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INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

URBAN POLITICS ON ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the special issue on “Urban Politics on Ethnic Entrepreneurship” based on research insights and focused discussion that bridges disciplinary discourses. It challenges ethnic entrepreneurship theory by presenting new perspectives and empirical case studies from North America and Europe. As ethnic diversity is widely regarded as a special asset for entrepreneurial cities in the competitive global city environment, there is a need to better understand how ethnic entrepreneurship is used as a resource in city branding and how it is enabled through certain policies. Starting from the historical development of ethnic entrepreneurship research, the introduction leads over to the theoretical embedding of the special issue with its relational focus on space. The contribution proceeds with linking ethnic entrepreneurship to urban politics and outlines three major fields of research that are covered in the special issue: symbolic value to urban development, placemaking and social inclusion, and urban planning.

Key words: ethnic entrepreneurship; migrant entrepreneurship; urban development; urban planning; urban politics

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, immigration has led to a profound change across the urban landscapes of metropolitan regions worldwide. Significant indicators of such change are seen in the growth and development of ethnic commercial activities that often cluster into ethnic business neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods serve not only functional needs but act as important symbols of ethnic diversity and often form a central component of city branding in neoliberal urban policies. Although municipalities’ interest in these entrepreneurial activities is widespread (Hackworth & Rekers 2005;

Murdie & Teixeira 2011; Shaw 2011; Parzer & Huber 2015), ‘questions of space and place have remained outside the focus of scholarly interest’ (Hatziprokopiou *et al.* 2016, p. 55). This is especially remarkable since the symbolic value of ethnic entrepreneurship for urban renewal policies is often framed through spatial agglomerations of ethnic businesses. Thus, this special issue looks at the role of space and place in urban politics on ethnic businesses, which we define as all businesses that label themselves as ethnic, irrespective of their nationality.

With its focus at the urban scale, this special issue ties in with the ‘local turn’ in migration studies (Martiniello 2013) that informed

geography, and neighbouring disciplines. In doing so, we challenge classic ethnic entrepreneurship research by critically engaging with concepts that are currently debated in social, cultural and economic geography and other disciplines. We discuss recent developments from multiple theoretical perspectives, such as rescaling, place-making, migrant agency, and urban labour markets and thereby aim to broaden the lens that has been theoretically applied to ethnic entrepreneurship research; and apply a relational approach to space in which place is defined as socially constructed and meaningful articulated space (Lefebvre 1991). Transferring this relational understanding of space to ethnic economies builds on a conceptualisation of place 'as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences, and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for the moment as the place itself' (Massey 1991, p. 24).

Urban politics on ethnic entrepreneurship in cities of different size and different scalar positionings are still under-researched (Räuchle & Schmiz 2018). As our special issue demonstrates, the urban scale is often the level at which negotiations take place about the support for and/or restriction of ethnic businesses. It is the scale, where politics on ethnic entrepreneurship are implemented through different measures; they become part of large-scale investments in both inner cities and suburban areas, while at the same time, ethnic neighbourhoods serve as places, where migrant agency is formed, and transnational migrant networks are built-up and sustained. Urban spaces are developed into meaningful places through ethnic entrepreneurial activities.

In order to address the described gap, this special issue draws on the expertise of a multidisciplinary group of scholars that provide research insights and focused discussion that bridges disciplinary discourses. It challenges ethnic entrepreneurship theory by presenting new perspectives and empirical case studies from North America and Europe to enrich the theoretical field. As ethnic diversity is globally regarded as a special asset for entrepreneurial cities in city competition, there is a need to understand better how ethnic entrepreneurship is used as a resource in city branding and how

it is enabled through certain policies. This is one of the contributions of the special issue, through its focus on municipal and neighbourhood policies and how they shape ethnic entrepreneurship: What impact do urban policies have on the production and regeneration of ethnic business neighbourhoods? What role does city size and the scalar positioning of cities play within this process? What influence do city planners have on ethnic entrepreneurship?

This introductory paper theoretically frames the special issue within the context of space and place in relation to ethnic entrepreneurship. The contribution proceeds with linking ethnic entrepreneurship to the urban scale, therein focusing on urban politics with three major fields of research: its symbolic value, placemaking and social inclusion, and urban planning. The paper concludes by outlining the structure of the special issue and summarising the original contribution of each of the five papers.

FOCUSING ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH AT THE URBAN SCALE

Given the policy framework of ethnic entrepreneurship representing a major field of interest of this special issue, we argue that the municipality sets the 'room to manoeuvre' through legal frameworks and politicised resource allocation. These concern the formal designation of business improvement areas (BIA), renewal of distinct places or other local policies and bylaws that frame how businesses can operate to the budgeting of city branding and placemaking initiatives. For example, research has highlighted that local authorities do have substantial room to manoeuvre, often with the option, to devise their 'own' policies on migrant economies (Kloosterman & Rath 2001; Syrett & Sepulveda 2012). Besides political programming, spatial conditions play a major role in the development of ethnic economies. Differences do not only occur between city types but also between inner-urban and suburban ethnic commercial neighbourhoods as well as between cities with a varying scalar positioning (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009; Folmer & Risselada 2013; Folmer 2014; Folmer & Kloosterman 2017; Kloosterman 2019).

Ethnic entrepreneurship research has largely framed urban politics as the sum of formal and informal local politics that influence ethnic entrepreneurship. Formal politics embrace stakeholders of the city administration, political representatives, migrant self-organisations and business associations on the local and sub-local scale. Such politic is manifest in various types of formal programmes, restrictions and guidelines. Given this urban focus, research in this field builds on theories from classic ethnic entrepreneurship research (Bonacich 1973; Light 1972; Waldinger *et al.* 1990; Light & Gold 2000), which only partially included space and place: the concept of ethnic enclave economy analysed the catering of Cubans in Miami to their own spatially segregated community (Portes & Wilson 1980). The interaction approach (Waldinger *et al.* 1990) brought in space as one dimension of entrepreneurial opportunity structures. However, only within the last two decades have scholars discussed the ethnic economy through multiple and interacting spatial scales to address urban planning and urban development issues. At least two strands of research can be differentiated in this field. The first strand looks at ethnic economies' provision of neighbourhoods with groceries and services, their shops as spaces for community life, job creation, placemaking and social cohesion (Lo 2006; Hall 2011, 2015; Kaplan 2015; Nuissl & Schmitz 2015). The second strand looks at the symbolic value of ethnic economies on urban development, which is often related to branded districts and gentrification (Hackworth & Rekers 2005; Shaw 2011; Chabrol 2013; Stock 2013). This special issue aims to discuss these research strands through a spatial lens and to identify relevant themes at the intersection of ethnic entrepreneurship and the urban scale.

Many studies within the first strand focused on early stages of self-employment among so-called guest-workers and focused on restrictive national policies that led to a delayed emergence of migrant economies in continental Europe: for example, in the Netherlands, where a flourishing migrant economy developed early on (Kloosterman & Rath 2003); and in a German context on Turkish economic activities in Berlin (Scholz 1990; Rudolph & Hillmann 1997; Hillmann 1998; Pütz 2003). Rudolph and Hillmann (1997) analysed

processes of ethnicisation in the food industry in Berlin and showed that Turkish companies concentrated in those city districts with a large Turkish population. The spatial proximity to the 'own' community was deliberately chosen, and 90 per cent of the companies depended on the cooperation of family members. Within the second strand, early research in Britain focused on migrants and how they formed an integral part of urban economies. As such, the situation of different ethnic business groups in British cities was systematically analysed by Jenkins (1984), Aldrich *et al.* (1984) and Jones and McEvoy (1992). At that time, the numerous Pakistani and Indian small enterprises were regarded as drivers of the regeneration of British inner cities (see Oc & Tiesdell, quoted in Haberfellner *et al.* 2000).

The first theoretical approach that bridges these two research strands is the *mixed embeddedness approach* (Kloosterman *et al.* 1999), which conceptualises self-employment by immigrants as embedded in both, opportunity structures and individual resources of migrants. Since opportunity structures are defined as an institutional framework, that is, technological development, production factors, markets, demand and the legal framework it provides a solid base for analysing urban politics. In line with our major argument, the market context has an important spatial dimension that needs further empirical studies, for example, on the effect of urban location on migrant businesses and the interaction of a diverse local population within markets. Moreover, it puts the institutional context centre stage (Ram *et al.* 2017). Individual or collective resources, on the other hand, comprise qualifications, socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the entrepreneur and networks, which are often place-specific. The strength of the mixed embeddedness approach for the special issue is that it considers market conditions, such as the welfare system, market organisation and housing market policy, which is crucial for real estate markets and the spatial distribution of migrant economies in cities. It takes urban policies into account that affect accessibility and the growth potential of ethnic entrepreneurs. It further focuses on neighbourhood markets as characterised by varying population structures, resources and spatial structures, and therefore, opportunities.

The added value of the approach to the special issue is its conceptualisation of migrant agency within the ethnic economy. As such, migrants are not only pushed into self-employment due to blocked mobility or missing qualifications as earlier approaches suggested, but they position themselves on the labour market as resourceful actors. Although migrant agency forms part of the mixed embeddedness approach, we add on this idea by focusing on the ways, in which migrants as agents become part of urban politics. This is the case, for example, if branding or marketing practices start from business alliances at the neighbourhood scale but directly help to reposition the city globally.

RETHINKING ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH THROUGH THE LENS OF URBAN POLITICS

Many of the classical approaches on ethnic entrepreneurship still provide useful frameworks within which to explain the emergence of ethnic entrepreneurship. However, over time a new set of entrepreneurial urban politics has emerged about ethnic economies. This neoliberal shift in many localities influences urban politics and theoretical approaches to ethnic entrepreneurship. The shift in urban policies is part of the opportunity structures within mixed embeddedness. However, this shift to deregulation and a subsequent self-help doctrine makes it worth to refocus on migrant agency. A major contribution of this special issue is to bring new urban politics on ethnic entrepreneurship together with migrant responses (or migrant agency) within the field of entrepreneurship, not least since migrants form the majority population in a growing number of cities worldwide. In doing so, we add to the discourse within the expanding mixed embeddedness approach on ethnic entrepreneurship. In the following section, we outline four key areas of urban politics that provide the focus of this special issue.

THE SYMBOLIC VALUE OF ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A growing body of literature is concerned with the value of the migrant economy as an 'emerging symbolic economy' (Zukin 1995)

and connects this to urban development. It shows branding attempts to promote discrete inner-city migrant neighbourhoods as ethnically and culturally vibrant places for visitors (Hackworth & Rekers 2005; Rath 2005; Shaw 2011; Aytar & Rath 2012; Chabrol 2013; Parzer & Huber 2015; Schmiz 2017). Agglomerations of migrant-owned shops, cafés and restaurants accordingly provide marketable places of leisure and consumption (Aytar & Rath 2012). The cosmopolitan flair of these ethnic neighbourhoods is used to attract tourists and new entrepreneurs in the knowledge economy and the creative industry alike. However, ethnic entrepreneurs are themselves, drivers of gentrification processes, as their businesses support a symbolic revaluation of neighbourhoods, especially through restaurants, which serve both locals and tourists (Stock & Schmiz 2019). Furthermore, they can no longer be conceptualised as victims of displacement processes. As Schmiz (this issue) shows, ethnic entrepreneurs in cities with a long migration history, such as Toronto, constitute an often-neglected share of homeowners, which underlines their interest in revaluation processes not only in terms of their clientele, but also in their role as property owners.

Critical studies address these branding processes as part of negotiations around ethnic representation and belonging in contested places and demonstrate how municipal top-down branding strategies often contradict the complex identity formations within neighbourhoods (Ip 2005; Sheth 2010; Pottie-Sherman & Hiebert 2015). These policies are often criticised as they tend to neglect social, labour market, education and housing inequality in their efforts to leverage the ethnic brand that may lead to increased social polarisation and harsh competition of businesses within a neighbourhood, resulting in exploitative labour conditions (Pütz & Rodatz 2013; Schmiz 2013, 2017).

The branding of ethnic economies often impacts metropolitan inner-city neighbourhoods, which were once associated with migrant poverty and decline but have now been re-imaged (Shaw 2011). Here, branding initiatives may give an impetus to revaluation and gentrification processes (Taylor 2000; Shaw *et al.* 2004; Hackworth & Rekers 2005; Stock 2013; Rankin & McLean 2015; Stock & Schmiz 2019), as branding first often

goes along with beautification initiatives. Second, cosmopolitan flair created through the branding of ethnic economies may serve to attract pioneers in the early stages of gentrification, such as students, artists and representatives of the creative class. These are characterised by high cultural and symbolic capital and often unintendedly provide the way for regeneration processes (Zukin 2008). Third, the described branding attracts tourists, which bring economic value to the neighbourhood but at the same time often change the character of the neighbourhoods.

However, these politics that draw on the symbolic value of ethnic economies are not found in all city types. Here, we add to the theoretical debate in providing different case studies within this field. As R auchle & Nuissl (this issue) show for two medium-sized cities, that the symbolic value of the ethnic economy and politics of branding are not applied. This argument highlights the need for a spatially sensitive approach in different urban settings. As research has shown, a relational perspective to space (Massey 1991) as applied by Glick Schiller and  ađlar (2009) may help to conceptualise the scalar positioning of a city, its specific migration history and its embeddedness into broader financial and economic power structures as well as migrant transnational networks (Schmiz 2017; R auchle & Schmiz 2018). In drawing on this argument, R auchle & Nuissl and Schmiz (this issue) show that the symbolic value of ethnic economies has led to this new field of political engagement in branding. Furthermore, it adds a critical perspective on the impacts of these politics for ethnic commercial neighbourhoods (see Schmiz, this issue). Taking migrant agency as one driver of branding processes, the special issue addresses politics on urban entrepreneurship as a partially mutual, but also highly controversial and debated interplay between cities and migrants.

PLACEMAKING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Besides being an object for commodification, ethnic business neighbourhoods can be viewed as representative places that support identity formation for migrant communities. In doing so, this special issue highlights that

placemaking activities transform migrant economies and the surrounding neighbourhoods, with varying levels of spatial externality, into important social and representational places. Famous examples of such placemaking initiatives are Chinatowns, with their Chinese archways, culturally framed architectural and urban design elements, such as lanterns and corporate street signs. Such formerly marginalised ethnic retail spaces are transformed into social and community spaces through both investments and migrant agency.

Numerous studies to date have shown that migrant agency can (un-)intentionally support neoliberal and entrepreneurial ideas of urban development. Examples are ethno-culturally branded commercial premises that are initiated by business-led alliances, such as business improvement districts (BIDs). This celebration of ethnic diversity through BIDs, parades or festivals is criticised as an act of essentialism, both in its form as placemaking activity (Veronis 2006; McClinchey 2008; Fincher *et al.* 2014) or as branding initiatives (Rath 2005). This commodification of ethnicity is problematised for Chinatowns as a racial category and Western product (Anderson 1991; Collins 2002). Beyond this top-down commodification of ethnicity, ethnic entrepreneurs themselves may draw economic and social benefits by proclaiming their ethnicity (Fincher *et al.* 2014) – a phenomenon termed ‘strategic essentialism’ (Spivak 1987). Veronis (2007) further develops this concept for the case of Hispanic parades in Toronto as ‘strategic spatial essentialism’ (Veronis 2007). The inclusion of space into this concept highlights migrants’ strategies of creating new urban places that are ethnically connoted and that form part of migrant-initiated urban development processes.

A different body of literature shows how migrants contribute to urban development (International Organization for Migration 2015) through economic activity and social network creation. Within this literature, migrant entrepreneurs are addressed as placemakers with a high social value for the ethnic community (Wood 1997; Bergmann 2011; Haid 2013; Kaplan 2015;  lker 2016). This has been demonstrated, for example, for

retail in Parisian neighbourhoods (Kaplan 2015), a Vietnamese wholesale centre in Berlin (Schmiz 2017), themed Chinese shopping malls in Toronto (Zhuang 2008) and an informal Thai food market in Berlin's Preußenpark (Haid 2013). In terms of economic placemaking, Stock (2013) shows the creative practices of falafel snack bar owners and how their strategic reaction to changing customer tastes makes them symbolic markers in gentrification processes in Berlin. In a similar vein, Yildiz (2011, 2013) describes how the spatial density of migrant entrepreneurs contributed to gentrify a marginalised area in Cologne to a hipster neighbourhood. Within this literature, the top-down commodification of these originally migrant-driven, bottom-up placemaking processes through city politics is addressed (Ülker 2016). The special issue draws on this ambivalence and analyses placemaking activities from a critical perspective (Ülker & Zhuang, this issue).

URBAN PLANNING

Despite rising academic and political interest in urban planning directed towards ethno-cultural diversity, there is a relatively small body of literature that focuses on the nexus of urban planning and ethnic entrepreneurship. Zhuang (2008) shows based on four Toronto case studies that urban planners failed in steering ethnic retail due to a lack of policy support and associated legislative structure. Subsequently, planners and municipalities lack specific tools tailored to the needs of ethnic entrepreneurs. This becomes apparent in the inappropriate application of dominant planning regulations to migrants' diverse commercial strategies such as sidewalk sales and street vending (Zhuang 2008). Planning regulations and design guidelines show Western hegemony, as they are dominated by Western aesthetics, styles and constructional expressions (Zhuang 2008).

With interest among scholars from several disciplines and policy networks, the 'planning for diversity' approach was developed, which encompasses diversity, for example, in age, gender, religion, ethnic background and income (Sandercock 1998, 2000; Fainstein

2005; Fincher & Iveson 2008; Zhuang 2008; Fincher *et al.* 2014). In line with the 'multicultural planning' approach, it proceeds from the assumption that 'the effectiveness of urban planning is assessed by its responsiveness to citizens' needs and goals. Given that interests and preferences differ by social class, race, gender, and cultural background, the responsiveness of urban planning depends on its ability to accommodate citizens' divergent social and cultural needs and to treat individuals and groups equitably in meeting those needs' (Qadeer 1997, p. 482). The approach thus promotes collaboration among municipal authorities, planners and local stakeholders, such as migrant organisations, residents and entrepreneurs. Especially in multicultural societies, such as Canada and Australia, planning scholars have been addressing the concepts of 'planning for diversity' and 'multicultural planning' (Qadeer 2009) for many years (Qadeer 1997, 2009; Sandercock 2000; Fincher & Iveson 2008; Preston & Lo 2009; Zhuang 2008, 2013; Murdie & Ghosh 2010; Fincher *et al.* 2014).

However, both concepts have been critically addressed since their advocates hail diversity as the new orthodoxy of city planning that often occupies a normative stance, e.g., on multiculturalism (Fainstein 2005; van der Horst & Ouwehand 2012; Fincher *et al.* 2014; Huning 2014; Schuster 2014). Neither the 'planning for diversity' approach nor the 'multicultural planning' approach brings ethnic entrepreneurship into focus (Zhuang 2008, p. 42). The role of ethnic entrepreneurs in the initiation of spatially concentrated economic developments is rarely noted in previous studies – although there are some exceptions, such as Zhuang (2008) for the case of Toronto and Rath and Swagerman (2011) for a comparison of 27 European cities. The latter highlights the political sensitivity of particularistic versus universal policies towards ethnic entrepreneurship and the possible adverse effects of spatial interventions under the umbrella of urban revitalisation (Rath & Swagerman 2011). Based on a case study on a Vietnamese wholesale centre in Berlin, Schmiz and Kitzmann (2017) highlight that diversity has not been implemented in German planning law yet.

As reflected in the missing link between the two research strands introduced above, urban planners and municipal authorities lack specific tools tailored to the needs of ethnic economies and a broader understanding of their specifics. Further, migrant agency and interests are not included in the planning guidelines that are binding for local governments. The current policy practice is anchored in planning systems that still rely on universal standards and regulations to govern citywide developments (Zhuang 2008), such as the German planning system (Stilike 2010).

Corporate and municipal urban policies that support ethnic economies include the sponsorship and naming of cultural parades and festivals in migrant neighbourhoods. As such, municipal politics play a crucial role for migrant economies (Hall 2011; Rath *et al.* 2017), as exemplified for Amsterdam's Chinatown, which as Rath *et al.* (2017) argued either flourished or declined dependent on municipal politics. In a similar vein, Hall (2011) highlights the influence of city planning on migrant retail in a deprived high street in London. Nevertheless, a city's powerful economic, political or cultural positioning may have negative impacts on migrant economies, i.e., a restrictively competitive real estate market (see Schmiz, this issue).

STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The five collected papers strengthen the theoretical field as they challenge ethnic entrepreneurship research by adding a spatial perspective to the theoretical field.

In her paper titled 'Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Placemaking in Toronto's Ethnic Retail Neighbourhoods', Zhuang argues that research about ethnic businesses has primarily focused on the urban context, although contemporary immigrants in North America have been settling in the suburbs and establishing new businesses there. Building on this argument, she compares emerging suburban ethnic retail clusters in the Greater Toronto Area with established urban business enclaves. The paper explores different entrepreneurial experiences in suburban retail spaces, the role ethnic entrepreneurs play in suburban placemaking, and the opportunities and limitations for them to interact with other key players. Extensive

field research, surveys, and interviews in more than 100 suburban Chinese and South Asian retail clusters were conducted. The paper builds on the mixed-embeddedness approach when exploring ethnic entrepreneurship in a suburban context and considers the institutional framework for shaping ethnic retail places.

In their contribution 'Migrant economies beyond metropolitan cities: a context-sensitive case study', R auchle & Nuissl examine how the local context fosters or hinders the development of migrant economies in two 'low-scale' German cities Rostock and Braunschweig. The paper conceptualises 'local context' as comprising economic, political and socio-cultural factors. In sum, it finds the local conditions less conducive for development of migrant economies in either city than suggested in previous studies, since these economies are not urban policy issues there.

 lker argues for a constructivist notion of space in his paper 'Ethnic/Immigrant Entrepreneurship through the Yellow Pages in Berlin'. Following this line of reasoning, the paper explores the concept of ethnic/immigrant entrepreneurship in Berlin relying on the yellow pages directory 'Gelbe Seiten' – 'Iş Rehberi' (IR). This particular yellow pages directory has become a spatial reflection of migrant entrepreneurial activities since 1996. It has also been playing a crucial role in the self-representation of migrants after the fall of the Wall. In this context, the paper explores how individuals construct themselves as ethnic/immigrant entrepreneurs by using the IR, which serves as a networking tool for them. To achieve this goal, it looks at three advertisement strategies of entrepreneurs in the IR between 1996 and 2016.

In her paper titled 'Sari vs. Dim Sum – Branding Toronto's Diverse Neighbourhoods' Schmiz provides a systematic analysis of urban policies towards the branding of diverse neighbourhoods in Toronto. She shows how under the umbrella of Toronto's city motto, 'Diversity our Strength' ethnically labelled business improvement areas (BIAs) have become the object of branding strategies. While these branding processes generate tourist places and multi-cultural neighbourhoods for the creative and cosmopolitan, they challenge social cohesion. Furthermore, ethnic placemaking and branding activity can create local conflicts around identity and urban images in which migrant

agency plays a central role. The paper compares two ethnically-branded BIAs in a political-economy perspective to show that marketability between ethnic groups varies. It further shows how heterogeneous power structures influence ethnic entrepreneurial neighbourhoods.

The content of the concluding paper by Schutjens & Rath builds on the elaborated manuscripts of the special issue. It discusses the papers, and it provides a look to the future, to emerging themes of research and challenges. It addresses questions raised in the introduction paper and future implications for urban and geographical studies in the field of ethnic entrepreneurship research. It comments on the outcome of a relational perspective on migrant agency and urban politics.

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