

## The Ethnic Entrepreneurship as a Multidimensional Process in the Context of System Approach

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The presence of migrants in the economically developed countries' marketplaces has been growing in the last decades. It seems to be very inaccurate to do research in economics and social science without taking migrants' participation in the labour market into consideration. Migrants not only participate in the labour market as employees but also they act as entrepreneurs. The nature of migrant entrepreneurship has been changing. Nowadays, migrants are starting businesses in sectors different from traditional retail or hotel and catering industries. Interestingly, the second generation of migrants born in the destination countries are following different businesses trajectories than their parents did, using the social capital and links between sending and receiving markets. Migrants are starting to act as new important actors in the economies of developed countries. Taking into account the existing research in this area, we propose a systematic approach to ethnic entrepreneurship, which is the main purpose of this article. Our system approach related to social sciences is understood as the recognition of macro- and medium-ranged dimensions of the system approach, and it presents ethnic entrepreneurship at three levels of analysis: input, system, output.

**Keywords:** ethnic entrepreneurship, system approach, identity, integration.

## Przedsiębiorczość etniczna jako proces wielowymiarowy w kontekście analizy systemowej

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Obecność migrantów w rynkach krajów gospodarczo rozwiniętych w ciągu ostatnich dziesięcioleci systematycznie wzrasta. Imigranci nie tylko uczestniczą w rynku pracy jako pracownicy, ale także funkcjonują jako przedsiębiorcy na zasadzie samozatrudnienia. Rola i znaczenie przedsiębiorczości wśród migrantów zmienia się. Obecnie migranci rozpoczynają działalność w sektorach innych niż tradycyjny handel detaliczny czy też branża hotelarska oraz gastronomia. Co ciekawe, drugie pokolenie imigrantów urodzonych w krajach docelowych nie przejmuje w zakresie aktywności przedsiębiorczej biznesów swoich rodziców, jednakowoż bazuje na wytworzonym kapitale społecznym i więziach powstałych na linii między państwem pochodzenia a krajem migracji. Imigranci coraz częściej stają się nowym, ważnym zasobem rynków pracy państw rozwiniętych gospodarczo. Biorąc pod uwagę stan istniejących badań w tej dziedzinie,

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proponujemy systemowe podejście do przedsiębiorczości etnicznej, co jest także głównym celem tego artykułu. Nasze podejście systemowe odnosi się do metodologii nauk społecznych zarówno w kontekście analizy systemowej makro, jak i średniego zasięgu. Pozwala to na analizę przedsiębiorczości etnicznej na trzech poziomach: wejścia, centrum systemu i wyjścia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przedsiębiorczość etniczna, podejście systemowe, tożsamość, integracja.

**JEL:** O35, J61, J15, F22, O41, L53, P47, R11

## 1. Introduction

The presence of migrants in the economically developed countries' marketplaces has been growing in the last decades. It seems to be very inaccurate to do research in economics and social science without taking migrants' participation in the labour market into consideration. Migrants not only participate in the labour market as employees but they also act as entrepreneurs. The nature of migrant entrepreneurship has been changing over years. Nowadays, migrants are starting businesses in sectors different from traditional retail or hotel and catering services (Rušinovič, 2006). Interestingly, the second generation of migrants born in the destination countries are following different businesses trajectories from their parents, using the social capital and links between sending and receiving markets. Migrants are starting to act as new important actors in the economies of developed countries. According to Bommers (1999, 2006), migration research has limited its interest to social integration and social inequality for a long time. The questions related to employment, unemployment and the economic activity of migrants have been for a long time the main focus in economic migration research. Besides, the above-mentioned aspects of the process of the immigrant entrepreneurship could be a part of main aims of the national economic policy, i.e. supporting individual creativity, entrepreneurship attitude and innovation, social inclusion, and in effect sustainable development for the whole national economy (Lichtenstein and Lions, 2010).

In the case of CEE countries, there is very limited research available on immigrant entrepreneurship (Bieniecki, Cybulska and Rogulska, 2008; Kohlbacher and Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2012; Brzozowski and Pędziwiatr, 2015; Glinka and Brzozowska, 2015). Immigrants in this part of Europe are more seen as labour migrants, employed in agriculture, services or construction. However, in big cities there are examples of traditional ethnic businesses such as ethnic restaurants and bars or shops. Many of those businesses have adapted their offer to the Polish clientele, which is logical in a country with less than 1% of immigrants in the total population (Brzozowski and Pędziwiatr, 2015). On the other hand, we do observe the presence of migrants from other EU member states, international students or highly qualified workers mainly from Eastern neighbouring countries who started their business in sectors different from traditional ethnic enterprises. In

this paper, we would like to focus on the group of entrepreneurs of highly-integrated businesses, operating in mainstream market, offering not ethnic goods and services for wider clientele (Curci and Mackoy, 2010; Brzozowski and Pędziwiatr, 2015). An important factor for this kind of businesses is their innovative character.

Taking into account the existing research in this area, we propose a system approach to ethnic entrepreneurship. Our system approach related to social sciences is understood as the recognition of macro- and medium-ranged approaches, and it presents ethnic entrepreneurship at three levels of analysis: input, system, output. System theory approaches define a problem as understanding a set of relationships among disparate factors. This contrasts with the classic scientific analysis, where a set of independent variables is compared to dependent variables. The system theory requires two things. First, there must be a web of interactions among all the elements under study. Second, there are complex patterns as a result of these interactions. In effect, the system theory includes such concepts as a feedback mechanism. The system theory can help to develop system concepts that could integrate with different areas (Parsons, 1951; Luhmann, 2013).

## 2. Theories of Ethnic Entrepreneurship

In the existing body of economic migration research, we can focus on 3 areas: a) the migration decision (what are the determinants in the destination country that determine migrants inflow), b) the economic impact of migration on labour, capital and consumption markets (typical migrant niches in the economy, traditional businesses run by a particular migrant group, changes in traditional patterns in the second generation) and c) economic participation of migrants (consequences for migrant groups, employment of members of the same ethnic group, acceleration of migration) (Kolb and Egbert, 2008).

In the migration research in Europe for many years a lot of attention was paid to the economic participation of immigrants in the labour market of receiving countries. The interest in immigrants' entrepreneurship started later and focused on the first generation of migrants acting in the traditional sectors such as services, restaurants, etc. Relatively little is known about the second generation of migrants and the type of their enterprises. At the beginning, the activities undertaken by ethnic entrepreneurs were analysed as the ethno-cultural phenomenon. Recently, more attention has been paid to structural economic and social embeddedness of immigrant entrepreneurs as well (Granovetter, 1985). Granovetter understands the concept of embeddedness in the following way: "economic action, outcomes and institutions are affected by actors, personal relations and by the structure of the overall network of relations" (1990, p. 98). The concept of embeddedness stresses that individuals seen as independent actors behaving

rationally in order to achieve maximum profit act in the structural context, within their network. In the case of immigrant businesses, the influence of network and social capital seems to be very interesting for both the input and the output side of the proposed model. In the embeddedness model, the political and institutional structure in the receiving country has been neglected. This important element was introduced in the concept of mixed embeddedness proposed by Kloosterman, Van der Leun and Rath (1999). In their concept, the authors argue that immigrant entrepreneurship should be studied in a broader socio-economic and political-institutional context. Besides the migrants network, cultural capital and cultural characteristics of a particular group, it is important to look at the opportunity structure. We do understand the opportunity structure, on the one hand as the interplay between supply and demand and on the other as structural changes in the economy. Examples might be related to the postfordist or postindustrial societies with more flexible ways of production and services (outsourcing) creating new opportunities for small businesses. In the proposed model of analysis, the laws, regulations, and policies of the national states seem to be important for entrepreneurial behaviours of immigrants and the outputs of their activities. The opportunity structure developed by the state institutions may enable or hamper enterprises coming into existence (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). In this case, migration policies or regulations should be studied carefully in order to understand the context. We do understand migration policy as a public policy managing inflow and outflow of migrants from the territory of a state based on the analysis of demographic, socio-economic and political situation and needs. Migration policy should be understood as a strategy aimed at incorporation of migrants into the receiving society in all dimensions. According to Penninx et al. (2014), not explicitly formulated migration policy might be a policy as well. It means that in countries without any migration policy, some of the elements of it might be incorporated in other sectoral policies such as education (recruitment of international students), economic (foreign direct investments), labour market (targeted work permits), and might influence the migratory situation (Matusz-Protasiewicz and Rajca, 2014). In the case of immigrant entrepreneurship, some Western European countries started to promote self-employment to immigrants in particular, in order to reduce the high unemployment rate among those groups (Kloosterman, 2003; Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2011). This shows that political and institutional arrangements influence not only the system level but also the input and output side in the given model of analysis. It is important to note that the moment in which a state starts to transform from an emigration to immigration country and the stage of development and modernisation of its economy might be very important for the types of migrants it accepts (highly educated, students, etc.) and the position of these migrants in the economy (manual workers versus self-employed or entrepreneurs). In the case of CEE countries, it is important to take into

consideration the specific context of the development of migration policy related to labour market changes.

### 3. Input

At the level of input, behavioural aspects are identified, for example potential resources (human, relational, network), social capital in the context of motivation for the migration decision related to entrepreneurial attitudes. It is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Model of Entrepreneurial Event (Shapiro and Sokol, 1982). In the theory of migration, since the late 1980s and 1990s, researchers have focused on multi-level relations between social (migration) networks and migration (Granovetter, 1982; Massey, 1987; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999). The social network approach not only focuses on individuals and the decision-making process, rational choice but also explains why migration persists over the long term, and how far it is dependent on policies of the sending and receiving countries (Gurak and Caces, 1992). It is important that the research on social networks in migration has moved far beyond the classical economic push-pull approach and focused on individual migrants who shape migration outcomes through their social network, human capital and resources (Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1993). It is important to add that for contemporary immigrant enterprises the transnational dimension might have a significant impact. By using social and cultural capital as well as the links between sending and receiving countries, immigrants start to act more internationally. Social capital might influence social skills which create more access to customers and markets. According to Kloosterman, entrepreneurial behaviour is an interplay between socio-economic and cultural characteristics of groups, as well as the opportunity structure and the supply and demand side (Kloosterman, 2003). This is why migrants' social networks and social capital should be studied on the input side. However, both migrant (transnational) networks and social capital might influence not only the decision on setting up a business but also the outcomes of this process, the targeting of potential customers, market or even the marketing strategy. In this aspect, quantitative research (surveys) should be conducted. The authors understood quantitative research as surveys in the form of Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI) conducted among entrepreneurial emigrants. The general content of surveys:

- entrepreneurial attitudes (assessment of the respondents' own entrepreneurship, education and activity before and during emigration, motivation to start an own company);
- issues concerning planned activity after emigration;
- evaluation of innovation and entrepreneurship centres by emigrants.

The next two theories are strongly connected with understanding entrepreneurship attitudes. The Theory of Planned Behavior to a great extent

belongs to the psychological research field. It assumes that human behaviour is the outcome of human intentions that are determined by three factors associated with perception:

- perceived attractiveness of the object or activity, that is the attitude towards these objects or activities,
- perception of social norms, that is the belief in whether the society accepts a given behaviour or not,
- perception of control over behaviour, that is predicting the possibilities and constraints of a given behaviour.

The Model of Entrepreneurial Event assumes that it is the intention that precludes an entrepreneurial behaviour. If there is a proper opportunity, this kind of behaviour will occur. It depends first of all on the individual's perception of her/his own willingness (*perceived desirability*) and feasibility of her/his intentions (*perceived feasibility*). These both factors depend on the external impacts. The third indicator of human intentions is the propensity to act. The events play an exceptional role in the process of activating entrepreneurship. Events are specific incentives that invigorate economic activity. These events might include graduation, institutional incentives or a market offer, but also loss of job.

Based on the above theoretical assumptions, the authors suggested that surveys should be the research tools. The general content of surveys:

- entrepreneurial attitudes (assessment of respondents' own entrepreneurship, education and activity during studies, motivation to start their own company);
- issues concerning planned activity after graduation;
- evaluation of innovation and entrepreneurship centres by students, researchers and graduates;
- the existing opportunity structure of diaspora in the receiving countries;
- transnational networks connecting sending and receiving country in terms of economic activity;
- the receiving country's policy supporting ethnic entrepreneurs (micro grants, trainings, legal advice, etc.).

#### **4. System**

The second level – the system – is defined as a network of public and private institutions and programmes that comprise support for ethnic entrepreneurship. This system is described in the Concept of Innovative Milieu (Perrin, 1989) and the Concept of a Growth Pole (Perroux, 1949; Hirschman and Myrdal, 1957). Institutions are understood here as described in the neo-institutional approach (March and Olsen, 1984). In the context of international migration, the state becomes a very important actor that might influence the push-pull factor creating the policy accelerating migration or stopping it (Zolberg, 1981). National states have developed instruments to

control not only the admission (external borders, passports, visas) but also the labour market, welfare state institutions, etc. It is important to add that in the recent years, the multilevel governance of migration has emerged with a significant new supra-national level of institutions (the EU and its policies in the field of migration and integration, Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2013). In the multilevel governance context, the interconnectedness between levels and actors is crucial for understanding the policy-making process. The role of public and private actors in migration policy formulation, operationalisation, instrumentalisation and implementation has increased. In the decision-making in migration and integration policies, three main points have been identified: a) development of an institutional structure that is responsible for the policies, b) actors and networks involved in policy-making, c) internal and external factors influencing the decision-making processes (economic situation in given states and outside, decisions on the supra-national level, etc.) (Zicone et al., 2011).

The Concept of Innovative Milieu based on geographical (economic, social, physical) conditions of production. Jean-Claude Perrin defined “innovative environment” as a territorial district where innovation networks evolve through cooperation of actors who exchange their stocks (convergence), and this exchange generates very specific effects for innovation. In the Concept of the Growth Pole, economic growth does not develop equally, but appears in points/poles with different intensity. These poles are fundamental for new entrepreneurial activities. A crucial element of this concept is the communication infrastructure (institutions of business development and support) necessary for gaining and processing information regarding innovation processes (Kwieciński, 2005, pp. 32–40). Migrants use labour networks that facilitate the exchange of information concerning employment, labour market shortages, necessary skills, institutional support. Migrants having access to well-developed labour networks are able to secure employment before or directly after arrival, as well as get necessary social and financial support in setting up their own business (Gallo and Bailey, 1996). For ethnic entrepreneurs, migrant labour networks have been a source of employees (Anderson and Calzavara, 1986). Labour networks include family, friends, acquaintances or people from the country of origin. Migrant labour networks serve not only as an important source of information but also as training and know-how for those who do not have access to formal institutions or credentials (Caponio, 2008). In this concept, we can also take into account the theory of ethnic economies. It has its origins in researchers’ interest in entrepreneurial immigrants, determinants of their entrepreneurship, and the so-called ethnic business. A direct stimulus for this interest was provided by the phenomenon of Asian micro-economic activities in the host countries (mainly the United States). Especially among first-generation immigrants from Asia, people setting up their own businesses are a relatively large group. In other words, the establishment of micro-businesses (i.e. those in

which the owner is usually also an employee or employs primarily members of his own family) is strongly correlated with ethnicity, so there are often some stereotypes about special predispositions or preferences for entrepreneurship of certain ethnic groups (Zhou, 2009, pp. 221–235).

A dedicated mechanism to support a new type of ethnic entrepreneurship is academic entrepreneurship. This type of activity of universities should not be solely evaluated via economic returns to the university but should be considered through wider social and economic benefits such as diffusion of knowledge or contribution to employment. Thereby, the systems implemented at universities for the measurement and evaluation of institutional support for entrepreneurship and its impacts should take into account the different views and expectations of every involved stakeholder and in our approach this should be connected with the process of recruitment of foreign students and placing them on the labour market (Gomes-Gras, 2007, p. 8).

These elements should be identified by qualitative and quantitative research in the form of IDIs with selected public and private institutions. Qualitative research should cover the number and type of support institutions and programmes dedicated to ethnic entrepreneurship and innovation in the local or regional dimension (desk research, data banks).

## 5. Output

On the output side, resources available for companies are identified. The theoretical basis is the Economic Base Theory (Murray Haig, 1926). This theory helps to describe endogenous factors and possibilities of firms set up by migrants (at the city and region levels), and it allows for identifying so-called ethnic activities (products, services) that are specific to “the networks of migrants activity”, especially in the aspect of internationalisation. Nowadays, this concept could be connected with the idea of smart specialisation (Foray, David and Hall, 2009). In the context of ethnic entrepreneurship, crucial elements of the output could be identification of the economic impact of migration on labour, capital and consumption markets (typical migrants niches in the economy, traditional businesses run by a particular migrants group, changes in traditional patterns in the second generation) and the economic participation of migrants (consequences for migrant groups, employment of members of the same ethnic group, acceleration of migration).

As an effect of this activity, we can describe two main processes of entrepreneurial activity among immigrants: the concept of path dependency and the concept of path creation towards integration of economic immigrants (Balaz and Williams, 2007, pp. 38–39). We deal with dependency when the result of the process of economic adaptation is the result of a sequence of activities pursued and decisions taken by migrants in the past, and not only the current socio-economic conditions. In other words, the



relationship that emerges when investment and patterns of action adopted by the first group of immigrants determine and to some extent limit the behaviour, actions and decisions of the following groups. This means that the economic activity of successive waves of foreigners is not necessarily optimal in a given economic context, because it is not only the result of rational calculation. Furthermore, it is the result of the characteristics of new migrants, conditions in the host country and, above all, the strategy adopted by earlier cohorts of migrants. As researchers point out (cf. Balaz and Williams, 2007, pp. 40–45), dependency and creation represent opposite ends of a continuum, and the situation of individual groups rarely takes the form of the extreme, locating them usually closer to one or the other pole.

As a next step, the type of immigrants' activity should be analysed by using the organization's resources. This kind of analysis could provide an answer to the question of how strong or weak this type of immigrant entrepreneurship group is and what kind of influence they could have on self-organisation, identity and milieu (labour market, regional innovation system, etc.).

There are eight types of the organisation's resources:

1. Access to strategic centres of the public administration (policy power) (representation in: parliament, local government committees, local government bodies).
2. The financial factor (access to financing, loans, tax incentives, public procurement).
3. The meritocratic factor (access to databases, information, administrative, scientific cooperation with experts).
4. The mobilisation factor (ability to mobilise, collective cooperation initiatives).
5. The factor of human capital (education, skills, leadership structure).
6. The factor of affiliation and coalition (strategies, cooperation with other entities).
7. Structural factors and coordination (degree of centralisation, the state of base material).
8. The symbolic factor (identity organisations, organisational culture, communication style) (Sroka, 2004, pp. 38–40).

Identification of both types of entrepreneurial activity (continued vs. created), as well as the resources of these organisations will allow for describing the kinds of identities of ethnic entrepreneurs, i.e.: ethnic separation, ethnic inequality and ethnic politics (Boksański, 2008, pp. 79–100). This, in turn, will determine the level of cohesion of a group of ethnic entrepreneurs and their integration with the local, regional or national economic system.

These elements should be identified by qualitative and quantitative research in the form of IDIs with SMEs that are established by migrants.

Qualitative research should cover the number and type of innovative and non-innovative SMEs of migrants, type of innovation and internationalisation activities which are strongly connected with the country of origin of some types of migrant groups.

As a result, having identified effects on the output side, and using the feedback mechanism, it is possible to determine the system elements that should be modified both on the input (trainings, skills) as well as on the very system side (institutions, programmes).

The approach described above allows for determining endogenous and actual characteristics and properties of the system, fully based on its strengths and weaknesses. It could be especially supportive for comparative research.

On the output side, there are different models that immigrant enterprises might create based on Curci and Mackoy:

- “Highly segmented businesses offer ethnic-specific goods and services mostly for the co-ethnic clients. The typical examples of such firms are the halal stores in Western Europe, which offer specific food from MENA region to the immigrants coming from the countries.
- Market-integrated businesses sell their ethnic output to the non-ethnic clients. In this category we can include Vietnamese restaurants in Poland, who serve their ethnic food mostly to Polish clients.
- Product-integrated businesses offer non-ethnic goods to the ethnic clients, usually within the limits of the ethnic enclave. Typical manifestation of this activity are the real estate agencies, who offer apartments for sale or to let in the ethnic district and for the ethnic clients,
- Highly-integrated businesses operate on the mainstream market, offering non ethnic goods and services for mostly non-ethnic clients. This kind of immigrants entrepreneurship is most heterogeneous and includes many companies from the ICS, high-tech, manufacturing sector, just to name few examples” (Brzozowski and Pędziwiatr, 2015, pp. 185–186).

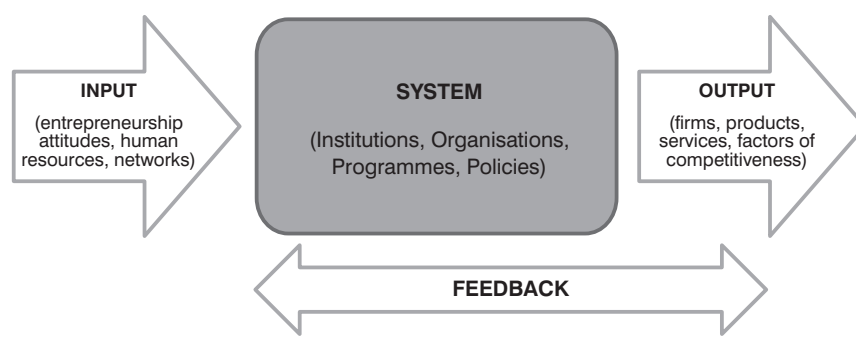


Fig. 1. System approach to entrepreneurship – original concept. Source: own proposal.

## 6. Conclusions

The concept of the system approach to ethnic entrepreneurship allows for describing and analysing key elements and aspects of this kind of multidimensional process:

- determination of behavioural, institutional, political, economic and social issues related to ethnic entrepreneurs;
- examination of the types of ethnic entrepreneurship: routine entrepreneurship (trade, gastronomy) vs. innovative entrepreneurship (high-tech, medium-tech services);
- evaluation of resources of ethnic entrepreneurs and the degree of their internal identities;
- description of the models of integration, interaction and relationships among immigrants and in the relationship immigrant-host country;
- definition of business models of ethnic entrepreneurs – continuation path vs creation path.

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