

Foreign Entrepreneurs in Migration Studies: Balance and Perspectives

Empresarios extranjeros en los estudios migratorios: balance y perspectivas

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to review theoretical notions and approaches from migration studies around international business and migrant entrepreneurs, identifying guidelines and problematizing their scope. The methodology used involved conducting a bibliographic review of these bodies of production in studies carried out in Europe and the United States. It is concluded that, in both cases, the central focus is on the migrant-turned-entrepreneur, unlike migration studies that place greater emphasis on analyzing the processes that lead to their conversion. International business concentrates on the global deployment of the migrant entrepreneur. While, from the point of view of entrepreneurship, migrants tend to be classified as entrepreneurs, and therefore, their productive activity is studied with greater attention from an international perspective.

Keywords: 1. migrant entrepreneurs, 2. migrations, 3. entrepreneurship, 4. Europe, 5. United States.

RESUMEN

Se propone una revisión de los enfoques y las nociones teóricas provenientes de los estudios migratorios en torno a los negocios internacionales y el emprendimiento de empresarios migrantes; se identifican sus postulados, lineamientos y se problematiza su alcance. La metodología consistió en una revisión bibliográfica de dichos cuerpos de producción en estudios realizados en Europa y Estados Unidos. Se concluye que, en ambos casos, el centro de referencia es el migrante devenido en empresario, a diferencia de los estudios migratorios que priorizan el análisis de los procesos que llevan a su conversión. Los negocios internacionales se valen de esa producción para centrarse en el despliegue global del empresario migrante. Mientras que, desde el emprendimiento, el migrante tiende a ser tipificado más como empresario y por ello se estudia con mayor interés su actividad productiva desde una dimensión internacional.

Palabras clave: 1. empresariado migrante, 2. migraciones, 3. emprendimiento, 4. Europa, 5. Estados Unidos.

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CONTEXT AND OBJECT OF STUDY

Migration studies have focused on migrants who cross borders in search of work, within contexts of unequal mobility (Heyman, 2012), that is, these studies have focused on economic migrants. In many cases, these migrants are people fleeing violence, severe conditions derived from economic and political crises, or are people who lack stable employment. Especially in the last decade, migration studies have focused on vulnerable and impoverished people who migrate under pressure to settle and seek work, so as to secure a better future for themselves and their families. Once they arrive at their destination, migrants try to insert themselves into the local labor market, most of them in hardship, and in dangerous and precarious informal jobs (Oso & Ribas, 2006; Connor & Massey, 2011; Solé et al., 2007).

This preferential focus on economic migration makes it difficult to understand the place occupied by other groups interested in settling yet not fitting this definition. Studies of this kind describe foreign entrepreneurs as labor migrants in their origin (Portes, 2006) who, once settled, become entrepreneurs and businessmen for different reasons, which will be analyzed below (Imilan et al., 2015). Still, the picture is not always the same for everyone: in the face of difficulties, some achieve economic success and others do not.

In this context, the literature produced on ethnic, transnational, or migrant entrepreneurship has been prolific in the European, Asian, and Anglo fields, which allows us to understand entrepreneurship, spatial concentration, social mobility, and the location of economic niches that have proven fruitful (Antolin, 2007; Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009; Lin & Tao, 2012; Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2018; Wong, 2003). Most of this work comes from migration studies; however, relevant research is also coming from the field of international business and entrepreneurship studies.

The production of migration studies has mainly focused on labor migrants, that is to say, people who migrate to look for work in the country of destination, but who, once settled, become entrepreneurs, especially in the United States and Europe (Glick Schiller, 2015; Solé et al., 2007; Tung et al., 2011). In many cases, migration studies have undertaken inquiring into the factors that explain prosperity and social mobility. A more critical strand of this line comes from anthropology and migrant transnationalism (Glick Schiller, 2018; Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013), raising new challenges from the limitations of previous approaches.

The main focus of the research corpus of international business and entrepreneurship studies is on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs who invest in different latitudes, that is, these studies are interested in the process by which a person—in this case, a migrant—becomes an entrepreneur, how they create companies, or how they reorganize or expand (Amorós & Abarca, 2006). In general, according to international business, entrepreneurs tend to move quite freely thanks to the resources they possess, and, for different reasons, they carry out ventures at the destination or in the countries of origin (Drori et al., 2009). Studies on entrepreneurship focus on the factors that explain why and how migrants start businesses, especially in contrast to nationals (Mwaura et al., 2019; Nicoara, 2021; Širec & Tominc, 2017).

Within this framework, the aim of this paper is to analyze this scientific production, identify its postulates, scopes and contributions, and discern its origins, approaches, and core debates, as well as those of the discussion and its guidelines in Europe and the United States. The aim is to problematize and establish a framework for understanding the scope of the notions and approaches used to date in these areas.³

The methodology consisted of a literature review on the concept of foreign or migrant entrepreneur, mainly in European and American journals specialized in the field of migration studies, international business, and migrant entrepreneurship. The research focused on articles that discuss or analyze these concepts from a disciplinary or thematic approach. To this end, searched was conducted across various databases, including the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)⁴ and indexed journals, making use of keywords (especially in English), such as: migrant/entrepreneurs, foreign/entrepreneurs, migrant/entrepreneurship, international/entrepreneurs. From the selection of articles, preference was given to studies focused on entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial agency in the migrant population in different scenarios, paying special attention to the conceptualizations and definitions used, as well as to places of origin and main analytical approaches.

This article is organized in different sections. The first part reviews the production on foreign entrepreneurship within the American and European contexts in the field of migration studies; it analyzes the culturalist approaches, the ecological approach, the theories of the context of reception, the American interactionist model, and, the European perspective of mixed embedding. The main postulates of each perspective, their scope, and their notion of the migrant entrepreneur are reviewed. The second section discusses the place of entrepreneurship and migrant or foreign entrepreneurship in the transnational approach, its scope, and the most recent discussions on the subject. The third section reviews the production found in international business studies that links international or transnational entrepreneurs with migration, as well as the production that investigates gender in these cases. The last section presents a balance of the literature review analyzed, so as to account for the scope, limitations, and spaces that remain to be discussed.

MAIN APPROACHES TO MIGRATION STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE

As noted above, most of the theoretical production on foreign entrepreneurship has been elaborated mainly in the United States and in some European countries, within the field of migration studies under various names, including migrant entrepreneurship, ethnic entrepreneurship, or ethnic enclave. The first studies were carried out in 1970, a decade in which this line of research underwent

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⁴ The GEM was established in 1999 by researchers at Babson College (USA) and London Business School (UK). It is a globally harmonized dataset dedicated to the study of entrepreneurial behaviors at the individual level in all countries (Levie et al., 2014), among which research focused on migrant populations can be found.

significant development, basically due to the substantial increase in the number of businesses run by foreigners. Those studies were particularly interested in the ways in which migrants integrated into the societies of destination, including the entrepreneurial initiatives of Koreans in Los Angeles and Cubans in Miami (Del Pozo, 2009; Portes & Manning, 1986). In the 1980s, self-employment among immigrant groups increased significantly in Europe, and thus the phenomenon of migrant entrepreneurship gradually became a topic of study in that continent. Thus, a network of concepts was gradually woven throughout this field of study (Gil & Yufra, 2018).

There are different theoretical approaches that elucidate the emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives among migrants at their destinations. These explanatory theories have been commonly classified among the following streams of analysis: cultural theories, the ecological approach, the American interactionist model, and the European mixed embeddedness approach. To this end, each of these streams will be analyzed. The first works that established the link between migration and entrepreneurship did so under the cultural theories approach, emphasizing the relationships between cultural characteristics and the entrepreneurial success of migrants (Solé et al., 2007). From this approach, it was suggested that ethnic groups and immigrants possessed certain cultural characteristics that made them prone to entrepreneurial success, such as dedication to hard work, proclivity to self-employment, risk acceptance, among others (Volery, 2007).

The aforementioned characteristics provide, according to culturalist theories, an ethnic resource that supports and encourages entrepreneurial behavior, reinforces self-employment initiatives, generates proactivity, and facilitates the search for work. According to this approach, the different modes of labor incorporation among ethnic groups can be explained by their affinity with the qualities required for entrepreneurial success, which makes it possible for the individual to gain broad knowledge in the exercise of his or her profession (Arjona Garrido & Checa Olmos, 2006).

The culturalist approach was also linked to the concept of middleman minorities coined by Blalock (1967), a term that was later reconceptualized by Bonacich (1973) in order to account for some of the obstacles and facilitators of migrant entrepreneurship. The concept of middleman minorities refers to resident entrepreneurs who trade between the elites and the masses, establishing niches in poor neighborhoods or urban areas where mainstream commerce is nonexistent, a situation that allowed them to avoid direct competition with the dominant groups (Bonacich, 1973).

According to the author above, intermediary minorities constitute one of the origins of immigrant or ethnic entrepreneurship, a concept used to define owners, managers, or operators of their own business, whose group membership is linked to a common cultural heritage or origin. These emerge as a response to a hostile and fragmented labor market, where exclusion from the labor market pushes immigrants to seek job opportunities in commerce through self-employment (Solé et al., 2009). The disadvantages they experience in the place of reception hinder their arrival and, at the same time, guide their behavior (Volery, 2007), encouraging members of the collective to seek options in intra-group networks of ethnic solidarity (Light & Bonacich, 1988). This approach has been widely criticized in contemporary studies (Portes & Yiu, 2013; Solé et al., 2007; Waldinger, 2000).

Another approach that seeks to explain migrant entrepreneurship is the ecological approach (Arjona Garrido & Checa Olmos, 2006), or the so-called reception context theories (Solé et al., 2007), a term coming from the work of Portes and Rumbaut (2014). This view, unlike the culturalist approach, incorporates in its analyses the structural factors that enable, condition, or hinder the emergence of migrant enterprises in host places. As these authors point out, “the central idea is that the ‘reception context’ generates specific social conditions and environments for national groups, while providing opportunities or constraints to individuals, regardless of their human capital or cultural characteristics” (Solé et al., 2007, p. 21). Some of these contextual factors that hinder labor insertion in the general market and favor the emergence of entrepreneurship are discrimination, legislation, poverty, low wages in the market, among others. In addition to these factors, the residential patterns of the immigrant population and the forms and models of succession that this entails in urban areas should be highlighted.

For Aldrich and Reiss (1976), the emergence of ethnic businesses in the destination country can be explained through the processes of succession and/or replacement of the resident population and businesses run by natives by the immigrant population, which results in an ethnic recomposition of urban areas. This occurs due to the progressive abandonment by the native population of business niches that they consider no longer profitable in order to join others, this impacting on the market’s capacity to meet the demand for certain products and services, especially those used and/or consumed by the migrant population.

A third approach is the interactive one, developed mainly in the United States. This approach presents changes and continuities with respect to ecological theories. Authors such as Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) suggested that the success of ethnic entrepreneurs cannot be explained on the basis of a single characteristic, but is rather due to a complex interaction between opportunity structures, group characteristics, and ethnic strategies. Opportunity structures “provide the [market] niches and access routes for potential entrepreneurs” (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990, p. 122), which depend on the ability of the latter to mobilize the resources available to them (that is, solidarity and kinship ties, ethnic institutions). The interaction between these two dimensions gives rise to ethnic strategies, as a way for migrant entrepreneurs to adapt to their environment.

This interaction among the three dimensions proposed by the authors does not imply that all these dimensions are equally important in the analysis. In a study on the business activities of Hispanic immigrants in the New York textile industry, Waldinger (1984) postulated that migrant entrepreneurship is basically produced by “market demand for small-scale business activities and by the supply of existing and potential business owners” (p. 61). In other words, small-scale businesses are presented by this author as a product of the market’s hindrance to the development of large-scale production and distribution enterprises. One of the most recurrent forms of criticism is the excessive economicism of such postulates, which fail to account for regulatory regimes (Arjona Garrido & Checa Olmos, 2006). Other criticisms point to the relationship with the static view of the economic context within which entrepreneurs operate, wherein the institutional context is simplistically represented by a list of laws and regulations (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001).

In order to overcome these limitations, Kloosterman and Rath (2001) centered the analysis around the ways in which the market and the institutional context condition the emergence of ethnic entrepreneurship in different European nations. Thus, the emergence and success of ethnic entrepreneurship “is not only to be understood by its embeddedness in social networks, but also on the basis of the socioeconomic, political, and institutional structure of the host society” (Solé et al., 2007, p. 25). For these authors, not only is the analysis of consumer demand and economic structures relevant, as in the case of the United States, but also the role of institutional frameworks, such as welfare rules and regulations established by States (as in the case of European countries). Under this mixed embeddedness approach, the development of ethnic economies depends on what groups can offer and on what, according to regulatory frameworks, they are allowed to offer.

Contributions of Transnationalism to the Study of Migrant Entrepreneurship

The advance of information technologies and the accelerated access to them, as well as to faster travel, have contributed to the increase in international migratory movements since the end of the 20th century (Blanco Fernández de Valderrama, 2007). In the first decades of the 21st century and up to the present, the widespread use of cellphone devices and different software applications made “connectivity on the move” (Brickell & Datta, 2011, p. 4) a certainty, making it possible to shorten distances and multiply people’s movements. These transformations had consequences not only on the amount of mobility across current borders, but also on the concepts relied on for the study of migration (Blanco Fernández de Valderrama, 2007).

Thus, a new approach emerged in the 1990s in the field of migration, especially from anthropology, which came to be known as transnationalism. This approach departed from the so-called container paradigm, which seemed insufficient to explain and discuss migration issues and the changes in migration patterns resulting from the development of new technologies in the context of globalization. For Glick Schiller (2008), transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, since already during the 19th century and at the dawn of the 20th, immigrants from different parts of the world contributed to forging economic systems in the American continent through transnational networks.

The same author proposed to look at the relationships between the residents of a given place and local, regional, national, and global institutions. A key concept of his approach was developed in Nations Unbound (Bash et al., 1994) under the term *transnational social field*. The idea of a social field was defined as a set of multiple networks of interlocking social relations through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged, organized, and transformed in unequal ways (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

The notion of transnational social field made it possible to account for the links that unite migrants’ societies of origin and destination across borders. Disconnection with the origin through assimilationist theories would no longer have a place in this analysis:

“transmigrants” maintain, build, and reinforce multiple ties that bind them to their places of origin, thus generating true “deterritorialized communities.” Transnationalism would be the

set of activities created by transnational migrants that allow them to live simultaneously in two different communities. Transmigrants would be, then, immigrants whose everyday life depends on the multiple and constant interconnections across national borders, whose identities are shaped according to more than one nation-State (Blanco Fernández de Valderrama, 2007, p. 19).

Thus, the patterns of transnational connection that emerged from the 1980s onwards should be analyzed in close relation to the aforementioned historical patterns of connection, insofar as they share both similarities and differences. The transnationalism perspective made it possible to make visible the intensity and extent of the flows of people, information, goods, etc., by international migrations (Blanco Fernández de Valderrama, 2007). The extensive literature on this approach investigates the myriad ways in which immigrants maintain social, political, and economic links between their places of settlement and origin (Chaudhary, 2019). Transnational migrant entrepreneurship, in turn, “shapes one of the practices of the transnational perspective of contemporary migrations” (Cavalcanti, 2014, p. 111).

Literature linking transnationalism and migrant entrepreneurship has been widely produced in the United States from ethnographic case studies (Barabantseva, 2016; Zhou, 2004), and also in Europe, especially in Spain (Beltrán et al., 2006). From the focus on the economic and commercial practices and relationships that migrants maintained with the communities of origin and their deployment at destination, a series of concepts were coined, such as ethnic enclave, ethnic entrepreneurship, and ethnic economy.

The first of these concepts, and one of the most important contributions, was the ethnic enclave theory, whose origin is the theory of labor market segmentation between the primary and secondary labor markets that make up the dual market (Piore, 1979). Synthetically, the primary labor market refers to large corporations and formal labor conditions, and the secondary market is structured by small enterprises involving workers, employers, and entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities, regularly under informal conditions. The latter group shares a limited group identity and solidarity that helps to reduce uncertainty and allows the enterprise to get started.

Thus, at the convergence of the dual labor market and migrant transnationalism, Portes and Bach (1985) coined the concept of ethnic enclave to allude to a distinct spatial location and organization of a variety of enterprises serving immigrant groups. This definition emerged from a critique of the assimilation theories of the time, and referred to the modes of labor incorporation of Cuban exiles in Miami. It was a strategy of concentration in a specific spatial location, where migrants set up a variety of enterprises formed by fellow Cubans, which gave rise to migrant neighborhoods.

Spatial and economic concentration provided the theoretical foundations to postulate the concept of ethnic neighborhoods, in which not only a space is acknowledged, but also is a relational and community aspect that emerges from a long-term migratory process (Sassone & Mera, 2007). Years later, Portes and Shafer (2012) revisited their production and research on Cuban entrepreneurship in Miami, concluding that these ventures served to carve out a space for

themselves in the receiving society. This was especially important for the first generation, but not so for the next. The latter was less benefited by the advantages and opportunities provided by the enclave.

Still, the transnational approach shed new light on the phenomenon of migrant entrepreneurship, and allowed understanding how migrants not only react to structural disadvantages in host countries, but actively seek opportunities across borders. This allows migrants to construct spaces of their own, reacting creatively to the situations they find, and making the most of their pre-existing bicultural skills and binational ethnic networks (Zhou, 2004). Although this approach had a high explanatory capacity to understand the modes of incorporation of migrants in receiving societies, it is currently debated due to the static, bidirectional, and circumscribed character, from a spatial point of view (Valenzuela-Garcia et al., 2018), and binary and homogeneous, from a cultural one (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013).

Regarding the former, this development does not explain, for example, the relationship between ethnicity and space, nor does it allude to the connections and networks established by entrepreneurs across and beyond borders (Güell et al., 2015). On the latter, several studies tended to ascribe to ethnic groups a series of traits as their own or characteristic to them, as it was found in research on Chinatowns (Barabantseva, 2016). These views on the prosperity and mobility of certain foreign entrepreneurs with respect to others helped to overcome the culturalist approach that had predominated until recently, and to warn of the place of stereotypes about certain national groups.

The critique of both the cultural approach-based studies of the 1970s and the enclave theories tended to look at migrants and foreign entrepreneurs through an *ethnic lens*. That is to say, tended to naturalize identities, beliefs, networks, and practices as particular to a given group, only because of national origin (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013). In the same vein, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2013) proposed the idea of migrant location, an approach that addresses the analytical relationship between the economic, political, and cultural positioning of cities within broader power networks, and the ability of migrants to carve out a place for themselves within a specific locality. This notion is defined as “a relationship between the ongoing restructuring of a city within power networks and the efforts of migrants to establish and build networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific location” (p. 495).

To this end, time and place are taken into account, since the former is a fundamental factor to be included in the analysis, and the latter evidences that, to the extent that there is a favorable environment and a structure of opportunities, the possibilities of prospering may increase. Likewise, acknowledging the place that methodological nationalism has occupied in unveiling national differences as a central element makes it possible to overcome the ethnic lens and the importance of ethnicity in the analysis. Thus, based on the location approach, it is possible to overcome the binary view between nationals and foreigners, as well as the tendency to homogenize foreign groups.

Currently, with the observations on transnationalism and the contributions of critical geography, the most recent studies seek to address the links, networks, and connections that not

only foreign entrepreneurs, but migrants in general, deploy—across borders—without losing sight of the territory where they are established and their relationship with nationals. In other words, seek to understand that “transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-States” (Sinatti, 2008, p. 97); that they are not only transnational fields or spaces, but emerge from a national territory that has a structure of opportunities and obstacles in which migrants insert themselves.

Thus, mobilities are “shaped by the material reality of the national order of things” (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, p. 495), so that the opportunities and obstacles encountered by migrants or those crossing borders with various motivations pertain different factors. These include the provisions set by nation-States, the existence and character of co-ethnic communities, and the attitude and practices of receiving governments (Portes & Martinez, 2019). All these are part of the structure of opportunities, as well as of the barriers encountered by labor migrants, that is, by foreign entrepreneurs when inserting themselves or carrying out their activities in the receiving country.

APPROACHES FROM INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

This section will first review the production from international business (IB), among which are those studies concerned with entrepreneurship in general and with the participation of migrant women in this field.

The View from International Business (IB)

As a starting point, the studies point out that, to date, concern for migrant entrepreneurship has received little attention in this field, when compared to other disciplines such as economics, demography, and management and strategy, among others (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). They also evidence that, although there is a significant production on migrant entrepreneurship, it is fragmented and contextual, which makes it difficult to generalize based on it. In some ways, the literature identifies a lack of synthesized and integrated models to understand the real drivers of entrepreneurship among migrants (Dabić et al., 2020).

In terms of this, Dabić et al. (2020) identified six aspects that recur in these studies. These are, first, the motives and intentions that give rise to migrant entrepreneurship; the literature focuses mainly on individual characteristics, social and ethnic networks, the resources they provide, as well as the characteristics of the labor market in the host countries. As for the second, it refers to competencies and identity construction, this is, it addresses entrepreneurial competencies and personal characteristics, such as knowledge and skills that influence business creation and management (for example, language skills, being fluent in another language).

The third aspect deals with the relationship with ethnic networks, where the focus is on the benefits they provide, as well as the disadvantages they present for migrant entrepreneurs in the maintenance and growth of their businesses. Fourth, an important part of the literature on migrant entrepreneurship focuses on strategies and internationalization, which allude to decisions regarding the growth and/or expansion of companies, its diversification outside ethnic groups,

among others. The fifth aspect pertains resources; a segment of the literature that addresses the need for migrant entrepreneurs to have access to different resources, including financial ones, both to start and develop businesses, a need that can be overcome in part through the use of their networks. The last recurring aspect in the production on migrant entrepreneurship has to do with intercultural relations, including the culture of the country of origin and the cultural background of migrants as catalysts for entrepreneurship, social integration, assimilation strategies, cultural isolation, relationship building, and social capital in the host country.

Other authors (Dheer, 2018) identify categories of analysis based on the before and after migration, that is, on the background that sets entrepreneurship in motion and the results of such entrepreneurship. To this end, they address some dimensions at the micro-level before migration, such as sociodemographic variables, psychological characteristics, and the resources available to the migrant, such as his or her social capital and networks. They also allude to meso-level factors, including regional labor market environments, the type of industry where migrants insert themselves, socioeconomic conditions, and employment and unemployment opportunities in the receiving country. On the other hand, this production also focuses on business performance in terms of management and viability. To this end, these authors also look at the individual and organizational factors that migrant entrepreneurship produces in terms of innovation and technology in the host country (such as the decrease in unemployment).

Overall, the reviewed articles from IB are based on the contributions of migration studies, but emphasize aspects such as transnational entrepreneurship and the conditions and factors that explain the deployment of entrepreneurial activities by migrants across borders, especially in the context of globalization (Chen & Tan, 2009).

The research analyzed here on IB all agree in pointing out that the transnational approach is a conceptual framework that takes into account the culture, language, and market in the country of origin of transnational entrepreneurs. In this sense, those studies understand this type of entrepreneurs as people who migrate to a country other than their country of origin, yet sustain commercial ties with it. Therefore, they emphasize the connections and links such entrepreneurs maintain between the country of origin and the receiving country, and the domains and scenarios of each case, which involve dual cultures, institutions and economies (Drori et al., 2006). This production focuses on the international arena and on how transnational ventures take advantage of globalization and cosmopolitan lifestyles so as to multiply “ethnic resources that facilitate operation beyond the boundaries of ethnic environments” (Drori et al., 2006, p. Q2).

A common element to highlight from international business literature—in line with migration studies—is that the entrepreneur under analysis is a migrant. However, this literature does not focus on such condition, as their interest in transnational entrepreneurship is to elucidate “to what extent transnational entrepreneurs are not just migrant entrepreneurs, but are distinctive agents of change relative to other entrepreneurs whose activities have crossed national borders” (Chen & Tan, 2009, p. 1080).

The main concern of the international business literature lies in the explanatory factors and in the search for theoretical frameworks to understand the transnational entrepreneurial dimension of immigrant entrepreneurs, as they discover and implement business opportunities across borders. One of these factors is the understanding of transnational entrepreneurship as shaped by multilevel forces that distinguish between macro and micro resources, where networks play a central role. In this sense, the inclusion of the network approach helps to explain the access to resources and opportunities available at different levels, because “they facilitate entrepreneurs’ access to instrumental resources such as information, capital, market, technology, and expressive resources such as emotional support” (Chen & Tan, 2009, p. 1081).

Other elements identified in the IB literature meant to explain entrepreneurship among migrants and ethnic minorities are the institutional factors of the countries of origin and destination. Among the former, negative aspects such as bureaucracy, corruption, and economic restrictions are identified, and among the latter, exploitation, abuse, discrimination, lack of education, poor social acknowledgement, exclusion from the labor market, and gender roles, among others (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). As such, difficulties can act as push factors and incentives for entrepreneurship. In other words, IB have—for the most part—focused on the provision of entrepreneurial support, and have neglected other institutional facilitators, as well as the personal qualities that immigrant entrepreneurs draw on when starting and growing their businesses.

In general, there is agreement in international business that transnational ethnic entrepreneurs can come from above or from below (Drori et al., 2009). This is because some countries grant privileged access to entrepreneurial migrants in the hope of stimulating economic growth. These are entrepreneurs who have resources, financial capital, and business skills that non-entrepreneurial co-ethnics normally lack. But they can also come from below, meaning, from economic migrants who make use of the social capital, networks, and opportunities of both the receiving society and the country of origin (Drori et al., 2009). The same can occur with return migrants who manage to take advantage of the international social capital they have acquired through migration to set up businesses in the country of origin. This latter view has focused more on the types of entrepreneurship and motivations, and less on migration projects and forms of social insertion.

Studies on Migrant Entrepreneurship

Studies on international entrepreneurship, which refer to the exploitation of opportunities across borders to provide goods and services, are associated with the process of globalization and increased competition in world markets (Drori et al., 2006). Among them can be found the study on globally established companies, that is to say, young companies seeking international markets, especially in the early part of their life cycle. This production has focused more on aspects such as innovation, proactivity, and the risks taken by companies in an uncertain international business environment, leaving aside the ethnicity of entrepreneurs and their dual affiliations. It is here where studies on transnational entrepreneurship and ethnic entrepreneurship converge with the production of migration studies, and distinguish between intermediate minorities and enclave entrepreneurship (points reviewed above). However, there is a tendency to look at entrepreneurial activities as rooted in community networks and an inward orientation in a distinctive social and economic context.

Studies stemming from the exploitation of GEM data have the advantage of having comparable international data on entrepreneurial activity at the global level (Alvarez et al., 2014), and among these studies those that address migrant entrepreneurship can be found. These investigations are concerned with “individual determinants in entrepreneurial participation, as well as the links between entrepreneurship and economic growth” (Peroni et al., 2016, p. 640). To this end, their object of study focuses on large established companies, and, in turn, on the process of entrepreneurship from its onset (Amorós & Abarca, 2006). Within the latter, they seek to identify the factors (barriers or facilitators) that influence the emergence of an entrepreneurial venture. Some authors have showed how the creation of new businesses depends on the interaction of contextual and individual factors (Contín-Pilart & Larraza-Kintana, 2015), while a large part of the field has studied each dimension, in fragmented ways (Shane, 2003).

Entrepreneurship is understood as a process in several stages that include the interest in creating a business, the intention, the effective starting, and the survival of the business (Peroni et al., 2016). Some empirical studies draw attention to the relevance achieved by migrants as entrepreneurs with respect to natives or nationals (Nicoara, 2021). Others report on the impact of ethnic diversity on the creation of new businesses (Gutiérrez & Bernal, 2020), on the proliferation of innovative initiatives (Poblete & Mandakovic, 2021), as well as on exports (Ashourizadeh & Wickstrøm, 2020). For example, in the United States, immigrants have played a key role in economic growth, in fact, they represent 13% of the population, yet account for 27.5% of the country’s entrepreneurs (Akens-Irby, 2018). In this case, migrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs than natives, a phenomenon particularly noticeable in the field of innovation, especially those from India, Israel, and China (Akens-Irby, 2018).

Some GEM-derived studies have nuanced this statement in the cases of south-south migration (Coduras Martínez et al., 2013). Explanations are related, with respect to certain situations, to the economic context of the host country, as pertaining the needs faced by foreigners due to scarce job opportunities and high levels of education (Mwaura et al., 2019). Thus, for some studies, migrants would have a higher propensity to undertake business ventures, because of the difficulties already pointed out or due to them being less aversive to uncertainty than natives. This is related to the

migration experience itself, which often involves high risk (Hormiga & Bolívar-Cruz, 2014). In this sense, it has been found that migration can be associated with uncertain and variable incomes (Katz & Stark, 1986), by an experience of uprooting (marked in some cases by the breakdown of the networks available to them), and significant social stress (Noh & Avison, 1996).

Other key elements to understand the emergence of migrant entrepreneurship are cultural repertoires, social capital, industrial networks, institutional fields, and power relations. The former “are continuously refracted through human action and are adjusted to particular social contexts, and to the skills and habits of the actors” (Drori et al., 2006, p. Q4). While studies acknowledge that these repertoires are not necessarily linked or constrained by cultures, they also consider that there matter of fact is a propensity for transnational entrepreneurship derived from both cultural tradition and actual assets.

Regarding social capital, these studies understand it in the sense proposed by Bordieu: “as the sum of resources, real and virtual, accumulated by an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships” (Drori et al., 2006, p. Q5). When it comes to industrial networks, these studies base their approach on network theory, which helps to explain the extent and scope of the structure of opportunities that allow overcoming structural gaps and bridging bridges thanks to ethnic or community relations. Institutional fields refer to the institutional contexts in which transnational entrepreneurs develop, as well as to the rules and patterns of business interaction. Finally, the aforementioned authors distinguish power relations defined as the strategies of action that reflect both choices and available resources, both material and symbolic. This, added to the political context, helps to understand the choice and meaning attributed to a particular form of entrepreneurship (Drori et al., 2006).

The Gender Approach in Migrant Entrepreneurship

Regarding the gender approach in migration studies, it is important to note that it has been applied since the late twentieth century upon the realization of the absence of women in this body of production. Criticism pointed to the androcentric bias of the studies, insofar as the definition of migration as fundamentally economic, which led to understanding the migratory experience as masculine (Morokvašić, 1984). The sexual division of productive tasks in the hands of men and reproductive tasks in the hands of women made the place occupied by the latter in migration invisible (Gregorio Gil, 1998; Kofman, 1999; Morokvašić, 1984). From then on, the production on gender within migration studies has been prolific, addressing different aspects, from a restitutive view of women in migration to the deployment of critical approaches. Among such, we can mention the discussion on the heteronormative nature of the gender approach, and the identification of gender as synonymous with women, a situation that has left out of the analysis the different sexual orientations (Marlow et al., 2018).

Studies on migrant women entrepreneurs from IB have mainly gone in two directions. On the one hand, those focused on the drivers and outcomes of women's entrepreneurship, especially in host countries in Western Europe (United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands) and North America (mainly the United States), and on the other hand, feminist studies that have tended to look at women's experiences as migrant entrepreneurs (Villares-Varela & Essers, 2019). Regarding the former, research has for the most part focused on identifying the chances and obstacles that women encounter in doing business in these countries, as well as their capacity for entrepreneurship. Various factors such as prejudice, language proficiency, and lack of access to financial resources have been addressed, thus concepts such as "accent ceiling" and "double disadvantage [that of ethnicity and gender]" have been coined (Chreim et al., 2018, p. 214). Such factors capture the problems faced by ethnic women entrepreneurs when the focus is on the resource deficit in the host country.

In addition, some research (Yetim, 2008) identified the strengths of immigrant women entrepreneurs' resources, especially in the social sphere derived from family and co-ethnic connections. Along this line, most studies highlight the social and cultural rootedness of gender and the importance of the family and ethnic networks, which may pose some obstacles to entrepreneurship, especially if the community retains a traditional gender organization. This research also takes into account enabling factors derived from gender roles, which explain the emergence of enclaves, especially due to the fact that these studies focus on certain fields such as traditional services, including food services, or derivatives of domestic service (sewing, cleaning, childcare, or cooking) (Chreim et al., 2018).

Regarding studies that inquire into the experience of migrant women entrepreneurs, Villares-Varela and Essers (2019) address the importance of context in the transnational trajectories of immigrant women, accounting for the ways in which they challenged, contested, or complied with established gender relations in their families during their transnational journeys. Thus, entrepreneurial activity can be a means of emancipation, but also a means of restoring gender arrangements in the country of origin. For these authors, these entrepreneurship outcomes depend on the spatial and temporal context, and on how they affect migrant women's strategies.

In relation to the above, critiques have been made on the production linking gender and entrepreneurship, especially because, beforehand, these business ventures are considered to have low productivity or performance, given that, they show limited growth in terms of sales, employment generation, profitability, and market share (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). These ideas are based on the bias of business analyses strongly rooted and grounded in competition and entrepreneurial ambition. By uncritically assuming the underperformance thesis, assumptions are reproduced that have implications for assessing migrant women's place as entrepreneurs (Marlow & McAdam, 2013).

Recently, research on immigrant women has been developed mainly under the theory of intersectionality, which makes it possible to address other social hierarchies that have been studied in a fragmented manner in the analysis of migrant entrepreneurship, such as religion or marginalization. From this perspective, the quite widespread idea that entrepreneurship would serve as a means of

empowerment for immigrant women is called into question. Research of this type accounts for the different levels of oppression of patriarchal structures, and the place of gender roles that usually are an obstacle to accessing financing and other forms of capital (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021). In a similar vein, more recent research makes use of the intersectional approach to probe gay and lesbian entrepreneurs, critiquing heterosexual women as the visible embodiment of the entrepreneurial subject (Marlow et al., 2018).

Balance and Perspectives

Having reviewed the theoretical production on migrant, ethnic, or transnational entrepreneurship based on studies on migration, international business, and entrepreneurship in Europe and the United States—from the 1970s to the present—, it is possible to point out several characteristics that are mentioned below.

In the first place, there is a prolific body of literature in all cases; however, in most cases, the focus is on migrants who cross borders for labor reasons or who seek better life prospects for themselves and their families. In other words, in most scenarios, the referenced subject is the migrant who has become an entrepreneur. The difference is that migration studies focus on the various motives or factors that lead them to undertake or become an entrepreneur in the receiving society, and are not concerned with the activities of transnational entrepreneurs with greater resources and who move internationally. The latter is the case of international business studies.

Unlike migration studies, the literature on international business is less concerned with this transit and more with the global factors deployed by these entrepreneurs, and their capacity for entrepreneurship. On this last point, GEM studies focus especially on the process of becoming an entrepreneur. In this sense, the latter two bodies of research are more concerned with the factors that facilitate or hinder migrant entrepreneurship and, in many cases, contrast them with native or national entrepreneurs. Thus, a distinction is made between migrants who, once established in the receiving society, become entrepreneurs because they do not find alternatives for incorporation into the labor market in accordance with their training, either because of barriers to insertion or because the networks available favor such a trajectory. In other cases, these are migrants who have greater resources thanks to networks, social capital, the institutional environment, or power relations, which places them in a condition of greater mobility.

Overall, European and U.S. production as a whole provides elements to understand why some groups opt for entrepreneurship as a form of incorporation into the receiving society, offering clues on the trajectories they follow, and allows for us to understand social mobility in the context of reception. Similarly, studies on migration, international business, and entrepreneurship, make it clear that globalization and interconnections are fundamental elements to be taken into account in such analyses, as is as the unequal distribution of mobility that structures the opportunities and conditions of the environment in which migrants are inserted.

In all the above cases, it was noted how the international division of labor is expressed in international human mobility where, on the one hand, there are flows of less skilled and

impoverished labor, but which can give rise to migrant enterprises, and on the other there are significant movements of capital and investments across borders, including those of entrepreneurs. At this point, the distinction made by Portes et al. (2003) between *top-down* and *bottom-up* transnationalism is useful, that is, differentiating between those initiatives and activities carried out by migrants at the local level and those carried out by large corporations and States.

From this perspective, the idea that human mobility or the capacity to move is unequally distributed and, in many cases, structures the modes of incorporation into the receiving societies and the possibilities that migrants find or forge there, as well as their capacity to undertake or become entrepreneurs, makes sense. Identifying the spatial dimension, and the opportunities and barriers that migrants find in the territories through which they move (in what has been called globalization from below) helps to understand these transits. This makes it possible to distinguish entrepreneurs who carry out their activities in neighborhoods or in areas with a high concentration of migrants, from those that take place in international networks and in the field of international business and entrepreneurship.

Concerning the review from migration studies and the theoretical approaches used to understand the origins of migrant entrepreneurship, they range from the culturalist theses of the 1970s, the ecological paradigm, the interactionist paradigm, and the ethnic enclave and emplacement concepts as ways of approaching and understanding its formation. There are also numerous case studies on this subject that go beyond the scope of this paper, but which are known to provide an account of trajectories in the formal and informal markets in Europe and the United States (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009; Beltrán et al., 2006; Cavalcanti, 2014; Lin & Tao, 2012; Solé et al., 2007; Tung et al., 2011; Wong, 2003; Zhou, 2004).

However, critical reviews of this production—especially those coming from migrant transnationalism—are relevant, as they dismantled the idea that certain groups have a natural propensity for entrepreneurship. By paying attention to the place of opportunity structures and the barriers found by migrants in destination countries, it has been possible to unveil the ethnic lens that had predominated in research on the entrepreneurial capacity of some groups with respect to others. These observations can be very useful for studying other geographical locations, such as Latin America, as they liberate from colonialist, Eurocentric, and stigmatizing views of migration. Along the same line, the concept of emplacement makes it possible to overcome the often stereotypical view of migrant entrepreneurship and aids to understand how, on various occasions, the local and transnational dimensions overlap beyond the particular traits or characteristics of foreigners. It also sheds light on the commercial activities of indigenous groups in Latin America that migrate or conduct business across borders and, in some cases, give rise to migration.

On the other hand, studies on international business have generally paid less attention to the origin of transnational entrepreneurs and the explanatory factors that led them to become entrepreneurs. From this, foreign entrepreneurs are seen less as migrants, and the international business dimension or entrepreneurial capacity is observed with greater interest; some even consider the migrant experience as a decisive factor when it comes to entrepreneurship (as mentioned above). This view makes it difficult to understand migrant entrepreneurship, since it

neglects the migration project, the forms of anchoring in the places where migrants carry out their activities, as well as the social and cultural relations deployed by migrants in the territories where they make business.

Along the same lines, the gender approach—in this theoretical production—has warned of the importance of the sexual division of labor and of patriarchy as a social organization for understanding how women become entrepreneurs or carry out entrepreneurial ventures. A critique of the gender approach has also been developed because of its heteronormative character, which has paid less attention to groups such as gay and lesbian migrants and their enterprises, as well as the biases of IB studies in focusing on competition and productivity. In all these cases, the intersectional approach proves to be an adequate tool to account for this dimension widely used in studies on migrant labor trajectories.

In general, both in migration studies and in international business, there is a significant gap in the production of migrant or foreign entrepreneurship, since there is less concern for those entrepreneurs who migrate as such and who are part of the globalizing networks from above (Alba Vega et al., 2015) and have greater capacity for movement. Perhaps, the concept of migrant, perceived as someone who migrates for economic reasons, that is, whose main motivation is work, turns out to be too ingrained, leaving out other forms of migration.

In this way, the mobility paradigm has looked with greater interest at this type of movement, especially because of the sense of freedom or ease of movement of international entrepreneurs. However, such a body of literature is less concerned with how movement structures people's lives and how it is an important way of belonging in today's society while perceiving globalization as one of the most important stratifying factors today leading to a global hierarchy of movement (Salazar, 2018). This is possibly because the movement of international entrepreneurs is less problematic than that of economic migrants—in terms of social insertion and inclusion—, and so it has been less addressed by the production reviewed for this study.

Closing up, it should be pointed out that any study on migrant or foreign entrepreneurs must take into account the concrete reality where this activity takes place, as well as the opportunities and obstacles migrants encounter across borders, in the receiving society, and/or in the society of origin (upon returning). This implies learning from the bodies of production coming from Europe and the United States, but, at the same time, avoiding applying them in uncritical ways, deploying concepts and approaches in an unreflective manner. Constant analysis and discussion are required, a back and forth between concepts and reality, as well as a methodological flexibility that allows the production of notions adjusted to the space and the subjects to be studied. More so given that the phenomenon of migration is a determining one of our times, growing in relevance in Latin America, especially concerning intra-regional movements.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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