Locating migrant pathways of economic emplacement: Thinking beyond the ethnic lens

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Abstract

This article reinforces the calls, including those articulated by the editors of this special issue, for scholarship that does not rely on an ethnic lens to study migrant practices, socialities and identities. We offer a concept of migrant emplacement that focuses analytical attention on the relationship between the economic, political and cultural positioning of cities within broader networks of power and the ability of migrants to forge a place for themselves within a specific locality. Using the example of Halle/Saale in eastern Germany but calling for comparative research, the article notes the synergies between urban regeneration and rebranding efforts and the emplacement of migrants in that city through local situated and transnationally connected small businesses. Time is also shown to be a factor: a welcoming ambience and opportunity structure in urban regeneration at one point can be replaced by a reduction in possibilities at a later period.

Beginning in the 1980s, urban areas in many countries experiencing new migration were transformed by the growth of migrant businesses.[1] If you were a middle class New Yorker you began to experience more food choices in the form of a new array of ethnic restaurants or fruit, vegetable and flower markets with extensive

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Korean-owned carryout buffets open day and night. If you lived in New York's or Los Angeles' inner city neighbourhoods you found that Hispanic bodegas were replaced or supplemented by Chinese food take-aways. At market 'stalls' in the towns surrounding Manchester, England, Pakistani vendors sold inexpensive jumpers produced locally in garment production that had recently passed from Jewish manufacturers to South Asian, whilst throughout the UK 'off licence' shops and fish-and-chip restaurants became migrant owned or operated. Migrant businesses and vendors become an important part of gateway cities (such as Paris, Berlin, Toronto). By the 1990s, new migrant businesses also thrived in less globally connected cities. In the wake of the capitalist transformation of eastern Europe migrant businesses proliferated so that you could easily buy Chinese take-away food in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and Sofia.

Scholars, noting this transformation, began a spirited discussion of what they termed 'ethnic enterprises', echoing Light (1972), a pioneer of studies of migrant businesses. The majority of researchers assumed without any further reflection that there were real differences between 'ethnic entrepreneurs' and all other business people and sought explanations for migrant entrepreneurial behaviour in ethno-cultural traditions, ethnic moral frameworks, behaviour patterns, loyalties and markets.

This article offers an alternative approach to the study of migrant businesses by exploring urban-based entrepreneurial activities as a mode of emplacement. Emplacement is understood as a relationship between the continuing restructuring of a city within networks of power and migrants' efforts to settle and build networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific locality. It focuses analytic attention on the conjunction of time and place. In this approach, migrants' local and transnational networks of connection are considered in relation to local institutions, structures and narratives, as they emerge at particular moments in the historical trajectory and multiscalar positioning of specific cities.

In offering this approach, we argue that analysts need to move 'beyond the ethnic lens' (Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 2008, 2011a). To take this stance is to reject methodologies and analyses that begin with the assumption that ethnic or ethno-religious identities, beliefs, practices, networks or practices are central to the lives of people of migrant background. As Fox and Jones (this volume) state, 'ethnicity is naturalised as a taken-for-granted fixture of the migration and post-immigration landscape', which obscures the ways in which 'diverse forms of belonging are enacted.' We agree and stress that to critique the ethnic lens is to neither neglect nor privilege ethnic identities. It is only by rejecting the unquestioning use of the ethnic group as the primary or exclusive unit of study and analysis in migration research that scholars obtain the analytical distance to investigate when, why and how ethnic identities become salient for people of migrant background and for the institutions of governance. At the same time, by rejecting the ethnic lens scholars can explore the ways in which all people, including people of migrant background, deploy multiple frames of action and forms of belonging.

The editors of this special issue address the methodological and analytical challenges that accompany a critique of the ethnic lens by suggesting the saliency of the 'everyday'. In this article, we respond to their challenge by examining the identities, practices and relationships of migrant entrepreneurs, as they are constituted within specific cities and points of time. We emphasise that we are *not* using the spatialisation of the 'everyday' life within a specific neighbourhood, institution or form of activity as an entry point to the study of the relationships between cities and migrants. This is because we believe that more is needed than to 'specify the actual practices and processes through which ethnicity and other modalities of belonging are negotiated and reproduced, or undermined, resisted, rejected and rendered irrelevant' (Fox and Jones, this volume). To confine our discussion to such a perspective is to assume that whatever 'other modalities' of belonging or frames of action are in process, ethnicity is always relevant. In contrast, we argue that to analyse migrant businesses scholars must examine the changing opportunity structures and barriers to entrepreneurial activity as they are configured by the continuing regeneration of urban space, governance and structures of capital accumulation. Descriptions of everyday practice must be extended to encompass the ways all residents of a city participate in multiple hierarchical networks and institutions of unequal power. From such an analysis we can see how all residents of a city mutually constitute and are constituted by the local, national and global in processes that change over time.

Locating the problem

Most of the literature about migrants' local and transnational economic integration has been shaped by methodological nationalism that equates society and culture with the nation-state and sees national borders and the boundaries of belonging generated by the nation-state as the unit of analysis (Aninina et al., 2012; Beck, 2002; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). This perspective on culture and membership is a product of 20th- and 21st-century nation-state building processes. These processes legitimate a political ideology that portrays individuals as having only one country and one identity.

When assessing the implications of migration across state borders, researchers have come to see differences in national origin as the most significant social and cultural division within the population of a particular nation-state. Through a single discursive act those who are native to the territory of a nation-state are transformed into participants in a shared and homogenous culture; those departing from one national territory to settle in another are likewise seen as sharing identity and culture so that they become identified by the nationality of their homeland. It is this foundational binary of difference that leads scholars to approach all people of the same national or ethnoreligious migrant background as homogenous in terms of their values, culture, achievement and identity. When migration researchers adopt a transnational perspective on migration but retain an ethnic lens, they assume that migrants, who share an ethnic identity, form a

transnational or a diasporic community that links homeland and new lands of settlement (Cohen, 1997).

Shaped by a methodological nationalism, migration scholars concerned with migrant economic incorporation generally have either: (1) compared migrant workers to natives within a specific nation-state using migrant and native as comparative categories (Bjoris, 1994); or (2) studied migrants grouped by nationality, conceptualising economic incorporation as an outcome of the cultural attributes or human capital attainments of a specific ethnic group (Aldridge and Waldinger, 1990; Light, 1972; Waldinger, 1986). In the first analytical strategy, the optic is the foreign/native divide, which rests on an underlying assumption that cultural differences or differences in human capital substantively separate the 'native' workers who belong within a nation-state from the new comers. In this approach, 'natives' who differ in educational background, skills and income are conflated into a single national indicator of economic outcome against which migrant success can be measured. When structural factors have been addressed, scholars have generally examined them on a national level (Bjoris, 1994).

In the second approach, the unit of analysis for the study of economic integration is the ethnic group, and the analyst highlights the cultural repertoire, skills, beliefs and practices of a population assumed to share similarities that structure their abilities to obtain employment and their subsequent economic performance (Bonacich and Model, 1980). The role of local urban-based institutional structures has typically not been addressed (Pécoud, 2000). In adopting and popularising these approaches within discourses about social cohesion, researchers seriously diminish their ability to examine non-ethnic forms of social relations and conflate migrants' ancestral origins, practices and identity (Laurence, 2011).

By the 1990s, some scholars began to explore class variations within and between migrant groups, arguing that it was the degree of capital, education and prior business experience of the 'immigrant entrepreneur' rather than cultural traits or ethnic solidarity that produced success in small business ventures (Bates, 1994; Min and Bozorgmehr, 2000). There was some recognition that an array of differentiating factors led to the growth of such businesses. These factors ranged from the level of unemployment, lack of qualifications and discrimination of each group to the willingness of some migrants to open or purchase businesses in neighbourhoods where customers were poor and racialised as dangerous. Moreover, many studies of so-called 'ethnic' entrepreneurs and 'enclaves' noted that manufacturers and small businessmen organised their economic activity, sought workers and built a customer base with people of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Light et al., 1999; Portes, 1995; Rath and Kloosterman, 2000). Other scholars described a progression from businesses that 'once catered mostly to co-ethnic customers...[to those that] rely largely on a non-immigrant clientele' (Pécoud, 2004a: 19). To move beyond the concentration on co-ethnic social capital, Kloosterman and his colleagues (1999) offered a concept of 'mixed embeddedness' that included non-ethnic networks and highlighted the significance of varying urban opportunity structures in explaining the trajectories of migrant businesses. Pécoud (2004a) in turn spoke of 'cosmopolitan businesses'.

In the light of this research, one would have expected an emerging consensus that the 'ethnic entrepreneur' is often a misnomer (Pieterse, 2003: 3), and that business people of migrant background are first and foremost entrepreneurs seeking a viable supply network and customer base. Yet the concept of the ethnic entrepreneur has assumed a life of its own in the literature on migration. As Rath and Klosterman (2000: 663) have noted, even critiques of the ethnic niche literature equate 'immigrant businesses' with 'ethnic businesses' and assume they are marked by 'ethnic loyalties and ethnic markets' and cultural difference. Consequently, decades after the conflation of the business activities of persons of migrant background and the concept of 'ethnic business' the concept of ethnic entrepreneurs continues to structure research, policy proposals and remains prominent in the public imagination (Constant et al., 2007: Deakins et al., 2009; Kitching et al., 2009; Masurel and Nijkam, 2004).

At the beginning of the 21st century, European policy makers in a wide range of European countries began to examine variations in the structural factors that shape migrant integration on the level of cities (Cities for Local Integration Policy [CLIP], 2010). Organisations and research networks in the European Union have fostered an interest in the role of cities in the development and implementation of public policy, regulatory regimes, programmes of support, and anti-discriminatory policies, all of which shape migrant emplacement. The National League of Cities (2011), an organisation of US cities, has articulated a similar understanding of the synergies that develop between migrant businesses and migrant friendly policies and urban growth.

At the same time, it is important to note that as they highlight variations in local factors that shape the relationships of migrant businesses to urban development, urban policy initiatives have continued to frame migrant businesses in ethnic terms. Thus the CLIP Network (2010: 5), a coalition of research centres and local authorities, discussed business people of migrant background as 'ethnic entrepreneurs', whilst noting 'the increasing importance of ethnic entrepreneurship for local economies'. They differentiated and culturalised the contributions of these business people, while proclaiming that these entrepreneurs 'have long remained 'unsung heroes' . . . [who are] active agents, shaping their own destinies as well as revitalizing economic sectors especially in neoliberal times' (CLIP, 2010: 5).[2]

Alternative starting points for migration and policy studies

Alternatively, researchers might consider joining ethnographies of migrant everyday practice to a structural locational approach. Such an approach could examine the relationship between migrants' local emplacement through small businesses and the positioning of a city within time and within spatially differentiated global networks of power. Researchers would then be able to theorise urban variation and its relationship to the possibilities and pathways of migrant emplacement through entrepreneurial activities. Rather than assuming that the unit of analysis is an

ethnic group within the boundaries of a nation-state, scholars of migrant businesses might find it more productive to deploy a concept of multiple embeddedness.

Multiple embeddedness would highlight the processes through which individual migrants in their everyday entrepreneurial practices form networks of social relations and multiple social fields. Social fields are networks of uneven power that may be locally situated or extend nationally or transnationally and link individuals to economic, political, social and cultural institutions (Glick Schiller, 2003). Social fields are the aspect of social relations through which broader social forces enable, shape and constrain individual migrants and their networks. States are significant actors within the constitution of these fields of differential power. Through their institutions states impose territorial and legal borders; however, an analysis of the forces that shape migrants' emplacement cannot be restricted to or contained within state institutions and actors.

This conceptualisation of emplacement emphasises that all individuals live within, as they create, a social nexus composed of all those to whom they are connected by various forms of interaction (Giddens, 1984). In order to study how migrant entrepreneurs actually establish and maintain their businesses, migration scholars must explore the linkages of their business related everyday local activities to urban institutions as well as broader fields of power. Differences in national and local jurisdictions and shared cross-border regulations such as those of the EU and WTO affect the economic insertion of migrants, the availability of employment, the degree to which wages can be locally modified and the regulations that confront small entrepreneurs. At the same time, as they are differentially reconstituted as actors in these varying networks and hierarchies, cities matter.

As Rath et al., (2011) has noted, local policies, histories, demographics and relative cultural and political power of a specific locality structure the business and employment possibilities for everyone living in a specific place. Analysts must describe and analyse the role of structural factors reflected in spatial variation in accounting for the particular trajectories, successes or failures of migrant entrepreneurs. All capital – economic, human, social, cultural – is in fact a socially based form of unequal emplacement. For migrant emplacement is 'the product of the interaction of structural factors such as migration history and processes of social, economic and political incorporation in the mainstream, as well as their spatial variations' (Rath, 2006: 5).

However, it is insufficient to examine urban variations that affect migrants and their businesses without an analysis of the global reach and power of the processes and actors who restructure various forms of capital including urban real estate. Scholars of neoliberal urban restructuring and regeneration have made it clear that cities are not bounded units but contribute to and are shaped by the on-going reconstitution of capital (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 2006). The processes through which cities, nation-states and global spanning institutions are continually mutually constituted are simultaneously economic, political and cultural and occur within networks of differential power that are substantiated within specific places and periods of time.

Cities are useful entry points because they have the coherence of a specific institutional structure of governance including taxation and regulation, a territorialised opportunity structure as a result of historical and contemporary conjunctions of economic and political power and geographic positioning, and institutions that create, brand and market local cultural configurations and identities. Consequently, the relative positioning of cities within hierarchies of uneven power can enable or impede the pathways of emplacement for all those – migrants and non-migrants alike – who reside in a particular place at a specific period of time.

Cities as entry points for the study of migrant emplacement through entrepreneurship: A processual example

To make these arguments more concrete, we draw on ethnographic research we conducted with co-researchers between 2000 and 2007 in Halle/Salle, Saxony-Anhalt in eastern Germany. This research – preliminary and ethnographic in nature – is insufficient to constitute a fully developed exploration of the relationships among urban economic opportunity structure, local narratives about migrants and migrant businesses as pathways of settlement. However, this example concretises our argument for an alternative approach by illustrating a way to study the intersection of three fields of interest: (1) specific urban restructuring and rebranding projects and policies; (2) urban leaders' narratives about migrants that reflect their restructuring agendas; and (3) migrant emplacement. In addition, by using an ethnographic account of a migrant pathway of emplacement in a relatively powerless city, we move the current conceptualisation of migrant economic emplacement beyond the limits of data collected in global and gateway cities.[3] Our hope is to alert researchers to the need to link specific pathways of emplacement to the varying opportunity structures of different localities, noting that both the localities and these pathways develop with global networks of power.

When we speak of Halle as a relatively powerless city, we refer to its positioning within the economic, political and cultural networks that connect this city within larger fields of power. We mean by cultural positioning the reputation of the city, which is a factor in each city's efforts to attract and maintain capital investment, new economy industries and other forms of local economy such as tourism. The research we conducted in Halle was not confined to the migrant population. It included open-ended interviews with city leaders, and more than sixty interviews with migrants – migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented workers and students. We also collected and reviewed relevant city statistics, policies and pronouncements that touched on the political economy and on city leaders' approach to urban regeneration, rebranding and migrant 'integration'. In addition, we participated together with our co-researchers in formal and informal events and activities organised for or by migrants or by local political or cultural activists (Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 2011a).

(1) Urban restructuring and rebranding projects and policies

Historically and within the German Democratic Republic, Halle had been a centre of science and of the petroleum and chemical industries. These gave the city, its university and scientists international prominence. However, after German unification in 1989, Halle experienced dramatic de-industrialisation, massive unemployment and out migration. In the reorganisation that followed unification, Halle lost out politically to neighbouring Magdeburg, which became the capital of the newly formed state of Saxony-Anhalt and economically to Leipzig where the regional airport was located. The population of the metropolitan area had shrunk to 237,000 people by 2005, half its former size, whilst the city itself contained 135,000 people (City Population, 2011; Geohive, 2012; International Building Exhibition Urban Redevelopment Saxony-Anhalt, 2010).[4] In 2004, the city's unemployment rate stood at just under 20%, the youth unemployment was much higher, and there was stiff competition among local residents for even low paid employment. Halle had few opportunities for employment or social mobility for either those seen as natives and those described as foreigners or of migrant background. Consequently, and in rather dramatic contrast to German cities with more economic, political or cultural resources, Halle attracted few migrants.

Although the size of the migrant population doubled in the fifteen years following German unification, in 2005, it was only 4% of the population of Halle, with the largest number of migrants coming from the European Union.[5] Within this population, migrants from several different countries of Africa and the Middle East, as well as those from Vietnam made up a small, but visible, minority.[6] Few of these migrants voluntarily came to Halle, and those who did often sought to leave and settle in western Germany where there were much greater possibilities for employment. The narrative of Halle as a shrinking city that was unfriendly to migrants contributed to the outward flow of migrants. The migrants who remained included asylum seekers whose mobility in Germany was legally limited, students, migrants who were married to, or had children with members of the local German population, and the elderly who came as either refugees, Jewish settlers, or 'ethnic Germans' and who didn't believe they would be employable elsewhere in Germany. Although city leaders often portrayed the migrants as uneducated, rather than desirable technologically skilled newcomers who could help rebuild the city, relatively few migrants were without some education and the migrant population included multilingual people with professional degrees and university students who wanted to settle in Halle because they had local ties.

Between 2000 and 2007, the European Union and the German state's efforts to revitalise the city and the region contributed to a refurbishment of Halle's historic centre but this influx of capital did not immediately revitalise the city's overall economy or lower unemployment. The former massive petro-chemical complex was privatised and converted into one of the world's most modern chemical production facilities (CeChemNet, 2008). Impressive international capital investment provided a relatively small number of hi-tech jobs and made this region of Halle a

'leading industrial site in central Germany' according to local promoters (Barjak, 2001; CeChemNet, 2008: 18). There were also major public investments in research facilities and these began to rejuvenate Halle's research and technological facilities.

(2) Responses to restructuring: City leaders' narratives about migrants

In the context of the hi-tech jobs that were being generated – 3000 by 2008 – city developers and local corporate representatives faced the challenge of attracting professionals and skilled technicians necessary to maintain and build these industries. City leaders sought ways to refurbish the city's prestige and reputation so as to provide the cosmopolitan ambience necessary to attract global talent and further corporate investment. However, they found that the relatively weak economic, political and cultural positioning of the city affected their redevelopment strategies and marketing. They could not boast of global nor regional corporate headquarters, nor did they have the power or resources to brand the city as a financial or intellectual centre. City promoters sought tourists but Halle's reputation as a deindustrialised, impoverished and racist city did not make it a desirable tourist destination.

The city leaders we interviewed in 2001 (city officials and members of political, economic, religious and social service organisations from very different political affiliations) spoke about migrants through the lens of the city's positioning. When speaking about the relationship between Halle and its migrants, these respondents shared certain assumptions. They were committed to changing the public image of the city, not only in Germany, but worldwide. They saw their city as down but not out and sought ways for Halle to regain its former prestige and prominence. In this task they faced numerous obstacles, including the fact that the city had gained a reputation as racist following several attacks on migrants by angry, neo-Nazi youth, who were a very small but dangerous sector of the population. Publicity surrounding these attacks proved detrimental to efforts to attract investment, industry and 'global talent'[7].

In the context of Halle's competition with other cities, city leaders created a narrative that, in different contexts, depicted some or all migrants to the city as belonging to Halle. Facing an economic positioning of the city that yielded few possibilities of employment for most inhabitants, city leaders became convinced that migrants could contribute to positively repositioning the city. They subscribed to a common narrative and policies that contributed to migrant emplacement in Halle through domains of commonality rather than difference. In these narratives migrants, rather than being seen as ethnic actors, were hailed as small business people who were particularly important to the city. Even when they used the term foreigner, these leaders included these foreigners as part of the locality and emphasised how the provincialism of natives could be overcome with the help of those from elsewhere.

It is true that in some instances, city institutions and leaders participated in events that profiled the cultural variation of migrants. Interestingly, these were often initiated and funded by foundations and religious organisations based

elsewhere than in Halle. The Heinrich Böll Foundation, linked to the German Green Party, funded some multicultural activities including an African week, and city leaders such as the vice-mayor spoke at an official ceremony that was part of the celebration. City leaders also participated in a celebration of a 'Week of the Foreign Citizens' initiated by a national religious network, although activities were locally organised.

However, and this point is crucial if we are to develop an analytical framework that can encompass the relationship between the varying and relative positioning of different cities and migrant emplacement in those cities, Halle's weak positioning within various powerful networks meant that ethnic difference was not a central aspect of its urban restructuring and branding efforts. In this dimension, Halle differed from cities with greater degrees of cultural, political or financial capital where city leaders and developers have approached migrant businesses as ethnic businesses (Pécoud, 2004a, 2004b). In those cities, there was a synergy between the funding by city authorities of ethnic organisations and activities and the celebration of migrant ethnic difference as part of the successful branding and marketing of their city as innovative, diverse, and cosmopolitan (Binnie et al., 2006; Florida, 2003; Rath et al., 2011). Ethnic and cultural industries provided opportunities for social, cultural and political mobility for people identified as ethnic leaders. None of this happened in Halle.

In the first stages of their restructuring activities, Halle's leaders rather saw migrant business people as economic actors who were agents of the city's redevelopment. In discussing Halle's efforts to revive its small business sector, most city leaders included migrant entrepreneurs as part of the city. They acknowledged that after reunification, the rebuilt city centre would have been replete with empty shopfronts without the shops and restaurants opened by migrants. A representative of the Employment Bureau explained, 'foreigners who want to open a shop here . . . help the employment situation if they come here and also employ people who already live in Halle'. A city councillor stated that he was 'comfortable with migrants who had made a place in the city through the establishment of small businesses'. These leaders tended to emphasise migrants' common humanity rather than exotic marketable difference.

City leaders also embraced migrants as an indication of the city's openness, which was badly needed to improve the city's competitive positioning. Responding to the need for city leaders to combat Halle's image as a racist unwelcoming city, they tried to link openness to learning about the world via migrants. As local people recognised the humanity of migrants, they would learn about the world from them and so migrants were key to connecting Halle to the world. A city councillor from a minority party commented that 'there are too few foreigners living here'.

(3) Migrant economic emplacement

Migrant economic pathways of emplacement in Halle were not confined to small businesses. People of migrant background participated in many other

forms of city-making, including the forging of local and transnational familial, religious, social and cultural ties not confined to ethnic relations (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2008; Glick Schiller et al., 2006). However, migrant small businesses were visible as well as significant in the city centre space in the 15 years after German reunification. Migrants from Vietnam, Nigeria, Ghana, Turkey, Greece, India, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Sudan and Azerbaijan initiated or were employed in these businesses. In all cases we observed, the networks upon which these businesses were built were composed of people from multiple backgrounds, both migrant and non-migrant. Often spouses native to Germany became partners in a business.

Migrant owned businesses were significant within the specific period of the research for several reasons. As we have indicated, city leaders publicly recognised migrant entrepreneurs as contributors to Halle's regeneration. Migrant businesses filled city centre shopfronts that otherwise would have been empty. Our 2001 survey identified 75 businesses that had migrant workers or owners within several city centre streets. Although only 4% of the population of the city had migrant backgrounds, 12% of the businesses in the sample were owned or operated by migrants.

Migrant businesses provided affordable, needed goods to local residents. They provided a significant proportion of the inexpensive fast food and fresh produce available in the city for at least fifteen years after reunification. Migrant businesses supplied low-cost fruit, vegetables and staples such as milk, bread and salt, inexpensive clothing and household items. These goods were particularly welcome in a period in which local Germans faced job losses and displacement from managerial positions and skilled work. Local people were confronted with lowered living standards, the diminution of savings accounts when the West German deutsche mark replaced the currency of the German Democratic Republic, and later rising prices when the euro replaced the deutsche mark.

At the time of unification and the reintroduction of a local capitalist economy, migrants were able to compete with natives, who did not have much commercial experience or access to wholesale networks. Moreover, German policy in the region at that time allowed migrants to obtain permanent residency, if they opened a business. This was true in other eastern German cities but Halle had its own specific opportunity structures including a politically progressive leadership that sponsored migrant friendly policies such as city centre housing for asylum seekers and free German lessons. As a result Halle attracted Kurdish refugees without entrepreneurial backgrounds but with access to commercial networks (mostly in nearby Berlin), former guest workers from Vietnam with professional educations and migrants from West Africa with some history of small scale trading in Africa.

Living economic embeddedness in a globally restructuring city

We offer several ethnographic examples to illustrate the ways that changing opportunity structures, which are produced by restructuring and urban narratives,

are significant for an analysis of entrepreneurial emplacement as a form of daily practices of network building and sociality that are not configured by the ethnic background of the actors. We begin with a brief description of Madame Flora's[8] Emporium and two other businesses that in Germany are often labelled 'Afro-shops' because of all the migrant businesses, at first glance, these seem to be the most ethnic. However, an examination of the histories and customer base of these shops makes it clear that though commonly labelled Afro-shops in Europe, these businesses cannot be understood as ethnic enterprises. These owners drew on both ethnic and non-ethnic ties to build their businesses, as did the other migrant entrepreneurs in our research.

Arriving from Ghana as an asylum seeker, Flora was able to gain permanent legal status through opening the first 'Afro-shop' in Halle. In finding her way through the bureaucratic procedures necessary to open a legal business Flora was assisted by her 'best friend', a women migrant from Russia who spoke German. Flora soon expanded her multilingual competencies to include some German. Her business was located on the periphery of the city's redeveloped area and in the vicinity of run down housing blocks and the sites of abandoned or demolished factories. From conversations with Madame Flora, as well as participant observation in the shop, it soon became clear that her business served not only African asylum seekers and refugees but also local residents of the neighbourhood.

Flora skilfully marketed to her various clienteles. Whilst there were virtually no other Ghanaians in Halle, she sold food products, frozen fish, male and female beauty products and telephone calling cards that were familiar to customers from a range of other African countries including Nigeria, Congo and Mozambique. Madame Flora served the needs of her impoverished German customers for beer, soft drinks, cigarettes and snacks, having situated her shop in an area where there were no other outlets for such products. In the front part of the shop, a migrant from Nigeria sold hip-hop fashions produced in Asia. The back-room of her shop served as a meeting place where young men from diverse African countries could purchase cooked food and exchange information about how to settle in the city and further develop their network connections to cities throughout Europe and North America.

The second 'Afro shop' we visited was a telephone-calling shop, owned by a migrant from Nigeria and his wife from Halle. They identified their business as Christian rather than African. The third business owned by migrants from Africa followed the business strategy adopted by Madame Flora of supplying cooked food to African migrants and beverages and cigarettes to customers of various backgrounds in the local neighbourhood. This shop owner was less successful than Flora in this strategy because there were more sources of food and drink close at hand until late in the evening.

Most migrant businesses in Halle provided products needed by natives and migrants alike. Their supply chains made use of regional wholesale suppliers, often accessed through connections with people of multiple migrant backgrounds.

Entrepreneurial concerns rather than ethnicity regulated their relations to and with suppliers. For example, the shops and restaurants owned by migrants of Vietnamese background had access to Vietnamese wholesale sources in Leipzig, 20 miles away. However, clothing and inexpensive manufactured goods in their shops were also part of commodity and distribution chains that extended to China. This supply chain was also used by the African migrant who sold clothing from Flora's shop, and another African migrant who opened a branch of his Berlin based business in the city centre, where he sold baggy jeans and shorts, sweat shirts and other African-American men's fashions to local youth.

In general, shops selling inexpensive clothing and household goods as well as fast food restaurants, carryouts and *imbiss* (kiosks), which were set up in mobile trailers on empty lots or unused land, were often identified with ethnic labels by the city's inhabitants even though they were organised to utilise the most expedient supply chains and as broad a customer base as possible. Fruit and vegetable and '*donner*' (kebob) businesses were publicly identified in Halle as 'Kurdish,' (although in German cities such as Berlin they might be identified as Turkish) and in at least one instance included workers from Azerbaijan. Shops labelled 'Vietnamese' included fruit and vegetable as well as 'textile' shops that sold inexpensive clothing and gift items.

It is noteworthy that these restaurants and food shops were not of the type highlighted in discussions of the cosmopolitan city and its broad array of ethnic culinary treats and exotic items of clothing and décor. These were shops that had become part of the provision of inexpensive foods and clothing to the unemployed or poorly paid local German population.

Tracing the path through which migrants from Vietnam began to play a role as shopkeepers in Halle reveals the mutuality of interests that emerged between the local city leadership striving to competitively improve the national and global positioning of their city and migrants who generally chose to have a public presence as business people rather than as members of an 'ethnic community'. A core of the migrants who ran small clothing shops, fruit and vegetable shops, and restaurants in Halle had been professionals or students in Halle in the GDR period. After a period of uncertainty immediately after unification, they were allowed to stay if they opened small businesses. These migrants' transnational networks and family ties simultaneously played a role in these migrants' efforts to succeed as locally based entrepreneurs and in the initial efforts of city leaders to redevelop the city's commercial sector. These connections and the subsequent business sector upon which they were built also helped to recruit migrants into a city generally seen as unwelcoming to foreigners.

Phuong Schmidt's history is illustrative. Trained in law and pedagogy in Hanoi, and the child of a university professor, she came to Halle after unification to visit her sister who had a university degree but had already established a clothing shop. This sister used distribution networks that stretched from nearby Leipzig back to China, the source of many of the inexpensive items sold in the shop. Through a Vietnamese woman who had originally studied in an elite graduate program in

Halle, Phuong then met Bernd, her future husband, who was native to the city and to Germany. Their courtship took place in the meetings and conferences of an Esperanto club that they both had joined.

Bernd was unable to find a job in the depressed local economy so the couple decided to open a women's clothing shop. Bernd and Phuong drew on her sister and brother-in-law's entrepreneurial experience and networks and a loan from Bernd's father, who had some savings. The shop also provided part-time employment for an experienced German shop assistant. Through her marriage and her business, Phuong started to identify with Halle and Germany, as well as with Hanoi and Vietnam. She said that she 'felt like a German' because Halle was her 'second home.' She maintained strong family ties in Vietnam.

Phuong's example of an emplacement that extends to an identity not only with her city of settlement but the nation-state through the dual pathways of business ownership and inter-marriage cannot be said to be typical of migrants of Vietnamese background or other migrants in Halle. She is also not unique. Among the 22 business owners we interviewed in the course of the research, four told us about inter-marriages. Nor is Phuong's example of hiring a German worker unusual. We found German workers as employees in businesses owned by people of Nigerian, Vietnamese and Indian backgrounds. As city leaders noted, some people of migrant backgrounds were providing employment for local unemployed people of German backgrounds.

These German employees expressed varying kinds of relationships with their employers. One young woman who worked in an Indian *imbiss* situated in the city's central market place explained that her relationship to the Indian owner preceded her employment. She said,

> I often went to (the restaurant in Halle that he owns) with a friend of mine. It's like a big family there! We sat all together and talked. The boss – everybody calls him Harry – is very friendly to me. He often talks to me and hugs me and so on.

Not all relationships to employers were so cordial but even the most anti-migrant of the employees of German origin, a rather angry middle-aged woman who worked in a telecafe located near the central market place, exempted her Indian born boss and all those of Indian background from her condemnation of 'foreigners'.

Structural forces, changing times and business failure

Not all migrant businesses were able to survive in Halle. Those businesses that did not provide the necessities of daily life had the most difficulty surviving, particularly when the city faced hard times as a result of the downturns of the global economy after the bursting of the hi-tech bubble in 2000. Detailing the struggles of these businesses makes clear that their failure was not a reflection of migrants' cultural difference but of the on-going restructuring of the city economy within

global economic downturns. In this conjuncture, city developers in Halle with German and EU funding sought to regenerate the city centre in ways that primarily benefited large-scale international chains and real estate and construction interests.

An examination of two business failures in our sample of migrant businesses, Elite Foods and Beautiful Dream Gifts, which both were positioned to sell to an upscale cosmopolitan customer base rather than to the urban poor can clarify these points. The fate of these businesses paralleled that of a city centre non-migrant-owned business that sold upscale gifts from craftspeople located around the world and fashions crafted locally by people of German backgrounds.

Elite Food was owned by Helga, a German woman married to Zaher, a Turkish man. It is important to note, in terms of assessing the relationships between migrant-owned businesses and the local structural context of Halle, that although his German was not fluent, Zaher, through his marriage to Helga, was well incorporated into the local political and social structure. Helga, a native with a fierce love of her city, had extensive local social networks. These became publically visible when many years after their relationship began, the couple decided to legally marry and the wedding guests included city officials.

Helga and Zaher located their shop on a section of a street in the city centre set aside as an urban pedestrian mall and dedicated by urban planners as the 'high street' of the city. However, when our research began in 2001 the most desirable section of the street had five migrant owned shops: two selling inexpensive clothing and cheap goods and an ice cream cone stand. In contrast to these businesses, Elite Foods seemed to meet the up-scale aspirations of the city planners. It featured the type of expensive imported fruits, olives and candies sought by consumers who desired high-end commodities. Some of these were Turkish but of a quality and price not accessible to the poor of the city.

The second elite-oriented migrant business in our sample was Beautiful Dream Gifts, a shop filled with African jewellery and art that the shop owner wished to market to consumers who sought to validate their cosmopolitan tastes through such purchases. Located near to the centre, the shop's interior and merchandise, and even wrapping paper, were designed to cater to this elite market. Beautiful Dream Gifts was owned by Evelyn, a woman from Nigeria and her husband Stephan, a retired businessman who was of German ancestry and grew up in a neighbouring village.

Unfortunately, at the turn of the millennium, businesses in Halle faced a global economic downturn as well as the price inflation that accompanied the conversion from German currency to the euro. In this climate, it was increasingly difficult for small businesses to compete with well-capitalised corporate owned businesses for the custom of a diminished number of upscale consumers in Halle. This situation was made more difficult when Halle developers, interested in catering to a high-end market, sought to do so through a second wave of urban regeneration that placed national and international conglomerates in the shopfronts of the city centre.

While Helga and Zaher held onto their valuable corner high street location for a few years after the downturn, eventually they were unable to compete with a food market set up in an upscale department shop, which was located just down the

street and directly on the market square. Concurrently, their profit margin was destroyed by the currency conversion, which almost doubled wholesale prices in the region at a time when their customer base would not support higher retail prices. Meanwhile, many migrant businesses in the city centre that had been selling inexpensive goods found new locations with cheaper rents on the periphery of the city but Elite Foods and Beautiful Dreams, poised to market to Halle's new cosmopolitans and requiring a central location, went out of business.

In the last days of their gift shop, Evelyn and Stephan sought to find new markets by participating in what they thought was an open-air crafts fair. To Evelyn's dismay, when they arrived they found that the event was funded by an organisation external to the city, which sought migrant integration through multiculturalism and intercultural understanding. The few small migrant organisations in Halle – generally active only at such events – and some migrant families had been contacted to display goods, foods or crafts such as hair braiding that were seen as ethnic and exotic. Evelyn was discomforted by such marketing because she did not want to position her business or self within an ethnic niche and vowed no further participation in such events.

Conclusion

Several points are crucial in understanding the relationship between the efforts of Halle's leaders to reposition and re-empower the city and the efforts of migrants to secure emplacement in the city through small businesses. These points all contribute to an analytical perspective that extends beyond the ethnic lens. None of these businesses exclusively served customers of the shopowners' own ethnicity or even an migrant customer base. Most of the clothing shops, fruit and vegetable stands, carryout kiosks, and fast food restaurants served natives and migrants alike and given the demographics of the city, most of their customers could be identified as 'German'. None relied solely on the same or single ethnicity supply chains. Many had workers or co-owners who were natives of Germany.

Unlike many other cities, for a period of at least 15 years small businesses provided a particularly welcoming economic niche for migrants in Halle. Migrants could successfully compete *not* because they arrived with an entrepreneurial culture or past experience but because local people also did not have such skills and the city needed small businesses to fill its empty city centre shopfronts. In this context, the political, economic and social leadership of Halle were supportive of migrant businesses and saw them as assisting the city's efforts to reposition itself after German unification and deindustrialisation. That is to say migrants' emplacement in Halle through businesses was shaped by the positioning of the city at a particular period of time and within a situation shaped by political and economic forces in Germany, Europe and globally.

Those businesses that failed did so not because of the cultural differences of their owners or workers but because of the changing global, national and local processes of restructuring. As a result of these rapid changes, businesses that could flourish

shortly after German reunification might be unsustainable in the economic climate of the following decades. It is important to note that in the same period many of the businesses owned or franchised by international chains also failed, prey to larger forces and the poverty of a large proportion of the population. Some of the migrant owned businesses that served this impoverished population persisted, either in their original locations or elsewhere in the city. Hence, to understand the success or failures of migrant businesses it is not enough to speak of the everyday practices of urban people and the presence or absence of ethnic categorisation. These practices and these categorisations reflect, are shaped by and in turn contribute to, the constitutions of the local, national and transnational within uneven hierarchies of power. Such a perspective provides new ways to approach the issue of migrant emplacement.

At the same time, the on-going regeneration of the city centre proved a threat to some migrant businesses. Many but not all were pushed out of the city centre when shopfronts were rebuilt and rents raised in an area of the city designated for further redevelopment. Meanwhile the telephone-calling shops were displaced by the growth of mobile phone industry and the availability of mobile phone networks throughout the world. Depending on the relative political, economic and cultural positioning of the city and its response to the global neoliberal agenda, migrant businesses can play different roles at different times not only in terms of the emplacement of migrants in the city but also in terms of the efforts of the city to shape itself for competition within a global market. Migrant retail businesses may revitalise urban areas from which other entrepreneurs have withdrawn. They may provide needed goods and services that are not being supplied by other means including food and services to the native population whose quality of life would be poorer, or cost of living higher, without migrant businesses.

City developers and policy makers should recognise people of migrant background not as actors confined to and representing a niche of ethnic diversity but as active agents of neoliberal urban regeneration. As such, they may in particular contexts of redevelopment open up ethnically framed business. However, in all cases, and often within networks of emplacement that are not visible through an ethnic lens, they participate in the reshaping of urban fortunes and in the repositioning of the city. As participants in such processes, people of migrant background may advocate and strengthen neoliberal discourses that legitimate growing social and economic inequalities. Or as they confront these inequalities and the displacements and insecurities that accompany them, people of migrant background may join movements for justice and against various forms of structural adjustment.

As the editors of this special issue note, to understand people of migrant background scholars need to do more than critique the ethnic lens. In response, we have offered an analytical framework that moves beyond a 'view from below' that remains confined by descriptions of the 'everyday' practices. This framework facilitates examination of the dynamics between migrants and situated networked institutions of power. Such an examination will make clear that migrants do not

live in a world apart but are shaped by and contribute to the processes through which globe encircling institutions, networks and struggles become emplaced in time and space.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. In the literature on entrepreneurs, people of migrant backgrounds are referred to as immigrants. This causes difficulties since many others without permission to legally remain are also important actors in city-making processes. To address this problem we use the term migrant to refer to all those who cross international borders. We also recognise that this usage is also problematic since it renders invisible and unproblematic the mobility of all those who move within the nation-state.
2. The use of the phrase 'unsung heroes' by CLIP responds to and reinforces this description of migrant business people by *Business Week* in 2000.
3. Without comparative material from other cities, it is not possible to specify the role and significance of various factors within local processes of incorporation and transnational connection (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2009, 2011b).
4. Estimates of Halle's shrinkage are complicated by the fact that after unification, the city of Halle incorporated near-by Halle Neustadt.
5. The statistics in Halle did not record as foreigners people from the former Soviet Union who either claimed German ancestry or who were Jewish (and migrated under a special immigration provision). They also did not count asylum seekers or the undocumented. Consequently, the 4% figure is our estimate based on taking these other migrant streams into consideration.
6. These are pre-accession numbers and those from the EU were primarily from Italy and Greece. Bosnians and Poles were among the non-EU migrants at the time of the study.
7. In point of fact, unlike many of its neighbouring cities, Halle also had a vibrant anti-racist music scene and a coalition of mainstream organisations committed to standing up to racism.
8. All names are pseudonyms in keeping with the university policies of confidentiality.

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