiz 275’000 Arbeitsplätze. https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/alle-news-in-kuerze/migranten-schaffen-in-der-schweiz-275-000-arbeitsplaetze/29086846. Accessed 14 September 2022

Swiss Federal Statistical Office. (2021). Voluntary work. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/work-income/employment-working-hours/balancing-unpaid-work/voluntary-work.html#25_1461223514976__content_bfs_en_home_statistiken_arbeit-erwerb_erwerbstaetigkeit-arbeitszeit_vereinbarkeit-unbezahlte-arbeit_freiwilligenarbeit_jcr_content_par_tabs. Accessed 4 November 2022

Swiss Federal Statistical Office. (2022a). Nach ausgewählten Nationalitäten: Berufliche Stellung der Erwerbstätigen nach Geschlecht. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/en/22985457. Accessed 18 November 2022

Swiss Federal Statistical Office. (2022b). Berufliche Stellung. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/wirtschaftliche-soziale-situation-bevoelkerung/gleichstellung-frau-mann/erwerbstaetigkeit/berufliche-stellung.html. Accessed 8 July 2021

Szarucki, M., Brzozowski, J., & Stankevičienė, J. (2016). Determinants of self-employment among Polish and Romanian immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, *17*(4), 598–612. https://doi.org/10.3846/16111699.2016.1202313

Teo, T. (2018). Homo neoliberalus: From personality to forms of subjectivity. *Theory & Psychology*, *28*(5), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354318794899

Torr, R. (2008). Theoretical perspectives as ideal-types: Typologies as means not ends. *Social Epistemology*, *22*(2), 145–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691720802156276

Trehan, K., Vedi, P., & Kevill, A. (2020). Against entrepreneurship: Unveiling social inequalities for minority entrepreneurship. In A. Örtenblad (Ed.), *Against entrepreneurship: A critical examination* (pp. 111–131). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47937-4_7

UNCTAD, IOM, & UNHCR. (2018). *Policy guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees* (No. UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2). New York, Geneva: United Nations. https://publications.iom.int/books/policy-guide-entrepreneurship-migrants-and-refugees. Accessed 31 March 2022

Vaismoradi, M., & Snelgrove, S. (2019). Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *20*(3). https://doi.org/10.17169/FQS-20.3.3376

Valda, A. (2020). Erfolgreiche Einwanderer: Der Weg ins Unternehmertum. *Handelszeitung*. https://www.handelszeitung.ch/unternehmen/erfolgreiche-einwanderer-der-weg-ins-unternehmertum. Accessed 14 October 2022

Valenzuela-Garcia, H., Güell, B., Parella, S., Molina, J. L., & Lubbers, M. J. (2018). Placing migrant entrepreneurship: Migrant economy debates through new spatial lenses. *Sociologica*, *12*(2), 39–56. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/8619

Verduijn, K., & Essers, C. (2013). Questioning dominant entrepreneurship assumptions: The case of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *25*(7–8), 612–630. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.814718

Vershinina, N., & Cruz, A. D. (2021). Researching migrant entrepreneurship communities: A reflection through collaborative (auto)ethnographies. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, *17*, 507–526. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-020-00706-6

Wacquant, L. (2015). For a sociology of flesh and blood. *Qualitative Sociology*, *38*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-014-9291-y

Waldinger, R. D., Aldrich, H., & Ward, R. (1990). *Ethnic entrepreneurs: Immigrant business in industrial societies*. Newbury Park, California: Sage. https://doi.org/10.2307/2072935

Walsh, J. P. (2011). Quantifying citizens: Neoliberal restructuring and immigrant selection in Canada and Australia. *Citizenship Studies*, *15*(6–7), 861–879. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2011.600135

Wang, C. C. (1999). Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health*, *8*(2), 185–192. https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.1999.8.185

Weber, M. (1949). *The methodology of the social sciences*. New York: The Free Press.

Webster, N. A. (2020). Migrant women entrepreneurs and emotional encounters in policy fields. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *37*, 100730. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100730

Webster, N. A., & Haandrikman, K. (2017). Thai women entrepreneurs in Sweden: Critical perspectives on migrant small businesses. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *60*, 17–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2016.11.001

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, *1*(2), 125–151.

Wills, J. (2008). Taking on the CosmoCorps? Experiments in transnational labor organization. *Economic Geography*, *74*(2), 111–130. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-8287.1998.tb00108.x

Wingens, M., Windzio, M., de Valk, H., & Aybek, C. (Eds.). (2011). *A life-course perspective on migration and integration*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1545-5

Witzel, A. (2000). The problem-centered interview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(1), Art. 22. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.1.1132

Zapata-Barrero, R., & Rezaei, S. (2020). Diaspora governance and transnational entrepreneurship: The rise of an emerging social global pattern in migration studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1959–1973. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559990

Zufferey, J. (2019). Who are the serial movers? Sociodemographic profiles and reasons to migrate to Switzerland among multiple international migrants. In I. Steiner & P. Wanner (Eds.), *Migrants and expats: The Swiss migration and mobility nexus* (pp. 83–100). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05671-1_4

# PART II: COLLECTION OF ARTICLES

# ARTICLE 1

## *A Review of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship: Perspectives on Unequal Spatialities*

Laure Sandoz, Christina Mittmasser, Yvonne Riaño, and Etienne Piguet

Published in 2022 in ZFW - Advances in Economic Geography, 66 (3), 137–155.

https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004

### *Abstract*

The spatialities of migrant entrepreneurship have changed dynamically in recent decades. Movements and exchanges transcend national borders more than ever, and transnational migrant entrepreneurship has become a burgeoning field of research. Yet, knowledge is dispersed across disciplines, and an understanding of contemporary spatialities is limited. We review 155 articles published in English, French, German, and Spanish since 2009, thereby providing an overview of existing knowledge on transnational migrant entrepreneurship and suggesting avenues for future research. We identify five current topical areas of research: (1) the business advantages of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, (2) the determinants of becoming a transnational migrant entrepreneur, (3) the transnational networks of migrants, (4) the economic impacts of transnational migrant entrepreneurship on home and host countries, and (5) whether local environments enable or deter entrepreneurial success. Building on our synthesis of the most recent literature, we propose three crucial dimensions which have been under-researched in past and current work, and which address the diversity of geographical locations, spatial connections, and spatial mobilities involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, we put forward a set of questions for future research which will advance a comprehension of unequal opportunities among transnational migrant entrepreneurs.

**Keywords**: Transnationalism, Entrepreneurship, Migration, Mobility, Spatiality, Inequality

## *A Review of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship: Perspectives on Unequal Spatialities (Article 1)*

### *1. Introduction*

Migrant entrepreneurship is of increasing scientific and policy interest today. Rates of business creation and self-employment in migrant communities appear to be higher than the national averages in many countries and play an important role in local economies (IOM, 2019; Juchno & Agafitei, 2017; UNCTAD, 2018). Furthermore, the spatialities of migrant entrepreneurship have changed dynamically in recent decades. Transnational life course trajectories, coupled with contemporary social and technological transformations, have created new opportunities for migrants to move goods, capital, and ideas across national borders for business purposes (Ambrosini, 2012; Portes et al., 2002). Transnational migrant entrepreneurship therefore addresses economic geography's central concern, which is to study the relationship between economic activities and the spaces where they are carried out and circulate (Barnes, 2009).

In 2009, Yeung stated that transnational entrepreneurs should not be viewed "as merely localised agents of economic change, for they embody different spatialities of economic action and processes" (2009, p. 211). He advocated for paying more attention to how cross-border entrepreneurship produces transnational spaces and connects multiple locations. Today, transnational migrant entrepreneurship is a burgeoning field of research that combines economic, business, and social science approaches (Harima & Baron, 2020; Muñoz-Castro et al., 2019; Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020). Yet, knowledge is dispersed across disciplines.

We will advance this field of research by critically discussing the literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship based on a database of 155 scientific journal articles published since 2009, thereby providing an overview of existing knowledge and suggesting avenues for future research on this topic. While acknowledging that transnational approaches have significantly improved our understanding of migrant entrepreneurship, we recognise that a *spatialities perspective*—concerned with how this phenomenon is positioned in space—needs further development. This is important because entrepreneurs do not act, exchange, and move in a vacuum but in concrete material spaces. We contribute to this endeavour by identifying three under-researched dimensions for future research which address the diversity of *geographical locations*, *spatial connections*, and *spatial mobilities* involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, we emphasise that *unequal opportunities* available

to transnational migrant entrepreneurs depend on social markers such as class, nationality, gender, and ethnicity.

The article comprises six parts. Following the introduction, the second section briefly introduces our understanding of transnational migrant entrepreneurship in relation to spatiality, and the third describes our methodological approach. The fourth part identifies major topical areas of study in the literature: (1) the business advantages of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, (2) the determinants of becoming a transnational migrant entrepreneur, (3) the transnational networks of migrants, (4) the economic impacts of transnational migrant entrepreneurship on home and host countries, and (5) whether local environments enable or deter entrepreneurial success. The fifth section discusses future avenues of research, and further develops our proposed dimensions to examine contemporary spatialities of migrant entrepreneurship. The conclusions set the findings in a wider context.

## *2. Defining Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship in Relation to Spatiality*

The term "transnational entrepreneur" was first popularised by Portes et al. (2002), who applied it to "self-employed immigrants whose business activities require frequent travel abroad and who depend for the success of their firms on their contacts and associates in another country, primarily their country of origin" (p. 287). Studies on this specific form of entrepreneurship lie at the crossroads between sociologically oriented research on ethnic economies and economic/business-oriented research on international entrepreneurship. In this article, we use the term transnational migrant entrepreneurship for the following reasons. Compared with international entrepreneurs, transnational migrant entrepreneurs have migration experience, which has been recently recognised as key asset for their business activities (Elo et al., 2018). Moreover, international entrepreneurship is predominantly concerned with firm analysis whereas transnational entrepreneurship examines the cross-border activities of individual entrepreneurs (Drori et al., 2009; Etemad, 2018). Transnational migrant entrepreneurs can also be distinguished from ethnic entrepreneurs based on their ability to simultaneously engage with multiple places and develop ties that extend beyond a single ethnic economy (Henn, 2012; Honig, 2020). In current studies, however, the categories of transnational, international, and ethnic entrepreneur often overlap. These different research traditions have only recently begun to communicate with one another, and the interdisciplinary field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship is starting to become more unified (Harima & Baron, 2020). Following the most recent developments, we define transnational migrant entrepreneurs as former and current migrants who use transnational

migration experiences and networks to develop businesses that are active in more than one country (c.f. Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). Empirically, this definition can be applied using both quantitative (e.g. surveys) and qualitative (e.g. interviews and focus groups) methods.

The multiplicity of places, connections, and mobilities within which transnational business activities occur lead us to rethink the notion of spatiality. In transnational settings the spatial ontology needs to shift "from a static and circumscribed characterization of migrant economies to a more dynamic and flexible one" (Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2018, p. 49). How can we then conceptualise space and spatiality in this context? Concepts of space are at the heart of geography research. Although abstract and difficult to grasp, "it is precisely the multiplicities and heterogeneous nature of space and spatiality—as abstract and concrete, produced and producing, imagined and materialised, structured and lived, relational, relative and absolute—which lends the concept a powerful functionality that appeals to many geographers" (Shoorcheh, 2019, p. 64). Broadly speaking, we understand spatiality as an entanglement of materiality, which refers to the physical characteristics of places as well as social practice and symbolic meaning. Therefore, the everyday actions and experiences of individuals transform material spaces into social spaces (Riaño, 2017).

In the context of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, specific spatialities arise when individuals simultaneously act in multiple *locations* and progressively develop meaningful social, economic, political, and symbolic *connections* by conducting and maintaining diverse *mobilities* across borders. In this article we attempt to demonstrate how a focus on these spatialities can advance our understanding of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Thus, we propose to adopt a processual and relational understanding of space, with a focus on the social interactions that (re)produce space over time, as well as the power hierarchies that shape spatial settings and individuals' options (Massey, 2005). As we will show through our literature review, this conceptual approach contributes to the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship by highlighting the role of unequal spatialities in shaping different opportunities and constraints among transnational migrant entrepreneurs.

## *3. Methodology*

We created and reviewed an interdisciplinary corpus of 155 journal articles on transnational migrant entrepreneurship published since Yeung's work in 2009, applying rigorous methods and best practices to identify the most relevant literature (Haddaway et al., 2020). Focusing exclusively on journal articles is a pragmatic choice frequently practised in literature reviews (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). We

combined “automated” methods (using alerts and information-gathering software such as Feed Informer to both monitor existing literature and discover new publications) and “manual” methods (adding references from ongoing keyword searches in online databases and from the bibliographies of already-obtained articles). A complete list of databases and journals monitored via automated research is provided in the online appendix to this article. Our corpus includes scientific journal articles in English, French, German, and Spanish (the main languages spoken by our team members).

We selected journal articles on transnational migrant entrepreneurship based on the definition presented in the previous section. To begin with, we researched academic databases and journals using the keywords “transnational”, “migrant”, “entrepreneurship”, and synonyms of these (e.g. “transnationalism”, “migration”, “immigrant”, “entrepreneur”, “business”, “start-up”, “firm”) in English, French, German, and Spanish (see online appendix). We then checked each article to ensure that they actually covered on the topic, which led us to exclude several articles because the transnational dimension of migrant entrepreneurship was not explicitly mentioned. In a third step, we manually reviewed the bibliographies of the selected articles to identify references that the automatic search had missed. We repeated this process with newly selected articles until we could find no further salient references. These steps led us to identify 155 relevant articles (listed in the online appendix) published between 2009 and 2019, and originating from various disciplines (mainly economics, business and management, sociology and geography). Despite the inclusion of non-anglophone articles, only seven are in French, German, or Spanish, thus highlighting the predominance of English-language publications in the field. Nevertheless, we believe that this corpus allows us to develop an extensive overview of the state of the art. In addition to our main corpus, we also considered a special issue of the *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies* on transnational migrant entrepreneurship (2020) to include the most recent literature.

We reviewed each publication to identify key definitions of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, research questions, theoretical lenses, regional contexts, methods, results, and research gaps. Our team collaboratively discussed and synthesised this information in an iterative process. We first developed an overview of our knowledge about transnational migrant entrepreneurship. We then applied a content analysis methodology (Mayring, 2014) to inductively develop a set of preliminary codes for each article (examples of codes include: “choice of location for transnational activities”, “role of governments in promoting transnational entrepreneurship”, “commitment to the home country through economic actions”, etc.), which we subsequently reorganised into broader categories. Inspired by other literature reviews (Piguet et al., 2018), we worked with specific categories to ensure coherent analysis. This process enabled us to identify five main topical areas of research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, which will be discussed in the next section.

## *4. Major Topical Areas of Research in Recent Literature on Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship*

This section presents an overview of five major topical areas of research—including results and gaps—on transnational migrant entrepreneurship since 2009, highlighting the strengths and limitations of current research: the first focuses on identifying the specific advantages of transnational migrant entrepreneurship and aims to empirically test the extent to which migration experiences can, under certain circumstances, constitute an asset for transnational business-related activities; the second attempts to understand the reasons, determinants, and motivations that lead migrants to engage in transnational businesses; the third analyses the composition of migrants' personal networks and their potential utility in transnational business-related activities; the fourth assesses the economic impact of transnational entrepreneurs on the places where they conduct business; and finally, the fifth examines the role of local environments in supporting or deterring transnational migrant entrepreneurship.

### *4.1. Specific Advantages of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship*

Inspired by Schumpeter (1974), research on entrepreneurship often distinguishes between necessity-driven and opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, arguing that the latter drive innovation and reforms (Baltar & Icart, 2013; Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020). While initial research on migrant entrepreneurship focused on "ethnic minorities" as being more likely to become self-employed out of necessity due to exclusion from the labour markets of host countries, recent studies have criticised this deficit-based approach (Elo et al., 2018; Garrido & Checa, 2009). They show that the ethnic and exclusion lenses do not sufficiently capture the complex realities of today's transnational migrant entrepreneurship because they fail to recognise migrants' abilities to capitalise on opportunities beyond ethnic and national boundaries (Drori et al., 2009; Muñoz-Castro et al., 2019). Scholars in business and management studies have developed a positive view of transnational entrepreneurship, considering migration experiences advantageous to expanded business opportunities and calling for a "reconceptualisation of migrants from an economic burden to a source of economic activity and export earnings" (Baklanov et al., 2014, p. 68).

The positive conceptualisation of transnational migrant entrepreneurship builds on the notion of "dual embeddedness", which posits that migrant entrepreneurs have a competitive advantage (Elo & Vincze, 2019; Emontspool & Servais, 2017) due to their ability to access "economic resources, education and social networks, and exposure to social lifestyles" in the home and host countries (Dahles, 2013, p. 386)

For some authors this unique position drives innovation (Harima, 2014), success (Ojo, 2012), development (Ashourizadeh et al., 2016), emancipation (Villares-Varela & Essers, 2019), prestige (Ottati, 2014), and socioeconomic integration (Lin & Tao, 2012).

While the literature often implies that dual embeddedness automatically leads to economic success and other promising outcomes, we need to remain sceptical as long as this process is not explained. In practice, authors who stress the added economic value of transnational entrepreneurs tend to select case studies involving highly skilled people in the technology, consulting, and educational sectors (Brzozowski et al., 2014; Crick & Chaudhry, 2013). By contrast, authors with a more critical approach focus on less privileged migrants working in low-profit sectors. For example, Eckstein and Nguyen (2011) analysed Vietnamese manicurists in the US who created a transnational market for professional nail care without significantly improving their long-term earning potential. Similarly, Munkejord (2017) showed that migrant women in rural Norway who build diverse businesses are motivated mainly by developing their sense of regional belonging and fulfilling personal aspirations rather than improving their economic situation. This raises the question of whether or not dual embeddedness is the key to success for some transnational entrepreneurs, and under what circumstances migrants profit from it (Jones et al., 2010; Wahlbeck, 2018). In other words, this interrogates whether transnational connections are a main driver of social mobility and economic development or simply reflect existing privileges and inequalities among entrepreneurs. Furthermore, we agree with other scholars (Harima & Baron, 2020; Solano, 2020) that transnational entrepreneurship is not simply a relationship between the origin and destination countries. Contemporary migrants have the potential to simultaneously connect with various countries, given their multiple mobility experiences and global connections. In their study of Bukharian Jews in the diaspora, Elo and Dana (2019) speak of "multiple embeddedness" to describe the extended family, ethno-religious, cultural, and social ties that shape this specific transnational entrepreneurial community. Finally, some authors contest the simplistic view of transnational migrant entrepreneurship as only positive by emphasising the enduring hardships and inequalities that many entrepreneurs face when developing transnational economic activities (Åkesson, 2016; Wahlbeck, 2018). Thus, we suggest that future studies need a more differentiated understanding of the diverse transnational connections created, developed, and maintained by entrepreneurs from more and less privileged social backgrounds.

### *4.2. Motivations and Determinants of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship*

Many authors explore the reasons and necessary conditions that lead some migrants to engage in transnational business activities (Portes & Martinez, 2020). Researchers in business and management

studies tend to associate transnational migrant entrepreneurship with specific individual attitudes, skills and motivations such as the ability to identify business opportunities (Lundberg & Rehnfors, 2018), the desire for capital accumulation (Ribeiro et al., 2012), and the propensity to take risks (Urbano et al., 2011). Although criticised by some because of reified and static definitions of culture (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013; Liu, 2012), several authors highlight that specific nationalities are particularly prone to engage in entrepreneurship (Dimitratos et al., 2016; Goktan & Flores, 2014). A distinction can be drawn between explanations linking a specific national culture with the emergence of entrepreneurship, and explanations that view cultural resources as a potential asset for business creation.

Social scientists tend to focus more on the determinants of social structure, unpacking the social position of transnational migrant entrepreneurship regarding variables such as education, gender, ethnicity, length of stay, and financial security (Nkrumah, 2018; Webster, 2017). Using Bourdieu's capital approach, several authors highlight the importance of social, symbolic, economic, and cultural resources to business development (Åkesson, 2016; Nowicka, 2013), stressing the unequal distribution of resources between individuals and groups as well as the specific power relations embodied in social hierarchies. For example, in her study of Polish entrepreneurs in Germany, Nowicka (2013) developed a theoretical model to analyse how intersections and conversions of different forms of capital across national borders, such as the ability to mobilise specific resources and social networks transnationally, influence the social positions that migrants can achieve in both their home and host country. Other authors analyse enabling and disabling factors related to specific socioeconomic environments, and highlight the obstacles faced by specific categories of migrant entrepreneurs such as women or refugees (Halilovich & Efendić, 2019; Lee & Lee, 2020). For example, in a study examining the business start-up process of Chinese and Turkish restaurant owners in Finland, Katila and Wahlbeck (2012) show that the ability of migrant entrepreneurs to activate transnational networks is connected to specific migration trajectories and entry patterns. In another study of Latino entrepreneurs in the US, Poblete (2018) discusses the role of discrimination, highlighting that negative experiences in the host countries can strengthen ties with the country of origin and thus motivate migrants to engage in transnational business activities.

However, a comprehensive examination of the role of spatial mobility in transnational business creation is still lacking. Overall, scholars engage with different determinants of cross-border entrepreneurial activities but pay insufficient attention to the fact that migrants have unequal opportunities to travel and move goods, services, and ideas into transnational spaces. The processes of spatial mobility involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship should not be taken for granted. Moreover, questions concerning the relationships between (im)mobility, inequality, and space are rarely raised. Examining the interplay between geographical location and social position would enable scholars to reveal the complex spatial nature of the mechanisms that shape transnational migrant entrepreneurship. This focus would cast new

light on how entrepreneurs' options are structured by concrete locations and their connections, and how spatially situated processes of mobility and immobility participate in the (re)production of global social inequalities.

### *4.3. Social Ties and Networks of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs*

Authors in all disciplines have developed a growing interest in how transnational ties and networks impact the performance of migrant entrepreneurs, with particular interest in social contacts between migrants and their countries of origin (Elo & Hieta, 2017; Pruthi et al., 2018), diasporic networks (Evansluong et al., 2019; Fossati, 2019), and returnees' social contacts in former host countries (Åkesson, 2016; Santamaria-Alvarez et al., 2018).

Following Chen and Tan's (2009) influential contribution to this topic, some authors provide evidence that transnational networking significantly improves entrepreneurial performance (Kariv et al., 2009; Mustafa & Chen, 2010), and that this positive impact increases as ties strengthen (Patel & Terjesen, 2011). Yet, other authors obtain more ambiguous results by highlighting transnational migrants' risk of disconnection from home country networks (Nawojczyk & Nowicka, 2018; Quan et al., 2019). Several scholars discuss the argument first developed by Portes et al. (2002) that local embeddedness enhances transnational connections because it provides a stable basis to support transnational economic engagements (Brzozowski et al., 2017; Sequeira et al., 2009).

This area of research points towards the interdependence of local and transnational forms of belonging and the relationship between local and transnational socioeconomic integration. We propose that a spatial perspective, which analyses how distant places become connected through the geographically situated activities of entrepreneurs, and emphasises the concrete locations, mobilities, and processes that bring these connections to life, would further advance our understanding of the role of networks in transnational migrant entrepreneurship. It would also enable a closer analysis of the power dynamics that shape the relationships between transnational migrant entrepreneurs and network members. Many studies highlight the importance of private and family networks to transnational entrepreneurs' business development (Henn, 2012; Liu et al., 2020), thus pointing to the role of emotional connections and trust in business-making processes. Zani (2019), for example, speaks of "emotional space" to describe the physical and virtual transnational economies that Chinese migrant women develop using digital technologies. In doing so, women maintain ties between China and Taiwan and cope with economic discrimination. Similarly, the literature on diasporic entrepreneurial communities points to the important role of attachment and identification to the host country, as well as feelings of duty and obligation

towards co-nationals and diaspora members, as central motivations to engage in both pecuniary and non-pecuniary investment (Osaghae & Cooney, 2020).

Although self-employment is often associated with independence, research shows that mutual dependencies exist between transnational entrepreneurs and network members, some of which are more beneficial than others (Fuller-Love & Akiode, 2020). Therefore, we call for a more diverse portrayal of the complex social and spatial dependencies involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship, which carefully addresses individual experiences in both private and professional spheres.

### *4.4. Economic Impacts of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurship on Host and Home Countries*

Evaluating the impact of transnational businesses on the economic development of a region or country in terms of resource flows, knowledge transfers, foreign investments, and employment creation is of central interest. Most discussions on development are grounded in the "brain-drain/brain-gain" debates, which examine the positive and negative effects of migration flows from poor to rich countries (De Silva, 2015; Veréb & Ferreira, 2018).

Some authors support Saxenian's (2007) idea of "brain circulation", which describes the positive impacts of transnational entrepreneurial activities on the economies of both home and destination countries (Portes & Yiu, 2013; Terjesen & Elam, 2009). Riddle et al. (2010) study a business incubator for transnational entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, and highlight how migrants from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Surinam, and Turkey receive support to develop cross-border businesses that generate employment and investments in both residence and origin countries. Other authors focus exclusively on the economic impact of transnational entrepreneurs on their home countries. Ojo et al. (2013), for example, analyse the inclination of Sub-Saharan African entrepreneurs in the UK to promote business development in their countries of origin through investment strategies, and observe positive consequences in terms of innovation and opportunity creation.

However, authors such as Santamaría-Alvarez and Śliwa (2016) obtain less optimistic results. Studying the entrepreneurial activities of Colombian emigrants to the US, they argue that if transnational networks are fragmented and governmental support is lacking, their transnational entrepreneurship activities have little impact upon their home country's economy and society. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) discuss the importance of altruistic motivations and the need for social recognition from the home country to explain why certain entrepreneurs engage in business activities in environments that other investors would consider too hostile and risky. In line with other authors (e.g. Brzozowski et al., 2014) they posit that socioeconomic development not only depends on the actions of individual entrepreneurs

but on state policies and other contextual factors within the home and host countries. Several studies focus on how supportive diaspora policies and entrepreneurship programmes for migrants and returnees contribute to economic development (Rezaei & Goli, 2020; Zapata-Barrero & Hellgren, 2020), while others highlight the obstacles and institutional voids that prevent successful investments (De Silva, 2015).

In economic geography and related disciplines, many scholars address the question of how individual migrant entrepreneurs contribute to the development of business clusters and entrepreneurial ecosystems at a local level, asking to what extent and under which conditions they can generate positive dynamics of economic development (Maceda Rodriguez & Vazquez Vazquez, 2016). Schäfer and Henn (2018) propose a three-stage model in which highly skilled returnees become entrepreneurial pioneers. These returnees act as role models for local entrepreneurs and diaspora members, thus promoting subsequent business engagement and local economic growth. In addition, these authors argue that the role of network linkages and connections between entrepreneurial ecosystems situated in different locations needs to be further researched.

Overall, how spatial dependencies are created through the practices of transnational entrepreneurs across the globe and the impact of historical hierarchies between the places involved are topics rarely evoked. Paying closer attention to "the inequality of power and forms of economic domination that characterises the relations between rich and poor countries" (Calhoun, 2002) and shifting the focus from an economic growth perspective to a spatial inequalities perspective would advance our understanding of transnational entrepreneurship at both local and transnational levels.

### *4.5. The Role of Local Environments*

Using economic or political science approaches, and inspired by Everett Lee's theory of migration (1966), most authors distinguish between location-related push and pull factors that may influence a migrant's engagement in transnational entrepreneurship (Honig, 2020). Pull factors include positive location-specific elements such as supportive policies, favourable market conditions, or personal networks, whereas push factors refer to obstacles and constraints such as economic crises, competitive pressures, or unemployment. This distinction highlights the fact that transnational entrepreneurship can be a way to balance negative conditions in one location with positive conditions in another. Brzozowski et al. (2014) show, for example, that the home country's institutional and socio-economic characteristics (such as macroeconomic stability, level and quality of education, level of corruption, and level of

entrepreneurial endowment) play a crucial role in shaping the performance of transnational immigrants' business activities in the Italian information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

"Mixed embeddedness" is another major theoretical framework used to discuss the impact of locations on transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Proposed by Kloosterman et al. (2010), this approach combines the micro-level of an entrepreneur's resources with meso-level opportunity structures and macro-institutional frameworks. Recent publications have tried to adapt this approach by analysing the interconnectedness of the various environments in which migrants operate (Solano, 2020). Building on interviews with Vietnamese business owners based in London, Bagwell (2018) studies transnational mixed embeddedness by analysing how individual resources (social, financial, or cultural capital; history of migration), markets (at the local, regional, and national levels), and political-institutional factors in the UK and overseas influence the development of transnational migrant entrepreneurs' activities. This research area sheds new light on the complex interactions linking entrepreneurs and places, thus encouraging researchers to move beyond simple host-home country dichotomies.

Using geographical approaches, other authors examine the territories in which transnational entrepreneurs operate (Lan & Zhu, 2014; Zack, 2015). Some are critical of transnationalism approaches, arguing that a focus on abstract notions of flows ignores geographical locations (Mavrommatis, 2015) and preferring to speak of translocalism as a means for individuals to engage materially and symbolically with various sites through daily activities (Schmoll, 2012; Zani, 2019). These authors build on Brickell and Datta's (2011) geographical concept of "translocality", a key contribution to transnational mobilities studies. Translocality is for them "grounded transnationalism" (p. 3), or a space where otherwise de-territorialised networks of transnational social relations take shape through migrants' agency. They argue for a spatial understanding of translocality, which situates migrants' experiences within or across particular "locales" and does not confine them to the territorial boundaries of a nation-state. Furthermore, they bring the geographical scale to the fore by empirically addressing a range of scales including translocal homes, translocal neighbourhoods, and translocal cities.

By emphasising the role of agency and geographical position, these authors propose a powerful research lens through which to examine the experiences and practices of transnational migrant entrepreneurs. However, none of the current conceptual frameworks adequately address the complexity of how different locations provide different types of opportunities for transnational migrant entrepreneurs, and how they are able (or unable) to actively take advantage of such opportunities over space and time.

## *5. Towards a Spatially-Sensitive Approach in Future Research: Locations, Connections, and Mobilities*

Our literature review reveals a dynamic field of cross-disciplinary transnational migrant entrepreneurship research. Currently, there appears to be a genuine attempt to shift the focus from a single-location and deficit-based perspective to an opportunity-oriented and transnational approach. This literature addresses important topics for geographers and other scholars interested in spatial dynamics. Yet, geographic contributions on transnational migrant entrepreneurship remain scarce, as seen in Figure 1.

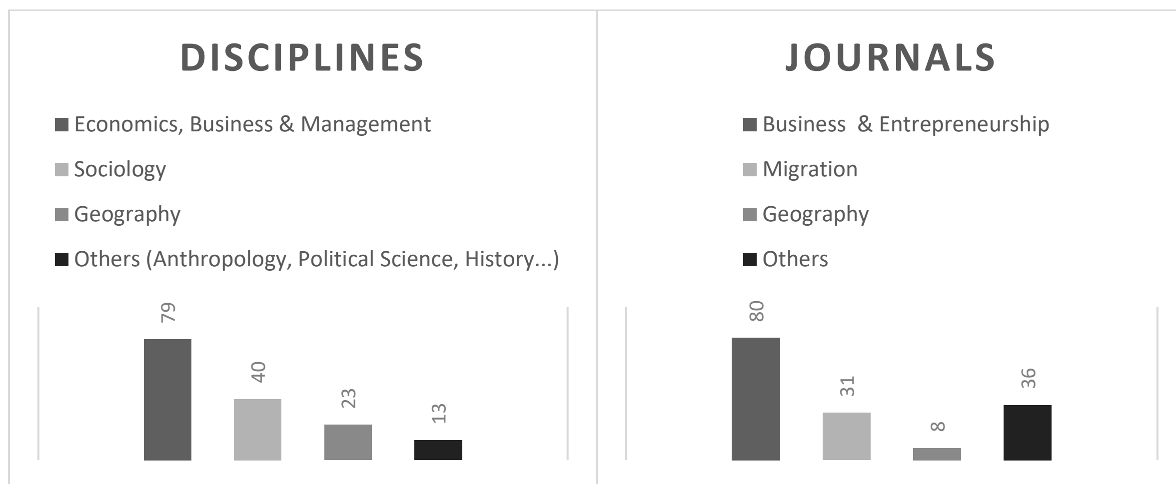



*Figure 1: Overview of the disciplinary orientation of transnational migrant entrepreneurship studies published in scientific journals between 2009 and 2019, n=155*

Besides the willingness to move beyond simplistic and static conceptualisations of space in the field, there is much potential to develop a more spatially informed understanding of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, which would benefit geography research as well as other disciplines by enabling a greater focus on *the dynamic spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship* and the *power relations that shape opportunities for different groups of entrepreneurs*. We will now discuss these gaps in more detail.

First, the range of *locations* selected by scholars for empirical work on transnational migrant entrepreneurship is, in most cases, limited to countries of the Global North. This results in most studies focusing on the destination countries of transnational entrepreneurs with migratory trajectories from the Global South to the North. Figure 2 shows that almost 70% of the articles in our study corpus focus on migrants who move from low-income countries in Asia, Africa, and South America to high-income

countries in Europe or North America. This reproduces traditional representations of transnational migrant entrepreneurship as an exclusively South-to-North trajectory and downplays the diversity of current mobilities including South-to-South trajectories. Some scholars expand this view by examining migrants who move from high-income countries to low-income countries (Elo, 2016; Harima & Vermuri, 2015) or between two high-income countries (Lundberg & Rehnfors, 2018). However, the richness of South-to-South mobility patterns is still largely overlooked. We thus call for more attention to the diversity of transnational migrant entrepreneurs' spatial trajectories.

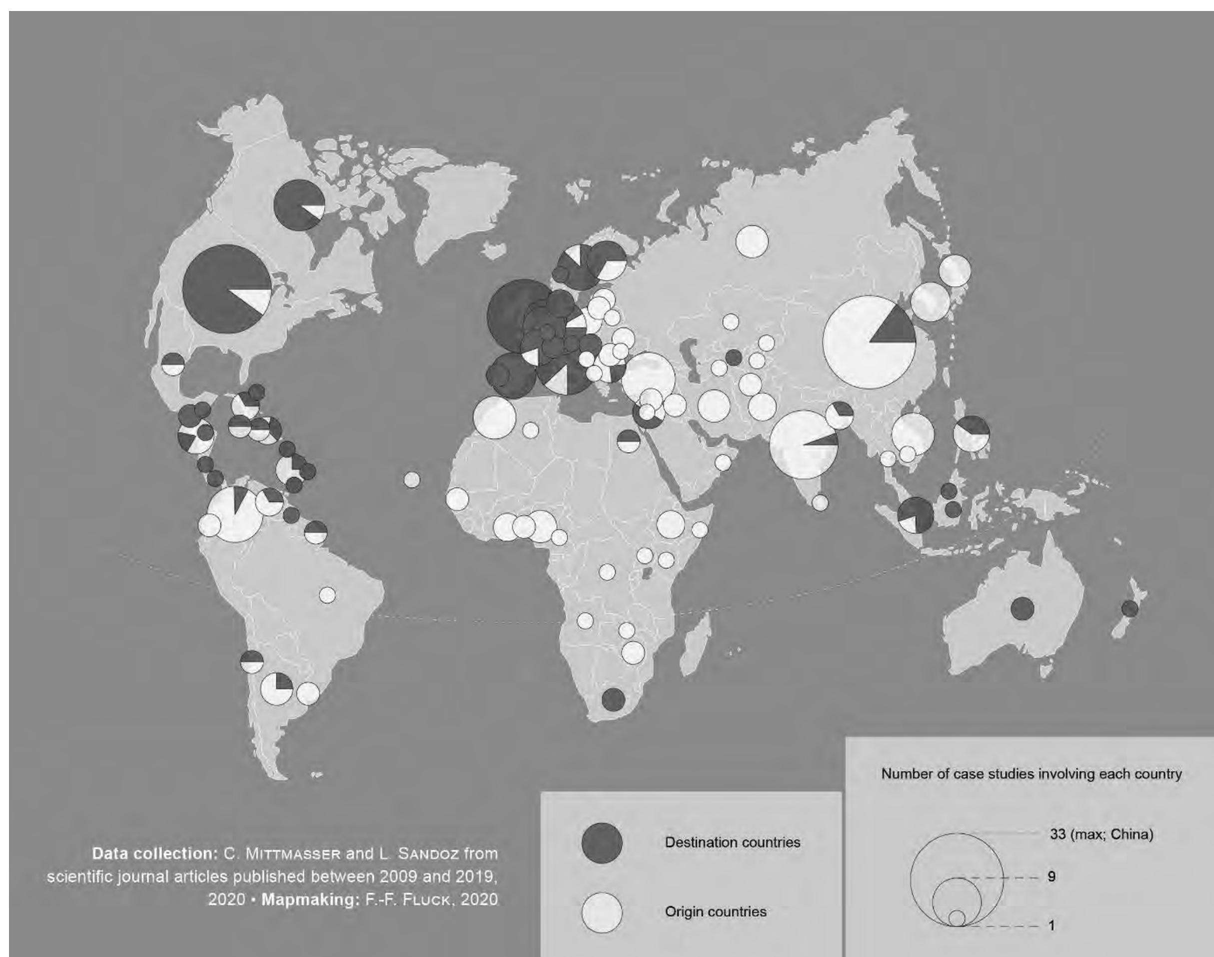



*Figure 2: Origin and destination countries of migrants in transnational migrant entrepreneurship studies published in scientific journals between 2009 and 2019, n=155*

Second, there is scant research on the diversity of *connections* that transnational migrant entrepreneurs create between locations across national borders. Most research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship examines connections between destination and home countries. Yet, as pointed out in a study on Moroccan entrepreneurs in Milan (Solano, 2020), transnational migrant entrepreneurship today is characterised by "multifocality" rather than "bifocality". By disregarding the diversity of

existing connections, authors reproduce a simplistic view of migration that does not correspond to contemporary transnationalism characterised by multisitedness and resulting from onward movements (Moret, 2018), facilitated international travel, lower transportation costs, digital technologies, and the development of transnationally located families (Riaño, 2017). Although transnational migrant entrepreneurs are, to a certain extent, conditioned by their nationalities and migration backgrounds, they can potentially use their agency to develop ties beyond national or ethnic groups, and connect with multiple places through entrepreneurial practices. Therefore, we need to expand our understanding of how transnational migrant entrepreneurs develop connections with multiple locations and create social, economic, and political relationships.

Third, insufficient attention has been paid to the diverse *mobilities* developed by transnational migrant entrepreneurs. Many studies have shown that engaging in transnational business activities requires travelling and/or moving goods, capital, or ideas across national borders (Ambrosini, 2012; Dannecker & Cakir, 2016). While spatial mobility is an essential dimension of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, studies that focus on how circulation patterns shape transnational entrepreneurial spaces remain scarce. In order to gain a better understanding of the spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, we propose applying a mobility lens (Cresswell, 2010; Sheller & Urry, 2006) to seriously study if, when, where, and how transnational migrant entrepreneurs move, and across which borders. This involves paying specific attention to the multi-scalar movements of transnational migrant entrepreneurs (e.g. home, neighbourhood, 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). Moreover, in our technologically connected world, transnational business activities increasingly involve moving goods, ideas, and capital via digital means, which reduces the need for the spatial mobility of entrepreneurs (Harima & Baron, 2020). 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.

Finally, it is important to examine the diverse spatialities involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship from a *power relations perspective* to understand how such spatialities relate to social inequality. Particularly in the business and management fields, authors tend to overemphasise the idea that transnational linkages constitute a competitive advantage for economic success without considering that structural inequalities create different geometries of power among transnational migrant entrepreneurs and thus different opportunities to benefit from transnational resources. Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei (2020) accurately highlight that most typologies of transnational migrant entrepreneurship are based on motivations and social status but ignore dimensions of inequality such as access to mobility, space, and territory. Opportunities for transnational migrant entrepreneurs to mobilise skills are not

context-neutral but depend on how specific markers of social difference (e.g. gender, nationality, or education) are valued in the locations where they develop business activities. Also, inequalities of power between locations in rich and poor countries, and their impact on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, need further examination. Different countries implement different policies and agendas to attract, promote or discourage transnational migrant entrepreneurship (Tung, 2008). Power relations and mobility regimes shape hierarchies of opportunities and constraints for different categories of transnational migrant entrepreneurs (Sandoz, 2021).

Overall, there is great potential to move beyond static or ethnic framings of transnational migrant entrepreneurship and to strengthen our understanding of this topic. From a conceptual perspective, this could mean deeper engagement with the diversity of spatialities involved, as well as examining emerging webs of *geographical locations*, *connections*, and *mobilities*. From a methodological perspective, this could mean diversifying the current range of approaches to include digital (Kozinets, 2020), mobile (Boas et al., 2020), and multi-sited (Marcus, 1998) methods in future research.

To go one step further, we propose some examples of questions for each of the three dimensions put forth in our analysis (locations, connections, and mobilities) to examine contemporary spatialities of migrant entrepreneurship (Figure 3). These questions arise from our critical literature review and build on the main shortcomings of current research, which we identified.

*Dimension 1: Geographical locations*

- Across/in which different locations do transnational migrant entrepreneurs move as they produce, obtain, and circulate goods, money, and services?
- How do the material, social, and symbolic features of places shape the transnational business activities of entrepreneurs with diverse social backgrounds, and why? How do these features contribute to the (re)production of social inequalities?
- How do entrepreneurs use different global locations for business activities and why? How do they transform the locations and shape the entrepreneurial ecosystems in which they operate?

*Dimension 2: Spatial connections*

- What kinds of cross-border connections are created, developed, and maintained by transnational migrant entrepreneurs? Between which places and social groups do they build these connections?
- What connections already exist between spaces and social groups (e.g. political, economic, or symbolic dependencies and hierarchies on the macro and micro levels)? How do these relations shape transnational businesses activities?
- How do transnational entrepreneurs use and transform existing relations, and create new ones? What are the socioeconomic implications of the transnational connections established by transnational entrepreneurs?

*Dimension 3: Spatial mobilities*

- What kinds of spatial mobilities are involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship? How important is spatial mobility for transnational businesses? For whom is it important, and why?
- Which spatial mobilities are possible for whom, under what conditions, and why? How do transnational migrant entrepreneurs' capacities to move material and immaterial entities across time and space vary? How do these capacities evolve, and why?
- How do entrepreneurs' strategies counteract undesired mobilities or other constraints?

*Figure 3: Crucial dimensions for future research on the spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship*

## *6. Conclusion*

In this article we critically reviewed the literature on transnational migrant entrepreneurship published since 2009. We observed an increasing interest in this topic across a broad range of disciplines. Scholars have intensely studied the business advantages, characteristics, and networks of transnational migrant entrepreneurs as well as their impacts on specific sites (and vice versa). Yet, we observe that the new spatialities of transnational migrant entrepreneurship have not yet received adequate scholarly attention.

To address this gap, we proposed three crucial dimensions for future research which have been under-researched in past and current work, and which address the diversity of *geographical locations*, *spatial connections*, and *spatial mobilities* involved in transnational migrant entrepreneurship. We also advanced the following reflections: first, we argued that a processual and relational approach is necessary to understand how transnational entrepreneurial spaces are dynamically created and maintained through the everyday practices of individuals. Although geographers have so far marginally contributed to the field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship, the "relational turn" in economic geography (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003; 2018; Yeung, 2003) has addressed many of the shortcomings that we identified in this article and could therefore provide valuable tools for advancing our spatial perspective on this topic. Second, we encouraged researchers to include more diverse and multi-sited approaches to better grasp the diversity of the spatialities involved, particularly regarding transnational migrant entrepreneurship in the Global South and connections beyond the host and home countries of the studied entrepreneurs. Third, we suggested that in addition to empowering views that shed a positive light on transnational migrant entrepreneurship, more research is needed that addresses persistent social inequalities. It is important to ask how power relations between and across geographical locations and social groups shape the practices of entrepreneurs. In particular, the role of spatial mobility and

immobility—and their relationship with social mobility—has not yet been sufficiently addressed in research on transnational migrant entrepreneurship.

In terms of future research, the discussion on how social mobility relates to transnational migrant entrepreneurship is immature but highly promising. Highlighting the role of locations, connections, and mobilities is important, not only to grasp the agency and creative potential of migrants but also to recognise that opportunities and constraints are unequally distributed across social groups and places. We need to advance our understanding of unequal spatialities in transnational migrant entrepreneurship and identify the mechanisms that enable individual and family businesses to move forward economically and socially. This is important not only for research, but also in the development of more inclusive places for migrant entrepreneurs, which could lead to better opportunities for success.

## *References*


Åkesson, L. (2016). Multi-sited accumulation of capital: Cape Verdean returnees and small-scale business. *Global Networks*, *16*(1), 112–129. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12100

Aliaga-Isla, R., & Rialp, A. (2013). Systematic review of immigrant entrepreneurship literature: previous findings and ways forward. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *25*(9–10), 819–844. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.845694

Ambrosini, M. (2012). Migrants' entrepreneurship in transnational social fields: research in the Italian context. *International Review of Sociology*, *22*(2), 273–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2012.696970

Ashourizadeh, S., Schøtt, T., Şengüler, E. P., & Wang, Y. (2016). Exporting by migrants and indigenous entrepreneurs: contingent on gender and education. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, *16*(3), 264–283. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBG.2016.075736

Bagwell, S. (2018). From mixed embeddedness to transnational mixed embeddedness: An exploration of Vietnamese businesses in London. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *24*(1), 104–120. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2017-0035

Baklanov, N., Rezaei, S., Vang, J., & Dana, L.-P. (2014). Migrant entrepreneurship, economic activity and export performance: Mapping the Danish trends. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *23*(1/2), 63–93. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2014.065309

Baltar, F., & Icart, I. B. (2013). Entrepreneurial gain, cultural similarity and transnational entrepreneurship. *Global Networks*, *13*(2), 200–220. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12020

Barnes, T. (2009). Economic Geography. In D. Gregory, R. Johnston, G. Pratt, M. Watts, & S. Whatmore (Eds.), *The Dictionary of Human Geography (5th ed.)* (p. 178). Wiley-Blackwell.

Boas, I., Schapendonk, J., Blondin, S., & Pas, A. (2020). Methods as moving ground: Reflections on the 'doings' of mobile methodologies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 163–146. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i4.3326

Brickell, K., & Datta, A. (2011). *Translocal geographies: Spaces, places, connections*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Brzozowski, J., Cucculelli, M., & Surdej, A. (2014). Transnational ties and performance of immigrant entrepreneurs: the role of home-country conditions. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *26*(7–8), 546–573. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2014.959068

Brzozowski, J., Cucculelli, M., & Surdej, A. (2017). The determinants of transnational entrepreneurship and transnational ties' dynamics among immigrant entrepreneurs in ICT sector in Italy. *International Migration*, *55*(3), 105–125. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12335

Calhoun, C. (2002). Dependency. In *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195123715.001.0001/acref-9780195123715-e-438. Accessed 16 October 2020

Chen, W., & Tan, J. (2009). Understanding transnational entrepreneurship through a network lens: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1079–1091. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00335.x

Cresswell, T. (2010). Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *28*(1), 17–31. https://doi.org/10.1068/d11407

Crick, D., & Chaudhry, S. (2013). An exploratory study of UK based, family-owned, Asian firms' motives for internationalising. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *20*(3), 526–547. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-04-2013-0051

Dahles, H. (2013). Cambodian returnees' entrepreneurial ventures: The opportunities and constraints of mixed embeddedness. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *7*(4), 383–396. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-03-2013-0009

Dannecker, P., & Cakir, A. (2016). Female migrant entrepreneurs in Vienna: Mobility and its embeddedness. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, *41*(1), 97–113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11614-016-0193-y

De Silva, R. (2015). How transnational entrepreneurs are responding to institutional voids: A study of transnational entrepreneurs from Sri Lanka. *South Asian Journal of Management*, *22*(2), 61–80.

Dimitratos, P., Buck, T., Fletcher, M., & Li, N. (2016). The motivation of international entrepreneurship: The case of Chinese transnational entrepreneurs. *International Business Review*, *25*(5), 1103–1113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2016.01.012

Drori, I., Honig, B., & Wright, M. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurship: An emergent field of study. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1001–1022. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00332.x

Eckstein, S., & Nguyen, T.-N. (2011). The making and transnationalization of an ethnic niche: Vietnamese manicurists. *The International Migration Review*, *45*(3), 639–674. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2011.00861.x

Elo, M. (2016). Typology of diaspora entrepreneurship: Case studies in Uzbekistan. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *14*(1), 121–155. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-016-0177-9

Elo, M., & Dana, L.-P. (2019). Embeddedness and entrepreneurial traditions: Entrepreneurship of Bukharian Jews in diaspora. *Journal of Family Business Management*. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-03-2019-0016

Elo, M., & Hieta, H. (2017). From ethnic enclaves to transnational entrepreneurs: the American dream of the Finns in Oregon, USA. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *31*(2), 204–226.

Elo, M., Sandberg, S., Servais, P., Basco, R., Cruz, A. D., Riddle, L., & Täube, F. (2018). Advancing the views on migrant and diaspora entrepreneurs in international entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 119–133. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0231-x

Elo, M., & Vincze, Z. (2019). Transnational intrapreneurship: opportunity development in transnational teams in the Nordic periphery. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *36*(1/2), 103. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2019.096954

Emontspool, J., & Servais, P. (2017). Cross-border entrepreneurship in a global world: a critical reconceptualisation. *European Journal of International Management*, *11*(3), 262–279. https://doi.org/10.1504/EJIM.2017.083875

Etemad, H. (2018). Advances and challenges in the evolving field of international entrepreneurship: The case of migrant and diaspora entrepreneurs. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 109–118. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0233-8

Evansluong, Q., Ramírez Pasillas, M., Discua Cruz, A., Elo, M., & Vershinina, N. (2019). Migrant entrepreneurship beyond place and space: A call to explore the roles of family across borders and contexts. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*. http://lup.lub.lu.se/record/9572d00c-e5cc-422c-9dcf-ca2b3487cdff. Accessed 23 September 2019

Fossati, D. (2019). Embedded diasporas: ethnic prejudice, transnational networks and foreign investment. *Review of International Political Economy*, *26*(1), 134–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2018.1543721

Fuller-Love, N., & Akiode, M. (2020). Transnational entrepreneurs dynamics in entrepreneurial ecosystems: A critical review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 41–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519881921

Garrido, A. A., & Checa, J. C. (2009). Theoretical overview of immigrant entrepreneurship. *Sociologia - Slovak Sociological Review, 41*(2), 199–221.

Glick Schiller, N., & Çağlar, A. (2013). Locating migrant pathways of economic emplacement: Thinking beyond the ethnic lens. *Ethnicities*, *13*(4), 494–514. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796813483733

Goktan, B., & Flores, I. B. (2014). The role of national culture in the transnational entrepreneurship process. *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, *25*(2), 75–95.

Haddaway, N. R., Bethel, A., Dicks, L. V., Koricheva, J., Macura, B., Petrokofsky, G., et al. (2020). Eight problems with literature reviews and how to fix them. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, *4*(12), 1582–1589. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-01295-x

Halilovich, H., & Efendić, N. (2019). From refugees to trans-local entrepreneurs: Crossing the borders between formal institutions and informal practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey066

Harima, A. (2015). Network dynamics of descending diaspora entrepreneurship: Multiple case studies with Japanese entrepreneurs in emerging economies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, *10*(4), 65–92. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2578697

Harima, A., & Baron, T. (2020). Is this transnational entrepreneurship? Five cases in which it is hard to say 'Yes' or 'No': *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 12–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519887561

Harima, A., & Vermuri, D. S. (2015). Diaspora business model innovation. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, *11*(1), 29–52. https://doi.org/10.7341/20151113

Henn, S. (2012). Transnational entrepreneurs, global pipelines and shifting production patterns. The example of the Palanpuris in the diamond sector. *Geoforum*, *43*(3), 497–506. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.10.009

Honig, B. (2020). Exploring the intersection of transnational, ethnic, and migration entrepreneurship. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1974–1990. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559993

IOM. (2019). *World migration report 2020* (No. PUB2019/006/L WMR 2020). Geneva: IOM. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020. Accessed 9 June 2020

Jones, T., Ram, M., & Theodorakopoulos, N. (2010). Transnationalism as a force for ethnic minority enterprise? The case of Somalis in Leicester. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *34*(3), 565–585. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00913.x

Juchno, P., & Agafitei, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Migrant integration*. Luxembourg: Publication office of the European Union. http://dx.publications.europa.eu/10.2785/295423. Accessed 3 April 2019

Kariv, D., Menzies, T. V., Brenner, G. A., & Filion, L. J. (2009). Transnational networking and business performance: Ethnic entrepreneurs in Canada. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *21*(3), 239–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620802261641

Katila, S., & Wahlbeck, Ö. (2012). The role of (transnational) social capital in the start-up processes of immigrant businesses: The case of Chinese and Turkish restaurant businesses in Finland. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, *30*(3), 294–309. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242610383789

Kloosterman, R., van der Leun, J., & Rath, J. (1999). Mixed embeddedness: (In)formal economic activities and immigrant businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *23*(2), 252–266. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00194

Kozinets, R. V. (2020). *Netnography: The essential guide to qualitative social media research*. London: Sage.

Lan, T., & Zhu, S. (2014). Chinese apparel value chains in Europe: low-end fast fashion, regionalization, and transnational entrepreneurship in Prato, Italy. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *55*(2), 156–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2014.948471

Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, *3*(1), 47–57. https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063

Lee, J. Y., & Lee, J. Y. (2020). Female transnational entrepreneurs (FTEs): A case study of Korean American female entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519881925

Lin, X., & Tao, S. (2012). Transnational entrepreneurs: Characteristics, drivers, and success factors. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *10*(1), 50–69. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-011-0082-1

Liu, H. (2012). Beyond a revisionist turn: Networks, state and the changing dynamics of diasporic Chinese entrepreneurship. *China An International Journal*, *10*(3), 20.41.

Liu, Y., Namatovu, R., Karadeniz, E. E., Schøtt, T., & Minto-Coy, I. D. (2020). Entrepreneurs' transnational networks channelling exports: diasporas from Central & South America, Sub-Sahara Africa, Middle East & North Africa, Asia, and the European culture region. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2106–2125. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1560002

Lundberg, H., & Rehnfors, A. (2018). Transnational entrepreneurship: Opportunity identification and venture creation. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 150–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0228-5

Maceda Rodríguez, E., & Vázquez, Vázquez, J. D. (2016). Transnacionalismo y rasgos de desarrollo local en Santa Inés Ahuatempan, Puebla. *Regiones y Desarrollo Sustentable*, (31), 133–153.

Marcus, G. E. (1998). Ethnography in/of the World System: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. In G. E. Marcus (Ed.), *Ethnography through thick and thin* (pp. 79–104). Princeton University Press.

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage.

Mavrommatis, G. (2015). South Asian tales: Ethnic entrepreneurship and narratives of spatialized transnational identities emerging in an East London (UK), inner-city area. *Diaspora Studies*, *8*(2), 89–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2015.1029710

Mayring, P. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: Theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution*. Klagenfurt. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-395173

Moret, J. (2018). *European Somalis: Post-migration movements, mobility capital and the transnationalisation of resources*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95660-2

Munkejord, M. C. (2017). Immigrant entrepreneurship contextualised: Becoming a female migrant entrepreneur in rural Norway. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *11*(2), 258–276. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-05-2015-0029

Muñoz Castro, D. C., Santamaría-Alvarez, S. M., & Marín-Zapata, S. I. (2019). Transnational entrepreneurship: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, *23*(6), 559–583. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEIM.2019.102824

Mustafa, M., & Chen, S. (2010). The strength of family networks in transnational immigrant entrepreneurship. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *52*(2), 97–106. https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.20317

Nawojczyk, M., & Nowicka, M. (2018). Transnational migration and entrepreneurial activities of migrants. Introduction. *Migration Studies - Review of polish diaspora*, *169*(3), 9–15.

Nkongolo-Bakenda, J.-M., & Chrysostome, E. V. (2013). Engaging diasporas as international entrepreneurs in developing countries: In search of determinants. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *11*(1), 30–64. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-012-0098-1

Nkrumah, A. (2018). Immigrants' transnational entrepreneurial activities: The case of Ghanaian immigrants in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *19*(1), 195–211. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-017-0535-z

Nowicka, M. (2013). Positioning strategies of Polish entrepreneurs in Germany: Transnationalizing Bourdieu's notion of capital. *International Sociology*, *28*(1), 29–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580912468919

Ojo, S. (2012). Ethnic enclaves to diaspora entrepreneurs: a critical appraisal of Black British Africans' transnational entrepreneurship in London. *Journal of African Business*, *13*(2), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2012.693446

Ojo, S., Nwankwo, S., & Gbadamosi, A. (2013). African diaspora entrepreneurs: navigating entrepreneurial spaces in 'Home' and 'Host' countries. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, *14*(4), 289–299. https://doi.org/10.5367/ijei.2013.0126

Osaghae, O.-G., & Cooney, T. M. (2020). Exploring the relationship between immigrant enclave theory and transnational diaspora entrepreneurial opportunity formation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2086–2105. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1560001

Ottati, G. D. (2014). A transnational fast fashion industrial district: an analysis of the Chinese businesses in Prato. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, *38*(5), 1247–1274. https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/beu015

Patel, P. C., & Terjesen, S. (2011). Complementary effects of network range and tie strength in enhancing transnational venture performance. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *5*(1), 58–80. https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.107

Piguet, E., Kaenzig, R., & Guélat, J. (2018). The uneven geography of research on "environmental migration." *Population and Environment*, *39*(3), 357–383.

Poblete, C. (2018). Shaping the castle according to the rocks in the path? Perceived discrimination, social differences, and subjective wellbeing as determinants of firm type among immigrant entrepreneurs. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 276–300. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-018-0224-9

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Haller, W. J. (2002). Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(2), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088896

Portes, A., & Martinez, B. P. (2020). They are not all the same: Immigrant enterprises, transnationalism, and development. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1991–2007. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559995

Portes, A., & Yiu, J. (2013). Entrepreneurship, transnationalism, and development. *Migration Studies*, *1*(1), 75–95. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mns036

Pruthi, S., Basu, A., & Wright, M. (2018). Ethnic ties, motivations, and home country entry strategy of transnational entrepreneurs. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 210–243. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-017-0223-2

Quan, R., Fan, M., Zhang, M., & Sun, H. (2019). A dynamic dual model: The determinants of transnational migrant entrepreneurs' embeddedness in the UK. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation (JEMI)*, *15*(2), 29–55. https://doi.org/10.7341/20191522

Rezaei, S., & Goli, M. (2020). Prometheus, the double-troubled – migrant transnational entrepreneurs and the loyalty trap. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2045–2066. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559998

Riaño, Y. (2017). Conceptualising space in transnational migration studies. A critical perspective. In E. S. Youkhana & Universität Bonn (Eds.), *Border transgression: mobility and mobilization in crisis* (pp. 35–48). Bonn: Universität Bonn. https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737007238.35

Ribeiro, A., Rezaei, S., & Dana, L.-P. (2012). Gender and family in transnational entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, *8*(3), 409–420. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBG.2012.046213

Riddle, L., Hrivnak, G. A., & Nielsen, T. M. (2010). Transnational diaspora entrepreneurship in emerging markets: Bridging institutional divides. *Journal of International Management*, *16*(4), 398–411. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2010.09.009

Sandoz, L. (2021). Localising informal practices in transnational entrepreneurship. *Migration Letters*, *18*(2), 135–148. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i2.1177

Santamaría-Alvarez, S. M., Muñoz-Castro, D. C., Sarmiento-González, M. A., & Marín-Zapata, S. I. (2018). Fragmented networks and transnational entrepreneurship: Building strategies to prosper in challenging surroundings. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *16*(2), 244–275. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-017-0215-2

Santamaría-Alvarez, S. M., & Śliwa, M. (2016). Transnational entrepreneurship in emerging markets: The Colombian case. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *10*(2), 203–223. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-10-2013-0030

Saxenian, A. (2007). *The new argonauts: regional advantage in a global economy* (1st Harvard University Press paperback edition.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Schäfer, S., & Henn, S. (2018). The evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the critical role of migrants. A phase-model based on a study of IT startups in the Greater Tel Aviv Area. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *11*(2), 317–333. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy013

Schmoll, C. (2005). Pratiques spatiales transnationales et stratégies de mobilité des commercantes tunisiennes. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, *21*(1), 131–154. https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.2352

Schmoll, C. (2012). The making of a transnational marketplace. Naples and the impact of Mediterranean cross-border trade on regional economies. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *5*(2), 221–238. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsr020

Schumpeter, J., A. (1974). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (4th ed.). Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Sequeira, J. M., Carr, J. C., & Rasheed, A. A. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurship: Determinants of firm type and owner attributions of success. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1023–1044. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00333.x

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *38*(2), 207–226. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268

Shoorcheh, M. (2019). On the spatiality of geographic knowledge. *Asian Geographer*, *36*(1), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/10225706.2018.1463854

Sinkovics, N., & Reuber, A. R. (2021). Beyond disciplinary silos: A systematic analysis of the migrant entrepreneurship literature. *Journal of World Business*, *56*(4). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101223

Solano, G. (2020). The mixed embeddedness of transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Moroccans in Amsterdam and Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2067–2085. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559999

Sternberg, R., & Mueller, C. (2010). “New argonauts” in China - Return migrants, transnational entrepreneurship and economic growth in a regional innovation system. *Die Erde; Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, *141*, 103–125.

Terjesen, S., & Elam, A. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurs’ venture internationalization strategies: A practice theory approach. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1093–1120. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00336.x

Tung, R. L. (2008). Brain circulation, diaspora, and international competitiveness. *European Management Journal*, *26*(5), 298–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2008.03.005

UNCTAD, IOM, & UNHCR. (2018). *Policy guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees* (No. UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2). New York, Geneva: United Nations. https://publications.iom.int/books/policy-guide-entrepreneurship-migrants-and-refugees. Accessed 31 March 2022

Urbano, D., Toledano, N., & Ribeiro-Soriano, D. (2011). Socio-cultural factors and transnational entrepreneurship: A multiple case study in Spain. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, *29*(2), 119–134. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242610391934

Valenzuela-Garcia, H., Güell, B., Parella, S., Molina, J. L., & Lubbers, M. J. (2018). Placing migrant entrepreneurship: Migrant economy debates through new spatial lenses. *Sociologica*, *12*(2), 39–56. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/8619

Veréb, V. N., & Ferreira, J. J. (2018). Transnational entrepreneurship as a win-win scenario of international knowledge spillover. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, *9*(2), 446–472. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-017-0496-7

Villares-Varela, M., & Essers, C. (2019). Women in the migrant economy. A positional approach to contextualize gendered transnational trajectories. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *31*(3–4), 213–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2018.1551789

Wahlbeck, Ö. (2018). The transferability and mobilisability of transnational resources: The case of Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, *8*(4), 237–244. https://doi.org/10.2478/njmr-2018-0027

Webster, N. A. (2017). Rural-to-rural translocal practices: Thai women entrepreneurs in the Swedish countryside. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *56*, 219–228. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.09.016

Yeung, H. W. (2009). Transnationalizing entrepreneurship: a critical agenda for economic geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(2), 210–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508096032

Zack, T. (2015). 'Jeppe'—Where low-end globalisation, ethnic entrepreneurialism and the arrival city meet. *Urban Forum*, *26*(2), 131–150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-014-9245-1

Zani, B. (2019). Gendered transnational ties and multipolar economies: Chinese migrant women's WeChat commerce in Taiwan. *International Migration*, *57*(4), 232–246. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12526

Zapata-Barrero, R., & Hellgren, Z. (2020). Harnessing the potential of Moroccans living abroad through diaspora policies? Assessing the factors of success and failure of a new structure of opportunities for transnational entrepreneurs. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2027–2044. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559997

Zapata-Barrero, R., & Rezaei, S. (2020). Diaspora governance and transnational entrepreneurship: the rise of an emerging social global pattern in migration studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1959–1973. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559990

# ARTICLE 2

## *“Because You've Lived in Different Places All Your Life” – How Mobility Trajectories Create Cross-Border Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Migrants in Switzerland*

Christina Mittmasser

Published in February 2022 in Geoforum, 129, 161–171.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.12.018

### *Abstract*

The activities of migrant entrepreneurs increasingly extend beyond national borders as they travel and move goods between countries. Yet, research still portrays a static and homogeneous picture of the phenomenon which disregards complex biographies, evolving along multiple places over time, and cross-border activities beyond the origin and destination country. In response, this article uses a time-geographic and biographic approach which allows for a more dynamic investigation of the different localities involved in migrants' entrepreneurial projects and the evolution of cross-border resources throughout their history of migration. The presented study is based on ethnographic observations and biographic interviews, including trajectories traced on geographic maps, of 34 migrants with diverse backgrounds in Zurich, Switzerland. Because most research participants have multiple migration experiences and are female, it provides insights into understudied groups within the field. The article introduces a typology of three different kinds of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship. In contrast to the classic literature, it highlights that the cross-border engagement of migrants often transcends the origin-destination binary. Knowledge of economic and institutional environments, professional and intimate contacts, as well as other competences that interviewees have developed within different localities and episodes of their mobile biographies, become important resources in this regard. Moreover, the study offers a nuanced view on the constraints experienced and strategies employed by different groups of migrants according to their position in society.

**Keywords:** Migration, Entrepreneurship, Transnationalism, Mobility, Biography, Switzerland

## *“Because You've Lived in Different Places All Your Life” – How Mobility Trajectories Create Cross-Border Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Migrants in Switzerland (Article 2)*

### *1. Introduction*

In many European cities, economic and political actors promote entrepreneurship as an opportunity for migrants to enter the local economy and improve their livelihoods (IOM 2019; UNCTAD et al. 2018). In recent decades, studies have also shown that business activities of migrants increasingly extend beyond national borders (Portes et al. 2002). “By travelling physically and virtually”, so-called transnational entrepreneurs are “maintaining business-related linkages with their former country of origin” and thereby “maximize their resource base” (Drori et al. 2009, p. 1001). This phenomenon has received increasing attention within the last years in business and migration studies (Pruthi and Mitra 2020; Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020), as well as in geography (Schäfer and Henn 2018; Yeung 2009).

The value of this paper lies in examining migrant’s entrepreneurial activities in different countries by using a time-geographic and biographic approach, which is largely missing from the literature. There is a certain consensus that migrants are in a particularly favourable position to conduct cross-border business activities, as they can take advantage of their lived experiences in different places. Yet, the focus often remains on two countries, migrants’ countries of origin and current residence countries (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 33; Sandoz et al. 2022, p. 8). The literature thereby ignores mobile biographies, which evolve along multiple countries over time, and portrays an incomplete picture of the spatiality and temporality of contemporary cross-border migrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, scholars have recently shown that migratory experiences should not be uncritically celebrated, as they do not automatically lead to entrepreneurial success for all migrants (Brzozowski and Cucculelli 2020; Portes and Martinez 2020). There is a need to dynamically study the processes behind the creation of cross-border businesses by different groups of migrants.

The paper builds on a qualitative study of 34 migrant entrepreneurs from different backgrounds in Zurich, Switzerland. It questions how migrants’ entrepreneurial projects relate to their complex biographies and via which processes they can use the experiences they accumulated in different localities and times. I follow scholars pushing for a time-geographic perspective when studying migrants’ livelihoods (Axelsson et al. 2017; Datta and Aznar 2019) and entrepreneurial journeys (Monteith and Camfield 2019) and use a biographical approach inspired by the mobility paradigm (Moret 2020;

Schapendonk et al. 2021). This allows for a dynamic investigation of the evolution of cross-border resources throughout the history of migration, which is particularly interesting for this study, as the majority of interviewees have lived in multiple countries. With this approach, I also consider the constraints experienced by different groups of migrants while creating and running their businesses, and the active strategies they develop to overcome difficulties over time. Because most research participants are female, this study thus portrays experiences that have not been represented to a great extent in the literature (Haandrikman & Webster, 2020, p. 6).

In the next section, I discuss the state of the art in transnational entrepreneurship research and the theoretical framework I apply. Section 3 offers a contextualisation of the presented research and a description of central features of migrants in Switzerland. Section 4 depicts my methodological approach, which is based on ethnographic observations and biographic interviews, using geographic maps. In section 5, I present the results of this study, including a typology of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship and two illustrative biographies.

## *2. State of the art and theoretical approach*

### *2.1. Migrant entrepreneurship beyond static biases*

There is a long tradition of migrant entrepreneurship research in the social sciences. Classical works focused on the concept of ethnic entrepreneurship (Waldinger et al. 1990). This applied mainly to migrant businesses in low-income labour sectors within urban centres of destination countries – such as restaurants serving specific diasporic communities. Within the last two decades, this approach has come under criticism because of its essentialising ideas of ethnicity and static orientation that focuses on integration in one place without considering cross-border activities. By applying a transnational perspective (Glick Schiller et al. 1992), the focus shifted from businesses in single-sited national contexts to the activities of migrant entrepreneurs embedded in both origin and destination countries through cross-border trading of goods, services, capital, and ideas (Drori et al. 2009; Portes et al. 2002). Transnational entrepreneurship has become a burgeoning field of research at the crossroads of different disciplines (Sandoz et al. 2022, p. 8); yet, due to its limited analytical focus towards the origin-destination-country-relationship, most research ignores more complex mobility patterns among migrant entrepreneurs (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 33; Muñoz Castro et al. 2019, p. 569). Disregarding localities

beyond this binary reproduces a simplistic view of migration that does not correspond to the dynamic nature of contemporary migration processes. In fact, following onward migrations and the development of social networks across various geographical sites, migrant entrepreneurs might utilise places and contacts beyond their national origin in their entrepreneurial practices, which the transnational perspective often seems to ignore (Sandoz et al. 2022, p. 8). Researchers have started to draw attention to these dynamics by studying the involvement of migrant entrepreneurs in third countries, as in the case of cosmopolitan entrepreneurs, who engage in multilateral contexts (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 21), or transnational diaspora entrepreneurs, involving their diasporic networks across various locations (Rodgers et al. 2019, p. 122). A study on Moroccan entrepreneurs in Italy has for example highlighted the "multi-located (and not only bi-located) nature" (Solano 2020, p. 2073) of contemporary transnational entrepreneurship. Yet, contributions tracing the complex biographies and multi-sited entrepreneurial activities of migrants remain scarce.

In my research, I apply a dynamic biographic approach inspired by the mobility paradigm (Cresswell 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006). Scholars use this lens to criticise classical migration research for applying a simple "departure-movement-arrival-integration framework" (Schapendonk et al. 2021, p. 3244). Instead of a single and linear move of a person from country A to country B, they highlight diverse forms of spatial movements by people and other entities. Schapendonk and his colleges, for example, opt against the analytical separation of the migration journey from pre- and post-migratory movements. They use the concept of "im/mobility trajectories" defined as "open spatial-temporal processes", which evolve "across various places" and "do not necessarily follow a linear directionality" (Schapendonk et al. 2021, p. 3246). Another example is Moret, who argues that the mobility paradigm "makes it possible to look at migrants' biographies and life trajectories in the long term" (Moret 2018, p. 15). It thereby enriches the transnational paradigm and provides more depth.

I use this approach to explore the various mobilities that shape the biographies of migrant entrepreneurs. Thus, I am interested in the impacts of multiple mobility experiences on their business projects. Scholars have coined the terms migrant capital (Skaptadóttir 2019) or mobility capital (Moret 2020; Prazeres et al. 2017) to study the resources that result from living in different countries, such as international networks and knowledge of different places. Following this line of research, I want to understand how experiences in multiple places can become a resource for migrant entrepreneurs. In accordance with time-geographic perspectives (Axelsson et al. 2017; Datta and Aznar 2019), I thereby consider how moments in the past influence the present within mobile biographies and how different localities and temporalities intersect in the entrepreneurial projects of migrants.

### 2.2. Migrant entrepreneurship beyond heroization

In a recent report by the IOM, it is stated that "migrants' entrepreneurship is perhaps one of the most obvious illustrations of their agency for their economic inclusion" (IOM 2019, p. 203). Here, a migration background if framed as advantageous and migrants' diverse experiences are expected to lead to innovation and the introduction of new products to local markets (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 10). Similarly, research often conceptualises the knowledge and international contacts resulting from migration as a competitive advantage for entrepreneurship (Elo and Vincze 2019; Harima 2015). At a time when migrants are recurrently framed as economic burdens associated with labour market deficits and unemployment, this refreshing narrative sheds light on migrants' contributions to society. Yet, by focusing on success stories, less attention is paid to the fact that not every migrant can utilise cross-border resources for an entrepreneurial project in the same way. When lacking the necessary support and stability, the gap between the image of a celebrated entrepreneurial career and subjective realities may become a new source of frustration for people in already precarious situations (Mittmasser and Stingl 2021, p. 237). Authors responding to this issue highlight for example the obstacles encountered by migrant women (Dannecker and Cakir 2016; Haandrikman and Webster 2020) and refugees (Desai et al. 2021) or the impact of class and socio-economic position (Cederberg and Villares-Varela 2019). They call for more nuanced analyses which do not portray migrants as a homogenous group (Portes and Martinez 2020), but rather examine their differentiated experiences regarding entrepreneurship and the conditions in which migratory resources can be used for business purposes.

I aim to contribute to these discussions. A biographic approach allows me to trace the constraints experienced by individuals regarding the evolution of their position in society. Thereby, I follow scholars who remind us that we should not fall in the trap of "romanticizing spatial mobility" and "downplaying social inequalities" (Moret 2020, p. 236). While many people can improve their living conditions by moving in space, others experience a shortage of opportunities after moving, e.g., due to legal restrictions or a lack of networks (Beck 2007; Schapendonk et al. 2020). Intersecting social characteristics, such as gender, family situation, race, education, and class, shape mobilities and their value in different ways (Faist 2013). I study these categories of difference from a time-geographic perspective as migrants are influenced by the logics of different localities (Carmo and Hedberg 2019; Skaptadóttir 2019) and temporalities (Axelsson et al. 2017; Baas and Yeoh 2019). Moreover, I also consider their agency to react to structural conditions and their strategies to overcome difficulties over time (Cederberg and Villares-Varela 2019).

## *3. Research context in Switzerland*

This paper is based on a case study in Switzerland, which is an interesting country to study this phenomenon for several reasons. First, the country is often considered an attractive place to live because it offers political stability, higher salaries than other European countries, and strong connections to the international economy. Almost one-third of the Swiss population is foreign-born. Two-thirds of individuals moving to Switzerland were born in countries that belong to the European Union (EU) or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and more than 60% have completed a tertiary education. This relates to the selective and skill-focused immigration programme, Switzerland applies similar to other EU member states. The country grants free movement to EU/ EFTA citizens while limiting admission to individuals with other nationalities. Those can move to Switzerland as workers only if they are considered specialists and sponsored by a company, or through family reunification, student visas or asylum (D'Amato et al. 2019; Sandoz 2020).

Second, Switzerland is one of the top-ranking OECD countries when it comes to the participation of foreign-born individuals within the labour market (OECD 2021); yet, certain groups of migrants face significant challenges in their professional lives. The unemployment rate among the population with a migration background (7%) is more than twice as high as in the population without a migration background (3%) (Federal Statistical Office 2021a). Thus, 21% of migrant employees hold low-wage jobs, compared to 13% of non-migrant employees (Federal Statistical Office 2021b). Studies have highlighted that especially women who follow their partners to Switzerland from non-EU/EFTA countries struggle with unemployment or de-qualification after arriving due to discriminatory employment practices, unequal childcare responsibilities, and national family-related policies that lag behind other OECD countries (Riaño 2021). Interestingly, entrepreneurship is used as solution to these situations (Zimmermann 2016). However, quantifiable data is lacking. It shall be stated here that self-employment rates of migrants in Switzerland are lower compared to those of non-migrants[16] and below the EU average[17] (OECD and EU 2019, p. 162). Research also shows that factors, such as nationality, gender, duration of stay, and class, affect the likelihood of running a business as a migrant in Switzerland (Juhasz Liebermann et al. 2014; Piguet 2010), but insights into the lived experiences of migrant entrepreneurs remain scant.

Third, in Switzerland complex mobility trajectories and cross-border forms of entrepreneurship are present, but so far we have a limited understanding of them. The migration-mobility survey by the nccr

[16] Self-employment rates in Switzerland in 2018: 10.3% of those born in a EU country, 9.1% of those born outside the EU, compared to 12.4% of Swiss-born (OECD and EU 2019, p. 162).
[17] Self-employment rates in the EU in 2018: 13.7% of those born in another EU country, 13.1% of those born outside the EU, compared to 14.9% of those born in the reporting country (OECD and EU 2019, p. 162).

– on the move[18] shows that multiple mobilities are a common phenomenon among recently arrived migrants in Switzerland. For example, more than half of the migrants surveyed in 2018 have lived in several countries before moving to Switzerland (Wanner et al. 2019, p. 207; see also: Zufferey 2019). Thus, 10.4% of the survey participants have had business activities in the past 12 months with people or institutions in countries other than Switzerland (Wanner et al. 2019, p. 261). A qualitative study on migrants who run international businesses also concluded that diverse geographical and virtual mobilities provide "access to networks, exchange, ideas, facilities, and funding (…)" and constitute "the basis for entrepreneurial careers" (Sontag 2018, p. 150). Yet, the question of how cross-border entrepreneurial activities relate to the complex biographies of migrants has not been in the focus of research.

The presented research was conducted in Zurich. Every fifth migrant in Switzerland moves to the canton of Zurich, with half of them living in the city of Zurich (Stadt Zürich Integrationsförderung 2018). The region is one of the main areas for entrepreneurship, as its urban spaces are especially attractive to entrepreneurs due to the presence of a diverse customer base, universities, investors, and growing support structures. Zurich has the highest numbers of businesses created between 2015 and 2020 compared to other regions in the country (Kyora and Rockinger 2020, p. 38). Thus, we can find different forms of migrant entrepreneurship. First, migrants running mobile and digital businesses use the infrastructure of the city for their entrepreneurial careers, such as co-working spaces, networking groups, and diverse events for selling products and services. Second, in the city centre migrants run small shops in diverse fields, such as IT, construction, gastronomy, and retail (Stadt Zürich 2021). Moreover, different organisations provide training programmes for migrants and refugees beginning their entrepreneurial careers (UNCTAD et al. 2018, p. 144).

## *4. Methodological approach*

Qualitative fieldwork was mostly conducted in the summer and autumn of 2019 in Zurich, and included ethnographic observations and biographic interviews. I visited different shopping districts, co-working spaces, and entrepreneurial networking events. Additionally, I volunteered in an NGO supporting migrant entrepreneurs. Engaging in a collaborative relationship with this organisation over the course of two years gave me an intimate perspective on my research field and allowed me to meet further

[18] 7'740 individuals between the ages of 24 and 64 (52% women, 38% men) participated in the 2018 survey. The majority originates from an EU/EFTA country, has a tertiary-level education, is married and has arrived with their family. The survey is representative of the foreign population having arrived in Switzerland after the age of 18 (Wanner et al. 2019).

contacts. By applying the method of biographic interviews (Denzin 1989), I focused on life stories and personal narratives (Dutta 2016). I asked the research participants about their migration trajectories, the evolution of their businesses and cross-border activities, the difficulties they experienced, and their coping strategies. In addition, I used geographic maps to visualise past, present, and future mobilities that are important to the participants (see Figure 1). Sketching mobility trajectories and marking different locations on maps served as an icebreaker in the interviews, while drawing attention to complex im/mobility patterns. Following a participatory approach (Caretta and Riaño 2016), I tried to keep in touch with my informants through continuous exchanges, mostly via mail and social media. I invited them to give me updates about their projects and asked them to comment on my interpretation of the data.

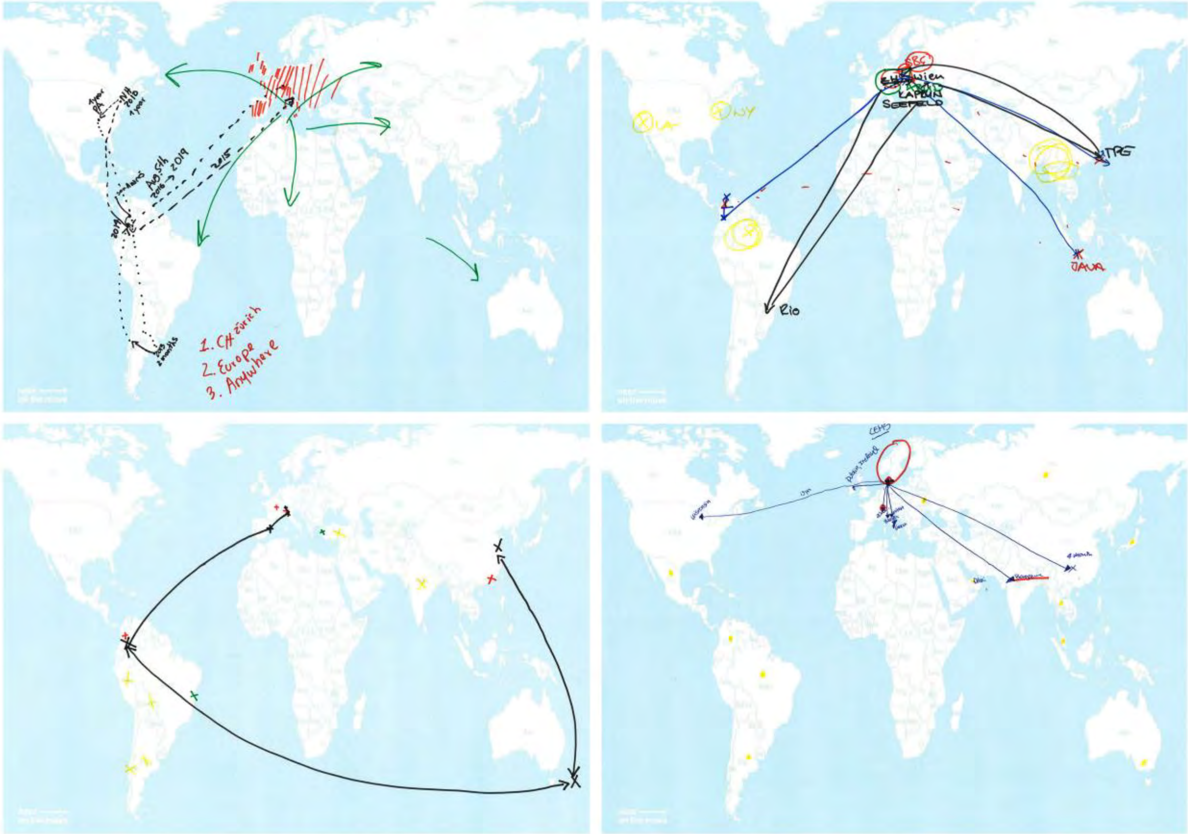



*Figure 1: Drawings of research participants on geographical maps, for all maps see: https://tabsoft.co/2VagVpT*

I accessed research participants in different ways, such as social media platforms, personal contacts, and snowballing. I followed a purposive theoretical sampling approach inspired by grounded theory and maximum variation sampling (Glaser 1992), not aiming for statistical representativity but for a representation of a variety of different situations (regarding age, family situation, region of birth, and

other characteristics) (see Table 1). I thus specifically tried to include female entrepreneurs, as they still remain understudied (Haandrikman & Webster, 2020, p. 6). Thirty-four interview partners were selected and share the following three features: First, they have lived at least once outside their country of birth. I did not define migrants in terms of nationality or legal status but in terms of their experiences of moving to another country. Due to my interest in complex mobility trajectories, I purposely included 28 individuals who migrated several times. Second, all interviewees created or were in the process of establishing a business or social project, formal or informal, with or without employees. In this sense, I used a broad and processual definition of entrepreneurship (Gartner 1988). I included individuals who officially created businesses but also those who were still in the early stages or had not managed to sustain a livelihood with their entrepreneurial activity. This enabled me to gain more varied insights into the difficulties of starting and running a business. And third, all interviewees operate across national borders, which means that they either travel for business-related activities or move goods and services between different countries. I did not limit my study to a specific economic sector, but most of my interviewees had completed tertiary education.

The average length of the conducted interviews was 81 minutes. They were transcribed, anonymised, and interpreted using charts and life course analysis (Wingens et al. 2011). In a first step, I focused on individual mobility trajectories, how they evolved over space and time, and how they relate to the cross-border business activities of research participants. Based on the differences among interviewees regarding these questions, I then created a typology (Collier et al. 2012). In a second step, I paid closer attention to how intersecting markers of difference created inequalities among interviewees. During the process of analysis, the family situation / gender, legal status / nationality, and socio-economic position of my interviewees appeared to be the most relevant factors.

| | n |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Female | 23 |
| Male | 11 |
| **Age** | |
| 20-29 | 7 |
| 30-39 | 10 |
| 40-49 | 12 |
| >50 | 5 |
| **Family situation** | |
| Married | 23 |
| Children | 17 |
| **Highest educational level** | |
| High school/ college | 5 |
| Bachelor's degree | 8 |
| Master's degree | 18 |
| PhD | 3 |
| **Region of birth** | |
| Europe | 14 |
| Middle East & Asia | 9 |
| Americas | 8 |
| Africa | 3 |
| **Primary reason to move to Switzerland** | |
| Work | 9 |
| Study | 2 |
| Family | 16 |
| Protection | 7 |
| **Number of countries lived in** | |
| 2 (country of birth and Switzerland) | 6 |
| 3 | 13 |
| >3 | 15 |
| **Years in Switzerland** | |
| 0–5 | 8 |
| 6–10 | 16 |
| 11–20 | 5 |
| >20 | 5 |
| **Legal status** | |
| Asylum seeker (N permit) | 2 |
| Temporary residence (5 years, B permit) | 11 |
| Permanent residence (C permit) | 11 |
| Swiss citizen | 10 |
| **Main business sector** | |
| Design / arts / fashion | 17 |
| Community building | 5 |
| Consulting | 5 |
| Technology | 4 |
| Gastronomy | 3 |
| **Years of entrepreneurial activity** | |
| 0–2 | 17 |
| 3–5 | 9 |
| >5 | 8 |

*Table 1: Characteristics of 34 interviewees in Zurich, for more descriptive data see:* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5139728

# *5. Results*

### *5.1. Beyond home and host countries: Three types of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship*

In this paper, I raise the question of how the entrepreneurial activities of the studied migrants relate to their complex biographies. By analysing the mobility trajectories of the interviewees, I uncovered three different types of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship: 1. classic transnational entrepreneurship; 2. extended transnational entrepreneurship; 3. explorative cross-border entrepreneurship (see Table 2). These types represent contrasting relationships between past mobility trajectories and entrepreneurial projects in terms of their spatiality and temporality. They differentiate regarding the number of places currently involved in business activities and whether or not the interviewees have lived in these places in the past. Furthermore, they describe how research participants use the resources and competences acquired in different episodes of their mobile biography for entrepreneurial purposes. It is important to note that these types rarely exist in a pure form, as most interviewees illustrated more than one type over time. Yet, they represent typical situations of cross-border entrepreneurial activities among the studied group.

The first type, classic transnational entrepreneurship, refers to individuals who focus on business activities in their country of birth and current residence country. They sell goods that are produced in their origin country within the Swiss market (or vice versa) or acquire technical and financial support there while establishing an entrepreneurial project in Switzerland (or vice versa). For this purpose, they mobilise their social network in their country of birth and apply the knowledge they acquired in the past about its economic and institutional contexts. Profiting from their lived experiences in place, they use contacts and resources, such as materials, training, and funding, available in two environments, the origin and destination country, and therefore represent the classic image of transnational entrepreneurs (Drori et al. 2009; Portes et al. 2002). Almost all interviewees of this study followed this pattern. Yet, only five interviewees limited their focus to two countries, while the rest also involved other localities over time.

The second type, extended transnational entrepreneurship, represents interviewees who conduct entrepreneurial activities in multiple countries where they have lived in the past. They move goods, services, capital, and ideas between these different localities, which is enabled by contacts and knowledge accumulated over time. While studying, working or caring for a family in various places in the past, they have established private and professional networks, which can be mobilised as producers, clients, collaborators or investors. Thus, they have acquired insights on how to access spaces for

production, selling, and support in multiple environments. This type is illustrated by almost half of the interviewees. They either incorporated various former residence countries from the start or expanded step by step, as more opportunities emerged or more resources were needed. This pattern has rarely been discussed in the literature (Muñoz Castro et al. 2019, p. 569; Sandoz et al. 2022, p. 8).

The third type, explorative cross-border entrepreneurship, refers to individuals who expand their business activities to countries where they have not lived before. In contrast to type 1 and 2, the localities involved do not mirror the past trajectories of interviewees spatially. Yet, the practice of exploring new places is still connected to their former mobility experiences. In the past, they have built international networks and specific competences in terms of if, when, and where to move, and how to make the best of a place's opportunities. They then use these contacts and competences to explore other environments and expand their business activities. In this context, interviewees often referred to diverse skills and attitudes they developed in different episodes of their mobile biographies, such as language proficiencies, intercultural communication competences, flexibility, and a certain confidence to enter distant places, illustrated in the following quotes:

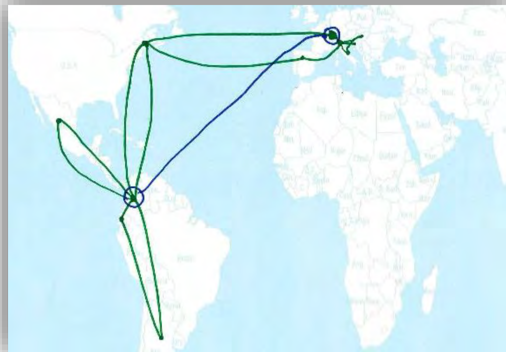
> *"Yes, because you've lived in different places all your life, you learn things that you can use in a business like this. (...) we have learned so much, so you can't read that in a book, right? That's just the way it is. Flexibility and openness (...)." (August 2019)*

> *"And I think my experience (...) kind of de-scared me a little bit to go abroad. (...) You know, it's just not all that wow to even like start selling in different countries or whatever." (September 2019)*

The majority of interviewees followed this logic, either exclusively or combined with other types. Similar to type 2, an exploration of new countries mostly happens out of curiosity for new opportunities or as a response to a lack of resources. The third type resembles forms of cosmopolitan entrepreneurship (Harima and Baron 2020, p. 21), or transnational diaspora entrepreneurship in the case of migrants who engage with their diasporic group in multiple locations (Rodgers et al. 2019, p. 122).

This typology gives an overview of how the business activities of the studied migrants relate to their complex biographies. In Table 2, the three types are exemplified with geographical maps generated in the interviews. Applying a dynamic biographic approach has allowed me to pay close attention to where interviewees have previously lived and where they are currently conducting business activities. While indeed almost all interviewees are active in their home and host country, most of them also mobilise networks, materials, and support in other countries. Some engage in countries where they have resided before by using knowledge and contacts accumulated in the past, others explore new ones for their business activities by applying the competences they acquired throughout their mobile biography, or

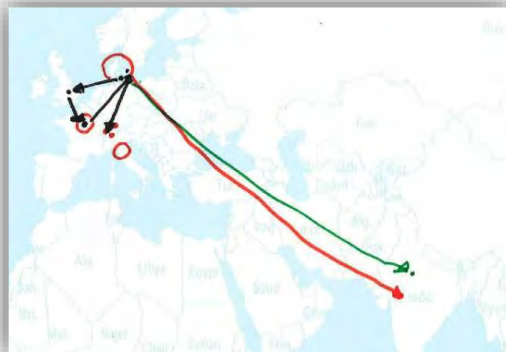
both. Overall, it becomes evident that by broadening the focus and going beyond the dual origin-destination-relationship most prominent in the literature we can find new patterns, in which multiple localities and temporalities interact with each other. Thus, it reveals the agency of migrants to transcend a simple and linear mobility trajectory.



**Classic transnational entrepreneurship**

TYPE 1: Entrepreneurial activities in country of origin and destination (n=32)

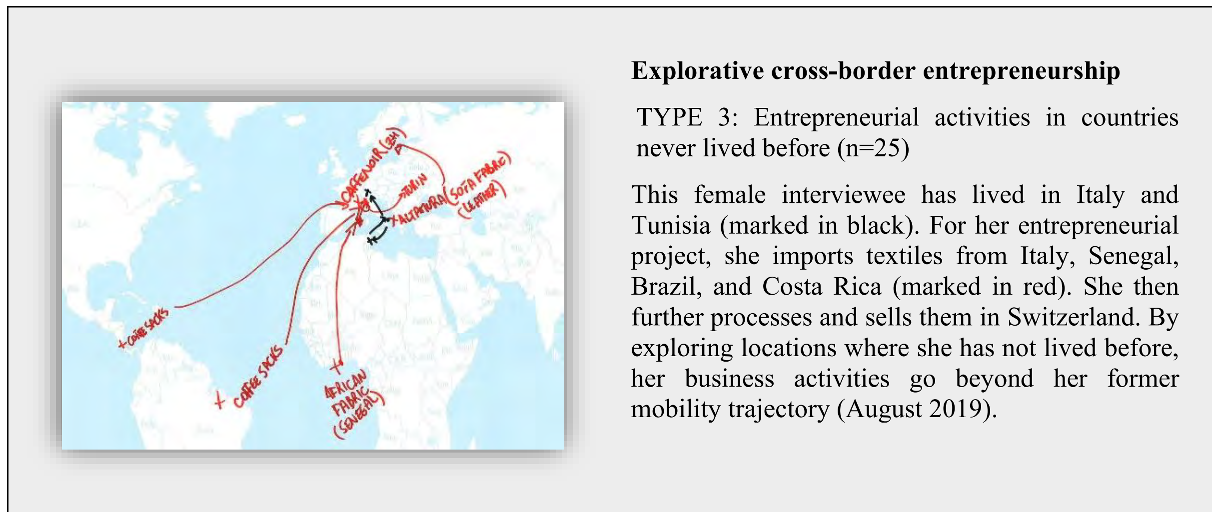
The map depicts the story of a female interviewee, who was born in Colombia and has lived in the US, Mexico, and Argentina before moving to Switzerland (marked in green). In her entrepreneurial project, she aims at facilitating fair trade of Colombian emerald stones to Switzerland. Thereby, she is active in two localities (marked in blue), her home and host country (August 2019).



**Extended transnational entrepreneurship**

TYPE 2: Entrepreneurial activities in multiple former residence countries (n=16)

This female interviewee has lived in Denmark, the UK, France, India, and Switzerland (marked in black and green) and incorporates several of these localities in her entrepreneurial project. She is importing clothes from Denmark, France, India, and Italy (marked in red) and selling them in her own shop in Switzerland. Her business activities thereby (mostly) mirror her complex mobility trajectory (August 2019).




**Explorative cross-border entrepreneurship**

TYPE 3: Entrepreneurial activities in countries never lived before (n=25)

This female interviewee has lived in Italy and Tunisia (marked in black). For her entrepreneurial project, she imports textiles from Italy, Senegal, Brazil, and Costa Rica (marked in red). She then further processes and sells them in Switzerland. By exploring locations where she has not lived before, her business activities go beyond her former mobility trajectory (August 2019).

*Table 2: Three types of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship, for all maps see: https://tabsoft.co/2VagVpT .*

### *5.2. Becoming a cross-border migrant entrepreneur: "Can you really do it?"*

In the previous chapter, I have demonstrated how lived experiences in different countries can help migrant entrepreneurs to create cross-border businesses. Yet, whether or not such experiences become valuable for entrepreneurial careers depends on the interplay with other factors, such as gender/ family situation, legal status/ nationality and socio-economic position. According to my analysis, such categories of difference create different possibilities to (physically and virtually) access the distant and local spaces, which are important for the business activities of research participants. In this section, I will discuss the constraints faced by different interviewees in these regards and in relation to their mobile biographies, and thus portray the strategies they apply to overcome difficulties over time.

*Access to distant spaces*

Research participants highlight that using their mobility experiences for their business activities often requires their regular presence in distant places. They need to check on the quality of their products produced in other countries and build trust with collaborators and clients located outside of Switzerland, illustrated by this quote:

*"It is, as I said, the trust-building is needed, they need to know me, I need to know them. (…) And this way, by going there it's of course me telling them, look, I appreciate you doing this (…)." (September 2019)*

Travelling allows entrepreneurs to maintain contacts and update knowledge they have acquired in the past. Yet, only about two thirds of the interviewees travel for business purposes and some of them do not cross international borders more than once a year. In certain cases, moments of immobility are a result of limited desire to travel. Yet, in others they can be explained by mobility restrictions. These often relate to the family situations of research participants, half of whom have children. Not exclusively, but especially the women among them explain that they cannot take the time to travel on a regular basis due to care obligations towards their children. In most cases, such mechanisms are visible throughout the biographies of female participants. Many of them have put their career on hold to accompany their partners to multiple countries and take care of their children. This is then repeated after arriving in Switzerland. Because their business projects do not provide the same financial output as their partner´s job, they often decide to not conduct their entrepreneurial activities full-time and raise their children on the side. In this context it needs to be highlighted that the professional sphere in Switzerland is significantly shaped by gender inequalities. It lacks behind other OECD countries when it comes to family-related policies and inexpensive childcare (Riaño 2021, p. 2).

Next to gendered family roles, difficulties to travel can also be explained by financial limitations, as well as the nationality and legal status of research participants. This is for example the case for two interviewees, who were born in Colombia and are waiting for asylum in Switzerland. Their legal situation restricts them from crossing international borders. Similarly, interviewees, who are dependent on the Swiss welfare system to sustain their livelihood while establishing their businesses, suffer from such mobility restrictions. It does not allow them to leave the country for more than two weeks. The limited access to distant places is in some cases also related to the specificities of the geographical locations of business activities. Particularly those, who engage in regions characterised by humanitarian crisis, political instabilities, or lack of relevant infrastructure, cannot access the spaces that are relevant to their business projects due to travel bans and visa restrictions, or face challenges in terms of moving goods and capital.

To carry on with their cross-border practices without regularly travelling, many interviewees rely on virtual communication tools. This is illustrated by a quote of a female interviewee, who is running a business for wedding dresses in Colombia:

*"But in the last two years I couldn't go because I have a son and it's not easy to leave him here (…). But I work every day through Skype. (...) And I'm connected everyday with them, everything*

> *that they do, I know it. So, everything is recorded in my phone, I have pictures of every dress, every client, they are not doing much without asking me." (August 2019)*

In a similar way, research participants highlight the important role of private and professional networks abroad. In times, when the studied entrepreneurs cannot be physically present in the places relevant to their business activities, they engage with intimate contacts located in multiple countries. They outsource business tasks to family, friends, and former work colleges who remained in the previous residence countries of the interviewees or have equally moved on and therefore provide access to new localities. Such relationships were developed and maintained over time and are characterised by shared lived experiences, intimacy, and trust. Combined with digital technologies, these intimate networks enable many interviewees to be indirectly present in distant places and navigate their business activities informally and on a low threshold level. Such contacts and the familiarity with digital communication also encourage them to expand their entrepreneurial activities to localities beyond home and host countries.

*Access to local spaces*

Many interviewees underline that mobility experiences are only useful as long as they are valued by the local community in Switzerland. Successfully creating and running a cross-border business is therefore also dependent on their access to local spaces. Constraints in this regard can partly be explained by a lack of sufficiency in German and professional networks that provide knowledge about the local business environment, as well as advice on how to approach clients and possible collaborators in the Swiss context. The following quote by a female interviewee illustrates this experience, which makes her rather critical of profiting from mobility experiences:

> *"The fact that you can do it, is a good thing. However, can you really do it? (…) Or let's say you have the mobility to travel, you have the mobility to see your products, you have everything… but how can you leverage this? Because that means you have to be part of certain circles. How can you find those circles? Do you have the guts to try? There is so much information available. Sometimes we spend a lot of totally useless time on something and it turns out that wasn't the right group. So, I think as much as it sounds great, it can be also a trap." (August 2019)*

Struggles to access professional networks in Switzerland are particularly present in the interviews with women and non-Europeans. To some extent, this relates to the fact that many of them have not been active in the Swiss labour market before. They mostly arrived by requesting family reunification or asylum, and thereby did not directly access the economic sphere in Switzerland. Moreover, research has

shown that the professional integration of migrants in Switzerland is shaped by discourses of otherness (Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006, p. 1705). These emphasise cultural differences and traditional gender roles, and thereby (re)produce deficit-oriented notions towards certain groups of migrants, particularly individuals from the African, Asian, and South American countries, as well as women. For example, many tertiary-educated women are living in Switzerland as trailing spouses whose economic potential is not sufficiently recognised (Riaño 2021, p. 8). This relates to a lack of state initiatives that provide support for accompanying family members to continue their professional careers according to their skills and aspirations (Bachmann, 2016, p. 234).

In order to access the local community, many interviewees rely on informal networking groups and non-state organisations that provide support to entrepreneurs. A third of the interviewees decided to participate in entrepreneurial programmes, which are specifically designed for migrants and offered by independent non-profit organisations. These programmes facilitate access to local networks and provide tools for professionalising marketing practices and acquiring financial support, for example through crowd-funding campaigns. Participants of such programmes also underline how their self-confidence increased by receiving encouragement during the training. They elaborate that over time they learned how to present their knowledge of multiple localities in a positive way and showcase their economic potential to possible collaborators and clients. Yet, in some cases local networking practices do not lead to sustainable collaborations and new resources (see quote above), which often motivates interviewees to look for further opportunities abroad, either in former residence countries or newly explored environments.

The analysis also showed that the socio-economic position of the interviewees is a determining factor whether or not they can risk to fully engage in an entrepreneurial career in Switzerland. Usually, a large amount of starting capital is needed to create a business and living costs are high in the Swiss context. In fact, 23 out of 34 interviewees are not able to sustain their livelihoods with their entrepreneurial activity yet and rely on savings, their partner, social welfare, or regular employment on the side. Those who are financially supported by their partners recurrently highlight that without this help starting a business in Switzerland would not be possible at all, exemplified by the following quote of a female interviewee: "I could use the money I earn to reinvest it in my business, (…) without that I wouldn't have a business at the moment" (August 2019). In contrast, interviewees who are dependent on the Swiss welfare system, often remain reluctant to officially registering and investing in their business, because they are afraid of losing access to social aid. They rather focus on finding a regular job and develop their project informally on the side, as an entrepreneurial career would be too much of a risk for themselves and their families. Yet, some manage to resolve financial limitations over time by collaborating with other entrepreneurs and investors. Economic constraints can also lead to extended transnational entrepreneurship and explorative cross-border entrepreneurship, as some entrepreneurs invest the

higher-value currency of Switzerland in other countries or acquire funding abroad in order to gain financial stability.

The material presented in this section further illustrates the processes via which migrant entrepreneurs use the experiences that result from their mobility trajectories. A time-geographic and biographic approach has allowed me to track the constraints experienced by my interviewees, as well as the strategies they apply to overcome difficulties over time. I have shown, that different localities and temporalities interact not only with each other, but also with categories of difference, such as family situation, legal status, and socio-economic position. Following these results, which are summarised in Figure 2, I am not arguing that mobility experiences automatically result in entrepreneurial success. It is clearly more complex than that, as mobility experiences lead to different outcomes for different groups of migrants.

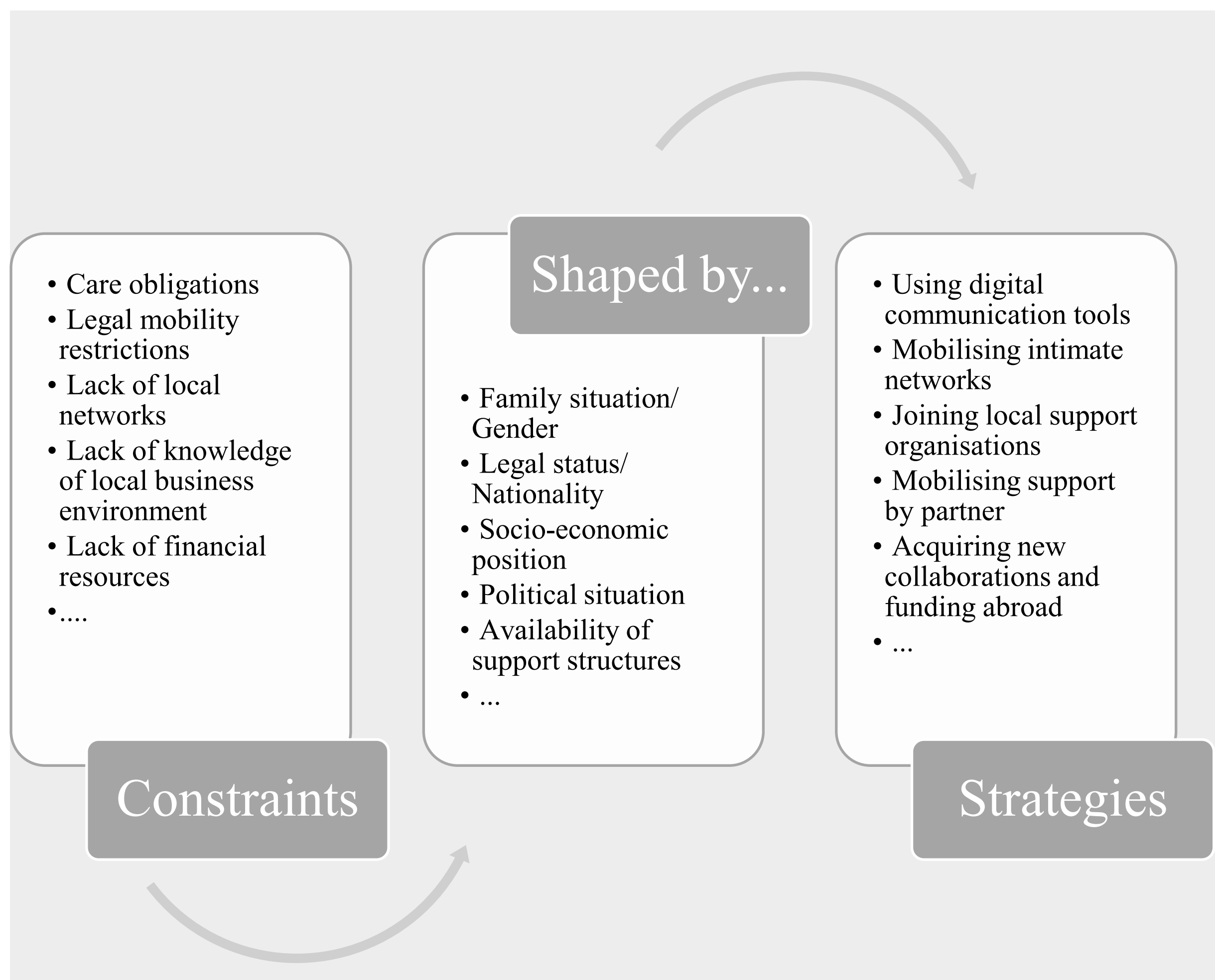



*Figure 2: Accessing distant and local spaces in cross-border migrant entrepreneurship*

### *5.3. Migrant entrepreneurs in multiple localities and temporalities: Two biographies*

The third empirical section aims to illustrate the general results presented above with the biographies of two interviewees. I chose the stories of *Ana Stoyanova* and *Farid Hassan*.[19] because they represent forms of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship beyond the home-host-country-binary, which have merely been discussed in the literature. These biographies thus exemplify the difficulties and strategies faced by women and Non-Europeans.

*Biography 1: Ana Stoyanova*

*Ana was born in the 1970s in a small town in what is now called the Republic of North Macedonia. While studying law, she worked for a human rights organization in the field of education. After, she managed a private clinic in the capital, Skopje, where she met and married her Swiss partner. Ana was about thirty years old when she followed her husband to Tajikistan. He worked for an international organisation while Ana gave birth to and raised their three children. In subsequent years, she continued following her partner, first to France in 2009, and finally to Switzerland in 2011. As the wife of a Swiss man, Ana had no difficulties acquiring a permanent residence permit in Switzerland.*

*Ana started looking for jobs in Switzerland in 2017, but could not find any position that suited her professional skills. In 2019, she decided to create her own fair-trade business importing handicrafts, toys, and other items produced by socially disadvantaged women in North Macedonia and Tajikistan and selling them online and at fairs in Switzerland. In North Macedonia, she is working with an NGO in the eastern part of the country close to her hometown. In Tajikistan, she works with a network of women-led NGOs, which was previously established by Ana´s husband and his colleagues. In the interview, Ana highlights that these organisations were already established. Thus, she knew them from the past, so she just needed to step in as a buyer.*

*Ana clearly profits from living in multiple places in her business activities but is also facing constraints. Due to care obligations towards her children, Ana can neither work on her project full time, nor visit Tajikistan and North Macedonia on a regular basis to meet her business partners. Moreover, she has difficulties reaching out to local networks and clients in Switzerland. Nevertheless, Ana moved on with her business activities. Digital communication tools enable her to run the business without travelling regularly. Thus, Ana's parents, who are located in North Macedonia, and her husband, who knows the context in Tajikistan and Switzerland, support her informally. She also receives training from an*

[19] All names have been anonymised.

*organisation in Zurich. Her family cannot fully live on her business project yet, but Ana is hopeful for the future. (September 2019)*

*Biography 2: Farid Hassan*

*Farid was born in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. At the age of sixteen he moved to Syria where both his parents were born. In Damascus, Farid studied fine arts and marketing. During and after his studies, he worked in different art workshops and advertising agencies in Syria as a graphic designer and art director. In this period, he also spent several months in the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon for professional purposes. In 2008, Farid met his future wife, who has family in Damascus but lived in Switzerland. Due to the Syrian civil war, he decided to join his wife in Zurich in 2011.*

*Struggling to find a job commensurate with his qualifications, Farid started his own business project in 2016. By selling Syrian crafts and furniture to clients based in Switzerland, he aims to preserve Syrian culture and empower its artisans. To set up this entrepreneurial project, Farid mobilised his social contacts from the past – mostly artisans he met while studying and working, during which he also gained an understanding of how traditional Syrian crafts are produced and how to access resources necessary for production.*

*Farid frames his experiences in Syria as assets and uses them as branding. Yet, he also encounters difficulties in his entrepreneurial career. Farid cannot travel to Syria because he considers entering the country too dangerous at the moment. According to him, the project would evolve faster if he could work with his Syrian suppliers face-to-face. Moreover, as some of the routes to Syria are blocked by international sanctions, it is very challenging and expensive to import goods and transfer money directly between Syria and Switzerland. Farid also highlights the lack of financial means and his limited local network in Switzerland.*

*To compensate for his physical absence in Syria, he started using digital means to exchange with the Syrian artisans and put into action his informal network in Syria. His sister communicates with his collaborators and checks on the quality of the products in Damascus. Furthermore, Farid currently modifies the import routes of his products. By using social contacts from previous migration experiences, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon become transit stops for the products en route to Switzerland. He also started to collaborate with the Syrian community in Germany for technical support and enlarging his client base. He highlights that his international contacts are very important to him, illustrated by the following quote about creating an advertising movie:*

*"Again, I was working from a distance, so I had a team working in Damascus. I had my sister with them. (...) And then I had another team in Beirut – old friends who did the photo shooting. And then I had the raw material shipped to Germany where I had a friend who worked on the postproduction. And yeah, I was managing the project from Zurich, so it was Damascus, Beirut, Darmstadt, Zurich."*

*Farid also joined an entrepreneurship programme in Zurich, where he expanded his local network, and he set up a crowdfunding campaign to finance the first phase of his business. (October 2019)*

What do these two biographies tell us? Both entrepreneurs had lived in multiple places in the past, which highlights that migration can be more complex than a single movement from country A to country B. Although Ana and Farid can be seen as *classic transnational entrepreneurs*, as they actively engage in their home country, they also involve other countries in their business projects. Both use their experiences in other former residence countries and thereby act as *extended transnational entrepreneurs*. Because Farid also started to involve a country where he had not lived in the past, he is thus an example of *explorative cross-border entrepreneurship*. With these biographies, I aimed to emphasise that the limited focus on home and host countries does not provide a complete picture of certain forms of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship.

The presented stories also illustrate the entanglement of multiple localities and temporalities in cross-border migrant entrepreneurship. On the one hand, Ana and Farid engage in multiple localities. They manage to mobilise social contacts and resources, such as materials, technical and financial support, in various countries. Abroad, they can use such resources and create collaborations by referring to their lived experiences in place and portraying themselves as highly skilled emigrants with access to the Swiss market, capital, and knowledge. In Switzerland, selling their migratory background as a unique feature of their entrepreneurial identity allows them to enter support structures and local networks. On the other hand, Farid and Ana actively connect with different episodes of their biographies. In Farid´s case, studying fine arts and marketing, as well as working as a graphic designer and project manager in different countries, gave him certain competences and access to a specific network. He now mobilises it for his entrepreneurial career and thereby compensates for the lack of contacts in Switzerland and his limited capacity to travel and move goods between Syria and Switzerland. Ana uses her contacts to NGOs in North Macedonia and in Tajikistan, where she lived with her husband for a few years. His then-position as leader of a humanitarian project in Tajikistan, as well as her own lived experiences in place allows her to build collaborations for her current project. The stories of Farid and Ana thereby reveal that cross-border migrant entrepreneurship needs to be studied geographically and biographically, as different localities offer different resources and moments in the past influence the present.

The mechanisms described here also clearly interact with other factors. Ana illustrates the case of a mother, who struggles with her cross-border business activities due to care obligations. Farid faces difficulties due to financial limitations and mobility restrictions related to political instabilities in Syria. Both experience constraints in accessing the local community as they have not been active in the professional sphere in Switzerland before. Yet, they have developed coping strategies over time. They include digital communication tools and intimate contacts in the places they incorporate in their business activities to compensate for their physical absence. Moreover, they have managed to receive support by an organisation offering entrepreneurial training to migrants. Thanks to their Swiss partners they thus enjoy a stable legal situation in Switzerland and a certain degree of financial security, which allows them to take risks to some extent. These aspects are crucial for the participants of this study. They reveal the danger in celebrating migratory resources without considering the fact that not every individual possesses the necessary privileges to become a cross-border entrepreneur.

## *6. Conclusions*

In this paper, I questioned how the entrepreneurial projects of migrants relate to their complex biographies and via which processes they can use experiences they accumulated in different localities and times. I studied 34 migrant entrepreneurs in Zurich, Switzerland, through ethnographic observations and biographic interviews. Because most of the purposively sampled group have multiple migration experiences and are female, this study provides insights into understudied groups within the field of transnational entrepreneurship. Theoretically, I followed a time-geographic and biographic approach. I thereby investigated the processes behind creating and running businesses geographically, by dismantling their multi-sited nature, and biographically, by examining multiple moments in time creating different opportunities and constraints. It enabled me to overcome the static thinking and home-host-country-binary within the literature (Sandoz et al. 2022, p. 8) and shed light on the recourses, difficulties and strategies that emerge from complex mobile biographies. This conclusion summarises the most important findings.

First, the paper introduces a typology of three different kinds of cross-border migrant entrepreneurship: classic transnational entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial activities in country of origin and destination), extended transnational entrepreneurship (activities in multiple former residence countries) and explorative cross-border entrepreneurship (activities in countries never lived before). In contrast to the classic literature on transnational entrepreneurship which mostly focuses on migrants who conduct

business activities in their home and host countries, I highlighted that the cross-border engagement of migrants can be more complex and diverse. In fact, next to activities in their origin country, most interviewees involve multiple countries, where they have previously lived, or explore new ones, not related to their previous mobility trajectory. Thereby, my research opposes the concentration on the origin-destination-relationship present in the literature as it prevents us from discovering further patterns of cross-border engagement. I conclude that the conceptualisation of transnational entrepreneurship needs to be broadened and complexified by paying close attention to how migrants transcend simple and linear trajectories over space and time.

Second, by taking the complexity of mobile biographies seriously I revealed how the process of becoming a cross-border entrepreneur is shaped by the evolution of an individual's position in society. Most interviewees can capitalize on knowledge of different economic and institutional environments, professional and intimate contacts, as well as competences, such as confidence and flexibility, they have accumulated within different localities and episodes of their mobile biographies. Yet, not every migrant can utilise former mobility experiences and cross-border resources for an entrepreneurial career in the same way. The family situation / gender, legal status / nationality, and socio-economic position of interviewees play an important role in this regard. Difficulties in relation to these characteristics include care obligations, mobility restrictions, limited access to local networks and a lack of financial resources. Especially female and non-European interviewees are affected by these constraints. Yet, the biographic approach also allowed me to highlight the coping strategies they develop over time, such as using digital technologies, mobilising the support of intimate networks, accessing supportive organisations, as well as expanding business activities to further locations. The study thereby provides a nuanced and dynamic analysis of the conditions in which mobility experiences can become a resource.

Overall, I conclude that due to structural inequalities, not every migrant is in a position to successfully start a cross-border entrepreneurial project that provides economic self-sufficiency and, thus, a meaningful alternative to more dependent forms of employment. Mobility experiences lead to different outcomes for different groups of migrants. While the stories of my interviewees clearly illustrate agency, creativity, and hope, they also call for a differentiated view on migrant entrepreneurship and support measures that speak to the factors involved in unequal access to entrepreneurial opportunities. In terms of policies, I therefore recommend that state institutions and non-state initiatives need to address the economic limitations certain individuals face by facilitating access to long-term funding or the prolongation of social aid during the first phase of business creation. Thus, it is relevant to take the care responsibilities of migrant entrepreneurs seriously by offering flexible and inexpensive childcare. Finally, those who need to travel in order to develop cross-border projects would benefit from an extension of mobility rights. In this regard, support organisations could also invest in digital training, which helps migrant entrepreneurs to develop and maintain their business networks virtually. In terms

of future research, I would recommend examining organisations working with migrant entrepreneurs more closely, as well as evaluating their impact on the inequalities that exist among the group. Moreover, it would be interesting to push the application of the mobility paradigm even further by applying mobile and multi-sited methods in order to provide even more context to the diverse mobilities conducted by migrant entrepreneurs.

## *References*


Axelsson, L., Malmberg, B., & Zhang, Q. (2017). On waiting, work-time and imagined futures: Theorising temporal precariousness among Chinese chefs in Sweden's restaurant industry. *Geoforum*, *78*, 169–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.12.007

Baas, M., & Yeoh, B. S. (2019). Introduction: Migration studies and critical temporalities. *Current Sociology*, *67*(2), 161–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118792924

Beck, U. (2007). Beyond class and nation: Reframing social inequalities in a globalizing world. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *58*(4), 679–705. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2007.00171.x

Brzozowski, J., & Cucculelli, M. (2020). Transnational ties and performance of immigrant firms: Evidence from Central Italy. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, *26*(8), 1787–1806. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-10-2019-0582

Caretta, M. A., & Riaño, Y. (2016). Feminist participatory methodologies in geography: Creating spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(3), 258–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116629575

Carmo, R. M., & Hedberg, C. (2019). Translocal mobility systems: Social inequalities and flows in the wild berry industry. *Geoforum*, *99*, 102–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.12.002

Cederberg, M., & Villares-Varela, M. (2019). Ethnic entrepreneurship and the question of agency: the role of different forms of capital, and the relevance of social class. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(1), 115–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1459521

Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, *65*(1), 217–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912437162

Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the move: Mobility in the modern Western world*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203446713

D'Amato, G., Wanner, P., & Steiner, I. (2019). Today's migration-mobility nexus in Switzerland. In I. Steiner & P. Wanner (Eds.), *Migrants and expats: The Swiss migration and mobility nexus*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05671-1_1

Dannecker, P., & Cakir, A. (2016). Female migrant entrepreneurs in Vienna: Mobility and its embeddedness. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, *41*(1), 97–113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11614-016-0193-y

Datta, K., & Aznar, C. (2019). The space-times of migration and debt: Re-positioning migrants' debt and credit practices and institutions in, and through, London. *Geoforum*, *98*, 300–308. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.07.009

Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Desai, S., Naudé, W., & Stel, N. (2021). Refugee entrepreneurship: Context and directions for future research. *Small Business Economics*, *56*, 933–945. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00310-1

Drori, I., Honig, B., & Wright, M. (2009). Transnational entrepreneurship: An emergent field of study. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1001–1022. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00332.x

Dutta, M. (2016). Place of life stories in labour geography: Why does it matter? *Geoforum*, *77*, 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.10.002

Elo, M., & Vincze, Z. (2019). Transnational intrapreneurship: Opportunity development in transnational teams in the Nordic periphery. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *36*(1–2), 103–125. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2019.096954

Faist, T. (2013). The mobility turn: A new paradigm for the social sciences? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(11), 1637–1646. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.812229

Federal Statistical Office. (2021a). Unemployment rate based on ILO definition. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/integration-indicators/indicators/unemployement.html. Accessed 23 August 2021

Federal Statistical Office. (2021b). Share of low wages. https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/integration-indicators/indicators/low-wages.html. Accessed 23 August 2021

Gartner, W. B. (1988). "Who is an entrepreneur?" is the wrong question. *American Journal of Small Business*, *12*(4), 11–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/104225878801200401

Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L. G., & Szanton Blanc, C. (Eds.). (1992). Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *645*(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33482.x

Haandrikman, K., & Webster, N. A. (2020). *Migrant, woman and business owner: A heterogeneous group with diverse needs*. Stockholm University. http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-186687. Accessed 23 November 2020

Harima, A. (2015). Network dynamics of descending diaspora entrepreneurship: Multiple case studies with Japanese entrepreneurs in emerging economies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, *10*(4), 65–92. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2578697

Harima, A., & Baron, T. (2020). Is this transnational entrepreneurship? Five cases in which it is hard to say 'Yes' or 'No': *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 12–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519887561

IOM. (2019). *World migration report 2020* (No. PUB2019/006/L WMR 2020). Geneva: IOM. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020. Accessed 9 June 2020

Juhasz Liebermann, A., Suter, C., & Iglesias Rutishauser, K. (2014). Segregation or integration? Immigrant self-employment in Switzerland. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *15*(1), 93–115. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-012-0270-4

Kyora, S., & Rockinger, M. (2020). *Swiss startup radar 2020/2021*. Lucerne: JNB Journalistenbüro GmbH. https://www.startupticker.ch/en/swiss-startup-radar. Accessed 6 July 2021

Mittmasser, C., & Stingl, I. (2021). Migrant counterspaces: Challenging labour market exclusion through collective action. *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, *37*(1–2). https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.18507

Monteith, W., & Camfield, L. (2019). Business as family, family as business: Female entrepreneurship in Kampala, Uganda. *Geoforum*, *101*, 111–121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.03.003

Moret, J. (2018). *European Somalis: Post-migration movements, mobility capital and the transnationalisation of resources*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95660-2

Moret, J. (2020). Mobility capital: Somali migrants' trajectories of (im)mobilities and the negotiation of social inequalities across borders. *Geoforum*, *116*, 235–242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.12.002

Muñoz Castro, D. C., Santamaría-Alvarez, S. M., & Marín-Zapata, S. I. (2019). Transnational entrepreneurship: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, *23*(6), 559–583. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEIM.2019.102824

OECD. (2021). Foreign-born participation rates. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/foreign-born-participation-rates/indicator/english_fa75b43e-en. Accessed 23 August 2021

OECD & EU. (2019). *The missing entrepreneurs 2019: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/3ed84801-en

Piguet, E. (2010). Entrepreneurship among immigrants in Switzerland. In OECD (Ed.), *Open for business. Migrant entrepreneurship in OECD countries* (pp. 149–175). OECD.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Haller, W. J. (2002). Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(2), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088896

Portes, A., & Martinez, B. P. (2020). They are not all the same: Immigrant enterprises, transnationalism, and development. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1991–2007. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559995

Prazeres, L., Findlay, A., McCollum, D., Sander, N., Musil, E., Krisjane, Z., & Apsite-Berina, E. (2017). Distinctive and comparative places: Alternative narratives of distinction within international student mobility. *Geoforum*, *80*, 114–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.02.003

Pruthi, S., & Mitra, J. (2020). Migrant and transnational entrepreneurs: International entrepreneurship and emerging economies. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 7–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957520903117

Riaño, Y. (2021). Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and nonmigrants. *Population, Space and Place*, *27*(5), e2456. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2456

Riaño, Y., & Wastl-Walter, D. (2006). Immigration policies, state discourses on foreigners and the politics of identity in Switzerland. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *38*(9), 1693–1713. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37411

Rodgers, P., Vershinina, N., Williams, C. C., & Theodorakopoulos, N. (2019). Leveraging symbolic capital: the use of blat networks across transnational spaces. *Global Networks*, *19*(1), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12188

Sandoz, L. (2020). Understanding access to the labour market through migration channels. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(1), 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1502657

Sandoz, L., Mittmasser, C., Riaño, Y., & Piguet, E. (2022). A review of transnational migrant entrepreneurship: Perspectives on unequal spatialities. *ZFW – Advances in Economic Geography*, *66*(3), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004

Schäfer, S., & Henn, S. (2018). The evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the critical role of migrants. A phase-model based on a study of IT startups in the Greater Tel Aviv Area. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *11*(2), 317–333. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy013

Schapendonk, J., Bolay, M., & Dahinden, J. (2021). The conceptual limits of the 'migration journey'. De-exceptionalising mobility in the context of West African trajectories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *47*(14), 3243–3259. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804191

Schapendonk, J., van Liempt, I., Schwarz, I., & Steel, G. (2020). Re-routing migration geographies: Migrants, trajectories and mobility regimes. *Geoforum*, *116*, 211–216. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.06.007

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *38*(2), 207–226. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268

Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2019). Transnational practices and migrant capital: The case of Filipino women in Iceland. *Social Inclusion*, *7*(4), 211–220. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2320

Solano, G. (2020). The mixed embeddedness of transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Moroccans in Amsterdam and Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2067–2085. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559999

Sontag, K. (2018). *Mobile entrepreneurs. An ethnographic study of the migration of the highly skilled*. Opladen: Budrich UniPress. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvbj7k27

Stadt Zürich. (2021). Ethnic business. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/stadtentwicklung/integrationsfoerderung/integrationsthemen/projekte_und_studien.html. Accessed 23 August 2021

Stadt Zürich Integrationsförderung. (2018, January 18). Factsheet Zuwanderung: Jede zehnte ausländische Person kommt nach Zürich. https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/prd/Deutsch/Stadtentwicklung/Publikationen_und_Broschueren/Integrationsfoerderung/themen_a-z/Statistik/Factsheet%20Zuwanderung.%20Jede%20zehnte%20ausl%c3%a4ndische%20Person%20kommt%20nach%20Z%c3%bcrich.pdf. Accessed 23 August 2021

UNCTAD, IOM, & UNHCR. (2018). *Policy guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees* (No. UNCTAD/DIAE/2018/2). New York, Geneva: United Nations.

https://publications.iom.int/books/policy-guide-entrepreneurship-migrants-and-refugees. Accessed 31 March 2022

Waldinger, R. D., Aldrich, H., & Ward, R. (1990). *Ethnic entrepreneurs: Immigrant business in industrial societies*. Newbury Park, California: Sage. https://doi.org/10.2307/2072935

Wanner, P., D'Amato, G., Landös, A., & Pont, A. (2019). Migration mobility survey. Survey on living as a migrant in Switzerland 2016-2018. https://zenodo.org/record/4147324#.YUM-BX2xXb0. Accessed 17 September 2021

Wingens, M., Windzio, M., de Valk, H., & Aybek, C. (Eds.). (2011). *A life-course perspective on migration and integration*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1545-5

Yeung, H. W. (2009). Transnationalizing entrepreneurship: A critical agenda for economic geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(2), 210–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508096032

Zapata-Barrero, R., & Rezaei, S. (2020). Diaspora governance and transnational entrepreneurship: The rise of an emerging social global pattern in migration studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1959–1973. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559990

Zimmermann, D. (2016). *The making of migrant entrepreneurs: social dynamics of migrant self-employment with a case study of Peruvian entrepreneurs in Switzerland*. Florida: Brown Walker Press.

Zufferey, J. (2019). Who are the serial movers? Sociodemographic profiles and reasons to migrate to Switzerland among multiple international migrants. In I. Steiner & P. Wanner (Eds.), *Migrants and expats: The Swiss migration and mobility nexus* (pp. 83–100). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05671-1_4

# ARTICLE 3

---

## *Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs: Understanding Their Dependencies, Fragilities, and Alternatives*

Laure Sandoz, Christina Mittmasser, Yvonne Riaño, and Lorena Izaguirre

Published in December 2022 in Globalizations – Special Issue: Globalizations from Below: Understanding the Diverse Spatial Mobilities and Connections of Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs across the Globe.

https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2157149

### *Abstract*

Recent research highlights that the activities of migrant entrepreneurs increasingly extend beyond national borders, thus making them relevant actors of globalization. Nevertheless, the socio-spatial conditions that frame their cross-border activities are still poorly understood. The aim of this article is twofold: first, we apply the lens of "globalization from below" to study small-scale transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs), thereby providing new insights into less visible globalization processes; second, we show that TMEs are not simply free economic agents but depend on connections in local and transnational spaces. Inspired by the literature on dependencies and feminist approaches, we develop a typology to address the following research question: Under which conditions is relying on others beneficial for transnational migrant entrepreneurship, and under which conditions does it lead to precariousness? Building on 86 semi-structured interviews in Colombia, Spain, and Switzerland, we uncover the diverse nature of dependencies and reveal the unequal opportunities TMEs face.

**Keywords:** Globalization from below; dependencies; transnational entrepreneurship; migration; social inequality

## *Transnational Migrant Entrepreneurs: Understanding Their Dependencies, Fragilities, and Alternatives (Article 3)*

### *1. Introduction*

Globalization is not only driven by large transnational corporations and powerful political institutions, but also by ordinary, often "invisible" individuals who contribute to processes of "globalization from below" (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012). This article focuses on small-scale transnational migrant entrepreneurs (TMEs) who travel and move goods, services, capital, and/or ideas across national borders (Portes et al. 2002). Although TMEs do not operate at the scale of global corporations or have the same degree of organizational complexity, we view them as relevant actors of globalization because they connect distant places and people across the world. We thereby refer to globalization not only as an economic phenomenon, but also as a social and cultural process involving multiple interconnected actors and complex power geometries (Massey 2005). Furthermore, in line with Mathews and Alba Vega (2012), we argue that if we strive to achieve a comprehensive understanding of "the current world-system, then we need to take globalization from below as seriously as we take globalization from above" (2012, p. 2).

We build on the observation that transnational business opportunities can improve the livelihoods of migrants (Harima and Baron 2020), but that the various socio-spatial conditions they face remain poorly understood (Sandoz et al. 2022; Sinkovics and Reuber 2021). Our aim is twofold. First, we draw from the literature on "globalization from below", which focuses on the transnational strategies and daily activities of less privileged individuals, to study the diversity of situations experienced by small-scale TMEs, thereby providing new insights into less visible globalization processes. Second, we show that TMEs are not simply free economic agents but depend on diverse connections in local and transnational spaces. Inspired by the critique of the individual conceptualized as isolated, independent, and self-interested, we build on the literature on "dependencies" (Evans 2001; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003) and feminist approaches that highlight the relational and reciprocal dimension of social interactions across the globe (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015; Webster and Haandrikman 2017). This enables us to study the interplay between different forms of dependencies and inequalities among TMEs and to address the following research question: Under which conditions is relying on others productive and beneficial for transnational migrant entrepreneurship, and under which conditions does it lead to fragilities and precariousness? Building on a qualitative study of 86 TMEs in Colombia, Spain, and

Switzerland, we uncover the diverse nature of their dependencies and contribute to a deeper understanding of the unequal opportunities that migrants face while striving to build transnational businesses.

Following the introduction, the second part of the article reviews the literature and presents research gaps. The third part introduces our analytical framework, while the fourth presents our methodological approach. The fifth proposes a typology of dependencies based on the analysis of our empirical data. The sixth discusses the proposed typology, followed by a conclusion that sets the findings in a broader context.

## *2. State of the art*

TMEs between autonomy and constraints

Recent research recognizes the increasingly transnational character of migrant entrepreneurship (Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020). Combining insights from the social sciences and business studies, scholars examine how migrants use socio-spatial knowledge of multiple places to identify market gaps and develop entrepreneurial projects (Harima and Baron 2020; Sandoz et al. 2022), emphasizing that they mobilize resources across borders to achieve socio-economic advancement (Fuller-Love and Akiode 2020). Yet, research approaches that uncritically celebrate entrepreneurship, individual responsibility, and independence remain dominant (Mancinelli 2020), as the notion of entrepreneurship is rooted in managerial discourses of individualization and self-realization (Webster and Haandrikman 2017). Such approaches fail to recognize that TMEs are not isolated individuals but rely on a web of social and economic connections (Solano 2020). Migrant entrepreneurs require a certain degree of autonomy to organize transnational businesses, but they also need stable social connections and access to relevant resources and infrastructure (Sandoz 2021).

Moreover, research on transnational entrepreneurship tends to focus on migrants with high levels of education (Harima and Baron 2020) and conceptualizes TMEs as homogeneous (Portes and Martinez 2020). A more subtle account of the socio-spatial conditions that create different transnational opportunities is needed (Sandoz et al. 2022). This is particularly important in the context of globalization, where resources are unequally distributed across geographical space and social groups, thus constraining equitable economic success (Riaño et al. 2022).

We are aware that definitions of TMEs remain highly debated (Harima and Baron 2020; Sinkovics and Reuber 2021). Although many authors conceptualize entrepreneurship based on fixed traits and characteristics, we adopt a processual approach (Gartner 1988) and understand TMEs as individuals with migration experience who (formally or informally) move goods, services, capital, and/or ideas across national borders to sustain livelihoods and fulfill personal aspirations. In this article, we include individuals with diverse types of businesses, from different socio-economic levels and geographical settings. This inclusive perspective highlights different situations in which small-scale transnational business activities take place, the unequal opportunities individuals face while conducting them, and the gray zone between "from above" and "from below" globalization processes.

*TMEs as actors of globalization from below*

Literature on "globalization from below" lends important but scant insights into TMEs. Portes (2000) used the term to examine the informal economic activities of TMEs who take advantage of different locational opportunities in former and current residence countries. Similarly, Tarrius (2002) identified the emergence of transnational trade networks operated by working-class migrants through informal and illegal channels. Mathews and Alba Vega (2012) explain "globalization from below" as a recent phenomenon caused by the liberalization and deregulation of the global economy, the growth of liberal democracy, an increase in international migration flows and social inequality, and the revolution of information and communication technologies. Empirically, Mathews and Alba focus on marginalized social groups conducting informal transnational businesses, such as micro-scale traders and street hawkers. They view these activities as a strategy to cope with the difficulties of accessing paid employment and benefit from the structures set by "globalization from above" actors.

By shedding light on the transnational day-to-day practices of informal traders, the "globalization from below" lens unveils "less hegemonic" and "more mundane streams of global traffic and local connection" (Knowles 2014, p. 188). This perspective also uncovers the impact of global power relations and social inequalities on the mobilities of cross-border entrepreneurs, and it highlights the agentic strategies of individuals to navigate obstacles. However, categorizing globalization as from "above" or "below" establishes a dichotomic view of economic practices (formal/informal; legal/illegal; marginalized/ privileged) even though "back-roads" globalization often and actively intersects with "main-roads" globalization (Knowles 2014). Positioning marginalized or delegitimized economic activities as opposed to more conventional forms of business overshadows the complex connections between formal and informal spheres of entrepreneurship (Routh 2011). Furthermore, globalization from below excludes the transnational practices of small-scale TMEs operating within formal and legal

frameworks, and neglects the interplay between various disadvantages, potentials, and opportunities resulting from diverse social positions. In this article, we aim to shed light on these intersections.

*TMEs and dependencies across borders*

To enhance our understanding of globalization from below, we propose an analysis of the diversity of situations that small-scale TMEs experience, and the local and transnational connections they rely upon. We view the notion of "dependency" as a useful tool to capture the multiple relations—often informal and loaded with unequal power—involved in globalization from below, and to show that such relations can be helpful but also constraining for entrepreneurs.

Prebisch (1950) first used "dependency" as a concept to explain the process of dependent development that results when resources flow from a "periphery" of low-income countries to a "core" of wealthy countries, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. In this context dependency is defined as "the inequality of power and forms of economic domination that characterizes the relations between rich and poor countries" (Calhoun 2002). Later, the concept was refined to include not only asymmetrical relations between countries, but also between different organizations, social groups, and individuals, both within and across nations (Evans 2001). Broadly, a dependency can be conceptualized as a "relationship in which one or more social actors are reliant on another social actor" (Jeanes 2019).

The concept has already been used in entrepreneurship studies. Resource dependency theory proposes that corporations which rely on external resources are "constrained by webs of dependence relationships with other organizations that can exercise power" (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003, p. 44). However, this theory focuses on large European and American companies and its analysis of dependencies is bi-directional rather than multi-directional. We therefore propose an engagement with feminist perspectives on dependencies (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015). These approaches instead focus on the interconnections between individuals and highlight the reciprocal and care-based dimension of relationships while simultaneously drawing attention to the power geometries that characterize them. By emphasizing links between the professional and the private, structural elements and people's subjectivities, they provide fruitful and thought-provoking tools to question dominant discourses of independence and individual success in entrepreneurship (Mancinelli 2020). Furthermore, they highlight the importance of interconnections and emotional bonds in enabling or disabling entrepreneurial projects (Webster 2020; Webster and Haandrikman 2017).

## *3. Analytical framework: Dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives*

The presented literature leads to first assumptions about the local and transnational connections that TMEs rely upon and enables us to develop an analytical framework to understand the interplay between different forms of dependencies and inequalities. In this section, we draw attention to key aspects of our approach.

First, we do not analyze TMEs in purely economic terms but strive to understand their personal aspirations and lived experiences. According to certain authors (Portes et al. 2002; Sinkovics and Reuber 2021), an entrepreneur is first and foremost motivated by the desire to generate an income to fulfill basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, medical care, basic services) and maximize profit. Yet, an entrepreneur may also be motivated by the desire to fulfill personal aspirations, such as reaching a sense of ontological security (a sense of order and continuity without chaos and anxiety; Giddens, 1991), a sense of place (human attachment and belonging as opposed to fear and insecurity; Tuan, 1980), reconciling unpaid (domestic) and paid work (Webster and Zhang 2020), personal commitment to a community (Osaghae and Cooney 2020), symbolic recognition (Munkejord 2017), or the desire to innovate (Harima and Vermuri 2015). While a focus on the economic motivations of TMEs emphasizes an individualistic view on entrepreneurship, considering other aspirations allows us to understand the context in which they live, as well as their interconnectedness with others and dependency on external resources (Webster 2020; Webster and Haandrikman 2017).

Second, we aim to capture the diversity of local and transnational connections that TMEs rely upon. As other authors have shown (Chen and Tan 2009; Solano 2020), accessing the necessary resources for developing a business may include relying on specific social networks (relationships between individuals, groups, organizations) that facilitate access to economic capital, goods, knowledge, services, and infrastructure. Yet, it may also require a specific geographical location with access to reliable transportation infrastructure, institutional support systems, safe environments, and trading hubs (Schäfer and Henn 2018). For some entrepreneurs, spatial mobility may be a condition for conducting business, thus making them dependent on specific national and international mobility regimes, intermediaries, and infrastructures (Riaño et al. 2022; Sandoz et al. 2022). Finally, access to institutional support is important for many entrepreneurs, as it enables them to access financing, training, and networking through the support services provided by central or local governments, NGOs, professional networks, and international organizations (Liswoska and Stabuskawsju 2014).

Third, we want to understand under which conditions dependencies may enhance or constrain transnational business development. Here, we build on the argument that dependencies are characterized by the socio-economic and symbolic power of the actors involved (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). Thereby

they are shaped by factors including class, gender, race, and geographical location, whose intersection influences the specific position of the actors involved and their ability to engage in mutually fruitful relations (Souralová 2015). Unequal dependencies emerge when power is utilized in a manner that diminishes the profits of less powerful actors while enlarging the profits of more powerful actors (Massey 2005). Such dependencies may be limiting and exploitative, thus creating fragilities for the weaker party. A fragility is shaped by risks and vulnerabilities, which may range from uncertainty about the future to complete loss of a relationship or entrepreneurial project. In contrast, relationships based on reciprocity, whether material or symbolic, may result in valuable and sustainable entrepreneurial resources, thus strengthening all involved (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015). To avoid becoming dependent on exploitative relationships, entrepreneurs may mobilize strategies and defensive mechanisms to create new opportunities. Thus, to understand whether a dependency is emancipatory or constraining, we propose considering the power relations at stake and asking what alternatives an entrepreneur has or can develop to achieve their goals. We define alternatives as ways of expanding one's options, gaining security, and thereby mitigating the risks involved with fragile dependencies.

Figure 1 illustrates our analytical framework for this article. We focus on how dependencies (towards social networks, geographical locations, spatial mobility, and institutional support) interact with fragilities (the level of risk and vulnerability associated with these relations), and alternatives (strategies to mitigate risks and expand options). By analyzing our empirical data within this framework, we provide a better understanding of which conditions make dependencies productive and beneficial for TMEs, and which conditions lead to fragilities and precariousness.

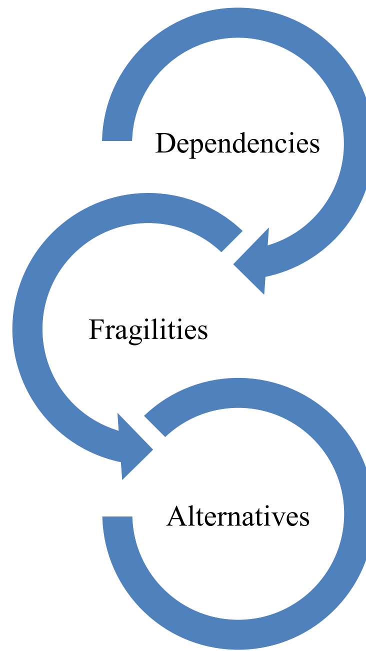



*Figure 1: Analytical framework*

## *4. Methodological approach*

Empirically, this paper is based on case studies of TMEs in Colombia, Spain, and Switzerland. Our fieldwork, conducted between 2018 and 2020, includes 86 biographical and semi-structured interviews combined with ethnographic research (Flick 2006). The first author conducted fieldwork in Barcelona, where she interviewed 22 TMEs from diverse backgrounds (digital nomads, knowledge workers, small business owners, street traders) and conducted ethnographic observations in co-working spaces, shops, and retail locations used by migrant entrepreneurs. The second author conducted 34 interviews with TMEs in Zurich and carried out ethnographic observations within a local NGO that supports migrant and refugee entrepreneurs. The third author conducted ethnographic fieldwork at the Venezuelan-Colombian border (Cúcuta-San Antonio) and interviewed 30 individuals running mostly informal businesses. We developed common guidelines for the semi-structured interviews, which focused on migration and business creation stories, mobilities of people and other entities, the role of social and institutional networks, the importance of specific localities for entrepreneurship, and the research participants' subjective perception of their businesses. Inspired by feminist approaches challenging the power relation between researchers and research participants (Riaño 2016), we tried when possible to

engage in long-term relationships with our research participants, and organized two participatory workshops to discuss emerging hypotheses with them.

Our aim was not to conduct a strictly comparative study of three countries but rather to gain a contrasted understanding of what kinds of dependencies arise in diverse socio-spatial contexts. The locations were chosen because they exemplify three geographical contexts in which opportunities and constraints for business development differ in terms of centrality, mobility regimes, economic conditions, support measures, and quality of infrastructure. Zurich is characterized by its location in central Europe, high standard of living, safety, high population density, and quality of transportation infrastructure (Mittmasser 2022). Yet, Switzerland has a restrictive migration regime that focuses on highly skilled workers and offers little support to small-scale entrepreneurs with limited business capital (Mittmasser and Stingl 2021). Barcelona is also centrally located in Europe and has high population density, quality transportation infrastructure, and a vibrant start-up scene (Sandoz 2021). Yet, in contrast to Switzerland, Spain is a less wealthy country, has a more liberal approach to regulating and controlling the spatial mobilities of migrants, and presents fewer entry barriers for small-scale entrepreneurs (Hooper 2019). Colombia is an example of an even less wealthy country with relatively low average incomes, and is distantly located from places with better income-earning opportunities, such as Europe. The state maintains only a limited presence in its border zones, and, in particular, the Cúcuta-San Antonio region at the Venezuelan-Colombian border is threatened by illegal armed groups and home to internally displaced people who struggle to survive through informal entrepreneurial activities (Riaño et al. 2022).

These case studies were selected following a qualitative approach, whose goal is not statistical representation or generalization, but to gain a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We applied a maximum variation sampling approach (Flick 2006), which allows us to explore our research question from different angles and generate new knowledge through comparison and contrast. Our strategy involved selecting candidates across a spectrum of dimensions which we considered essential to empirically assess the diversity of dependencies among TMEs. We focused on individuals with migration experience (including current migrants and returnees) running cross-border businesses (from informal micro-economic activities to small-scale conventional businesses). We selected individuals whose geographical location ranged from peripheral to more central, and whose social status (class, gender, race, education level, mobility rights) encompassed more privileged as well as less privileged individuals. Despite achieving a certain degree of variety, biases in the sample could not be avoided, for example, an overrepresentation of individuals with university education and women in the Zurich sample (see Table 1). Moreover, we are aware that using the term transnational migrant entrepreneurship to describe our sample raises conceptual difficulties as it involves very different types of businesses. Yet, as previously discussed, a broader definition of the term, including both formal and

informal cross-border business activities, is useful in understanding how ordinary, often "invisible", people contribute to processes of globalization from below.

We analyzed our data collaboratively within the team. First, building on the literature presented in the previous section, we tried to understand which dependencies are relevant to our research participants, how and why they emerge, what kind of fragilities they entail and which alternatives TMEs have to mitigate them. We used these questions to analyze our interviews, applying coding techniques inspired by Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We then organized internal workshops to discuss our data and create the typology presented in the next section. Each of us selected interviews from our case studies which we found representative of specific situations emerging from our data. We created detailed life-course descriptions of these cases, inspired by the method of biographical case reconstruction developed by Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal (2004). Our typology thus arose from the process of coding our data based on a combination of deductive and inductive categories, and then collaboratively developing in-depth analyses of specific stories. We were particularly guided by Kluge's procedure of constructing typologies (2000), who recommends the following steps: 1. Development of relevant analytical dimensions (based on research questions, theoretical knowledge, and coding of empirical data); 2. Grouping cases and analyzing empirical regularities; 3. Analysis of meaningful relationships and type construction (which includes considering further attributes, confronting individual cases with their type, and searching for contradicting cases); 4. Characterization of the constructed types (in relation to the analytical dimensions and illustrative cases). Our typology does not encompass all cases and should not be considered as static (Torr 2008). Nevertheless, we view it as a valuable means of representing how and why differences between cases exist (Weber 1949). Organizing our results in the form of a typology enables us to shed light on the inequalities arising between different categories of people, but we are aware that heterogeneity and contrasts also exist within each type.

| | Colombia<br>n = 30 | Spain<br>n = 22 | Switzerland<br>n = 34 | Total<br>n = 86 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Female | 25 | 8 | 23 | 56 |
| Male | 5 | 14 | 11 | 30 |
| **Age** | | | | |
| 20-29 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 15 |
| 30-39 | 10 | 5 | 10 | 25 |
| 40-49 | 13 | 6 | 12 | 31 |
| >50 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| **Childcare responsibilities** | | | | |
| Children | 29 | 8 | 17 | 54 |
| No children | 1 | 14 | 17 | 32 |
| **Highest educational level** | | | | |
| Primary school | 20 | 2 | | 22 |
| High school / college / vocational training | 10 | 8 | 5 | 23 |
| Bachelor's degree | | 2 | 8 | 10 |
| Master's degree | | 10 | 18 | 28 |
| PhD | | | 3 | 3 |
| **Region of birth** | | | | |
| Europe | | 7 | 14 | 21 |
| Middle East & Asia | | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| Americas | 30 | 7 | 8 | 45 |
| Africa | | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Oceania | | 1 | | 1 |
| **Reason for migration** | | | | |
| Work | **1** | 11 | 8 | 20 |
| Study | | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Family | | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| Safety | 29* | 1 | 7 | 37 |
| Lifestyle | | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| **Years in current country of residence** | | | | |
| 0–5 | 30 | 7 | 8 | 45 |
| 6–10 | | 2 | 16 | 18 |
| 11–20 | | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| >20 | | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| **Main business sector** | | | | |
| Handicrafts/ Textiles/ Design | 8 | 6 | 17 | 31 |
| Community building/Education | 4 | 2 | 5 | 11 |
| Consulting | | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Technology | | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Food / Gastronomy | 10 | 4 | 3 | 17 |
| Others | 8 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| **Years of entrepreneurial activity** | | | | |
| 0–2 | | 6 | 17 | 23 |
| 3–5 | 30 | 7 | 9 | 46 |
| >5 | | 9 | 8 | 17 |

*Table 1: Characteristics of research participants*

* For most participants in the Colombian case study, the need for work is closely interlinked with the need for protection. In general, many interviewees migrated for multiple reasons. Here we state only the most relevant ones.

## *5. Beneficial and fragile dependencies in transnational migrant entrepreneurship: A typology*

Although each case is unique, the empirical analysis of our 86 interviews in relation to our research question and analytical framework enables us to identify three main types of situations that assist us in understanding under which conditions dependencies can be productive and beneficial, and under which conditions they can lead to precariousness: (1) entrepreneurs who use dependencies productively while having alternatives; (2) entrepreneurs trapped in precarious situations who struggle with fragile dependencies; and (3) entrepreneurs who manage to develop alternatives to overcome precariousness. This section presents concrete examples to illustrate these contrasting situations, while also showing the nuances and fluidity within and across each type.

*Using dependencies productively while having alternatives*

Fanta Conde[20] is a 40-year-old transnational entrepreneur from Spain who runs a business selling female hygiene products. Born in a middle-class family with roots in Equatorial Guinea, she studied architecture in Barcelona and the United States, and lived for several years in her parents' country. She founded her business with a friend, first as a side activity while working as an architect in Spain and Equatorial Guinea. She says:

> *The two of us were architects, and we were both working, so we didn't think that we would quit our job and do only this, no. It was like a hobby that motivates you, that grows, (...) and if it becomes a business, well that's great, but there wasn't a preoccupation that we wanted to get a salary.*

After a successful online crowdfunding campaign, she decided to quit her job and dedicate more time to growing the business. Her family situation also motivated her decision as she was now married with young children, and her husband took on a job in a Spanish town where she had no network connections. Nevertheless, digital technologies enabled her to stay in contact with her business partners. She believed that developing a transnational business while working from home and taking care of the children was a good option in terms of a healthy work-life balance. At the time of the interview, she divided her days between managing her business, continuing a non-profit project on Equatorial Guinea's architectural heritage, and caring for her two young children. She did not earn enough money to make a living, but

[20] All names were changed to protect the anonymity of our interviewees.

she was confident about the future. Furthermore, she was keeping her professional options open by maintaining connections through her architectural project in Equatorial Guinea.

Another interviewee, Afonso Ferreira, bears similarities with Fanta Conde. The 45-year-old Portuguese man obtained a PhD in Switzerland in aerospace engineering and worked for several years for a Portuguese company connected to the European Space Agency. In 2010 he met his future Swiss girlfriend and subsequently moved with her to Zurich. Finding employment in his specialization proved difficult, but he was able to work as an independent consultant for a former employer in Portugal. At the time of the interview, he had founded a business selling his skills and knowledge as a project-based expert in aerospace engineering to European partners. This involved regular travel but enabled him to maintain residency in Zurich.

Fanta and Afonso are highly educated and specialists in their field. Becoming entrepreneurs allowed them to find a satisfying balance between their professional and personal aspirations. Both rely on network connections that they have developed across time and space to access business opportunities, and since their clients value their skills and products, they can engage in mutually profitable relations with them, and therefore feel in control of their situation. As Afonso says: “Coming as an expert from that experience makes me, let’s say, valuable for other missions.”

These cases illustrate a situation in which TMEs experience dependencies positively while having alternatives to reorient in the future if their business fails to fulfill their aspirations. Their in-demand skill set, European nationality, professional network, and geographical location in Europe enable them to connect with others, travel freely, and use digital technologies. Due to previous employment and support from their partners, they are economically secure, which reduces their need for immediate profitability; and they can access institutional support (such as training, funding, and social security) to develop their business and support their livelihood in the event of failure. These assets foster business development and mitigate the risks of living precariously. Under such conditions, the studied TMEs can engage in dependencies without fearing abuse and exploitation. Their risks are limited because the power relations are balanced, the dependencies are mutually profitable, and alternatives are available. For instance, both Fanta and Afonso have the option of finding other employment, starting another business, or relying on their partner’s income if their entrepreneurship is not profitable. Moreover, although engaged with a partner, they are not trapped in the relationship and can maintain a degree of autonomy thanks to their skills, stable legal status, and network. TMEs of this type can thus engage in projects outside of conventional employment and career structures, and are able to take measured risks without threatening their livelihood.

*Struggling with fragile dependencies in situations of precariousness*

Luca Awad's story illustrates the second type of situation. He was born in the United Arab Emirates in 1980, where he studied business administration and informatics. In Dubai he held a regular job while running a real estate business on the side. Because his parents are Palestinian refugees, he was unable to obtain stable legal status in the Emirates and therefore moved to Syria when he was 25 years old. There, he continued his professional career, working for a company and creating another real estate business on the side. He also met his wife. In 2013, they fled to Lebanon because of the war, and subsequently moved to Switzerland through a UNHCR relocation program. Unable to find a job, Luca joined a start-up incubator program for refugees where he developed an online marketplace business project aiming to sell luxury Swiss products in the Middle East. At the time of the interview, he had set up a website and social media profiles for his business. However, he was reluctant to register officially as an entrepreneur over fears of losing Swiss social assistance. With three children, Luca considers this too risky for his family. His current dependency on social assistance means that he cannot regularly leave Switzerland, which constrains his transnational activities. He is currently seeking investors, but his priority is to find a stable job so that he can save money while growing his business slowly on the side. When we interviewed him, Luca remained in a precarious situation, trying to sustain his family with very little income while struggling to find regular employment.

> *Luca's case is characteristic of fragile dependencies. His precarious legal status and the unstable political situations of the countries where he previously lived have resulted in undesired im/mobilities and difficulties maintaining international connections over time. His dependency on the Swiss welfare system enables his family to survive but hinders his transnational business aspirations. He struggles to access the local labor market and has few alternatives to improve his situation.*

Another example is Sandra Barroso, a 47-year-old Colombian living in Cúcuta at the Colombia-Venezuela border. At a young age, she migrated to Venezuela with her three sons to escape marital abuse and the threat of illegal armed groups. They became mobile vendors, selling coffee, handmade jewelry, and Colombian knickknacks at fairs and beaches. Their trade became transnational as they regularly traveled to Colombia to buy products. In 2015, as Venezuela's economic crisis and unstable political situation led to the violent deportation of Colombian migrants, Sandra returned to her husband's house in Cúcuta, Colombia. There she started selling stationery and handmade decorations in Colombia and Venezuela. This business only produces survival income. She receives no institutional financial support in Colombia and relies on her neighbors and networks in Venezuela to sell her products. Her livelihood depends on living near the border, as she travels regularly to Venezuela to sell her products and meet with clients. In 2019, however, the Venezuelan government closed the border. Crossing

illegally is fraught with risks, as she is regularly stopped by corrupt officials at Venezuelan border checkpoints:

> *I fight to the last. [I tell the police officers] that I come from so far away, that it is not fair, that my family needs it. I argue with them, but yes, they have tried to take my things away.*

Sandra's situation involves several fragilities. Her neighbors are low-income individuals and thus have limited purchasing capacity. She receives financial support from NGOs, but this could end at any time. The political and security situation at the border is unstable, representing significant risks for cross-border mobility. She would like to return to Venezuela, but the food shortages, power outages, and political instabilities are discouraging. Her situation is a typical case of globalization from below in which precariousness and lack of alternatives arise from low social status, political volatility, lack of state support, and limited access to digital technologies.

These examples illustrate that not all connections benefit migrant entrepreneurs. Legal travel restrictions, family care responsibilities, economic difficulties, and political instabilities may limit a TME's entrepreneurial opportunities. Because they lack options to develop sustainable alternatives, they must make the most of their resources despite the fragilities and risks involved. While we showed previously that networks are valuable for developing a business project, our interviews with entrepreneurs in precarious situations highlight that not everyone can maintain international professional or social networks after migrating, as their movement is restricted by selective mobility regimes and a lack of access to digital technologies. Our interviews also reveal important place-based inequalities: In Zurich, Luca receives social assistance and institutional support for his start-up, which provides basic stability; in Cúcuta, where state-run institutions are absent and the political situation is volatile, Sandra's fragilities compound to exacerbate economic and ontological insecurities. The degree of encountered fragilities thus varies in different geographical locations. Finally, unbalanced dependencies relate to social position. Financial insecurity is particularly constraining, as it forces some entrepreneurs to find side jobs, limiting the time they can dedicate to their businesses. TMEs like Luca who struggle to obtain a stable position in their host countries have restricted access to economic, social, and mobility rights, which makes it particularly difficult to develop formal business activities. Under such conditions, entrepreneurs have little power to engage in mutually beneficial connections and to develop more stable alternatives.

*Developing alternatives to overcome precariousness*

Many of the dependencies we observed include fragilities and a lack of alternatives to avoid adverse or exploitative conditions. However, despite the risks involved, some interviewees developed creative strategies to cope with asymmetric power relations, thereby using their fragile connections productively to cultivate alternatives and expand their options. Individual strategies include: Engaging in informal practices (when formal/legal activities are impossible); expanding to new geographical sites and social networks (when existing connections are unhelpful or constraining); employing a proxy and/or labor abroad as well as digital technologies (when personal mobility is not possible or desired); improving legal status through marriage or formal employment; using relevant institutional support structures. These strategies require specific skills, knowledge, and resources, and are not available to every TME. Furthermore, they involve risks that can lead to the improvement or deterioration of living conditions, depending on factors that are often largely out of the TME's control. Nevertheless, the stories of TMEs who manage to build stability despite their initially precarious position sheds light on how fragile dependencies can sometimes lead to improvement.

Alejandro Morales is a 52-year-old man born in Otavalo, an area in Andean Ecuador renowned for its traditional indigenous handicraft enterprises. With only a primary-level education, he began traveling at 15, playing music on the streets of the Americas and Europe, and selling Otavalo crafts. He explains his motivations:

> *There has been a phenomenon that the vast majority of people in my area started to travel abroad […], always with the aim of crossing borders to find better work opportunities.*

During his first trip to England, Alejandro was under financial pressure to repay the debt he incurred to pay for his flight. After years of nomadic living, he married an Otavalo woman and settled in Barcelona near her family. His in-laws helped him to develop businesses, from selling handicrafts to managing bars and restaurants. On the side Alejandro engaged in musical projects and eventually founded a music studio. This gave him and his wife economic independence from her family's business. They also managed a handicraft shop where, building on a vast transnational network of handicraft producers that they developed over time, they gradually improved the quality and diversity of their products. Over the years they managed to save enough money to retire in Otavalo. This story illustrates how a combination of risky but smart choices, fruitful connections, and favorable conditions made it possible for a TME to overcome initial fragilities, build on mutually profitable dependencies, and develop new opportunities.

Vanessa Cubillo is another example of an entrepreneur who overcame some initial fragilities. She was born in 1960 in a rural area in northern Colombia. She experienced several forced mobilities resulting

from domestic abuse, gang rape, and criminal assaults, including five internal displacements caused by violent armed guerrillas and paramilitary forces. Despite these setbacks, Vanessa began again each time she lost everything, finding work as a street vendor, in restaurants, and other miscellaneous ventures. In 2009, following another forced displacement and the death of her partner, Vanessa migrated to Venezuela where her eldest son lived. With her meager savings, she purchased low-cost goods in Colombia to sell in Venezuela. Yet she was deported again to Colombia in 2015. Far from giving up, Vanessa started selling clothes and knickknacks. Eventually she obtained a survivor's pension, which allowed her to rent a house and set up a shop selling clothes and handmade perfume. Terrified by the precarious situation of victims at the border, in 2016 Vanessa created an association to help Colombians and Venezuelans who have experienced displacement, deportation, or extreme poverty:

> *My idea of an association, and of doing work for the community, arises from what I have lived, from the five displacements, from the gang rape, from the death of my partner, from seeing that there are people who are really needy, that there are people who do not have the same capacities as others.*

She regularly travels between Venezuela and Colombia, encouraging victims of violence to participate in the professional training sessions she organizes, and to access psychological, legal, and family support. Her association receives no financial assistance from Colombian institutions and depends on international aid and collaborations with the National Apprenticeship and Employment Service, a public institution that offers free training. Vanessa is a remarkable example of a TME who has created significant opportunities for herself and others despite a poor education, low income, and devastating setbacks due to her gender and regional violence. Relying on her pension, her geographical location (at the border), her spatial mobility (in a context of danger and illegality), and her transnational economic and local institutional networks allowed her to partially counteract the fragilities she encounters and create alternatives.

These examples show how some entrepreneurs in precarious socio-spatial conditions manage to mobilize connections to access new resources and expand their options, thus gaining more power to cope with associated risks. Their situations highlight that place-based socio-economic conditions influence the degree of fragility that entrepreneurs may face: While in Colombia, Vanessa's physical integrity was in danger, the risks that Alejandro faced in Europe were economic and not life-threatening. Moreover, they reveal how the ability to move across borders can constitute a major resource for expanding one's options. Finally, they illustrate the importance of supportive networks and relationships that foster growth and autonomy. Such cases involve impressive stories of courage in the face of

adversity. Yet, they also rely on the unpredictable combination of external conditions, which sometimes enable new opportunities to arise from even the most hazardous situations.

## *6. Discussion*

Overall, our analysis reveals different situations in which TMEs rely on social networks, geographical locations, spatial mobility, and institutional support. It underlines the relational and interdependent character of human beings and calls for a rejection of individualistic views on entrepreneurship. As our framework based on dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives shows, relying on others is not beneficial or limiting per se but depends on the specific power configuration of the relationship. Whether or not our interviewees can profit from their connections is largely shaped by their social position and the geographical context in which they are embedded, as well as the alternatives they have to mitigate risks and expand options.

In terms of social networks, migrants integrate family members, former work colleagues, acquaintances, and friends from various countries into their business activities. These contacts facilitate access to new economic spaces, funding opportunities, moral support, and knowledge. Relying on close family members to assume care obligations and other family responsibilities, as in the case of Alejandro Morales, or depending on a partner's stable income to mitigate the financial risks associated with entrepreneurship, as in the case of Fanta Conde, are common strategies among the studied TMEs. Yet, relying on others can also be risky when the power dynamic is unbalanced, and the entrepreneur feels that their obligations exceed the benefits. For example, we observed that some migrants are pressured to send remittances or otherwise contribute to the economy of their community of origin, which may result in undesired and constraining dependencies. This is an important observation to contribute to the large body of literature insisting on the solely positive impact of networks for TMEs (e.g. Chen and Tan 2009; Munkejord 2017; Solano 2020). In order to overcome this narrow focus, such networks clearly need to be re-examined in relation to the intersection of inequalities and power relations faced by specific actors in specific contexts and in relation to others (Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019). Moreover, the role of emotional connections and trust during entrepreneurial processes needs to be considered (Sandoz et al. 2022; Webster 2020). It is therefore important to consider entrepreneurs not only as economic actors, but also as people with emotions and intimate relationships which can create feelings of duty, obligation, and attachment, and therefore shape their decisions, aspirations, and opportunities.

Furthermore, accumulated international knowledge enables migrants to identify and strategically employ opportunities and resources in different geographical locations. Many TMEs rely on the advantages of specific places for production, trade, and access to institutional support to expand their options. Alejandro Morales, for example, can capitalize on his transnational network and personal mobility to select handicraft products in locations with a lower cost of living and resell them in Barcelona for a higher price. Yet, entrepreneurs are also challenged by the constraints of specific places, which may range from limited infrastructure to life-threatening conditions. This is particularly illustrated by the cases of Sandra Barroso and Vanessa Cubillo, who faced forced mobilities, an absent state, and violence throughout their entrepreneurship. Since most studies on TMEs focus on empirical cases in Europe and North America (Sandoz et al. 2022), theoretical contributions do not consider aspects such as geographical peripherality and armed violence in limiting the opportunities of entrepreneurs. If transnational connections are a clear asset for migrant entrepreneurs (Yeung 2009; Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020), the literature needs to acknowledge that a TME's ability to benefit from them is largely structured by place-based inequalities across the globe.

Our analysis also shows that dependencies on spatial mobility vary widely among TMEs. Some people, like Alejandro Morales, need to travel internationally to exchange goods, money, services, and ideas. Others, like Fanta Conde, can use digital business management technologies or have other people travel on their behalf. TMEs with a European nationality or residence permit benefit from relative freedom of movement, whereas TMEs from poorer countries are restricted by selective migration policies or political instabilities. Gender also plays an important role in facilitating or restricting mobilities, as people with care duties—traditionally women—have fewer options to travel compared to people without dependents. Furthermore, women are particularly physically endangered while traveling in politically unstable locations, such as the Colombian-Venezuelan border. These factors structure the ability of TMEs to use, build, and maintain mutually beneficial connections across places and through time. While most typologies of transnational migrant entrepreneurship are based on motivations and social status, they ignore dimensions of inequality such as access to mobility, space, and territory (Zapata-Barrero and Rezaei 2020). For some entrepreneurs, like Luca Awad, spatial mobility is a desired yet restricted resource; for others, like Vanessa Cubillo, it is the possibility to settle in one place that constitutes a challenge. Therefore, access to im/mobilities are unequally distributed among our interviewees. TMEs who depend on spatial mobility experience a specific form of precariousness associated either with too much (possibly undesired) mobility or a lack of access to safe mobility.

Finally, our data also reveals differences regarding reliance on institutional support. TMEs in Colombia experience a relative lack of access to institutional training, consulting, sustainable financing, and networking compared to those in Spain and Switzerland. Yet the case of Luca Awad illustrates that government support can play an ambiguous role, even in wealthy countries: While social assistance

enables him to sustain his livelihood in Switzerland, the associated constraints limit his entrepreneurial options, thus trapping him in long-term dependency on the state. This is a relevant observation for policymaking, as it shows the importance of acknowledging the transnational resources of migrants and creating the conditions under which they can fruitfully exploit them. In line with other feminist scholars, Parekh and Wilcox (2020) argue that "vulnerability, dependency, and need should be understood not as deficits or limitations, but rather as essential human qualities requiring an adequate political response" (2020, p. 12). Our analysis highlights that such responses must consider individuals' motivations beyond economic interests, their interconnectedness with others, and the persistence of global social inequalities.

## *7. Conclusions*

Social, cultural, and economic globalization shapes dependencies on many scales, including the micro-scale of everyday lives (Evans 2001; Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). In this article, we analyzed these dependencies in the context of transnational migrant entrepreneurship. Inspired by the literature on "globalization from below" (Mathews and Alba Vega 2012) and feminist approaches (Parekh and Wilcox 2020; Souralová 2015; Webster and Haandrikman 2017), we drew attention to the multiple relations involved in the daily activities of small-scale TMEs. Using empirical data from Spain, Switzerland, and Colombia, we highlighted the importance of social networks, geographical locations, spatial mobilities, and institutional support for migrants' transnational business activities. Our twofold aim was to provide new insights into less visible globalization processes by studying small-scale TMEs and to show that they are not simply free economic agents but depend on connections in local and transnational spaces to develop their entrepreneurial projects. Interested to understand the interplay between different forms of dependencies and inequalities among TMEs, we addressed the following research question: Under which conditions is relying on others beneficial for TMEs, and under which conditions does it lead to precariousness?

In terms of our first aim, applying the lens of "globalization from below" enabled us to include interviewees with diverse social and geographical backgrounds and to analyze the unequal entrepreneurial conditions they face. Revealing the diverse nature of dependencies—some productive, others unbalanced and contributing to precariousness—allowed us to nuance celebratory discourses about the positive impact of transnational connections. Moreover, focusing on diverse types of businesses in geographical contexts situated in both the Global North and the Global South added to the

argument that the informal "back roads" and formal "main roads" of globalization intersect rather than oppose each other through the daily activities of TMEs (Knowles 2014). Whether specific entrepreneurs are conceptualized as actors of globalization "from below" or "from above" may change over time depending on the opportunities and constraints they face, and the strategies they implement to navigate them.

In terms of our second aim, we discussed the fact that the development of small-scale transnational businesses is often analyzed in purely economic terms as a strategy to overcome difficulties accessing the labor market or achieving economic success. Our empirical data showed, however, that the aspirations of TMEs are not merely financially motivated, but also emerge for reasons of personal fulfillment, reconciling family and paid work, aiding home countries or communities, or resisting armed violence. A careful study of the complex interplay between multiple sources of disadvantage and opportunity led us to propose a typology that illustrates the extent to which TMEs can engage in reciprocal relations and dependencies to fulfill their aspirations.

Our typology highlights that dependencies are not constraining per se but can also lead to opportunity. Yet, the case of entrepreneurs who struggle with fragile dependencies (e.g. Luca Awad & Sandra Barroso) shows that a precarious social and geographical position makes certain dependencies unbalanced and potentially exploitative, thus complicating the mitigation of entrepreneurial risks. Therefore, starting a business in a poor and peripheral location, with fragile connections and a lack of alternatives, makes it difficult for TMEs to improve their situation and may trap them in exploitative relationships. However, the stories of entrepreneurs who develop alternatives despite difficult starting conditions show that some people (e.g. Alejandro Morales and Vanessa Cubillo) manage to counteract these fragilities by using supportive connections in a fruitful way to expand their options. In this sense, TMEs are not necessarily trapped in one type but may navigate multiple situations as new opportunities arise. We suggest that access to social networks, geographical locations, spatial mobilities, and institutional support may evolve over time, as does a sense of control over one's life.

Understanding how diverse configurations of dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives emerge in the lives of TMEs contributes to research and policymaking by nuancing exaggeratedly positive views on entrepreneurship and casting light on the difficulties that many transnational migrants face. Moreover, considering that TMEs are not only economically motivated, but also engage in entrepreneurial projects to fulfill personal dreams and aspirations, contributes to a more a holistic conceptualization of TMEs, which recognizes their need for emotional connection and social recognition (Saksela-Bergholm et al. 2019; Sandoz et al. 2022). Such a view is important, as it can give governments and institutions the tools to enable TMEs to maximize their resources and contribute economically, socially, and culturally to the multiple places to which they are connected (Webster 2020).

## *References*


Calhoun, C. (2002). Dependency. In *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195123715.001.0001/acref-9780195123715-e-438. Accessed 16 October 2020

Chen, W., & Tan, J. (2009). Understanding transnational entrepreneurship through a network lens: Theoretical and methodological considerations. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *33*(5), 1079–1091. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00335.x

Evans, P. B. (2001). Dependency. In *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195117394.001.0001/acref-9780195117394-e-0187. Accessed 16 October 2020

Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Fuller-Love, N., & Akiode, M. (2020). Transnational entrepreneurs dynamics in entrepreneurial ecosystems: A critical review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 41–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519881921

Gartner, W. B. (1988). "Who is an entrepreneur?" is the wrong question. *American Journal of Small Business*, *12*(4), 11–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/104225878801200401

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Standford University Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206

Harima, A., & Baron, T. (2020). Is this transnational entrepreneurship? Five cases in which it is hard to say 'Yes' or 'No': *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, *6*(1), 12–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/2393957519887561

Harima, A., & Vermuri, D. S. (2015). Diaspora business model innovation. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, *11*(1), 29–52. https://doi.org/10.7341/20151113

Hooper, K. (2019). *Spain's Labor Migration Policies in the Aftermath of Economic Crisis*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/spain-labor-migration-aftermath-economic-crisis. Accessed 24 January 2020

Jeanes, E. L. (2019). *A dictionary of organizational behaviour*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780191843273.001.0001

Kluge, S. (2000). Empirically grounded construction of types and typologies in qualitative social research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(1), Art. 14.

Knowles, C. (2014). *Flip-Flop: A journey through globalisation's backroads* (Illustrated edition.). London : New York: Pluto Press.

Liswoska, R., & Stabuskawsju, R. (2014). Institutional support system for the development of SME innovation. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, *16*(3), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIL.2014.064734

Mancinelli, F. (2020). Digital nomads: Freedom, responsibility and the neoliberal order. *Information Technology & Tourism*, *22*, 417–437. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00174-2

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage.

Mathews, G., & Alba Vega, C. (2012). Introduction: What is globalization from below? In G. Mathews, G. L. Ribeiro, & C. Alba Vega (Eds.), *Globalization from below: The world's other economy* (pp. 1–16). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203106006-6

Mittmasser, C. (2022). "Because you've lived in different places all your life" – How mobility trajectories create cross-border entrepreneurial opportunities for migrants in Switzerland. *Geoforum*, *129*, 161–171. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.12.018

Mittmasser, C., & Stingl, I. (2021). Migrant counterspaces: Challenging labour market exclusion through collective action. *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, *37*(1–2). https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.18507

Munkejord, M. C. (2017). Local and transnational networking among female immigrant entrepreneurs in peripheral rural contexts: Perspectives on Russians in Finnmark, Norway. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, *24*(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776415587122

Osaghae, O.-G., & Cooney, T. M. (2020). Exploring the relationship between immigrant enclave theory and transnational diaspora entrepreneurial opportunity formation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2086–2105. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1560001

Parekh, S., & Wilcox, S. (2020). Feminist perspectives on globalization. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive*, *Spring edition*. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/feminism-globalization/. Accessed 16 October 2020

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Standford University Press.

Portes, A. (2000). Globalization from below: The rise of transnational communities. In D. Kalb, van der M. Land, R. Staring, V. B. Steenbergen, & N. Wilterdink (Eds.), *The ends of globalization. Bringing society back in* (pp. 253–270). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Haller, W. J. (2002). Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(2), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088896

Portes, A., & Martinez, B. P. (2020). They are not all the same: Immigrant enterprises, transnationalism, and development. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1991–2007. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559995

Prebisch, R. (1950). *The economic development of Latin America and its principal problems*. New York: United Nations.

Riaño, Y. (2016). Minga biographic workshops with highly skilled migrant women: Enhancing spaces of inclusion. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(3), 267–279. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115614884

Riaño, Y., Mittmasser, C., & Sandoz, L. (2022). Spatial mobility capital: A valuable resource for the social mobility of border-crossing migrant entrepreneurs? *Societies*, *12*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12030077

Rosenthal, G., & Fischer-Rosenthal, W. (2004). The analysis of biographical-narrative interviews. In U. Flick, E. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 259–265). London: Sage.

Routh, S. (2011). Building informal workers agenda: Imagining "informal employment" in conceptual resolution of "informality." *Global Labour Journal*, *2*(3), 208–227. https://doi.org/10.15173/glj.v2i3.1106

Saksela-Bergholm, S., Toivanen, M., & Wahlbeck, Ö. (2019). Migrant capital as a resource for migrant communities. *Social Inclusion*, *7*(4), 164–170. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2658

Sandoz, L. (2021). Localising informal practices in transnational entrepreneurship. *Migration Letters*, *18*(2), 135–148. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i2.1177

Sandoz, L., Mittmasser, C., Riaño, Y., & Piguet, E. (2022). A review of transnational migrant entrepreneurship: Perspectives on unequal spatialities. *ZFW – Advances in Economic Geography*, *66*(3), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004

Schäfer, S., & Henn, S. (2018). The evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the critical role of migrants. A phase-model based on a study of IT startups in the Greater Tel Aviv Area. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, *11*(2), 317–333. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsy013

Sinkovics, N., & Reuber, A. R. (2021). Beyond disciplinary silos: A systematic analysis of the migrant entrepreneurship literature. *Journal of World Business*, *56*(4), 101223. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101223

Solano, G. (2020). The mixed embeddedness of transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Moroccans in Amsterdam and Milan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 2067–2085. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559999

Souralová, A. (2015). *New perspectives on mutual dependency in care-giving*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315598055

Tarrius, A. (2002). *La mondialisation par le bas: Les nouveaux nomades de l'économie souterraine*. Paris: Balland.

Torr, R. (2008). Theoretical perspectives as ideal-types: Typologies as means not ends. *Social Epistemology*, *22*(2), 145–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691720802156276

Tuan, Y.-F. (1980). *Landscapes of fear*. Oxford: University of Minnesota Press.

Weber, M. (1949). *The methodology of the social sciences*. New York: The Free Press.

Webster, N. A. (2020). Migrant women entrepreneurs and emotional encounters in policy fields. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *37*, 100730. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2020.100730

Webster, N. A., & Haandrikman, K. (2017). Thai women entrepreneurs in Sweden: Critical perspectives on migrant small businesses. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *60*, 17–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2016.11.001

Webster, N. A., & Zhang, Q. (2020). Careers delivered from the kitchen? Immigrant women small-scale entrepreneurs working in the growing Nordic platform economy. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, *28*(2), 113–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2020.1714725

Yeung, H. W. (2009). Transnationalizing entrepreneurship: A critical agenda for economic geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(2), 210–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508096032

Zapata-Barrero, R., & Rezaei, S. (2020). Diaspora governance and transnational entrepreneurship: The rise of an emerging social global pattern in migration studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(10), 1959–1973. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1559990

# ARTICLE 4

## *Migrant Counterspaces: Challenging Labour Market Exclusion through Collective Action*

Christina Mittmasser and Isabella Stingl

Published in December 2021 in Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales (REMI) 37 (1-2), 229–249 – Special Issue: Labour and Migration in the Age of Borders.

https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.18507

### *Abstract*

Recent debates in migration studies and labour geographies emphasise the need to acknowledge migrants' agency and their ability to challenge regulatory migration regimes and precarious working relations. Contributing to this literature, this article examines the activities of a migrant-run organisation in Switzerland in its collective response to labour market barriers mobilised by the state, employers, and society at large. Building on ethnographic and participatory methods, our findings reveal that the organisation's strategies focus strongly on the individual level and thus risk losing sight of broader power relations. Yet, our analysis also shows that the strategies employed can be transformative on the personal scale, creating a meaningful counterspace to dominant experiences of social and economic exclusion. In conclusion, we contend that an analysis of migratory movements needs to take into account the social and relational dimensions of agency as well as the differentiated effects of collective action.

**Keywords:** Migration, Labour, Agency, Space, Switzerland

## *Migrant Counterspaces: Challenging Labour Market Exclusion through Collective Action (Article 4)*

### *1. Introduction*

Switzerland is considered a particularly interesting site for the study of migration issues (Piguet, 2006; D'Amato et al., 2019). This is partly linked to Switzerland's high proportion of foreign residents, which reflects the country's economic dependence on immigration. Nevertheless, researchers exploring the labour market experiences of different groups of migrants have shown that many struggle to find work according to their skills and aspirations. Women and people with non-European citizenship are seen as particularly affected by devaluation processes resulting from a lack of recognition of their qualifications, discriminatory employment practices, and broader racialised and gendered discourses of otherness (e.g. Wanner, 2004; Riaño, 2021).

Migration scholars and labour geographers increasingly emphasise the need to engage more closely with migrants' agency and their ability to challenge these modes of economic exclusion (see e.g. Buckley et al., 2017). In the Swiss context, a number of researchers have highlighted migrants' creative solutions to the multi-faceted barriers they experience (e.g. Riaño, 2011; Sandoz, 2021). The focus, however, remains mainly on individual strategies, while migrants' collective responses to labour market exclusion have received less attention. These are particularly interesting as they offer insights into how personal experiences of inequality relate to organisational structures and how collective mobilisation can lead to change (see Caggiano, 2019; Martin, 2011).

To address this gap, this paper studies an organisation called Migrant Entrepreneurship Switzerland (MES). Operating within a city in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, it is run by migrant women who faced difficulties accessing the Swiss labour market. Since 2015 MES has offered an entrepreneurship programme to "skilled" migrants from diverse backgrounds, seeking to challenge exclusionary practices towards migrants within the labour market and society at large. To analyse the organisation's strategies and impact, we utilise the notion of counterspace (e.g. Hassanli et al., 2019). Moreover, we set this term in dialogue with studies that have warned against a simplistic romanticisation of agency and resistance. This enables a critical analysis of the differentiated effects and ambivalences in the actions of the organisation under study. Empirically, this paper builds on ethnographic and participatory methods, semi-structured and biographical interviews, and document analysis. It is the

result of a collaboration between two researchers who individually conducted empirical research on the organisation between 2018 and 2020.

To begin, we briefly outline links between labour and migration in Swiss immigration and integration policies. Then, we contextualise our research interest through a conceptual discussion of the terms agency and counterspace in the fields of migration studies and labour geographies. Next, we address our methodological approach and provide further detail on our case study. In the empirical section, we examine three key strategies that MES employs to challenge labour market exclusions and highlight a range of ambivalences within its practices. Finally, we discuss to what extent the organisation manages to create a counterspace that is able to effectively rework migrants' experiences of professional downward mobility in Switzerland.

## *2. Starting Point: "Marginalised elites" in Switzerland*

Switzerland's population consists of almost one-third foreign-born individuals, or the third-highest share in all OECD countries (OECD, 2021). Two thirds of migrants to Switzerland were born in European Economic Area (EEA) countries. Almost forty percent of the foreign-born working-age population had completed tertiary education (Riaño, 2021: 2). These numbers reflect the Swiss migration regime in which nationality and skills are used as central selection criteria for admitting migrants and defining their residence rights (Sandoz, 2020). Similar to other European countries, Switzerland grants free movement and facilitates easy labour market access to EEA citizens. Non-EEA citizens can only enter Switzerland as asylum seekers, reunified family members, students, or workers with specific skill sets who are sponsored and supported by an employer (Sandoz, 2020: 224). This shows Switzerland's clear intent to ensure that migration is economically beneficial (Piguet, 2006).

Moreover, the Swiss migration system is significantly shaped by discourses of otherness that emphasise cultural differences, especially between Europeans and non-Europeans, and frame certain migrants as burdens to society and the welfare state (Fischer and Dahinden, 2017). These narratives are visible in populist anti-immigration movements such as the "minaret initiative", the "mass immigration initiative", and most recently, the "burqa ban", which regularly result in referendums (see Manatschal, 2015; Ackermann and Freitag, 2015; DW, 2021). It is important to note in this context that in Switzerland's political system, the right to vote or stand for election at the federal and most cantonal and municipal levels is strictly limited to Swiss citizens. Thus, many migrants are unable to participate in the elections

that govern their lives. According to Giugni and Passy (2004: 77), this can also limit the effectiveness of minority-led social movements, as they often lack strong political alliances.

Statistics suggest that the Swiss labour market is favourable to highly skilled migrants compared to other countries (OECD and European Union, 2015: 116). However, research has shown that many migrants in Switzerland struggle to make full use of their skills (e.g. Wanner, 2004; Riaño, 2021). This is especially the case for women and non-Europeans who do not arrive to Switzerland with an existing employment contract, but through family reunification or by requesting asylum. These migrants often experience a devaluation of their former work experiences which can lead to situations of unemployment and skills mismatch. Apart from deficit-oriented images and their influence on employment practices (Auer et al., 2019), these situations are usually attributed to a lack of professional networks, limited knowledge of the Swiss labour market, and a lack of fluency in the local language (Riaño, 2021: 8). In consequence, many "skilled" migrants must downgrade their professional goals and become "marginalised elites" (Riaño, 2021: 10).

Integration programmes that address unemployment among migrants have been criticised for channelling participants into precarious labour sectors, often regardless of previous work experiences (see Bachmann, 2016; Benelli et al., 2014; Stingl, 2021). According to Bachmann (2016: 178), these programmes mostly operate under the neoliberal premise of "Fördern und Fordern" (foster and demand) and promote personal responsibility for one's own employability instead of targeting structural conditions. Bachmann further argues that most initiatives fail to recognise migrants' differentiated experiences and their realities beyond the sphere of work (Bachmann, 2016: 244). This is reflected, for example, in the fact that improved access to childcare is not addressed by these programmes (Bachmann, 2016: 234). In sum, research has shown that Swiss integration policies fail to cope with the diversity of social and biographical situations in the context of migration, and can thus reinforce the difficulties faced by many migrants trying to find employment according to their skills and aspirations (see Choffat et al., 2020). This paper contributes to and extends these debates by analysing how migrants collectively react to this situation.

## *3. Conceptual approach: Migrants' agency and the production of counterspace*

In the past decades, migration scholars and labour geographers have become increasingly interested in migrants' agentic responses to exclusionary practices mobilised by capitalism and the state (see Buckley et al., 2017; Piguet, 2013: 154). By emphasising migrants' abilities to contest and resist structural

constraints, these works aim to overcome the victimisation of — and often one-sided emphasis on — migrants' experienced hardships (Bork-Hüffer et al., 2016: 129). A rich scholarship has emerged that demonstrates the potential of individual, sometimes subtle forms of agency in the everyday lives of migrant workers (e.g. Rogaly, 2009; McDowell et al., 2007), as well as organised and collective forms of agency such as trade unions and civil society organisations (e.g. Martin, 2011; Caggiano, 2019).

Geographically inspired research in the field specifically underlines the spatial dimension of agency (see e.g. Etzold, 2016; Yeoh and Huang, 1998). Seo and Skelton (2017) and Caillol (2018), for instance, show that immigration regulations and precarious working conditions constrain migrants' livelihoods by restricting access to certain public spaces and economic sectors or isolating them spatially within specific districts or housing arrangements. At the same time, however, they shed light on how migrants use existing resources to (re)appropriate and produce spaces of resistance. This can provide relief from oppressive working conditions and affirm multiple identities, despite the economy's and the state's construction of migrants as disposable workers (Seo and Skelton, 2017: 166).

Building on these studies, we draw on the notion of "counterspace" for our analysis of migrants' collective action. This term originates from critical race theory (see e.g. Solorzano et al., 2000; Case and Hunter, 2012) and found use in migration research. Hassanli et al. (2019), for instance, applied the concept in their analysis of a cultural festival in Australia, in which deficit notions of migrants and refugees can be challenged and thus self-enhancement can be forged. Pande (2018) uses it in her research on migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, who strategically use public and private spaces to challenge racialised and heteronormative labels assigned to them by migration policies. In a similar manner, we utilise the notion of counterspace to develop a spatialised understanding of the agentic strategies applied by MES. Our conception of space in this context does not confine MES's activities to a particular material space, e.g. in the sense of a building where its members come together. Rather, we refer to space as a social and relational product made up of individuals' practices and interactions as well as their connections to different places (see Massey, 2009; Salzbrunn, 2016; Riaño, 2017). Moreover, we understand space as always in process, in that the uneven power relations and social hierarchies that create different opportunities for different people are constantly reinforced and rearranged (see Massey, 1994, 2009). Attending to these spatial dimensions makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on migrants' spatial agency, which has so far focused mainly on the interplay of material infrastructures and social actions.

We further develop our notion of counterspace by building on studies that have cautioned against romanticising agency and the resistant potentials of individual and collective actions (e.g. Mitchell, 2011; Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Bork-Hüffer et al., 2016). Many of these accounts draw on Katz (2004), who has famously urged us not to celebrate all "everyday acts" as resistance, and instead

introduces a terminological distinction between "resilience", "reworking", and "resistance". Inspired by these critical approaches, we seek to dismantle MES's strategies with regard to what extent and on which levels they become transformative. This is of particular importance for our subject matter, as Martin (2011: 2948) has shown that the capacity of migrant organisations to advocate for progressive change is in constant tension with the dominant social, economic, and political orders that such organisations may support, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

## *4. Research context and methodological approach*

This paper studies the migrant-run organisation Migrant Entrepreneurship Switzerland (MES). Overall, we address two research questions: 1) What strategies does MES use to challenge dynamics of labour market exclusion towards migrants? 2) What are the effects of these strategies and what difficulties and ambivalences can be observed? Based on these questions, we discuss to what extent the activities of the organisation become transformative and can thus be considered counterspace.

Choosing an organisation as field site is based on our interest in how personal experiences of inequality are translated into organisational agendas and to what extent individual and structural constraints can be resolved through collective mobilisation — questions which have not received enough attention in the literature (Caggiano, 2019: 2). Yet, we do not fully restrict our analysis to the organisational level, but also pay close attention to the lived and biographical experiences of individuals within and beyond this collective setting and the multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities they face regarding nationality, legal status, gender, and family situation (see Dutta, 2016). However, the focus remains on analysing how these experiences are linked to the organisation under study, thus less attention is paid to the influence of migrants' everyday agentic strategies outside of MES.

MES was created in 2015 and operates in a city in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It seeks to challenge the devaluation of migrants' skills and foster inclusion in the Swiss economy and local community. MES provides a bilingual (English and German) training programme to migrants with diverse statuses who want to create an entrepreneurial or social project in Switzerland. It also coordinates a mentoring and coaching programme, in which local professionals are encouraged to support and advise migrants. Finally, MES organises public events and networking opportunities for anyone interested in topics of diversity and migrant inclusion in Switzerland. The project-funded organisation is financially supported through grants offered by the state, canton, and municipality, as well as through private donations and partnerships with larger corporate firms such as insurance companies or banks.

We regard MES as an ensemble of diverse actors that includes the core team, programme participants, volunteers, and others. At the time of writing this paper, the core team responsible for MES's main activities consisted of approximately eight women, some of whom were also founders of the organisation. They mostly originate from Latin American countries, had obtained tertiary education, and faced difficulties entering the labour market as trailing spouses to Switzerland. Through financial contributions from sponsors, MES is able to cover two-thirds of the core team's wages, while the rest is unpaid working time. In addition, around twenty advisors, board members, and former team members regularly support the core team. Each year, around twenty migrants take part in the entrepreneurial programme. We observed a great diversity in terms of their socio-economic profiles, including nationality, gender, and fields of activity. For instance, the twenty-three participants in the 2019 programme represented seventeen nationalities. Sixteen were born in a non-European country, thirteen were female. Most moved to Switzerland for family reasons or following a humanitarian crisis in their former country of residence. Almost all had university education, but experienced situations of skills mismatch or unemployment in Switzerland. To overcome this, they sought to create entrepreneurial projects selling goods and/or offering services in diverse fields such as design/arts, fashion, gastronomy, technology, consulting, and community building. MES also engages external volunteers to support these activities, including corporate employees from firms that collaborate with MES, migrants who want to support newcomers by sharing their own experiences, or other local individuals motivated to help MES support vulnerable groups within their community.

| | | N (total 18) |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 12 |
| | Male | 6 |
| Age | <30 | 3 |
| | 30-40 | 11 |
| | 41-50 | 4 |
| Region of Birth | South America | 5 |
| | Europe | 6 |
| | Sub-Saharan Africa | 3 |
| | Middle East | 2 |
| | South and Central Asia | 2 |
| Years in CH | 1-5 | 9 |
| | 6-10 | 6 |
| | >10 | 3 |
| Reason to move to CH | Humanitarian | 5 |
| | Partner | 9 |
| | Job/Education | 3 |
| | Other | 1 |
| Education | Secondary Education | 2 |
| | University Degree | 16 |
| Business activity (multiple choices possible) | Consulting | 4 |
| | Community Building | 6 |
| | Design/Arts/Fashion | 8 |
| | Technology | 2 |

*Table 1: Characteristics of interviewees*

This article combines two research projects. The first, conducted by Isabella Stingl[21], engages with the work-related experiences of refugees and analyses how these are shaped by Swiss migration and integration policies. The second, conducted by Christina Mittmasser[22], studies the transnational business activities of migrant entrepreneurs in Switzerland. In general, both projects follow the framework of critical ethnography, which examines the everyday experiences of individuals in relation to power structures (Denzin, 2017). In the course of our individual fieldwork — which included participating in MES's activities — we were brought together by a common acquaintance who realised that our research interests overlapped. We began to communicate regularly, which led to the idea of a collaborative paper.

[21] This project is carried out at the Department of Geography at University of Zurich. It was partly funded by a doc.mobility fellowship from the Swiss National Science Research Foundation (SNSF, Grant No. P1ZHP1_184117).

[22] This project is carried out in the context of a larger project, "Migrant Entrepreneurship: Mapping Cross-Border Mobilities and Exploring the Role of Spatial Mobility Capital", led by Yvonne Riaño and Etienne Piguet. For more information see: https://nccr-onthemove.ch/projects/migrant-entrepreneurship-mapping-cross-border-mobilities-and-exploring-the-role-of-spatial-mobility-capital/. The study is supported by the nccr – on the move, National Centre of Competence in Research – The Migration-Mobility Nexus (https://nccr-onthemove.ch/), funded by the Swiss National Science Research Foundation (SNSF, Grant No. 51NF40-182897 for IP32 project).

The empirical material was collected between 2018 and 2020 and includes a semi-structured interview with one of MES's co-founders as well as biographical interviews (see Iosifides and Sporton, 2009) with fourteen former participants and three supporters of the organisation (see Table 1). These are complemented by extensive field notes on our observations and informal conservations during our participation in MES's workshops, public events, and team meetings. In addition, we conducted an analysis of MES's web presence and documents that the organisation shared with us, such as evaluation reports. After reviewing all available material and identifying information crucial to our research interest, the extracted data was then coded according to central themes that emerged during the analysis (see Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019). Overall, we identified three central themes that represent key intentions and practices of the organisation in relation to challenging the exclusion of migrants from the labour market. We are aware that this model includes intersections and overlaps. However, for the purpose of analytical clarity, we will present the empirical material according to the identified themes.

Finally, it is important to note that we followed a longitudinal and participatory approach by engaging in regular exchanges with the organisation. For example, during Mittmasser's long-term research collaboration with MES she volunteered in the organisation for more than a year, translating documents, co-organising events, and conducting research. In November 2020, we organised an online collaborative workshop with six members of MES's core team, during which we reported and jointly reflected on our preliminary results. This workshop was informed by the feminist methodological principles of participatory "Minga" workshops developed by Riaño (2016). Accessing the field and creating this collaborative relationship with MES was facilitated by our own positionality as women and migrants in Switzerland and our willingness to engage with the organisation. The core team thus appeared very motivated to cooperate with us in order to receive support, gather feedback on their strategies, and expand their community. Our active engagement in the organisation certainly affected our analysis. Yet, we believe it was mostly beneficial, not only regarding the validity of our results, but also in terms of reciprocity and the balance of power between researchers and research subjects.

## *5. Results: Collective strategies to counter labour market exclusion*

In this section, we examine strategies and ambivalences of the Swiss-based organisation MES in its challenge to the dynamics of migrants' labour market exclusion. To begin, we explain how MES tries to achieve its overall goal of overcoming situations of skills mismatch and unemployment by promoting entrepreneurship and discuss how this plays out in the biographies of individual participants. We then

explore further strategies that MES employs to accomplish its aims. In so doing, the second section looks at how MES attempts to challenge deficit-oriented and simplistic images of migrants. Finally, the third section sheds light on how MES seeks to improve the lives of its participants beyond the economic sphere. A common thread of interest in what kind of space is produced by the organisation's activities runs throughout these sections.

### *5.1. Overcoming situations of skills mismatch and unemployment*

MES was primarily created with the aim to support migrants who face situations of skills mismatch and unemployment in Switzerland. According to one of the co-founders interviewed for this study, this leads to frustration on an individual level and a waste of human potential on a societal level, when highly skilled individuals with valuable work experience are either unemployed or precariously employed. As a response, MES promotes the idea of migrants becoming self-employed entrepreneurs. The organisation offers an entrepreneurial programme in which migrants are encouraged to use their qualifications in creative ways. Thereby, MES revalorises former work experiences and the informal skills of participants, which are often not recognised by Swiss authorities and employers:

> *"[W]e have people coming in, who say: "Oh, I have nothing". And then you discover that they managed their uncle's shop for ten years, and you think well ok, but you have a basic understanding of leadership, stock management, accounting." (Interview with a co-founder – 10.05.18)*

Moreover, in the course of the entrepreneurial programme, participants are supported in using their transnational connections to create a business in Switzerland or abroad:

> *"[N]ine times out of ten maybe, they are working with a local partner in their home country or somewhere, where they lived before and then they want to sell the product here. So it is not about building the connections in the country, they have that, it is about finding the market, and pitching it [the idea] to the market here or online, or wherever the market is." (Interview with a co-founder – 10.05.18)*

In this way, MES gives new meaning to resources that are specific to "transnational biographies" (Glorius, 2017: 110), facilitating a relational perception of space in which participants are encouraged to maintain or (re)establish connections between their former countries of origin and Switzerland.

In fact, as we followed the activities of MES over time and interviewed participants, we observed that many migrants overcome situations of skills mismatch and unemployment by developing an entrepreneurial project. With the support of MES they create businesses or social projects that capitalise on their skill sets, resources, and contacts outside of Switzerland. For example, they sell goods produced in their former residence countries that incorporate cultural references, such as food and textiles, or mobilise social networks abroad to build professional collaborations. The following accounts, which derive from interviews with two former programme participants, illustrate such cases:

***Valeria Garcia***[23] *was born in Colombia in the 1980s. After finishing high school, she moved to New Zealand, where she worked as a nanny for four years and met her future Swiss husband. Following a short return to Colombia, she moved to Spain and then to Italy to obtain a bachelor's degree in fashion design. In 2013, she got married and decided to live with her husband in Switzerland. Valeria looked for a job in the fashion sector, but was unsuccessful. According to her, this was due to her lack of local contacts and German language skills. Valeria was frustrated and started working as a nanny again. Yet, she still aspired to create her own wedding dress label. She then joined the MES entrepreneurship programme, which supported her with expertise, encouragement, and access to a local network. Valeria not only uses her professional skills to design dresses, she also capitalises on her existing knowledge and contacts in Colombia. She founded a shop in the centre of Bogota, which is run by her relatives, and a tailors' workshop on the city outskirts. She continues to try to establish collaborations and a client base in Switzerland. In the interview, Valeria concludes that she is excited about the future as her business is growing. Not only is she portrayed in Colombian fashion magazines, but she has been able to quit her job as a nanny and still financially support her Colombian family and pay her employees. (retrieved from interview with a former participant – 23.08.19)*

***Farid Hassan*** *was born in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. At the age of sixteen he moved to Syria where both his parents were born. He obtained a bachelor's degree in fine arts and a master's degree in marketing. He then worked in different art workshops and advertising agencies as a graphic designer and art director. In 2008, Farid met his future wife in Damascus, who was born in Switzerland but was visiting her Syrian family at the time. They married shortly after. When the conflict in Syria became more critical, Farid decided to join his wife in Switzerland. Here, Farid struggled to find a job that met his qualifications. Relying on the salary of his Swiss wife, he tried to earn additional income by acquiring temporary contracts as a graphic designer and working nightshifts in an asylum shelter. Yet,*

[23] All names have been anonymised.

*he was not satisfied with his unstable professional life. Then Farid participated in the MES programme. His entrepreneurial project aims to preserve Syrian art workshops, which are disappearing as a result of the war. Thus, he brings the work of Syrian artisans to the Swiss market. MES helped him learn about start-up regulations in Switzerland and access local contacts. As he struggled to gather the necessary capital to start his business, MES supported him to set up a crowd-funding campaign and screened his advertising video at different events. His campaign was successful, and he started selling products online. He recounts:*

> *"Definitely, it is a morale booster, because when, you know, when you get one rejection after another it really demoralises people, you really tend to believe that I'm not good enough to do anything, to be accepted. So, it's a very critical, very bad position. [...] In terms of self-esteem, it's definitely building up at the moment when people approach you, saying: "Well you have a really interesting project, I would love to support you or be part of it." (Interview with a former participant – 28.10.19)*

These stories are representative of many other programme participants. They show how MES provides encouragement, professional training, and access to local networks, thereby fostering entrepreneurial projects of migrants who were rejected by and frustrated with the Swiss labour market. However, not all participants succeed in launching a business which provides economic self-sufficiency and thus a meaningful alternative to more dependent forms of employment. Entrepreneurship involves risks which are not possible for every migrant. Participants like Valeria and Farid are supported by their Swiss partners. Marrying a Swiss citizen not only provided them cross-border mobility rights and stable legal status in Switzerland, but also allows Valeria and Farid to rely on their partners financially while building a business. In contrast, Emilio's story suggests precarities for participants in different situations:

***Emilio Martínes*** *was born in Colombia in the 1990s. After completing a bachelor's degree in photography, he opened a café with his wife. Due to political instabilities in Colombia, however, Emilio and his family had to leave the country and applied for asylum in Switzerland. After living in different refugee shelters, Emilio and his wife were moved to an apartment in the countryside, where their first child was born. At the time of the interview in 2019, Emilio was still waiting for his residence permit. In this unstable situation, Emilio could not find employment. Yet, he was motivated to find a solution. Together with a Colombian friend, he developed an idea to foster the fair trade of mineral stones between Colombia and Switzerland. They joined MES to gain knowledge about the start-up process and access local contacts. Yet, because of Emilio's asylum status, he has not been able to officially launch*

*the business. As an asylum seeker he is not allowed to travel internationally, and it would be crucial for his business to be able to go to Colombia personally to expand his business connections. Thus, his legal status, lack of financial capital, and care responsibilities towards his new-born child are slowing down the development of his business. MES gave him new confidence and inspiration, but he must still wait for his legal situation to resolve as he seeks other employment opportunities to sustain his family (retrieved from interview with a former participant – 23.10.19).*

Emilio's story mirrors the experiences of numerous MES participants who do not succeed in launching a business. Due to nationality and permit status, unstable legal situations often prevent migrants from officially creating a business and travelling for entrepreneurial purposes. Others could not maintain professional networks abroad or access transnational resources due to political instabilities or a lack of relevant infrastructure. Some cannot risk investing in a business because they lack financial stability. Others face care obligations which prevents them from working on their project full time. Failed attempts to create a business can in part also be traced back to high levels of competition and the lack of stable pay within the entrepreneurial field. Moreover, statistics show that self-employment among non-citizens in Switzerland is lower compared to Swiss nationals (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2021). This is in sharp contrast to many other European countries (Juchno and Agafitei, 2017: 24) and suggests that a person's ability to start a business in Switzerland is highly dependent on characteristics such as nationality and duration of stay (see Piguet, 2010). Our data complements this analysis as it highlights intersections with other social markers of difference such as legal status, gender, family situation, and class.

In sum, it becomes evident that MES encourages its participants to imagine a professional future that many are unlikely to realise—at least in the short term. Hence, the gap between some participants' newly forged labour market subjectivities and their labour market realities may turn into a source of disappointment. Yet, our longitudinal data on MES also shows that the organisation is becoming aware that not every participant is able to become a successful entrepreneur. Consequently, MES tries to facilitate "regular" economic inclusion by forwarding employment and internship advertisements to participants. Furthermore, the organisation is currently exploring ways to create another programme which focuses on access to the labour market beyond the entrepreneurial sphere.

### *5.2. Challenging deficit-oriented views of migration and simplistic ideas of vulnerability*

As discussed above, processes of economic exclusion from the labour market also stem from deficit-oriented discourses and stereotypical assumptions regarding the skills and vulnerabilities of migrants. Following this argument, MES not only offers entrepreneurial training as a concrete alternative to downgrading migrants' skills, it also seeks to challenge dominant narratives with regard to migration more generally. In this regard, MES applies several strategies: on a societal level, "showcasing" migrants' potential contributions; on an organisational level, defining an inclusive target audience; and on an individual level, building resilience.

The strategy of "showcasing" migrants' potential contributions to society becomes especially visible when attending the public events organised by MES, in which participants pitch their project ideas and recount their migratory experiences. These events aim to challenge the exclusionary strategies of employers by advocating for the positive societal and economic impacts of diversity. In these attempts, MES highlights the role of migrants as resourceful individuals who contribute to society in innovative ways, rather than as vulnerable figures in need of support. The following quote by one of the co-founders illustrates this narrative:

> *"[We] try to reframe the dialogue, because I mean also what we are trying to do is shift the discourse on refugees: from poor people who need help, to people who can help themselves, if they are given the opportunities and the tools and if you see them not as a burden, but as a potential. So that is sort of our little sales pitch, this positive paradigm versus this negative. It is not negative even, it is like a good instinct from people, this "I want to support them", but it is very much like "I am going to help a little refugee!" And I am not kidding, we have had people come to us, and say "I want to be a mentor, do they need blankets, I can bring them food?", and we are like: "No, no, no!". (Interview with a co-founder – 10.05.18)*

This progressive view that transcends patronising notions of migrants as always vulnerable is evident in all the material we analysed. Moreover, in publicly describing the goals of the organisation, MES strictly refrains from talking about "integration" (see Glorius and Schondelmayer, 2020: 180-182 for a discussion on the manifold interpretations of this term). Rather than speaking of a one-sided integration of migrants into Swiss society, the organisation calls for migrants and "locals" to create an inclusive society together. Through its public events and online presence, MES also tries to convey this message to the "outside" by collaborating with local businesses and inviting their employees to become volunteers and mentors in the programme.

At an organisational level, MES tries to overcome dominant images of migration by defining an "inclusive target audience", in the sense that the core team does not admit participants to the training programme based on immigration status or imagined categories, such as "refugee". Rather, it seeks to address people who define themselves as entrepreneurs with a migrant background in need of support. Thereby, they apply an alternative, intersectional understanding which does not equate vulnerability with a particular legal status or country of origin. In doing so, the organisation acknowledges that vulnerabilities do not necessarily stem from the experience of migration per se but emerge in interaction with social categories such as gender, family situation, and class. This is of crucial importance, as studies have shown that state-based categories often reflect simplistic images of migrants and societal discourses of otherness, and do not actually relate to migrants' lived realities, experiences, feelings of belonging, and skills (see e.g., Akoka *et al.*, 2017; Waldinger, 2016). In this way, MES succeeds in creating a space that brings together otherwise disparate individuals who are united by their experiences of exclusion from the labour market.

Finally, MES addresses these issues on an individual level by seeking to foster resilience among programme participants. This is partly based on the organisation's assumption that deficit-oriented narratives not only affect state authorities and employers but are also internalised by migrants. For this purpose, MES members intentionally use alternative language during interactions between the core team and the participants, which we observed while attending training workshops:

> *"The subject of migration seems to be almost completely absent! Or rather, migration issues are negotiated quite differently here. The participants of the workshop were consistently addressed as business people or (future) entrepreneurs who are currently developing important and exciting projects—not as migrants who need to integrate or need to be integrated. Also, the title of a questionnaire some of them needed to fill in read: "Computer Skills Survey for Entrepreneurs". [...] If the topic of migration was addressed, then it was either positively connoted, or the participants were asked to interpret for themselves what significance their migration experience might have for their business, e.g. during the Speed-Dating exercise." (Field notes by Stingl – 12.-13.05.18)*

The experience of constantly being addressed as a skilled, talented entrepreneur encourages participants to overcome internal barriers related to their migratory experiences and legal status. According to the co-founder interviewed, these barriers prevent participants from imagining a professional future beyond precarious labour sectors. Thus, this interpellation seeks to strengthen migrants' self-confidence and enable them to forge alternative labour market subjectivities. This may enhance their entrepreneurial activities but could also encourage them to forge another path, such as further training or employment. In the interviews, participants continuously elaborated on the positive effects of the programme on their

mental well-being and self-esteem, as can be observed in Farid Hassan's statement in the previous section.

However, critical examination of these strategies also reveals a number of ambivalences. First, we would like to critically discuss the strategy of "showcasing" migrants' potential contributions to the wider public in order to reframe dominant discourses around migration. While this strategy may successfully create new narratives of inclusion beyond notions of deficit, which is particularly important when migrants are framed as economic burdens, it also risks reinforcing or creating new lines of differentiation. This concerns the established divide between migrants and non-migrants, where migrants are required to advertise their skills and potential societal contributions in order to be considered "welcome". Second, considering that migrants are often unfairly defined by reductive categories, the idea of an inclusive target audience that transcends immigration status and fixed ideas of vulnerability is refreshing. Yet, as shown in the previous chapter, precarities in the livelihoods of certain participants remain. Some of the difficulties that participants face in realising professional projects stem from structural relations mobilised by the Swiss immigration system, which MES cannot undo completely. For example, there are still legal restrictions on starting a business for asylum seekers or individuals that depend on social services. While the organisation welcomes these individuals to become active members of MES, their status-based restrictions only allow them to create "social initiatives" or to function as a silent partner in someone else's project.

Finally, we observed that despite MES's efforts on the societal and organisational levels, its strategies focus primarily on the individual level of participants when it comes to addressing migrants' exclusion from the labour market. MES rarely addresses public authorities or files legal proceedings against employers who engage in discriminatory practices. Instead, the organisation encourages the individual to overcome "internal barriers" by becoming an entrepreneur. This is in line with the neoliberal logic of promoting individual self- responsibility for one's professional trajectory and resembles regular integration programmes, as discussed in Chapter 2. This may hinder the mobilisation of broader collective alliances. Moreover, it supports the neoliberal discourses at the heart of Switzerland's current social and employment policies (see Bachmann, 2016: 178; Maeder and Nadai, 2009), while neglecting the conditions that excluded migrants from meaningful labour market participation in the first place. As a result, and similar to what Martin (2011: 2948) discusses with respect to the activities of a non-profit migrant organisation in Chicago, MES runs the risk of working within the system, rather than against it.

However, it is important to recognise that MES is mainly run by migrant women, who themselves founded the organisation to a certain extent out of an "act of necessity" after struggling to access the labour market. In the course of the collaborative workshop we organised, some of the core team members emphasised the constraints arising from their own positionality. These include unfamiliarity

with the Swiss system, the precariousness that comes with running a non-profit organisation, and the difficulties they face when it comes to bureaucratic procedures and acquiring funding from public and private sources. Moreover, as non-Swiss citizens most of them are unable to take full advantage of the Swiss system's multiple access points to the political arena (see Giugni and Passy, 2004: 77). In this sense, the focus on the individual level can be read as a circumvention strategy that aims to improve the living conditions of other migrants despite the structural constraints that limit the core team's own agency.

### *5.3. Acknowledging needs and identities beyond the economic sphere*

In this final section, we illuminate MES's strategies that, at first glance, appear to have little to do with promoting economic participation. However, these strategies are closely linked to its overarching goal of fighting against the economic exclusion of migrants while creating a durable social space. While conducting fieldwork, we observed that MES emphasises diverse aspects of life, which are relevant to migrants' everyday experiences both within and outside the labour market. Thereby, the organisation acknowledges that the multiple needs and identities of programme participants extend far beyond the economic sphere.

For instance, MES takes domestic care responsibilities into consideration. The core team members actively encourage participants to bring their children to the training sessions and even offer childcare in order to enable everyone to fully participate. This is particularly notable since childcare is not part of regular "integration" measures offered by the state (Bachmann, 2016: 234). Thus, MES seeks to challenge experiences of exclusion in a differentiated way by acknowledging that the participants' agency and well-being in the economic sphere is significantly shaped by their lives outside of it (see Dutta, 2016). In doing so, the organisation challenges the dominant reduction of migrants to "mere" workers as well as the simplistic focus on their potential economic contribution.

Along with creating equal access to entrepreneurial support and training, MES also actively fosters social inclusion. The entrepreneurial programme includes coffee breaks and shared meals which provide opportunities for informal exchanges. These allow participants to connect with others and expand their social networks and activities in the local community. Moreover, by organising a wide range of public events and engaging local volunteers, the organisation also establishes connections between migrants and "locals". Our observations show that these networking opportunities not only support the participants' business activities, but also enhance feelings of belonging to a community beyond their economic needs. In the interviews, participants highlighted that they appreciated MES particularly for

the social support they received during the programme and the friendships they were able to build with people in similar situations. Valeria Garcia, whose story we told above, described MES as a "place to go" where you "see that you are not alone" in the struggle to find a job (interview with a former participant – 23.08.19). Another participant, a thirty-two-year-old Ethiopian man, referred to MES as a "place of safety" that creates a feeling of "belonging" and "home" (interview with a former participant – 09.09.19). These narratives are apparent in all our interviews and informal talks. They show that MES creates a sense of community among its members, which counterbalances dominant experiences of loneliness after arriving in Switzerland.

Furthermore, MES facilitates the long-term engagement of participants. After the culmination of the entrepreneurial programme, many participants stay actively involved in the organisation as alumni and are able to take advantage of additional training and networking sessions. Former participants become mentors for future participants, support the core team's administrative tasks, or attend the organisation's public events. Notably, MES created an online chat group in order to enable exchanges among past participants to continue. The members of this chat send information relevant to business creation, employment opportunities, and other support institutions. They regularly share updates and advice related to their entrepreneurial projects, for example in terms of digital marketing and funding. Yet, they also report news on their legal status, family situations, and private social lives. Informal discussions and friendly conversations are central to these exchanges. This shows that MES provides continuous support to migrants not only in terms of their professional lives, but also with regard to their social relationships.

Another aspect that we noticed during our fieldwork is that in all of MES's actions, the appropriation of material space remains ephemeral, as the buildings and spaces in which the organisation's activities take place vary greatly. It uses co-working spaces in the city where they operate, meeting rooms of the cooperate firms with which they collaborate, as well as public event locations that can be rented. The organisation also operates in digital space by using virtual technologies and communication apps, as described above. This is particularly apparent since the COVID-19 outbreak. In 2020, MES offered their entrepreneurial programme completely online and intensified its online interactions with current and former participants, as well as volunteers and the public. While we could not observe the appropriation of a concrete material space, our research strongly suggests that the social activities and interactions of the different actors involved in MES create a durable social space that fosters a sense of belonging among participants. Following a conceptualisation of space that looks beyond the material structures of places (see Section 3), we argue that MES produces a social and relational space that allows people to re-evaluate their connections to other places, share experiences of exclusion, and work together to collectively improve their lives both within and beyond the economic sphere. In this way, this space provides relief from everyday struggles and represents an important point of connection, even for former

participants. In the conclusion to this paper, we connect these findings with the ambivalences of MES's strategies identified in the previous sections to discuss in what ways these strategies are transformative and thus to what extent MES can be considered "counterspace".

## *6. Conclusion: A migrant organisation as counterspace?*

This article explored the activities of Migrant Entrepreneurship Switzerland (MES), a migrant-run organisation in a German-speaking city in Switzerland. By focusing on migrants' collective responses to processes of labour market exclusion, we contributed to the existing literature, which primarily highlights individual agentic strategies. Based on ethnographic and participatory methods, we identified three main strategies employed by the organisation under study. First, MES aims to overcome situations of skills mismatch and unemployment by supporting migrants who aspire to become entrepreneurs. Second, it challenges deficit-oriented views of migration and simplistic ideas of vulnerability by showcasing migrants' potential contributions and fostering personal resilience. And finally, the organisation acknowledges the needs and identities of migrants beyond the economic sphere by providing a sense of community. In all of these examples, the social and relational dimensions of MES's agentic strategies became apparent. Our analysis revealed that despite the limited use of a specific material space MES is able to create a durable social space in which members reappraise migrants' transnational resources, forge labour market subjectivities beyond the precarious sectors, and create a feeling of belonging. In this space, migrants can share their experiences of labour market exclusion and collectively seek to improve their overall living conditions.

Nevertheless, our critical examination of these strategies uncovered a range of ambivalences in MES's activities and showed that the organisation does not always have a direct effect on the professional lives of participants, nor on the structural conditions that encouraged them to undertake the programme in the first place. For instance, not all entrepreneurial projects lead to success in terms of providing economic self-sufficiency. Whether or not participants become "successful" entrepreneurs and thereby overcome barriers to the labour market still depends on their position in society in relation to markers of difference such as nationality, legal status, gender, family situation, and class. MES is not able to fully address these structural constraints, which we attribute in part to the positionality of the core team members behind the organisation. The observed ambivalences are mainly connected to the organisation's strong focus on individual participants. Encouraging migrants to overcome personal barriers resonates with the

neoliberal logic of promoting individual responsibility for the success of one's professional career. By following this logic MES risks of losing sight of structural inequalities.

In light of these findings, our conclusion as to whether and to what extent the studied migrant organisation represents a counterspace needs to be differentiated. With regard to dominant societal modes of exclusion, our analysis shows that the organisation's intentions to actively reshape the power relations at stake do not fully align with its activities and their outcomes — at least during the period of this analysis. However, paying close attention to the experiences of individual participants reveals that the organisation serves as an important intervention in the prevailing reality of the social and economic exclusion of many migrants in Switzerland. Consequently, at the individual level MES's activities can be viewed as transformative, and in this sense, MES provides a meaningful counterspace. In conclusion, our study points to the importance of considering the social and relational dimensions of migrants' spatial agency and the differentiated effects of collective action.

## *References*


Ackermann Maya and Freitag Markus (2015) What actually matters? Understanding attitudes toward immigration in Switzerland, *Swiss Political Science Review*, 21 (1), pp. 36-47.

Akoka Karen, Clochard Olivier and Tcholakova Albena (2017) Éditorial: La condition de réfugié·e : Expériences subjectives et mobilisations collectives, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 33 (4), pp. 7-21.

Auer Daniel, Bonoli Giuliano, Fossati Flavia and Liechti Fabienne (2019) The matching hierarchies model: Evidence from a survey experiment on employers' hiring intent regarding immigrant applicants, *International Migration Review*, 53 (1), pp. 90-121.

Bachmann Susanne (2016) *Diskurse über MigrantInnen in Schweizer Integrationskonzepte:. Zwischen Normalisierung von Prekarität und Konditionierung zur Markttauglichkeit*, Wiesbaden, Springer.

Benelli Natalie, Mey Eva, Trommsdorff Barbara, Villiger Simone and Seiterle Nicolette (2014) *Arbeitsmarktintegration vorläufig aufgenommener Personen und anerkannter Flüchtlinge in der Schweiz: Die Sicht der Betroffenen (Schlussbericht zuhanden des Büros Schweiz und Liechtenstein des UNHCR, Genf)*, Luzern, Hochschule Luzern Soziale Arbeit.

Bork-Hüffer Tabea, Etzold Benjamin, Gransow Bettina, Tomba Luigi, Sterly Harald, Suda Kimiko, Kraas Frauke and Flock Ryanne (2016) Agency and the making of transient urban spaces: Examples of migrants in the city in the Pearl River Delta, China and Dhaka, Bangladesh, *Population, Space and Place*, 22 (2), pp. 128-145.

Buckley Michelle, McPhee Siobhán and Rogaly Ben (2017) Labour geographies on the move: Migration, migrant status and work in the 21st century, *Geoforum*, 78, pp. 153-158.

Caggiano Sergio, translated by Wendy Gosselin (2019) Migrant women and politicized experience: The place of gender in three social organizations in Buenos Aires and La Plata (Argentina), *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 35 (3-4), pp. 217-238.

Caillol Daphné (2018) The spatial dimension of agency: the everyday urban practices of Filipina domestic workers in Amman, Jordan, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25 (5), pp. 645-665.

Case Andrew D. and Hunter Carla D. (2012) Counterspaces: A unit of analysis for understanding the role of settings in marginalized individuals' adaptive responses to oppression, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50 (1-2), pp. 257-270.

Choffat Dietrich, Roca i Escoda Marta and Martin Hélène (2020) À certifier conforme : Les couples binationaux face à la loi helvétique, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 36 (2), pp. 281-304.

Coe Neil M. and Jordhus-Lier David C. (2011) Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour, *Progress in Human Geography*, 35 (2), pp. 211-233.

D'Amato Gianni, Wanner Philippe and Steiner Ilka (2019) Today's migration-mobility nexus in Switzerland, in Philippe Wanner and Ilka Steiner Eds., *Migrants and expats: The Swiss migration and mobility nexus,* Cham, Springer, pp. 3-20.

Denzin Norman K. (2017) Critical qualitative inquiry, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23 (1), pp. 8-16.

Dutta Madhumita (2016) Place of life stories in labour geography: Why does it matter? *Geoforum*, 77, pp. 1-4.

DW (2021) *Swiss narrowly pass Muslim 'burqa ban'*, [online] last checked on 23/03/2021. URL: https://www.dw.com/en/swiss-narrowly-pass-muslim-burqa-ban/a-56797836

Etzold Benjamin (2016) Migration, informal labour and (trans) local productions of urban space - the case of Dhaka's street food vendors, *Population, Space and Place, 22*(2), pp. 170-84.

Fischer Carolin and Dahinden Janine (2017) Gender representations in politics of belonging: An analysis of Swiss immigration regulation from the 19th century until today, *Ethnicities*, 17 (4), pp. 445-468.

Giugni Marco and Passy Florence (2004) Migrant mobilization between political institutions and citizenship regimes: A comparison of France and Switzerland, *European Journal of Political Research*, 43 (1), pp. 51-82.

Glorius Birgit (2017) Study German to shape your future? – Motives for foreign language acquisition among Spaniards, in Birgit Glorius and Josefina Domínguez-Mujica Eds., *European Mobility in Times of Crisis,* Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag, pp. 105-131.

Glorius Birgit and Schondelmayer Anne-Christin (2020) Diverging Perspectives on "Integration" in the Vocational Education System: Evidence from an East German Periphery, in Birgit Glorius and Jeroen Doomernik Eds., *Geographies of Asylum in Europe and the Role of European Localities (IMISCOE Research Series)*, Cham, Springer, pp. 179-200.

Guglielmo Meardi (2017) What does migration control mean? The link between migration and labour market regulations in Norway, Switzerland and Canada, *Warwick Papers in Industrial Relations*, 109, University of Warwick.

Hassanli Najmeh, Walters Trudie and Friedmann Ruth (2019) Can cultural festivals function as counterspaces for migrants and refugees? The case of the New Beginnings Festival in Sydney, *Leisure Studies*, 39 (2), pp. 165-180.

Iosifides Theodoros and Sporton Deborah (2009) Editorial: Biographical methods in migration research, *Migration Letters*, 6 (2), pp. 101-108.

Juchno Piotr and Agafitei Mihaela (2017) *Migrant integration*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.

Katz Cindi (2004) *Growing up global: Economic restructuring and children's everyday lives*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Maeder Christoph and Nadai Eva (2009) The promises of labour. The practices of activating unemployment policies in Switzerland, in Marco Giugni Ed., *The politics of unemployment in Europe: Policy responses and collective action,* Farnham, Ashgate, pp. 67-81.

Manatschal Anita (2015) Switzerland: Really Europe's heart of darkness? *Swiss Political Science Review*, 21 (1), pp. 23-35.

Martin Nina (2011) Toward a new countermovement: A framework for interpreting the contradictory interventions of migrant civil society organizations in urban labor markets, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 43 (12), pp. 2934-2952.

Massey Doreen (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Massey Doreen (2009) Concepts of space and power in theory and in political practice, *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 55, pp. 15-26.

McDowell Linda, Batnitzky Adina and Dyer Sarah (2007) Division, segmentation, and interpellation: The embodied labors of migrant workers in a Greater London hotel, *Economic Geography*, 83 (1), pp. 1-25.

Mitchell Don (2011) Labor's geography: Capital, violence, guest workers and the post-World War II landscape, *Antipode*, 43 (2), pp. 563-595.

OECD (2021) *Foreign-born population (indicator)*, [online] last checked on 23/02/2021. URL: https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-born-population.htm

OECD and European Union (2015) *Indicators of immigrant integration 2015: Settling in*, Paris, OECD Publishing.

Pande Amrita (2018) Intimate counter-spaces of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, *International Migration Review*, 52 (3) pp. 780-808.

Piguet Etienne (2006) Economy versus the people? Swiss immigration policy between economic demand, xenophobia, and international constraint, in Marco Giugni and Florence Passy Eds., *Dialogues on migration policy*, Oxford, Lexington Books, pp. 67-89.

Piguet Etienne (2010) Entrepreneurship among immigrants in Switzerland, in OECD Ed., *Open for business: Migrant entrepreneurship in OECD countries*, Paris, OECD Publishing, pp. 149-175.

Piguet Etienne (2013) Les théories des migrations: Synthèse de la prise de décision individuelle, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 29 (3), pp. 141-161.

Riaño Yvonne (2011) Drawing new boundaries of participation: Experiences and strategies of economic citizenship among skilled migrant women in Switzerland, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 43 (7), pp. 1530-1546.

Riaño Yvonne (2016) Minga biographic workshops with highly skilled migrant women: Enhancing spaces of inclusion, *Qualitative Research*, 16 (3), pp. 267-279.

Riaño Yvonne (2017) Conceptualising space in transnational migration studies: A critical perspective, in Eva Youkhana Ed., *Border Transgression: Mobility and Mobilization of Crisis*, Bonn, Bonn University Press, pp. 35-48.

Riaño Yvonne (2021) Understanding brain waste: Unequal opportunities for skills development between highly skilled women and men, migrants and nonmigrants, *Population, Space and Place*, e2456.

Rogaly Ben (2009) Spaces of work and everyday life: Labour geographies and the agency of unorganised temporary migrant workers, *Geography Compass*, 3 (6), pp. 1975-1987.

Salzbrunn Monika (2016) Shifting Theories, Methods and Topics: Monika Salzbrunn Talks with Ludger Pries about Thirty Years of Migration Studies, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 32 (3-4), pp. 231-247.

Sandoz Laure (2020) Understanding access to the labour market through migration channels, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46 (1), pp. 222-241.

Sandoz Laure (2021) Entrepreneurs de la migration: Des stratégies pour contourner les obstacles bureaucratiques, *Anthropologica*, 62 (2).

Seo Seonyoung and Skelton Tracey (2017) Regulatory migration regimes and the production of space: The case of Nepalese workers in South Korea, *Geoforum*, 78, pp. 159-168.

Solorzano Daniel, Ceja Miguel and Yosso Tara (2000) Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students, *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1-2), pp. 60-73.

Stingl Isabella (2021) Die Zeit als Gegenstand und Mittel des Regierens: Praktiken der Integrationsförderung im Kontext Arbeit und Migration, *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 190 (1), pp. 44-63.

Swiss Federal Statistical Office (2021) *Schweizerische Arbeitskräfteerhebung: Berufliche Stellung der Vollzeit- und Teilzeiterwerbstätigen nach Geschlecht, Nationalität, Altersgruppen, Familientyp*, [online] last checked on 11/03/2021. URL: https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/arbeit-erwerb/erwerbstaetigkeit-arbeitszeit/erwerbstaetige/beruf-berufliche-stellung.assetdetail.15724530.html

Vaismoradi Mojtaba and Snelgrove Sherrill (2019) Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20 (3).

Waldinger Roger (2016) La politique au-delà des frontières : La sociologie politique de l’émigration, *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 32 (3), pp. 319-334.

Wanner Philippe (2004) Intégration professionnelle des populations d’origine et de nationalité étrangères en Suisse, *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 20 (1), pp. 33-45.

Yeoh Brenda S. A. and Huang Shirlena (1998) Negotiating public space: Strategies and styles of migrant female domestic workers in Singapore, *Urban Studies, 35*(3), pp. 583-602.

# ANNEX

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

### *Short presentation of research interest*

Research project on migrant entrepreneurship with case studies in Switzerland, Spain, and Colombia. Questions/ Goals: better understand experiences/strategies of entrepreneurs; to what extent are resources related to the migration history and mobility in general important?

Informed consent & information regarding participation

| **Biography**: Migration History & Emergence of Business |
|---|
| To start I would like to learn more about you and the story of how you ended up in Switzerland.<br><br>**Please cross the places where you lived in your life on the map using the color black** (any other than blue) and connect these places with arrows in order to know how you moved from place to place. Feel free to add and refer to the map throughout the interview. You can use the color green for further notes on the map.<br><br>Follow-up: Educational, professional, and family history; Reason to migrate and arrival in CH |
| Can you now tell me a bit more about your business? What it is about and how did it develop from the initial idea to the current moment?<br><br>**Please mark the places important for your business on the map using the color red**! (or other color, e.g. Where do you sell? Where do you produce? Where do you buy? Where are important contacts?)<br><br>Can you think of any key moments/ key people for your business and describe them to me?<br>Have there been any difficult times? Why have these times been especially difficult? How did you solve these situations? What helped? |
| **Role of Mobility in Business Activities** |
| **Role of Entrepreneur:** How does a normal workday look like for you? What kinds of tasks do you perform? What are your places of work? |
| **Structure of Business & Role of Co-workers:** Can you please describe what activities are done in CH/and xxx? (Designing, producing, selling, administrating...) Who does which tasks? |
| **Products: What are the travelling routes of the products you sell?** Where from? Travel steps? Modes of transportation? |
| **People: Do you/ your co-workers travel to other countries for your business?**<br>For what purpose? How often and where? Modes of transportation? Past year, where and why? |

| **Travelling:** How important do you think it is for your business that you are able to <u>travel internationally</u>? Advantages?<br>Do you think you are as <u>free to travel</u> as you wish? (compared to others) Difficulties? In the past? What helped?<br>In what way does <u>passport or residence permit</u> make it easier or more difficult for you to move around for your business? (What nationalities? What permits? In the past?) |
|---|
| **Role of Social and Institutional Networks** |
| Who are the **important individuals and organisations** (in CH and xxx) that support your business? (Finance, information, training, moral support)<br>How did you meet these contacts/ got involved with them in the first place? Why and in what way have they been important for your business? |
| **Let's talk a bit about the role of your family in your business**.<br>Do you receive support from your close family or extended family for your business?<br>Have your <u>family's experiences of travelling</u> or living in other places been valuable for you in some way for your business? Where do they live?<br>Does your family situation place some kind of constraint on you for conducting your business? (Children?) |
| **The Role of Locality:** Specificities of Switzerland/ Zürich |
| **What are advantages and difficulties of creating/ conducting a business in Zürich/ CH?**<br>To what extent do regulations for foreign entrepreneurs in Switzerland have helped you or blocked you? |
| **Evaluation of Business Activity** |
| If you look back at your experience, what do you think worked particularly well? What didn't?<br>What was useful for you developing a business?<br>To what extent do you think that your financial/ personal situation has improved/worsened?<br>What would you do differently? |

**<u>Socio-demographic and other information:</u>**

<u>Gender:</u>

<u>Year born:</u>

<u>Place of residence:</u>

<u>Years in CH:</u>

<u>Country of origin:</u>

<u>Places lived in between:</u>

Nationality:

Permit:

Occupation: (if more, list all)

Number of employees:

Sector of business activity:

Socio-economic background: (profession of parents, economic environment during childhood)

Education:

Family: (civil status, children)

Can you recommend other migrant entrepreneurs or experts in the field for me to get in touch with?

Is it ok for you if I contact you again in the future for follow-up questions or other activities?

## *LIVING THE DREAM? The Odyssey of a Migrant Entrepreneur [Comic in ENG, FR and GER]*

Christina Mittmasser, Laure Sandoz, Yvonne Riaño, and Jean Leveugle

Published in October 2022 on Zenodo (Open Access).

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7142549

CHRISTINA **MITTMASSER**, LAURE **SANDOZ**, YVONNE **RIAÑO**
Adapted, written, and drawn by JEAN **LEVEUGLE**

# LIVING THE DREAM?

## THE ODYSSEY OF A MIGRANT ENTREPRENEUR

This project would not have been possible without the support of our research partners, friends, and families.

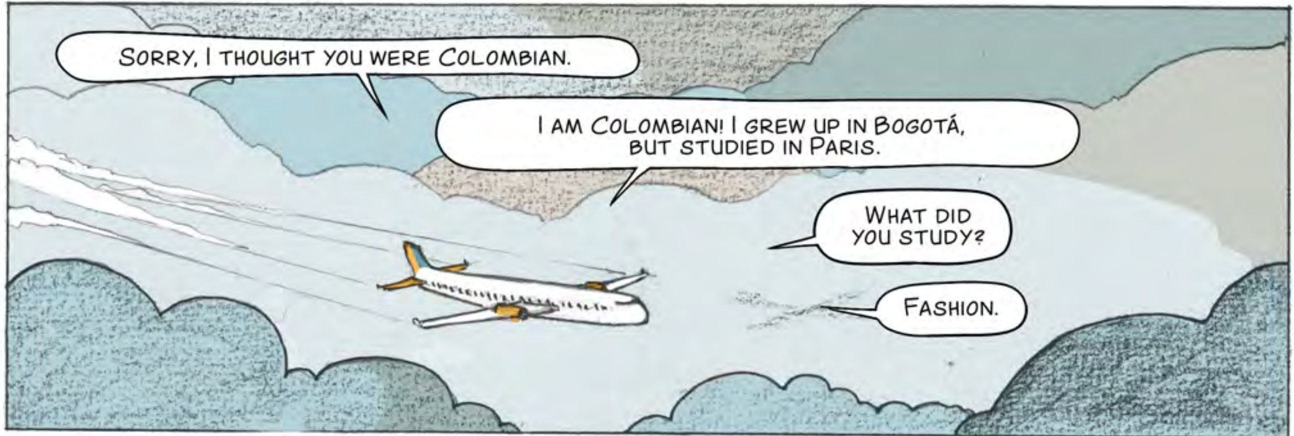
Many thanks!

2016 2018 2020 2022

Bogotá

Perfecto! Great work, Auntie Felicia.

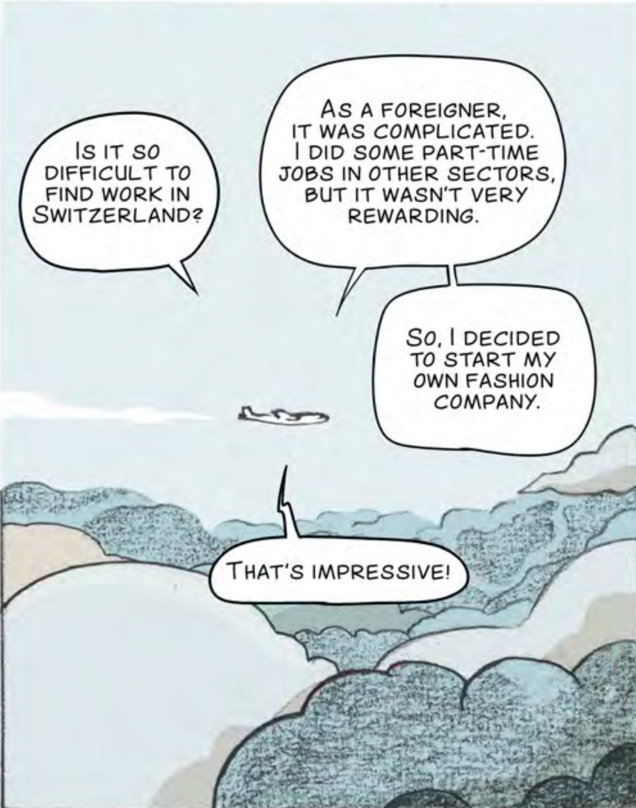
Thanks, Luisa.


Sorry, I thought you were Colombian.
I am Colombian! I grew up in Bogotá, but studied in Paris.
What did you study?
Fashion.

That's where I met my husband who is Swiss.
So we went to live in Zurich.

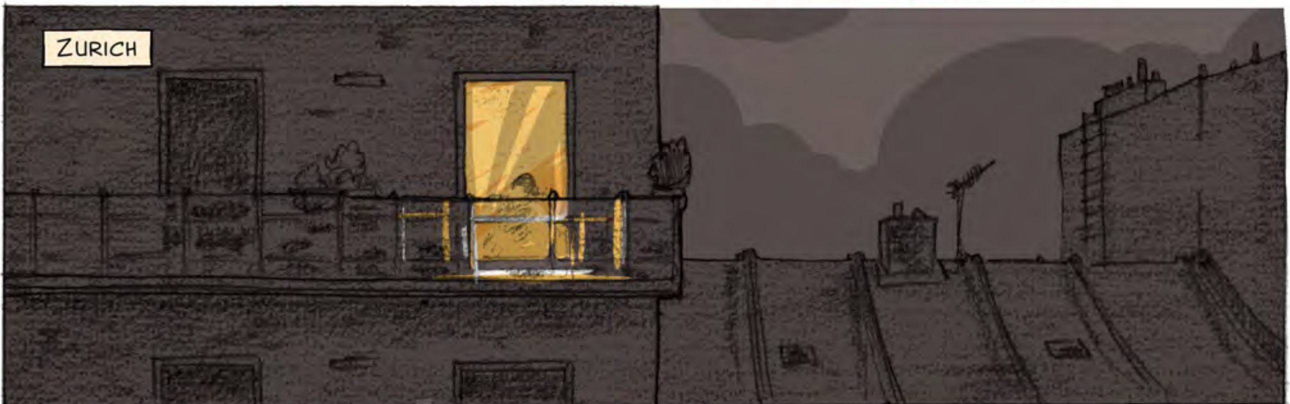
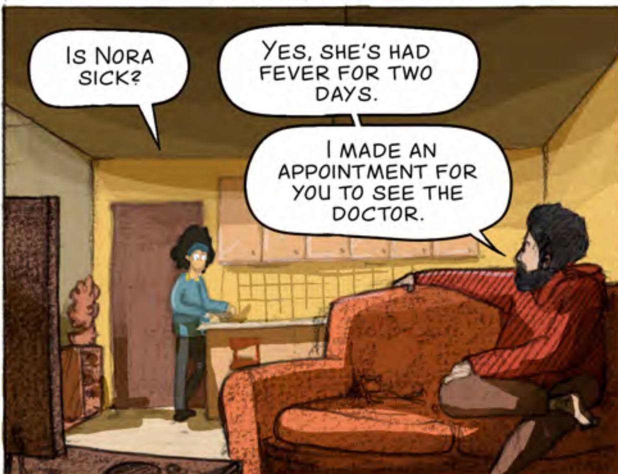
Okay. But you work in Colombia?
Yes...
Well... yes and no.

I couldn't get a job in Switzerland. Or let's say, none that matches my qualifications.
Despite the fact that I applied countless times.
It was very frustrating. Even discouraging.


Is it so difficult to find work in Switzerland?
As a foreigner, it was complicated. I did some part-time jobs in other sectors, but it wasn't very rewarding.
So, I decided to start my own fashion company.
That's impressive!

Maybe, but it didn't work out as planned...
Everything is so expensive in Switzerland.
And I found few outlets, few customers...

So, I ended up setting up a workshop in Bogotá. From there, I'm going to sell in Colombia and in Paris, where I still have a good network.
In Colombia, when they saw that I was going to create jobs, the doors suddenly opened.

I can imagine! It's wonderful that you are contributing like this to your country's development!
Mmmm.

Zurich

Is Nora sick?
Yes, she's had fever for two days.
I made an appointment for you to see the doctor.

Ok, thank you. And how is the little one doing?

All good.
She wanted to wait for you but I told her it was too late.
Ok.

What are you looking at?
Rejection letters.
For shop premises I wanted to rent.
Which ones?

The one close to the station. And this is for the one in Wiedikon.
The one with the nice window.

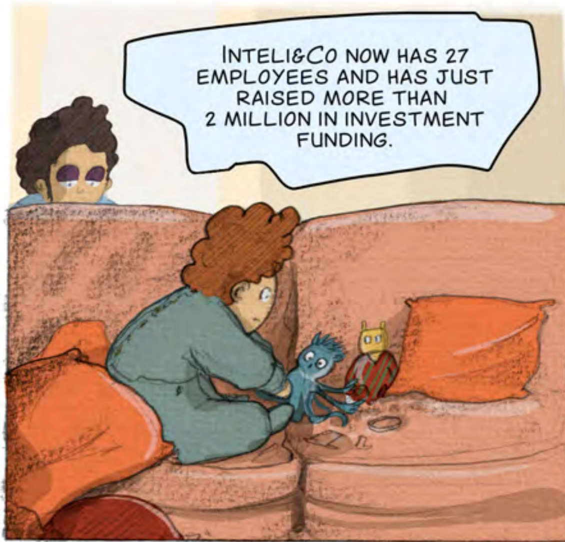
I'm sorry, Luisa...
Do you want to sit down and have a chat?

Damn it...
I will call them tomorrow to find out why they rejected my application.

Can you manage it with the two little ones on your hands?
I'd like to help you more, darling, but I don't have any more days to take off...

I know, I know.

João Oliveira is Brazilian and lives in Geneva.
In 2013, he created "Inteli&Co", an IT start-up working from Switzerland for Brazilian, Chilean, and Spanish clients.
Three countries in which João Oliveira has had the opportunity to live and gain entrepreneurial experience.


INTELI&CO NOW HAS 27 EMPLOYEES AND HAS JUST RAISED MORE THAN 2 MILLION IN INVESTMENT FUNDING.

"INTELI&CO" HAS ENABLED THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND CAPITAL ACROSS BORDERS.
DIVERSITY IN OUR TEAM IS KEY TO OUR SUCCESS AND OUR CLIENTS BENEFIT GREATLY FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

EVERY YEAR, MANY MIGRANTS LIKE JOÃO OLIVEIRA START THEIR OWN BUSINESS.

THEIR SKILLS AND CREATIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE DYNAMISM OF THE SWISS ECONOMY, WITH GREAT COMMERCIAL SUCCESSES TO SHOW FOR IT.
A TRUE MODEL OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION.

AH, FOR ONCE THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT A MIGRANT IN A POSITIVE WAY. SO NICE!

WELL...

MOST OF THE TIME WHEN I HEAR ABOUT MIGRANTS THROUGH THE MEDIA, IT'S NOT IN A GOOD LIGHT.

"ECONOMIC BURDENS", "LACK OF EDUCATION", "CRIME", "UNEMPLOYMENT" ... AS A MIGRANT, IT'S A BIT DISCOURAGING.

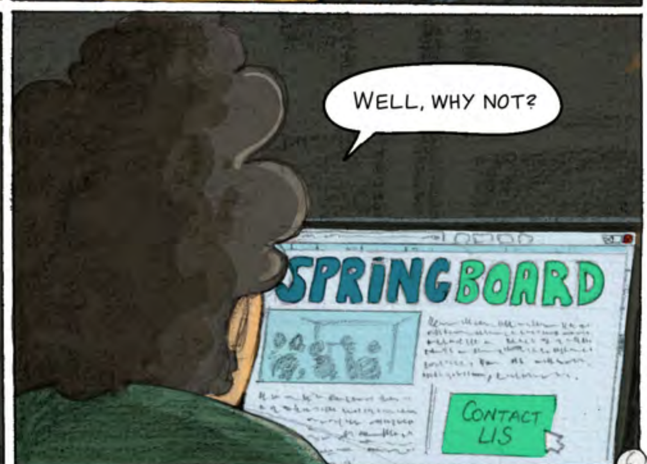
SO HEARING ABOUT A MIGRANT IN TERMS OF OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS IS REALLY INSPIRING.
SCHULE

BUT DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOU HAVE TO BE AN INNOVATIVE AND SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR TO BE A GOOD MIGRANT AND BE WELCOMED IN SWITZERLAND?

AND WHERE AM I IN THIS?

I WORK WHENEVER I HAVE TIME, BUT MY BUSINESS IS NOT TAKING OFF.
SO, THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREER, WHO IS IT FOR?

SPRINGBOARD, A SUPPORT ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS...


WELL, WHY NOT?
SPRINGBOARD
CONTACT US

2016 **2018** 2020 2022

ZURICH

SO, THE CUSTOMER BASE IS OK, THAT'S FINE.

GREAT THAT YOU'VE FINISHED THE BUSINESS PLAN MODULE. HOW IS THE SECOND COLLECTION GOING?
FINISHED.
I'M LEAVING TOMORROW FOR PARIS TO CHECK ON WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO MY TWO FRENCH RETAILERS. THAT, AT LEAST, IS GOING WELL.

VERY GOOD!
SO, FROM MY SIDE...

... REGARDING THE APPLICATIONS, WE'RE READY FOR THE SHOPS IN THE OLD TOWN AND IN WIPKINGEN.
IT'S ALL THERE.

I HAVE INCLUDED YOUR HUSBAND'S PAYCHECK FOR THE FINANCIAL GUARANTEE.
CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

WITH THE STAMP OF THE ASSOCIATION, A SWISS GUARANTOR, AND ALL THE WORK YOU PUT INTO YOUR BUSINESS PLAN, I DON'T SEE WHY IT WOULDN'T WORK, LUISA.
OKAY.
WHEN WILL WE SEND IT?

ARE YOU READY?
UM... YES.

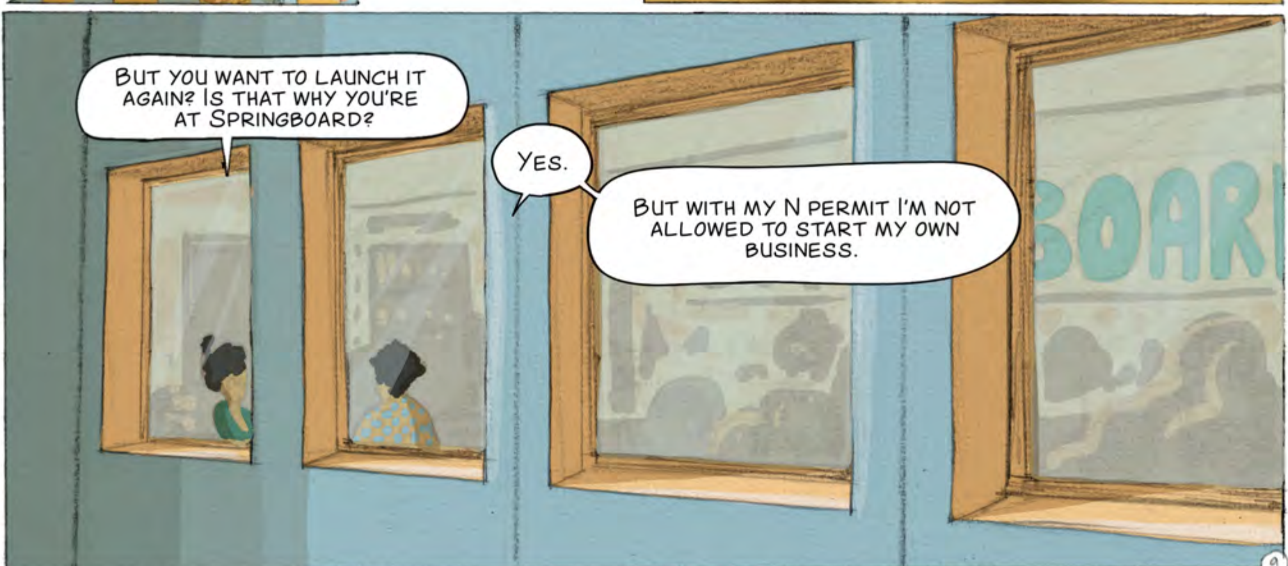
CLICK!

HERE WE GO.

From Syria?
Yes. With my wife and two children. It was a very difficult journey.
I can imagine...
Did you apply for asylum?

Yes, I've been waiting for an answer for more than two years now....
At the moment, I have an N permit, but that doesn't give me any right to settle permanently.
And I guess it doesn't help in finding a job either.
Exactly.

What do you work in?
IT and telecom-munications.
I was running an IT company in Syria. We were working with different countries in the Middle East...
And then it all had to stop. That's it.

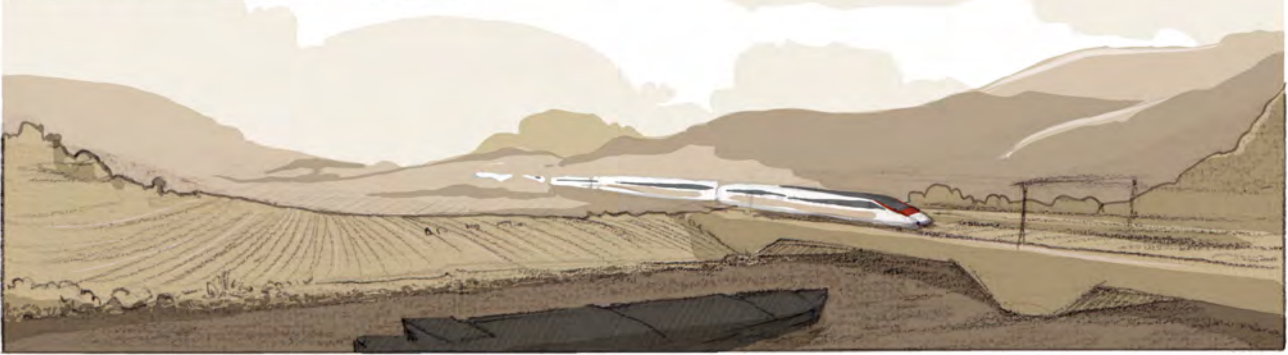

But you want to launch it again? Is that why you're at Springboard?
Yes.
But with my N permit I'm not allowed to start my own business.

Besides, I can't leave the country freely, so it's difficult to maintain contacts in the Middle East.
I guess, if I get asylum, it will be easier.
If I ever get it.

By the way, my name is Carim.
Luisa. Nice to meet you!

Carim is very nice.
But talking to him makes me realise that entrepreneurship is not an option for everyone.

I have a permanent residence permit in Switzerland, thanks to being married to Christian. And I can travel whenever and wherever I want. That's quite something. It allows me to pursue my entrepreneurial dream.


CARIM HAS TO POSTPONE HIS DREAMS, HE HAS TO WAIT. IT'S VERY STRANGE.

IN SWITZERLAND, MIGRANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES, TO BECOME FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT. BUT CARIM'S STORY SHOWS THAT IT'S NOT ONLY UP TO THEM.
THE STATE DOES NOT ALLOW HIM TO BECOME THE HERO THAT SOCIETY WOULD HAPPILY WELCOME.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS NOT ONLY ABOUT HAVING COURAGE AND SKILLS. IT'S ALSO ABOUT HAVING LEGAL ACCESS TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DREAM.

I FORGOT THAT I HAVE THIS PRIVILEGE.

RENTAL AGREEMENT
ACCEPTED APPLICATION

WELL...

... I'M GLAD YOU'RE SWISS!
WHAT?

2016 2018 **2020** 2022

ZURICH

YOUR SHOP IS REALLY NICE, LUISA!

THANKS A LOT!

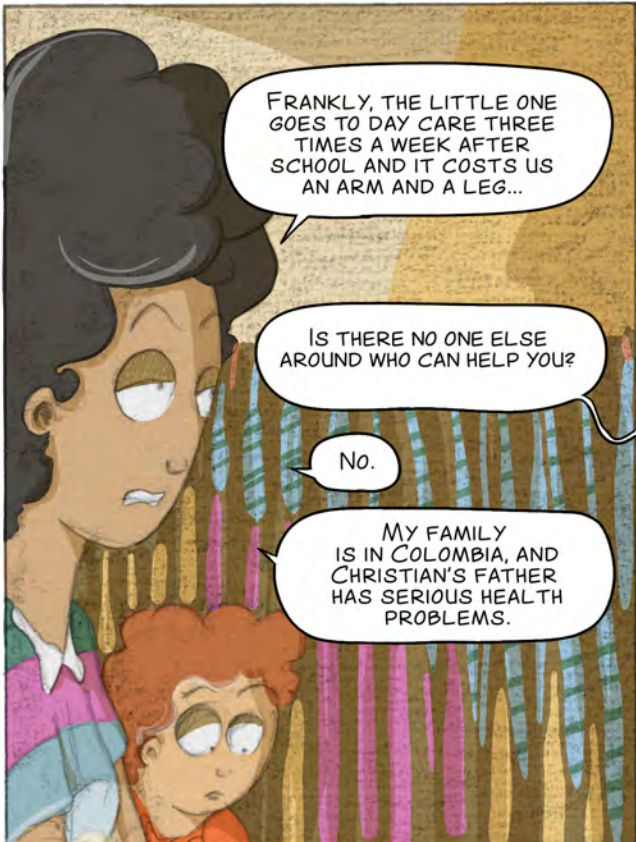
ATELIER LUISA

It took me a long time.
It did!

But it's alright now, isn't it?
Yes, on the professional side, everything is fine.

But I often have to look after my daughters.
It's not easy.

Can't you get a babysitter?


Frankly, the little one goes to day care three times a week after school and it costs us an arm and a leg...
Is there no one else around who can help you?
No.
My family is in Colombia, and Christian's father has serious health problems.

Running my own business allows me to adapt, to be more flexible.
But then I'm the one who has to juggle work and family.

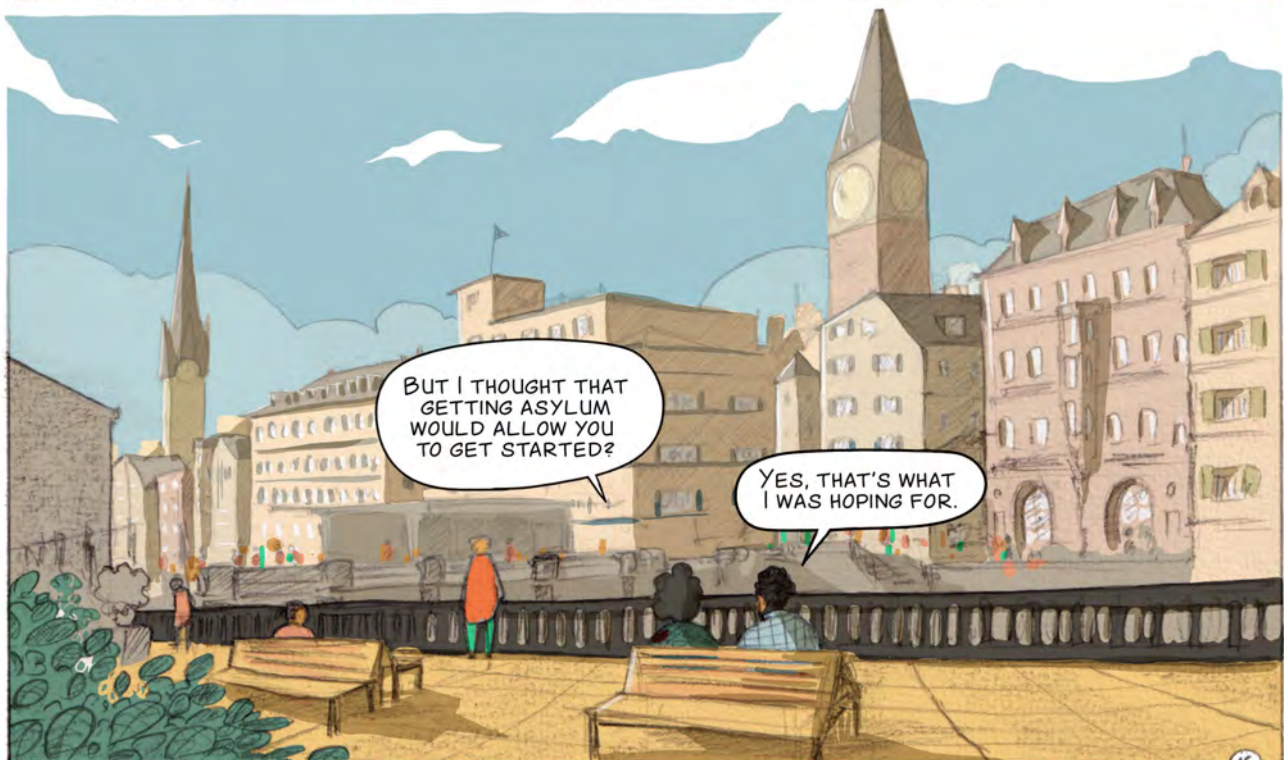
By the way... any news from Carim?
It's been a long time.

He still often comes to our events.
But it's not easy for him.
Oh...

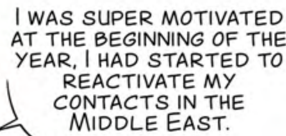
I'll call him to check in.

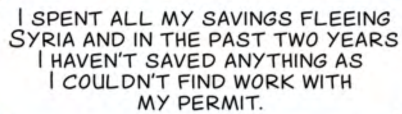
Oh, and Luisa, we're organising an exchange between female entrepreneurs next month.
You should come.

I'll try.

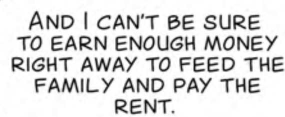

But I thought that getting asylum would allow you to get started?
Yes, that's what I was hoping for.

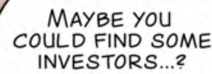
And in theory, I can now travel and launch an independent business.

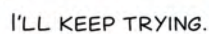

I was super motivated at the beginning of the year, I had started to reactivate my contacts in the Middle East.
But now the problem is money.


I spent all my savings fleeing Syria and in the past two years I haven't saved anything as I couldn't find work with my permit.

So, we are still dependent on social welfare and I risk losing it if I officially launch my own company.


And I can't be sure to earn enough money right away to feed the family and pay the rent.


Maybe you could find some investors...?


I'll keep trying.
But now I'm a bit tired. Honestly, my priority is to find a paid job, even if it doesn't match my qualifications. That's much more reasonable.
At least I have a better network in Switzerland, thanks to Springboard. It feels less lonely.

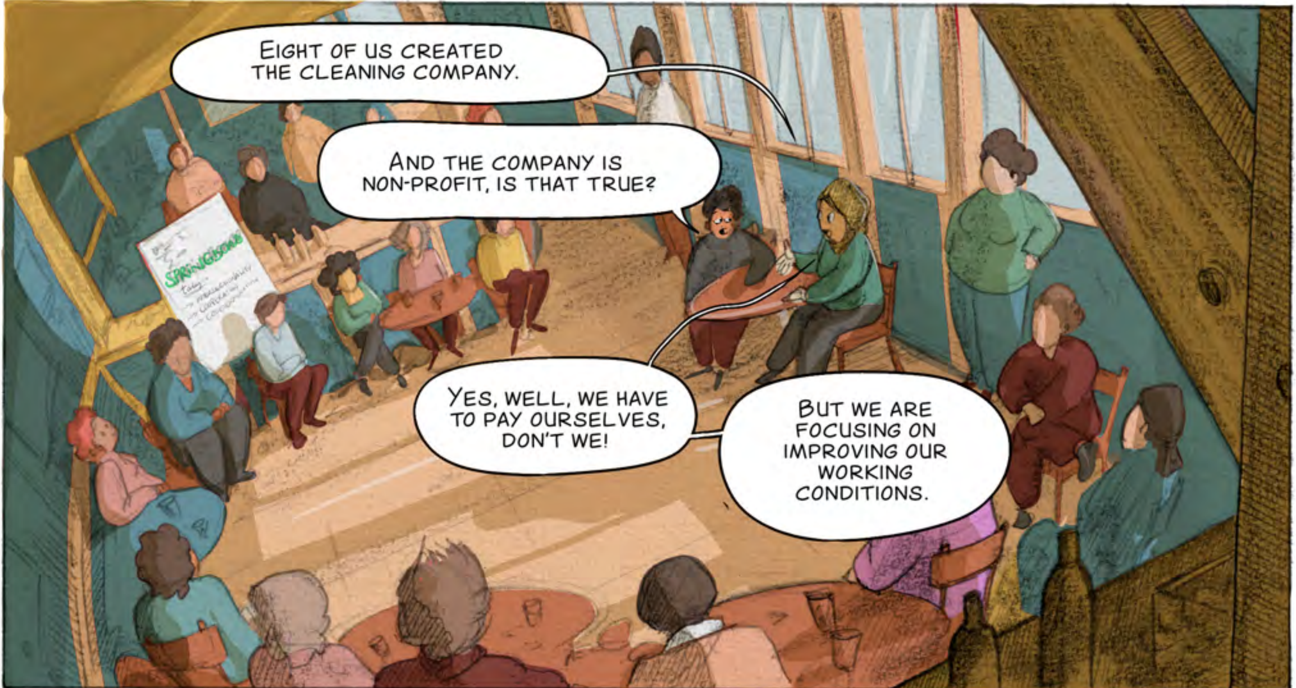
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS ABOUT TAKING RISKS.

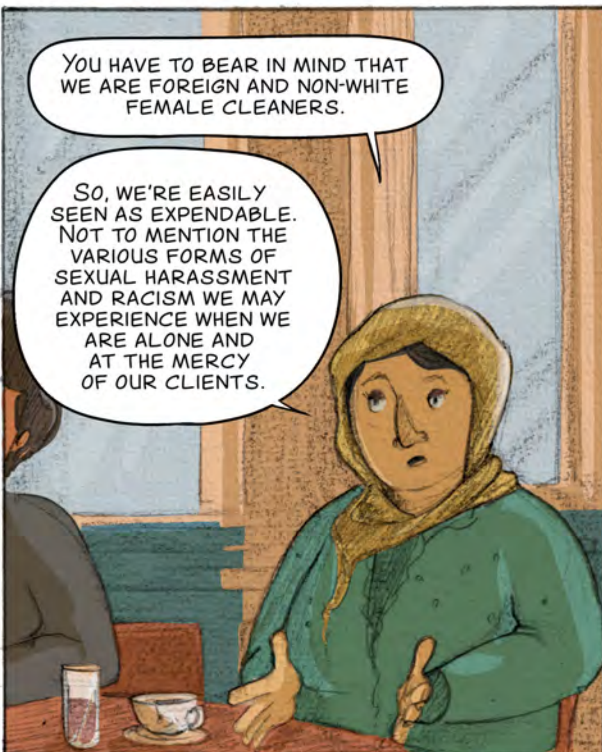
I HAVE FINANCIAL SECURITY BECAUSE OF CHRISTIAN. HIS SALARY COMES IN EVERY MONTH, ALTHOUGH IT MAKES ME DEPENDENT ON HIM.
CARIM IS IN A DIFFERENT SITUATION. HE HAS NO SAVINGS AND A FAMILY TO FEED. IT'S HARD TO TAKE RISKS IN THIS SITUATION...
... AND WHAT A GENDER CLICHÉ!

WHO IS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DREAM FOR?
FOR THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE CHILDREN?
WHO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF A PARTNER?
WHO ALREADY HAVE MONEY?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP REALLY ENABLE SOCIAL MOBILITY OR DOES IT ONLY REPRODUCE EXISTING INEQUALITIES?

SPRING BOARD
today =
→ INTERSECTIONALITY
→ COOPERATION
→ CODETERMINATION
SUSANA, HOW MANY ARE YOU IN YOUR COOPERATIVE BUSINESS?


EIGHT OF US CREATED THE CLEANING COMPANY.
AND THE COMPANY IS NON-PROFIT, IS THAT TRUE?
YES, WELL, WE HAVE TO PAY OURSELVES, DON'T WE!
BUT WE ARE FOCUSING ON IMPROVING OUR WORKING CONDITIONS.


YOU HAVE TO BEAR IN MIND THAT WE ARE FOREIGN AND NON-WHITE FEMALE CLEANERS.
SO, WE'RE EASILY SEEN AS EXPENDABLE. NOT TO MENTION THE VARIOUS FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND RACISM WE MAY EXPERIENCE WHEN WE ARE ALONE AND AT THE MERCY OF OUR CLIENTS.

AND THE ADVANTAGE OF STARTING A BUSINESS TOGETHER?
THERE ARE PLENTY.

THE MAIN THING IS THAT NONE OF US COULD HAVE SET UP A BUSINESS ON OUR OWN. WE DIDN'T HAVE THE CONTACTS, THE KNOWLEDGE, THE STARTING CAPITAL...

THEIR PROJECT IS SUPER REFRESHING. IT BRINGS COLLECTIVE ANSWERS TO INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS.

AND IT CHALLENGES THE MYTH OF THE SELF-MADE ENTREPRENEUR.

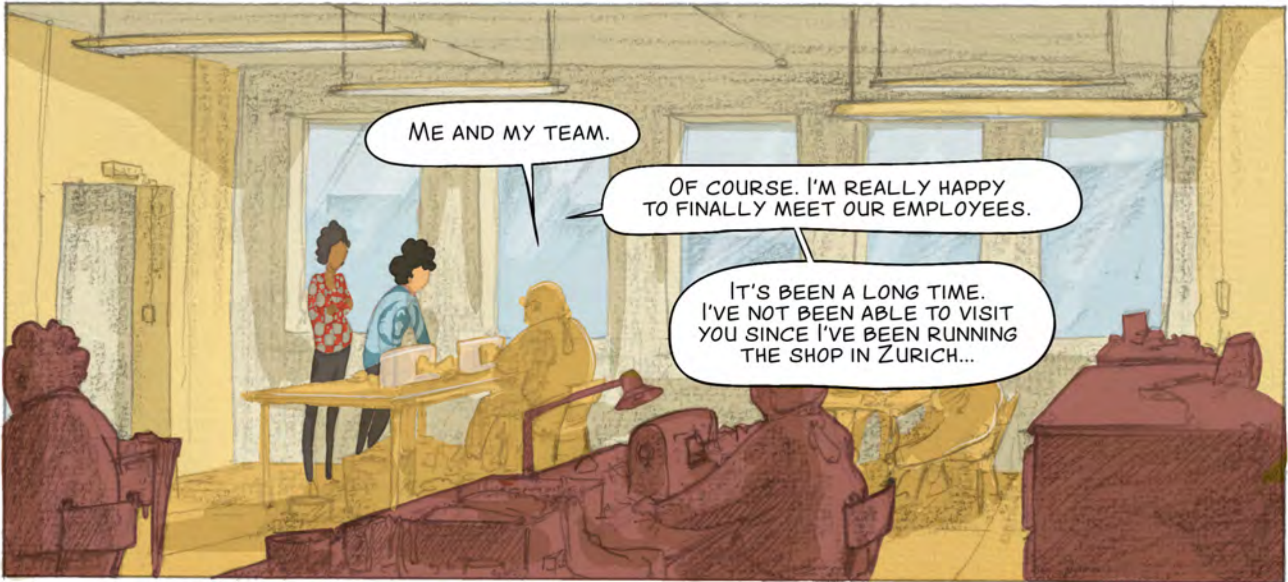
2016 2018 2020 2022

Bogotá

Your new machines are really great, Luisa.

You can do anything with them.

You can do anything with them!


Me and my team.
Of course. I'm really happy to finally meet our employees.
It's been a long time. I've not been able to visit you since I've been running the shop in Zurich...

Yes, but I had the impression you were always with us.

I think I got used to the virtual Luisa.
Ha ha ha!
Bip Bip Bip

One moment.
Bip Bip Bip

She is always connected to the whole world.
Hello?

Yes.
Yes, of course I can participate... yes.
Oh, absolutely! ... Ok.
There won't be too many people, right?
Well, if it's not too crowded, I'll do it.

ZURICH

LUISA, WE WANTED YOU TO TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY, YOUR INTEGRATION IN SWITZERLAND, THE STORY OF HOW YOU BECAME AN ENTREPRENEUR.

WELL I... ACTUALLY...

MAYBE SOME PEOPLE HERE EXPECT US TO TELL SUCCESS STORIES AND HIGHLIGHT THE POSITIVE SIDE OF OUR MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES.

BUT I'D RATHER CHALLENGE THESE NARRATIVES OF SUCCESS AND "GOOD INTEGRATION".

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

MY JOURNEY IS, ABOVE ALL, A STORY OF UPS AND DOWNS, OF MANY DIFFICULTIES.

AND I BELIEVE THAT'S THE CASE FOR MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED.

YET TODAY, WE CAN SAY THAT YOUR PROJECT IS A SUCCESS, RIGHT?

MAYBE, BUT THANKS TO WHAT OR WHOM?

MEANING?

OK, I MAY HAVE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT, BUT I ALSO SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN DO ALONE.

OR THAT WE ALL HAVE TO DO IT, FOR THAT MATTER.

OH NO?

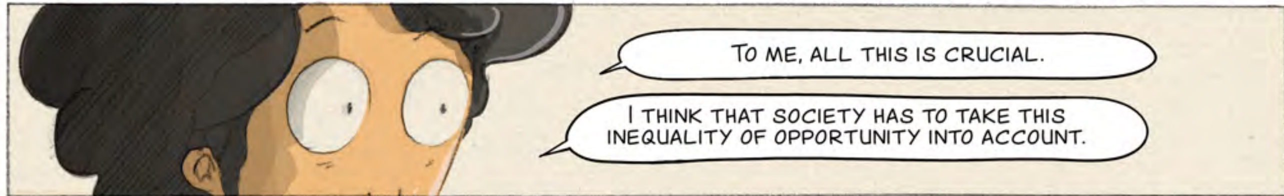
AND THAT IT'S NOT JUST A QUESTION OF SKILLS OR MOTIVATION.

No.
This all reminds me of the "American Dream": the myth that hard work and creativity will always be rewarded appropriately and fairly.

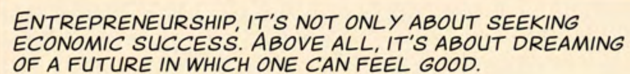
Which means, basically, that those who don't succeed and integrate must be lazy or lack courage.
In my opinion, this is all absurd.

But then, what do you think determines the success of a project?

What I think is that too often we forget some of the variables: your gender, the colour of your skin...
... but also your family situation, your legal status, having a network that supports you, sufficient financial resources...


To me, all this is crucial.
I think that society has to take this inequality of opportunity into account.

... and stop viewing migrants only in terms of their economic potential!
That's important!


Entrepreneurship, it's not only about seeking economic success. Above all, it's about dreaming of a future in which one can feel good.
But we need to recognise that many migrants face obstacles because of the way society is organised.
From this point of view, policy makers also have a responsibility to develop support measures.
The entrepreneurial dream, yes, but a dream in which the dreamer is not left alone!

# ANNEX

This comic booklet was developed as part of a research project entitled "Migrant Entrepreneurship: Mapping Cross-Border Mobilities and Exploring the Role of Spatial Mobility Capital". The aim of the project was to explore the role of spatial mobility in the business activities of migrant entrepreneurs, and to understand to what extent and under what conditions migration experiences constitute an asset for them. It was led by Prof. Yvonne Riaño and Prof. Etienne Piguet between 2018 and 2022 at the Geography Institute of the University of Neuchâtel, and was part of the National Centre of Competence in Research for migration and mobility studies "nccr – on the move".

The stories and characters portrayed in the comic are fictive. Yet they are directly inspired by qualitative research conducted by Christina Mittmasser in Switzerland. As part of her PhD dissertation, she interviewed 34 individuals with migration experiences developing a business or social project. She was particularly interested in the inequalities that have affected the life trajectories and entrepreneurial careers of her interviewees. In order to develop a collaborative approach with practitioners in the field, she conducted her research in partnership with an organization supporting migrant and refugee entrepreneurs in Zurich.

In addition, the comic builds on theoretical reflections and empirical observations by the project members Yvonne Riaño, Laure Sandoz, and Lorena Izaguirre, who carried out ethnographic research on migrant entrepreneurship in Colombia, Spain, and Peru.

To develop the storyline of the comic, the research team shared their ideas and empirical material with the urbanist and illustrator Jean Leveugle, from the studio "Savoirs Ambulants". He helped them transform their scientific data into a story accessible to the broader public, and created the aesthetic universe of the comic.

In the following pages, we provide references and links to go further, including a list of publications by the research team and information about the organizations that have inspired and/or supported this project.

More information on the research project:
https://nccr-onthemove.ch/projects/migrant-entrepreneurship-mapping-cross-border-mobilities-and-exploring-the-role-of-spatial-mobility-capital/

More information on the studio "Les Savoirs Ambulants":
https://www.lessavoirsambulants.fr/

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christina Mittmasser** studied sociology and human geography with a special interest in migration and the (re)production of social inequalities across borders. Motivated to find a creative way to make her research visible and give something back to her research participants, she initiated this comic project and the collaboration with Jean Leveugle.

**Laure Sandoz** is an anthropologist and migration specialist interested in how mobile people are affected by the internationalization of labor markets and the emergence of more flexible forms of work. She is also a comic lover who enjoys building bridges between science and the arts and integrating emotions into knowledge production processes.

**Yvonne Riaño** is a social geographer specialized in migration studies. She is particularly interested in the labour market barriers of migrants and their coping strategies. She is passionate about participatory research methods and uses short films as a means of communicating the realities experienced by migrants, particularly women.

**Jean Leveugle** is an author of scientific comics. After graduating in geography at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris and studying at the École Estienne, he created the studio "Savoirs Ambulants" in Rennes, dedicated to the mediation of knowledge through illustrations and comics. He is particularly interested in writing narratives that promote the understanding of social phenomena through the experiences and analyses of the concerned individuals themselves.

# PUBLICATIONS BY THE RESEARCH TEAM

### Scientific Articles

Komposch, Pohl, Riaño (2021) Worker cooperatives' potential for migrant women's self-empowerment. Insights from a case study in New York City. nccr – on the move Working Paper 29.
https://nccr-onthemove.ch/publications/worker-cooperatives-potential-for-migrant-womens-self-empowerment/

Mittmasser, Stingl (2021) Migrant counterspaces: Challenging labour market exclusion through collective action. Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales (REMI) 37 (1-2), 229–249.
https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.18507

Mittmasser (2022) "Because you've lived in different places all your life" – How mobility trajectories create cross-border entrepreneurial opportunities. Geoforum, 129, 161–171.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.12.018

Riaño (2022) Migrant entrepreneurs as agents of development? Geopolitical context and transmobility strategies of Colombian migrants returning from Venezuela. Journal of International Migration and Integration (JIMI).
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-022-00959-w

Riaño, Mittmasser, Sandoz (2022) Spatial mobility capital: A valuable resource for the social mobility of border crossing migrant entrepreneurs? Societies, 12(3), 77.
https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12030077

Sandoz, Mittmasser, Riaño, Izaguirre (in review) Transnational migrant entrepreneurs: Understanding their dependencies, fragilities, and alternatives. Globalizations.

Sandoz, Mittmasser, Riaño, Piguet (2021) A review of transnational migrant entrepreneurship: Unequal spatialities. ZFW - Advances in Economic Geography.
https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw-2021-0004

Sandoz (2021) Localising informal practices in transnational entrepreneurship. Migration Letters, 18(2).
https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i2.1177

### Blogs

Mittmasser (2022) Migrants' collective attempts to counter economic exclusion. nccr – on the move Blog.
https://nccr-onthemove.ch/blog/migrants-collective-attempts-to-counter-economic-exclusion/

Mittmasser, Sandoz (2020) Transnational entrepreneurs: Between vulnerability and solidarity. nccr – on the move Blog.
https://nccr-onthemove.ch/blog/transnational-entrepreneurs-between-vulnerability-and-solidarity/

Sandoz (2021) The informal practices of transnational migrant entrepreneurs in Barcelona: Three contrasting cases. nccr – on the move Blog.
https://nccr-onthemove.ch/blog/the-informal-practices-of-transnational-migrant-entrepreneurs-in-barcelona-three-contrasting-cases/

# FURTHER RESOURCES

### Organizations working with migrant entrepreneurs

**Capacity**
Talent & Startup incubator for people with refugee and migrant backgrounds in Zurich
https://www.capacityzurich.ch/

**Singa Switzerland**
Business incubator for people with refugee and migrant backgrounds in Zurich and Geneva
https://singaswitzerland.ch/

**Crescenda**
Entrepreneurship centre for migrant women in Basel
https://www.crescenda.ch/

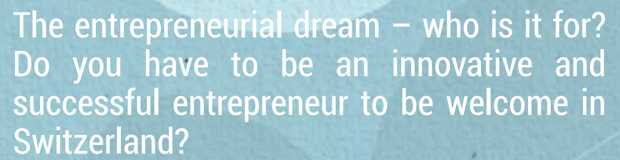
**Autonomía**
Cleaning platform cooperative in Zurich
https://autonomia-kooperative.ch/

### General information on migrant entrepreneurship


UNCTAD, IOM, UNHCR (2018) Policy guide on entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees.
https://publications.iom.int/books/policy-guide-entrepreneurship-migrants-and-refugees

OECD, EU (2021) The missing entrepreneurs 2021: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship and self-employment.
https://doi.org/10.1787/71b7a9bb-en

© 2022



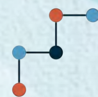
The entrepreneurial dream – who is it for? Do you have to be an innovative and successful entrepreneur to be welcome in Switzerland?

Luisa, a Colombian fashion designer based in Zurich, reflects on these questions. Through her experiences and encounters, she raises awareness of the obstacles along the entrepreneurial path and challenges simplistic success stories. This comic is the result of a research project conducted at the University of Neuchâtel.

nccr → on the move

National Center of Competence in Research– The Migration-Mobility Nexus

nccr-onthemove.ch



Swiss National Science Foundation

unine

Université de Neuchâtel