

Introduction: Re-positioning migrant entrepreneurs: A situated and relational approach to practices and policies

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Abstract

In 2024, international migrants numbered 304 million, nearly double the 1990 figure, emphasising the urgency of understanding migrant entrepreneurship in a global context. While much scholarship acknowledges individual traits such as cultural orientation, human capital or risk tolerance, it often assumes the neutrality of the institutional and political systems migrants must navigate. This special issue challenges such individualistic framings by foregrounding migration regimes – the political and regulatory processes governing mobility, settlement and economic participation – as central to shaping entrepreneurial opportunities. Across six contributions, the issue critically examines how support systems, policies and institutional practices embed migrant entrepreneurship within structural inequalities. The articles collectively highlight how access to markets, technologies and entrepreneurial ecosystems is mediated by intersectional factors including race, gender, legal status and socio-economic background. Rather than celebrating migrant resilience or focusing narrowly on venture outcomes, the articles explore how institutional intermediaries, support programs and policy environments both enable and constrain entrepreneurial possibilities. By situating migrant entrepreneurship within broader socio-political and regulatory contexts, the special issue reorients the field away from overly individualistic narratives and toward structurally informed perspectives. In doing so, it advances theoretical coherence, highlights the lived experiences of migrant entrepreneurs and provides policy-relevant insights for designing support initiatives that recognise and address systemic inequalities.

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Introduction: Re-positioning migrant entrepreneurs: A situated and relational approach to practices and policies

In 2024, the global number of international migrants reached 304 million – almost double the figure from 1990 (United Nations, 2025). The cross-border movement of migrants, their presence or liminality within host territories and their connections to countries of origin or other locations represent areas of growing relevance and research interest in the fields of entrepreneurship and small business management. Individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, bringing with them varied entrepreneurial norms and practices, can offer multiple approaches to identifying and exploiting opportunities, mobilising resources and developing business strategies (Guercini et al., 2017; Kloosterman et al., 1999). At the same time, migrant entrepreneurs may lack historical roots and emotional ties to the host country, exhibiting varying degrees of embeddedness in local and transnational networks – thus affecting their access to markets and technologies (Honig, 2020). Migrant entrepreneurs continue to face systematic exclusions, lower success rates and barriers that native-born entrepreneurs rarely encounter. Rath and Swagerman's (2016) comprehensive study of European cities found ethnic entrepreneurship promotion was 'sometimes ambitious, mostly absent, rarely addressing structural features'. The concept of the 'super immigrant entrepreneur', often promoted with Silicon Valley rhetoric is often misplaced, while many immigration policies do more harm than good (Naudé et al., 2017). The gap between policy promises and experience reveals a fundamental problem in how institutions shape and constrain migrant entrepreneurial possibilities.

Much migrant entrepreneurship literature is dominated by approaches that examine migrant characteristics (cultural traits, human capital or risk tolerance) while treating the systems they navigate as largely neutral (Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp, 2009; Bolzani, 2020; Ram et al., 2017). Recent systematic reviews reveal persistent theoretical fragmentation, with studies focused on individual outcomes rather than institutional arrangements (Lång et al., 2025; Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021). This focus treats migrants as the variable that needs explaining while the systems they navigate remain largely unexamined. Simultaneously, governments belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) wrestling with ageing and shrinking populations are tempted to view migration, frequently precipitated by inequality, war and climate change, with narratives extolling the role of migrant entrepreneurship (Acs and Szerb, 2007). Numerous pre-incubators, incubators, accelerators and other business or entrepreneurship support organisations have launched programmes, schemes and initiatives aimed at fostering the start-up and growth of migrant-led enterprises (David and Terstriep, 2025; Harima et al., 2019; Solano et al., 2019), often targeting specific groups based on ethnicity, legal status or business type (Nafari et al., 2024; Serpente et al., 2024).

Reviewing the articles in this special issue, we conclude that neither a focus on individual characteristics, nor isolated support mechanisms such as incubation and startup schemes capture the complexity of migration regimes – complex political and regulatory processes governing mobility, settlement and economic participation (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Honig, 2020). Much of the prevailing discourse – centred on resilience, market participation and self-initiative – tends to overlook the structural constraints, emotional burdens and complex institutional landscapes that migrant entrepreneurs must navigate. Patterns of access to and inclusion within entrepreneurial

ecosystems remain underexplored in the literature, particularly when examined alongside intersectional factors such as socio-economic background, gender, race, ethnicity and other characteristics (Bolzani and Mizzau, 2019; Neumeyer et al., 2019). This special issue challenges dominant individualistic approaches by examining how support systems themselves shape entrepreneurial opportunities. The articles featured move beyond individual explanations to investigate how political and regulatory processes, support policies and enacted practices embed migrant entrepreneurship within structural inequalities across different national contexts. Rather than focusing narrowly on the characteristics and decisions of migrant entrepreneurs, or the dynamics and outcomes of their ventures, this special issue aims to broaden the theoretical and empirical lens to encompass the complex political and regulatory processes, support policies and enacted practices that shape and embed migrant entrepreneurship around the world. These six articles critically reorient the conversation by offering grounded, context-specific perspectives that emphasise migrant entrepreneur's embeddedness in structural inequalities, their navigation of institutional arrangements, the effects of (dis)connectedness and trauma within entrepreneurial ecosystems, and the role of institutional intermediaries in designing effective support initiatives. Table 1 provides a summary of each article.

In the following, we discuss how this special issue opens new pathways for research, policy and practice that are context-sensitive, inclusive and forward-looking. Collectively, the contributions extend the theoretical, empirical and practical boundaries of migrant entrepreneurship research. As global migration continues to shape societies and economies, the insights offered here are not only timely – they are essential.

Synthesis of contributions

As depicted in Table 1, the six selected articles challenge three assumptions in migrant entrepreneurship research and policy. First, they reject the notion that entrepreneurial challenges stem primarily from migrant characteristics rather than institutional arrangements. Second, they expose how support systems that claim neutrality actually reproduce systematic exclusions. Third, they reveal that seemingly separate national contexts share remarkably similar patterns of structural disadvantage, suggesting these are not isolated problems but manifestations of broader institutional logics.

Institutional complexity across contexts

Despite spanning five countries with distinct economic and political systems, the articles reveal strikingly similar institutional complexities faced by migrant entrepreneurs. Barrios et al. (2025) document how Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Colombia face 'nested systems of formal and informal constraints' that create multiple institutional voids across labour, capital and product markets. Meanwhile, Peprah et al. (2025) show how migrant entrepreneurs in Ghana encounter parallel challenges through policy voids and 'entrepreneurial apprehension' that stem from systematic exclusion rather than individual risk aversion. David et al. (2025) identify five forms of disconnectedness within the German entrepreneurial ecosystem that mirrors the institutional fragmentation found in other contexts. This convergence across different national settings suggests that institutional complexity is not an accident of policy failures but a structural feature of how migration and entrepreneurship intersect. The articles collectively demonstrate that migrants face what Barrios et al. (2025) term 'institutional misalignments' between home and host countries that create ongoing disadvantages that few individual entrepreneurs can overcome alone. These misalignments operate across multiple domains simultaneously, from credential recognition to banking

Table I. Summaries of the articles in the special issue.

Authors	Title	Summary
Barrios, A., Camacho, S., & Martin-Shields, C.	Institutional voids, misalignments and workarounds: the role of intermediaries for forced migrant entrepreneurship	This study explores how forced migrant entrepreneurs navigate institutional challenges when establishing businesses in host countries, focusing on Venezuelans in Colombia. Drawing on institutional theory, the authors identify multiple institutional voids and misalignments between the migrants' home and host countries across labour, capital and product markets. These barriers create a nested system of formal and informal constraints that limit migrants' entrepreneurial capacity. To overcome these, migrants adopt various workaround strategies, including abiding by, evading or exiting from certain institutional arrangements. The study highlights the role of institutional intermediaries – both mission-oriented (e.g. government agencies, NGOs) and non-mission-oriented (e.g. digital platforms, migrant communities) – in supporting these efforts. These actors help bridge institutional gaps and correct misalignments by providing certification, training, networks and informal alternatives. The research advances theory by incorporating home-country institutional influences into migrant entrepreneurship, categorising workaround strategies and identifying emerging forms of support. It also underscores the need for tailored, cross-sector policy interventions to address the complex, layered institutional environments that forced migrants face.
David, A., Terstriep, J., & Freiling, J.	Understanding the nuances of (dis)connectedness of migrant entrepreneurs within entrepreneurial ecosystems	This study investigates how migrant entrepreneurs engage with entrepreneurial ecosystems, with a particular focus on the experience of disconnectedness. Drawing on interviews with 23 migrant entrepreneurs in a German city, the research challenges the assumption that entrepreneurial ecosystems inherently promote inclusion and support. Instead, it identifies five interrelated forms of disconnectedness – multiple segregations, lack of representation, alienation, resource voids and discrimination – that collectively hinder migrant the full integration of migrant entrepreneurs, and their success, within these systems. Disconnectedness is framed not merely as the absence of connection, but as a distinct condition shaped by systemic biases, societal prejudices and institutional voids. This condition influences strategic decisions, prompting some entrepreneurs to operate in parallel structures, rely heavily on diaspora networks or disengage from the local ecosystem altogether. The study calls for more transparent and inclusive outreach, targeted support measures and greater representation of migrant entrepreneurs in policy-making processes – efforts that acknowledge their lived experiences and aim to address structural inequalities.
Nafari, J., & Ruebottom, T.	A trauma-informed approach to refugee entrepreneurship support	This article addresses a critical gap in refugee entrepreneurship support: the lack of attention to trauma and mental health. Challenging resilience-based paradigms, the authors argue that unaddressed trauma can hinder entrepreneurial success and increase the risk of re-traumatisation. Drawing on the literature on trauma-informed care, the study proposes a novel framework centred on three components: temporal reorientation, identity reconstruction and prevention of re-traumatisation. Temporal reorientation helps refugees shift from trauma-induced time disintegration to a present-focused and future-oriented mindset through mindfulness and bridging techniques. Identity reconstruction supports the development of a coherent entrepreneurial identity via narrative work and community-based belonging. Preventing re-traumatisation requires safe, culturally sensitive environments that reduce power imbalances and foster trust and empowerment. The framework offers practical and policy-relevant guidance for entrepreneurship support providers. Programs should adopt trauma-informed principles – such as safety, cultural responsiveness, peer support and empowerment – and embed them through staff training, flexible timelines and collaborative mentoring. Culturally attuned support systems that incorporate non-verbal communication and community representation can reduce emotional distress and enhance inclusion. By integrating trauma-awareness into entrepreneurship programs, service providers can promote not only business success but also psychological healing and long-term integration for refugee entrepreneurs.

(Continued)

Table I. (Continued)

Authors	Title	Summary
Ozgoren, C., Karatas-Ozkan, M., Özbilgin, M., Kamasak, R., Sayin, E., & Vassilopoulou, J.	Refugee entrepreneurs: Typologies of emancipation and impact	This article explores the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurship by examining the experiences of 33 Syrian refugees in Turkey. Moving beyond dominant narratives of survival and resilience, the authors adopt an emancipation lens to understand how entrepreneurial activity can help refugees transform their circumstances and challenge structural constraints. Emancipation is conceptualised as multidimensional – economic, structural, behavioural, cognitive and emotional – and is achieved through mechanisms such as seeking autonomy and building entrepreneurial capacity. The authors propose a typology of emancipation: self-made (driven by resourcefulness despite limited support), political (enabled by initial government or network assistance), resource-driven (requiring greater social access despite financial assets) and complete emancipation (facilitated by supportive ecosystems). Emancipation emerges from the interplay between individual agency and contextual factors – including political stability, socio-cultural dynamics and legal rights – that shape the entrepreneurial journey. The policy implications emphasise the need to move beyond individual empowerment and address structural barriers. Support strategies must also actively engage host communities to foster inclusion and reduce discrimination. Promoting social solidarity, ensuring legal clarity and investing in long-term integration infrastructure are key to unlocking the collective and transformative potential of refugee entrepreneurship.
Peprah, A.A., Ataroh, B.A., Adegbile, A.S., & Liedong, T.A.	Navigating an environment lacking supportive government policies: The case of migrant entrepreneurs in Ghana	This focus here is upon how migrant entrepreneurs navigate contexts of weak institutional support, focusing on 13 entrepreneurs from various countries operating in Ghana. Unlike much of the existing literature, which assumes supportive host environments, this research explores how migrants cope in systems marked by policy voids, nationalistic support frameworks and anti-immigration sentiment. These conditions foster a sense of entrepreneurial apprehension, characterised by social and political risks such as market exclusion, discrimination and threats of expulsion. In the absence of formal support, entrepreneurs adopt informal coping strategies: (a) spiritualism, drawing strength from religious beliefs; (b) localisation, embracing local cultural norms and forming business partnerships; (c) socialities, leveraging networks from both host and home countries; and (d) political connections, particularly at the local level, to mitigate risk and gain legitimacy. These strategies lead to varying outcomes: some entrepreneurs remain and stabilise in Ghana, others exit due to persistent adversity and some return to their home countries to reinvest accumulated capital. The policy implications highlight the consequences of institutional neglect and the risks it imposes on migrant entrepreneurs. While their resilience is notable, it is largely driven by the absence of formal support. Policymakers must address systemic exclusion, recognise the role of local political dynamics and create inclusive institutions that view migrants not as threats, but as contributors to national development.
Stoyanov, S., & Stoyanova, V.	Mentors as identity work orchestrators: Facilitating migrant entrepreneurs' integration abroad	Migrant entrepreneurs face challenges of foreignness, including unfamiliarity, relational challenges and discrimination hazards. This paper explores the potential of mentoring to facilitate their integration into the host country, drawing on interviews with 14 mentor-mentee pairs involving Eastern European migrant entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom. The study finds that mentors play a key role in orchestrating mentees' identity work – the internal process of developing, negotiating and adapting one's social identity. Mentoring is identified as a dynamic, multi-phase process involving exploration, experimentation and integration. Mentors help mentees articulate their core values, reflect on identity-related challenges and adapt their identities to bridge home and host-country norms. This identity orchestration enables migrant entrepreneurs to navigate social networks, overcome exclusion and achieve deeper integration into entrepreneurial ecosystems. The mentoring process is non-linear and shaped by both mentor guidance and mentee agency. Policy implications include designing tailored, long-term mentorship programs that address identity challenges, encourage cultural competence and acknowledge power asymmetries within mentor-mentee relationships.

requirements to professional licensing, creating what David et al. (2025) identify as systematic 'resource voids' rather than temporary market imperfections.

Intermediaries as active translators, not neutral brokers

These successful submissions reframe how we understand support intermediaries by revealing them as active interpreters rather than neutral service providers. Barrios et al. (2025) show how Colombian NGOs become caught between government requirements, donor expectations and entrepreneur needs, resulting in what they term a 'mimicry problem' where organisations default to measurable outputs rather than meaningful support. Similarly, Stoyanov and Stoyanova (2025) demonstrate how mentors in the United Kingdom function as 'identity work orchestrators' who actively shape how migrant entrepreneurs understand themselves and their possibilities rather than simply providing technical business advice. Nafari and Ruebottom (2025) expose perhaps the most egregious translation failure by showing how standard business support approaches can re-traumatise refugee entrepreneurs by ignoring their psychological and social needs. Their trauma-informed framework reveals how seemingly neutral programme design choices about timelines, evaluation methods and mentor training embed assumptions about legitimate entrepreneurship that systematically exclude those who do not conform to dominant norms. These findings echo Ozgoren et al.'s (2025) analysis of how Turkish support organisations apply individualistic business models to Syrian refugees operating within communal moral economies, creating misalignments that undermine both individual and collective goals.

From individual deficits to structural reproduction

The special issue redirects attention from individual traits to the structural mechanisms that reproduce inequality. Rather than asking why some migrants struggle as entrepreneurs, they examine how support systems themselves generate the very barriers they claim to dismantle. David et al. (2025) challenge prevailing ecosystem assumptions, showing how 'multiple segregations', 'lack of representation' and systemic 'discrimination' are embedded in institutional design rather than driven solely by individual prejudice. Their notion of disconnectedness reframes entrepreneurial obstacles as structural conditions, not personal shortcomings. This structural analysis becomes particularly powerful when examining intersectional disadvantages. Peprah et al. (2025) reveal how anti-immigration sentiment in Ghana intersects with economic nationalism to create compounded exclusions that affect different migrant groups differently based on their countries of origin, business sectors and social connections. Ozgoren et al. (2025) demonstrate how refugee status compounds other forms of marginalisation, requiring what they term 'emancipatory' approaches that address structural constraints rather than individual empowerment alone.

The following analysis builds on these collective insights to examine how race-neutral policies produce racialised outcomes, how fragmented ecosystems create intersectional exclusion, and how intermediaries operate under neutrality claims while actively reproducing structural disadvantages. These are not separate problems but interconnected manifestations of deeper institutional logics that require coordinated rather than piecemeal responses.

Three critical problems

Race-neutral policies, racialised outcomes

The most persistent problem in migrant entrepreneurship support lies not in overt discrimination but in policies that claim neutrality while systematically excluding certain groups. This

phenomenon, which Ray (2019) terms 'racialised decoupling', operates through seemingly neutral requirements that have race-specific outcomes. Requirements like pristine credit histories, large collateral or visas with work authorisation end up disproportionately excluding entrepreneurs of colour and immigrants, creating an illusion of objectivity while perpetuating systemic biases. This is particularly egregious as the majority of migrants to OECD countries reflect these racialised groups (Scarpa et al., 2021).

This special issue reveals how this operates across different institutional domains. Barrios et al.'s study of Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Colombia exposes how visitor visas prevent formal contract signing with Colombian companies, pushing migrants toward informal markets where trust deficits compound their disadvantage. Similarly, banking requirements for local identification and tangible collateral systematically exclude migrants who lack property or stable employment history, regardless of their business acumen or potential. Contemporary research confirms these patterns across institutional settings. Studies controlling for creditworthiness show that ethnic minority entrepreneurs face higher rejection rates and more scrutiny from lenders (Fairlie et al., 2022). Bartlett et al. (2022) documented racial discrimination in both face-to-face and algorithmic lending, finding that Black and Latino applicants receive higher rejection rates and pay race premiums on interest rates. Recent investigations reveal that machine learning systems can amplify existing discrimination, with credit scoring algorithms showing systematic disparities against minority entrepreneurs even when controlling for traditional risk factors (Bartlett et al., 2022; Fuster et al., 2022).

Migration regimes create transnational institutional misalignments that few individual entrepreneurs can overcome alone. The transnational dimension adds complexity through credential recognition systems that require expensive processes favouring those with resources to navigate bureaucratic requirements (Kreimer, 2024). Language proficiency tests may privilege particular forms of English, contributing to 'translingual discrimination' (Dovchin, 2022) against skilled migrants. Even digital platforms, together with any other tool making decisions informed by machine learning algorithms, can embed biases that systematically discriminate based on personal or business characteristics (Lee et al., 2021). Systemic solutions require moving beyond race-neutral approaches to acknowledge how entrepreneurship unfolds in contexts marked by structural inequality. Policies should address the institutional arrangements that shape entrepreneurial possibilities before migrants even encounter support services.

Fragmented ecosystems and intersectional exclusion

Entrepreneurial ecosystems fragment along lines of privilege, creating disconnected worlds of opportunity that reflect broader social hierarchies. The papers reveal how multiple forms of disconnectedness operate simultaneously, creating what David et al. identify as five interrelated forms: multiple segregations, lack of representation, alienation, resource voids and discrimination. The fragmenting becomes particularly evident when examining intersectional disadvantages. Martinez Dy et al.'s (2024) quantitative analysis of UK self-employment reveals that women from Black and minority ethnic working-class backgrounds face compounded entrepreneurial penalties, becoming 'the subset of the population most likely to face the most challenging entrepreneurial conditions' (p. 1051). This intersectional penalty cannot be understood through single-identity frameworks that treat race, gender and class as separate variables. Collins' (1990) matrix of oppression demonstrates how social structures interlock to generate complex experiences requiring simultaneous rather than additive analysis. Support systems often fail to account for this complexity, defaulting to single-axis frameworks that overlook intersectional experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Programmes targeting 'women entrepreneurs' may inadvertently serve white, middle-class women

while marginalising women of colour who face different barriers (Knight, 2016). An accelerator requiring full-time participation without childcare support effectively excludes many women with caregiving responsibilities, who are disproportionately from working-class and minority backgrounds.

The articles reveal how exclusions operate through ecosystem design rather than individual prejudice. David et al.'s German study shows how entrepreneurial ecosystems create parallel structures where migrant entrepreneurs operate in segregated networks, relying heavily on diaspora connections while remaining disconnected from mainstream opportunities. This reflects differential access to social capital, where bridging and linking capital necessary for scaling businesses remain concentrated within dominant groups. Stoyanov and Stoyanova's research reveals another dimension of fragmentation. Traditional mentoring approaches focus on functional support without understanding complex identity negotiations required for genuine integration. When mentors lack cultural competence or programmes ignore power dynamics, they can inadvertently reinforce rather than bridge cultural divides. Nafari and Ruebottom's trauma-informed framework exposes the most fundamental fragmentation: separating entrepreneurial support from broader well-being concerns. When support systems address only functional business needs while ignoring psychological and social dimensions, they create fragmented experiences that can actually harm rather than help participants.

Racialised intermediaries under neutrality claims

Support intermediaries operate as racialised institutions that encode and reproduce hierarchies while claiming neutrality. Incubators, accelerators, banks and public agencies present themselves as neutral brokers, but critical analysis reveals how these organisations function as sites where racial and social power dynamics are actively reproduced through institutional routines that appear objective while systematically privileging certain groups. Research on algorithmic systems demonstrates how seemingly neutral technical processes can produce disparate impacts that perpetuate existing inequalities (Barocas and Selbst, 2016; Gompers and Kovvali, 2018).

Four critical problems are revealed within the articles regarding how intermediaries operate under neutrality claims. First, evaluation metrics systematically privilege dominant entrepreneurial norms while marginalising alternatives. Barrios et al. show how support organisations prioritise measurable outputs like business plans over sustainable development, creating a 'mimicry problem' where organisations default to seemingly successful models inappropriate for their contexts. Second, intermediaries function as active translators rather than neutral conduits, interpreting policies through their own institutional logics. The Colombian NGOs in Barrios et al.'s study found themselves caught between government requirements, donor expectations and entrepreneur needs, resulting in programmes that prioritised measurable outputs over meaningful support. Third, support provisions often misunderstand the entrepreneurial challenges facing marginalised groups. Stoyanov and Stoyanova's findings reveal how traditional mentoring approaches miss crucial identity work that migrant entrepreneurs must undertake. When mentors focus solely on functional support without understanding complex identity negotiations, they reproduce superficial assistance that fails to address structural barriers. Fourth, digital tools create new gatekeeping forms that appear neutral while embedding algorithmic biases. Platform algorithms convert complex entrepreneurial realities into data points, inevitably involving simplification that may exclude approaches not conforming to platform assumptions. Research reveals how machine learning systems perpetuate existing biases, with credit scoring algorithms showing systematic disparities against minority entrepreneurs (Fuster et al., 2022). Accountability mechanisms compound these problems by focusing on easily quantifiable outcomes rather than addressing how organisational practices

reproduce exclusionary results. When intermediaries can demonstrate impact through simple metrics while avoiding examination of who gets served and how, they maintain legitimacy while perpetuating exclusion. Programme evaluation demonstrates how emphasis on measurable outputs can obscure whether interventions actually address underlying structural barriers (Chen, 2005).

In sum, this research suggests that claims by intermediaries of neutrality often mask their active role in reproducing structural disadvantages. Transformation requires not just better training but fundamental changes to how support organisations conceptualise their role and measure their impact (Kummitha et al., 2025). Critical examination must move beyond individual bias to analyse how organisational structures, funding mechanisms and professional norms embed particular assumptions about legitimate.

Re-positioning migrant entrepreneurs within inequitable structures

Based on the insights emerging from these different contributions, we highlight the need to critically reorient the conversation by reframing migrant entrepreneurship as a set of dynamic practices entailing agentic identity, emotional and institutional work within deeply inequitable systems, unsupportive institutions, discriminatory attitudes and policy voids – which might be inadvertently replicated by the intermediary organisations that are supposed to provide support. In the following, we examine all these critical issues in more detail.

Blind entrepreneurship policies: Neglecting migration regimes and (transnational) structural disadvantage

For decades, the literature about migrant entrepreneurship has discussed specific characteristics of migrants engaged in starting and growing businesses – either focusing on their individual traits, such as culture, ethnic bonds, liability of foreignness, human capital; or on contextual dimensions, such as discrimination or market opportunities (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Kloosterman, 2010; Zhou, 2004). The articles in the special issue push to move the conversation to a wider level of analysis: the role of migration regimes and structural disadvantage at the host-country and transnational level. As shown in the studies by David et al. (2025) and Barrios et al. (2025), migration institutions, linked to policies regulating and legalising international human mobility, have a ripple effect on other institutions affecting every aspect of entrepreneurial life – legality, education, labour, finance, healthcare, housing and product markets. The transnational dimension of these institutions provides a further layer of complexity. As illustrated in the work by Barrios et al. (2025) and Ozgoren et al. (2025), migration regimes often generate misalignments between other home and host country institutions (e.g. lack of recognition for educational credentials) that complicate the efforts of migrant entrepreneurs to access rights and opportunities.

The articles clearly highlight a policy void: policies for entrepreneurship are separated from migration policies, or are set up so as to discounting or being blind to their effects. As shown in the work by Barrios et al. (2025) and Peprah et al. (2025), in these policy blind spots, migrants are pushed toward informal economies and practice a continuous agency-structure balance by abiding, coping, resisting or transforming formal and informal institutions. The authors have not only identified a policy void, but also point out that existing policies are often discriminatory against migrant entrepreneurs – failing to provide a level playing field (Solano, 2023). In some countries, the system of entrepreneurship support might set preferences for native entrepreneurs versus immigrant ones – for instance, by establishing ownership quotas as described by Peprah et al. (2025).

Discriminatory policies as well as informal institutions may nurture negative societal attitudes towards migrants resulting in mistrust and xenophobia.

A final note regards the isomorphism of entrepreneurship policies that promote entrepreneurship as a desirable form of support for migrants. The emergence of entrepreneurship discourse has brought forward a meta-narrative anchored in the neoliberal and free-market capitalist system (Kenny and Scriver, 2012; Nicholls and Teasdale, 2017). It typically fails to address the possibility that entrepreneurship can be compensatory (Honig, 2017, 2018) and rarely a panacea for socio-economic inclusion, leaving unattended the wider structural constraints leaving migrants as subordinate, subjugated, marginalised subjects in host societies.

Fragmented and layered entrepreneurial ecosystems

This special issue expands the insights deriving from previous literature that entrepreneurial ecosystems are not holistic, power-neutral infrastructures, but rather relational webs that might be layered and separated across social clusters forming boundaries along homophily, venture type and type of support institution (Neumeyer et al., 2019). David et al. (2025) illuminates the limitations of entrepreneurial ecosystems, cultural, social or material (Spigel, 2017; Stam and Van de Ven, 2021) that result in an uncoordinated support system providing conflicting signals and bureaucratic complexity. These insights suggest that understanding entrepreneurship ecosystems requires approaches that examine the wider experiences of individual entrepreneurs and business owners as they attempt to integrate into the ecosystem. This highlights the need for including issues such as welfare, training and the interaction of immigration institutions and structures. Thus, previous education, professional experiences, business connections and social and political networks may provide important trajectories through the generation or depletion of baskets of resources and opportunities (David et al., 2025; Ozgoren et al., 2025). Markedly, David et al. (2025) and Nafari and Ruebottom (2025) question whether the cultural and social guidance provided by actors in entrepreneurial ecosystems – in particular policy-makers and intermediary organisations – is one-sided, and therefore, aimed to ‘normalise’ migrant entrepreneurs in the new environment, rather than allowing a bi-directional exchange of values, norms, views and experiences. The experiences of migrant entrepreneurs studied in this special issue not only reflect on the effects of their business activities, but also on their individual well-being, including their emotional or psychological status (see David et al., 2025; Nafari and Ruebottom, 2025; Peprah et al., 2025).

We conclude that there are profound relationships between the embeddedness and connectedness of migrant entrepreneurs with their entrepreneurial ecosystems, highlighting that support systems can exacerbate emotional and psychological stress by ignoring trauma histories, failing to identify challenges and structural marginalisation by ‘siloing’ the entrepreneurial experience without integrating broader well-being or welfare dimensions. The result is an ‘othering’ as foreign subjects that need to be normalised and socialised within the current system, where they are not represented nor have political voice or capital (David et al., 2025; Nafari and Ruebottom, 2025; Stoyanov and Stoyanova, 2025).

The critical gap: Intermediaries and the policy-practice nexus

Notably, this special issue unveils several critical issues that highlight the fundamental role played by institutional intermediaries, which we define as all the organisations involved in implementing the policies and initiatives focused and involving migrant entrepreneurs (e.g. incubators/accelerators, NGOs, funding/investing agencies). In the following, we explore these issues in detail, acknowledging that they are closely linked and dynamic.

Support organisations facing uncertainty about how to help migrant entrepreneurs tend to employ mimetic isomorphism, employing seemingly successful models from elsewhere (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). These dominant norms of 'legitimate' business models privilege high-tech, formalised, growth-oriented entrepreneurship, while sidelining and marginalising informal, necessity or community-based practices and migrant-specific logics (David et al., 2025; Ozgoren et al., 2025). Similarly, many support organisations deploy entrepreneurship support schemes without tailoring to local diversity or considering intersectional challenges (e.g. gender, class and ethnicity). The result is standardised 'one-size-fits-all' entrepreneurship support models (e.g. training and mentoring), which ignore the full person behind the entrepreneur – for instance, displacement and trauma, educational and professional experiences, intersectional experiences – and erase identity, forcing migrants to conform to host-country norms instead of enabling bi-directional exchange (David et al., 2025; Nafari and Ruebottom, 2025; Peprah et al., 2025). The case of refugees in need of a trauma-informed approach, highlighted by Nafari and Ruebottom (2025), is an exemplar of the specific design that support intermediaries should consider adopting. This requires taking into account a more individual, holistic view of the migrant entering the support program. As well, the examination of mentoring by Stoyanov and Stoyanova (2025) illuminates the relational aspects of support programmes: both the supporter (e.g. mentor, incubation professional, and business angel) and the supported entrepreneur have agency, but implicit power relationships in support schemes matter to determine the directionality of advice. Another limitation of the standardised approach to entrepreneurship support is the implementation of evaluation metrics that reward alignment with dominant entrepreneurial norms, thereby privileging certain forms of entrepreneurship while systematically excluding others, and prioritising measurable metrics of outputs (e.g. number of participants to the training programme, number of pitches, number of business plans elaborated, number of startups) rather than sustainable and context-sensitive business development measures (Barrios et al., 2025).

Intermediaries are not neutral actors, but active translators and interpreters of policies through their own institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Their funding dependencies, donor requirements and professional norms shape how policies are translated into practice and programmes are delivered. This translation process, while often well-intentioned, can reproduce the exclusions it seeks to address, especially when outcomes are measured in narrow, quantifiable terms. Barrios et al.' (2025) show how 40 Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Colombia navigated different mission-oriented and non-mission-oriented intermediaries, each translating policy intentions through their own organisational lens. The Colombian government's Temporary Protection Status programme granted legal status but created ripple effects across labour, capital and product markets that intermediaries struggled to coherently address. The result was the implementation of entrepreneurship programmes that prioritised measurable outputs over sustainable business development. David et al. (2025) identify multiple segregations that prevent migrants from accessing the bonding, bridging and linking mechanisms necessary for entrepreneurial success. Discrimination operates not just through individual prejudice but through institutional design that appears neutral while reproducing exclusion.

Support systems often remain largely unaware or insensitive to the structural barriers facing migrant entrepreneurs (Rath and Swagerman, 2016). This lack of awareness reflects how organisations prioritise administrative convenience and funder expectations over entrepreneurial outcomes. We caution that the translation work by intermediaries involves active interpretation, which is not only shaped by wider goals related to business development, social welfare and inclusion, but also by their organisational imperatives – often linked to their own survival and legitimacy. On the ground, the active role of intermediaries as translators is problematic for migrant entrepreneurs, who must navigate fragmented institutional terrains, where each intermediary interpret policy

through its own lens. However, we reason that this situation is also problematic for intermediaries themselves, who are caught between state policies, donor agendas and entrepreneur needs thus, struggling to design consistent support models and to respond systematically. Overall, their initiatives of entrepreneurship promotion risk remaining disconnected and ineffective with respect to social inclusion, as the underlying structural constraints go unaddressed (Ram et al., 2017).

Providing support is more than an individual resource gap-filling exercise. When mentors focus solely on functional support – providing resources, networks and advice – without understanding the complex identity negotiations required for genuine integration, they reproduce superficial forms of assistance that fail to address deeper structural barriers. Stoyanov and Stoyanova's (2025) findings reveal that traditional mentoring approaches often miss the crucial identity work that migrant entrepreneurs must undertake. When intermediaries apply individualistic business models to entrepreneurs operating within communal moral economies, they create fundamental misalignments. Ozgoren et al.'s (2025) research on Syrian refugee entrepreneurs shows how support organisations failed to recognise that entrepreneurship serves collective well-being (e.g. social cohesion or rebuilding home societies) alongside individual goals. We wish to emphasise that these alignment problems are not outcomes of intermediary malicious intent, but normative organisational logics generated by professional standards, organisational structures and funding requirements. Several studies in the special issue pointed out that entrepreneurship support services often lack culturally sensitive and competent staff and mentors, therefore, failing to recognise the diverse identity trajectories of migrant entrepreneurs and tailor training and mentorship (Nafari and Ruebottom, 2025; Stoyanov and Stoyanova, 2025). These assumptions often clash with the social and cultural resources that constitute the primary advantages of migrant entrepreneurs.

Finally, we note the emergence of digital tools (e.g. fintech platforms, algorithmic evaluators) as new gatekeepers. The study by Barrios et al. (2025) documents how a digital financial platform simplified access to payment terminals, creating pathways to alternative formal banking services for entrepreneurs with legal status, demonstrating the potential of technological solutions to address institutional voids. By so doing, this fintech platform converted complex (public) regulatory requirements into (private) algorithmic management. We reason that, while these new intermediaries can create entrepreneurial opportunities, they may also create new forms of exclusion. Digital platforms perform translation work by converting complex entrepreneurial realities into data points and scores amenable to algorithmic processing. This inevitably involves simplification and standardisation that may exclude entrepreneurial approaches that do not conform to platform assumptions about legitimate business practice. For example, platform algorithms assess creditworthiness through data patterns that may systematically undervalue the informal economic activities, cross-border financial flows and activities, and community-based business models characteristic of many migrant enterprises.

Theoretical implications: A call to arms for further research priorities

The published work in this special issue allowed us to reflect deeply on subsequent research challenges in the field of migrant entrepreneurs – inclusive of issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion, which we believe is critical to both entrepreneurship and innovation. In this section, we build on the scholarship provided in this special issue, extending it through a transnational and mixed embeddedness framework (Honig, 2020; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Ram et al., 2022) and in light of our experience with practices in the field of entrepreneurial support (Ratinho et al., 2020) to develop an agenda to continuing studying migrant entrepreneurship.

We note the migrant entrepreneur is not as an isolated economic actor but navigates overlapping institutional, social, emotional and moral domains – situated within a dynamic ecosystem shaped by both structural constraints and enablers. Importantly, we avoid narratives focusing on the heroic individual, emphasising how entrepreneurs are both networked and embedded in their context. Their ecosystem is not structurally neutral but shaped by the macro-political regimes, migration regimes, technological and legal infrastructures and market conditions in their specific locations. The transnational aspect of migrant entrepreneurship also situates entrepreneurs in cross-border social fields enabling access to resources while also imposing constraints due to diverging institutional frameworks in various countries. Migrant entrepreneurs interact with other professionals and representatives of intermediary organisations, not only involved in business-related missions but also in other institutional missions such as welfare, training or housing (e.g. NGOs, incubators/accelerators, universities, banks and investors, religious institutions, ethnic associations). Entrepreneurial opportunities and constraints are co-produced across practices evolving at the intersection of structure and agency.

Institutional frameworks in their home countries profoundly shape how migrants perceive and navigate entrepreneurial opportunities in new settings. Drawing on institutional economics, home-country 'rules of the game' (North, 1990) leave durable imprints on migrants' cognitive schemas, expectations and business practices. These institutional legacies – shaped by formal structures (laws, regulations, enforcement mechanisms) and informal norms (social roles, trust, gender expectations) – create a path-dependent reality in which past experiences constrain or enable future action (David, 1985; Pierson, 2000). When migrants enter a new environment, the degree of institutional congruence or divergence between home and host contexts can either facilitate integration or create friction in entrepreneurial activity. For example, a woman entrepreneur migrating from Saudi Arabia – where institutional and cultural frameworks historically limit women's entrepreneurial agency (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011) – may face a paradox upon arrival in the United Kingdom. While the UK's regulatory and cultural environment may formally offer more gender equality and support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, the institutional distance (Kostova, 1999) between the two systems may produce uncertainty in interpreting and leveraging available resources. The entrepreneur's prior experiences may have instilled strategies for operating in highly restricted or male-mediated systems, making adaptation to a more transparent and egalitarian ecosystem slower and more complex. In contrast, a woman from the United States – where gender equality norms are institutionally embedded in entrepreneurship policy – may find the UK ecosystem institutionally familiar, enabling a smoother transfer of entrepreneurial capital. Similarly, home-country experiences with corruption, weak property rights or opaque regulatory systems can affect how migrants respond to host-country institutions. Entrepreneurs from countries with high corruption levels may be adept at navigating informal networks and circumventing bureaucratic barriers (Williams and Vorley, 2015), but they may initially distrust formal processes in high-transparency settings. Conversely, migrants from countries with robust rule of law and clear legal frameworks may struggle in contexts where informal arrangements dominate, as seen in cases of reverse migration or South–South mobility (Baltar and Icart, 2013). This demonstrates how institutional path dependence – the persistence of home-country logics – interacts with the institutional distance between home and host countries to either facilitate or impede integration into the entrepreneurial environment.

Ultimately, the capacity of migrant entrepreneurs to integrate into new ecosystems depends not only on the resources and opportunities available in the host country but also on how deeply their entrepreneurial orientation and strategies are anchored in home-country institutional realities. The greater the institutional distance – especially in domains such as gender norms, legal certainty, transparency and corruption – the greater the need for institutional learning, adaptation

and sometimes unlearning of ingrained practices (Welter and Smallbone, 2011). Examining the correspondence, or lack thereof, of the impact on home versus destination entrepreneurial ecosystems, represents an important new theoretical opportunity that has typically been overlooked in the literature. Understanding how best to facilitate these transitions through measurement, training and support should yield important enhancements to the field.

From unifying theory to contextual analysis: A variable-based approach

How do we research and support the heterogeneity identified in this special issue? A recent editorial by Bakker and McMullen (2023) calls for the development of a central 'bridging' theory – or set of theories – that can unify research on unconventional entrepreneurs, such as refugees, older founders, disabled entrepreneurs and others operating outside the normative entrepreneurial profile. While their intent to encourage scholarly dialogue across silos is commendable, we argue that the more pressing challenge lies not in the absence of a unifying theoretical framework, but in the lack of clarity about what we mean by *entrepreneurship* itself. While they do not comprehensively define entrepreneurship, they define 'conventional' entrepreneurship as 'those entrepreneurs who possess the traits considered to be in accordance with (local) customs and beliefs, conferring on them the greatest access to the resources required for entrepreneurship' (Bakker and McMullen, 2023: 2). Entrepreneurship is notoriously difficult to define, with conceptions ranging from opportunity recognition and resource mobilisation (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) to broader processes of value creation in economic and social domains (Zahra and Wright, 2011). How does this conventional view reflect the specific pre- and post-migration contexts experienced by so many immigrant entrepreneurs? Without definitional clarity, any bridging theory risks being built on unstable conceptual ground. What is labelled 'unconventional entrepreneurship' may simply be entrepreneurship manifesting in different contexts, by individuals with varied resources, constraints and motivations. If we cannot first agree on what constitutes entrepreneurship – its core processes, boundaries and outcomes – attempts to create overarching theories risk conflating fundamentally different phenomena. Once a shared definition is established, the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial actors becomes a set of variables – rather than separate theoretical categories – to be examined in relation to how entrepreneurship is supported, promoted and studied. For example, differences in gender, migration status, home and host country or age and culture should be treated as contextual and structural factors that influence entrepreneurial processes and outcomes, not as bases for separate theoretical silos. The central research question becomes: *Given this definition of entrepreneurship, how do particular constellations of individual characteristics and contextual conditions interact to enable or constrain entrepreneurial activity?*

The practical implications are equally important. Many entrepreneurship support programmes operate on a 'one size fits all' model, assuming that the same training, financing and networking approaches will work across all populations. Yet, the particular combinations of institutional context, personal experience and market positioning faced by different groups require tailored approaches. Rather than seeking a single bridging theory to cover all unconventional (or 'conventional') entrepreneurs, we should focus on building contextually grounded theoretical and empirical work that can inform differentiated, evidence-based support mechanisms. This approach recognises that the lived realities of a refugee in an urban centre, and a woman operating in a male-dominated industry are not merely variations on a theme, but require distinct policy, programmatic and theoretical responses.

In short, the path toward advancing scholarship and practice in unconventional entrepreneurship, including the issue of migrants, lies less in unifying disparate cases under one overarching theory, and more in clarifying our core definition of entrepreneurship, then systematically

examining how specific contextual variables shape the entrepreneurial process and the support it requires.

Research opportunities in migrant entrepreneurship

This special issue distils research opportunities that have long been overlooked. The contributions show how migrant entrepreneurs navigate the tensions between formal institutions – such as restrictive policies or nationalistic framings – and informal environments shaped by anti-immigration sentiment (Peprah et al., 2025). A recurring theme is the importance of political capital and resources in reducing risk and securing legitimacy. Yet, the role of state power in entrepreneurship remains underexplored. Most work focuses on individual strategies, but less is known about their broader impact upon public laws, policies and programmes. As Ozgoren et al. (2025) demonstrate, individual emancipation can translate into collective outcomes, suggesting the need to move beyond empowerment at the micro level toward addressing structural barriers. We therefore see fertile ground for studies that investigate how migrant collectives mobilise to challenge and reshape institutions. Equally important is understanding the internal power relations within these groups: how representation is organised, how authority is negotiated and how resources are deployed. By shifting the lens from individual to collective action, future research can advance a richer understanding of the intersection between migration, entrepreneurship and institutional change.

Another promising avenue for research is to examine how immigrant entrepreneurs ‘embody’ and transfer the institutions of the countries in which they were socialised (whether host or transit countries). We suggest that these institutional imprints may take a variety of forms, shaping both mental representations and the practical enactment of entrepreneurial behaviour. Future studies could investigate how such imprints influence entrepreneurial trajectories. For instance, exposure to institutions that contradict local ones may trigger cognitive dissonance, resistance to prevailing social norms or experiences of stress and ideological confusion. By contrast, institutions that align with or reinforce the existing schemas and cognition of entrepreneurs may facilitate smoother adaptation, easier access to resources, and, ultimately, greater entrepreneurial success.

Future research should further investigate the mechanisms that disconnect migrant entrepreneurs from entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly by examining their interconnections with broader institutional contexts – such as welfare, training or immigration systems – and the consequences these have for entrepreneurial trajectories and individual well-being in host countries. Another underexplored area is the role of intermediary organisations. In terms of processes, a deeper analysis of how funding dependencies, professional norms and organisational imperatives shape translation practices would extend current debates on institutional intermediation. In terms of outcomes, little is known about how migration trajectories intersect with an entrepreneur’s mental well-being. Key questions remain: through which interfaces do migrant entrepreneurs engage with local or transnational policymaking institutions? And how, whether individually or collectively, do they shape or transform these policies?

All of the empirical papers in this special issue rely on qualitative methods, primarily inductive or abductive approaches, often framed through interviews. While valuable, these studies also reveal the limitations of static snapshots. We encourage future research to adopt longitudinal and ethnographic designs that capture processes as they unfold. In particular, there is a need to investigate how policies actually operate in practice – rather than how they are formally designed – by examining the translation work undertaken by institutional intermediaries. Such work could illuminate how policies evolve over time and how entrepreneurs craft strategies to navigate institutional complexity. Comparative approaches are also essential. Future studies might explore how translation practices differ across intermediary organisations, funding regimes and national

contexts. The contrast between Barrios et al.'s (2025) study of Venezuela and David et al.'s (2025) analysis of Germany, for example, emphasises how institutional arrangements generate distinct forms of exclusion. Attending to these variations can deepen our understanding of migrant entrepreneurship as both locally embedded and globally differentiated.

Barrios et al. (2025) highlight the rise of digital intermediaries, a development that is rapidly accelerating with advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Future research should examine AI as both an enabler and a barrier for migrant entrepreneurs. On the enabling side, AI offers powerful tools: translation and voice-recognition services can ease communication with customers, suppliers and regulators; AI-driven credit scoring models based on alternative data (e.g., mobile payment histories, platform transactions) may expand financing opportunities where traditional credit is unavailable; and adaptive learning platforms can deliver tailored business training in multiple languages, opening access to entrepreneurial knowledge. At the same time, AI introduces new risks. Algorithmic bias may shape service delivery, affect access to incubation and funding, and mediate participation in transnational networks in ways that reinforce exclusion. Moreover, reliance on digital platforms can accelerate entry but potentially undermine the relational trust traditionally built through time and networks (Bolzani and Scandura, 2024). Future studies should, therefore, interrogate how AI is designed and deployed in entrepreneurial ecosystems: to what extent do these technologies mitigate structural disadvantages, improve operational efficiency and empower migrant entrepreneurs? And conversely, under what conditions do they entrench inequities? Addressing these questions is critical to understanding how digital transformations reshape the opportunities and constraints facing migrant entrepreneurship.

Policy implications: A call to arms for structural intervention

The goal of this special issue is not only to advance academic understanding but also to inform the practical transformation of support systems. The contributions gathered here offer both analytical tools and an empirical foundation for such change. Yet, one key point must be emphasised: meaningful transformation requires confronting the structural contradictions that underpin current approaches to supporting migrant entrepreneurship.

The evidence points to several priorities for policy and practice reform. First, policies should move beyond neoliberal framings that present entrepreneurship as inherently superior to other forms of work, or as the default pathway for marginalised groups. Entrepreneurship should not be promoted as the first or most desirable option without recognising structural constraints and intersecting vulnerabilities such as gender, trauma or disability. Drawing on the theory of compensatory entrepreneurship (Honig, 2017, 2018), we caution against the risks of overselling entrepreneurship as a cure-all for social and economic exclusion. When public policy over emphasises individual initiative while underinvesting in structural supports, responsibility for systemic barriers is shifted onto immigrant entrepreneurs themselves. This not only overwhelms their capacity to succeed but also risks reinforcing inequalities in the absence of targeted training, context-sensitive mentorship and sustained institutional backing. Policy frameworks must, therefore, avoid positioning entrepreneurship as a substitute for structural reform and instead embed it within a broader set of employment and inclusion strategies.

Second, entrepreneurship support policies must recognise that migration regimes fundamentally shape migrant entrepreneur's activities. Gaps, blind spots, and policy voids in formal institutions often push migrant entrepreneurs to rely on informal structures for survival and growth. What is needed instead are inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems that are fully integrated into the broader economy and explicitly supportive of migrant enterprise (UNHCR, 2018). Policymakers should design interventions that directly confront systemic exclusion – by removing nationality-based

restrictions, ensuring eligibility for grants and accounting for visa requirements. At the same time, they must invest in strengthening inclusive informal institutions, for example by enacting legal protections against discrimination, implementing anti-xenophobia measures and actively engaging host communities to foster trust and reduce prejudice.

Third, evaluation frameworks should shift from focusing on easily measured bureaucratic outputs to emphasising processes and structural outcomes. Accountability mechanisms must examine not only service delivery statistics but also how policies and organisational practices perpetuate exclusionary outcomes. Longitudinal indicators should extend beyond business performance to include aspects such as well-being, identity enactment and social participation.

Finally, intermediary organisations should be held accountable for their cultural sensitivity and competence. This can often be achieved when migrant entrepreneurs are represented in key migration and entrepreneurship policymaking and support organisations (e.g. advisory, consultation and decision-making boards), allowing them to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Rather than being treated as passive recipients of expert interventions, they should be actively involved in co-designing various initiatives. Managers and frontline support workers should also receive training to strengthen their cultural competence, critically reflect on their own positions of power, and recognise the organisational logics that shape their work. This training should prepare them to act as active translators between systems and to build social networks across the broader entrepreneurial, migration and welfare ecosystems – key elements for achieving full inclusion of migrant entrepreneurs. As previous literature has analysed, intermediary organisations need to balance mainstreaming with targeting entrepreneurial support initiatives to different groups of migrants. Despite emancipatory intentions, categorising and labelling migrant entrepreneurs – for example, based on ethnicity, legal status or type of business – risks reproducing the societal hierarchies that the support initiatives were designed to counteract (Högberg et al., 2016).

We conclude by noting that migrant entrepreneurship represents just one facet of the broader spectrum of diversity that many support systems still struggle to address effectively. We hope this special issue encourages further research that examines not only the migrant, cultural, ethnic and racial dimensions of diversity in entrepreneurship, but also other forms – such as disability, gender and their intersectional combinations – so that policy and practice can more accurately reflect the realities of all entrepreneurial experiences.

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Monder Ram is the Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME). He is a leading authority on small business and ethnic minority entrepreneurship research and has published widely on the subject, and has extensive experience of working in and acting as a consultant to small and ethnic minority businesses. Monder is a regular keynote speaker at international conferences, and advises the government on the importance and value of ethnic minority businesses through his position on the APPG for BAME Business Owners. He also holds visiting positions at Warwick University and the University of Turku.