

# **Opportunity recognition among migrant entrepreneurs: household, community and the haphazard nature of migrants' entrepreneurial decisions**

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## ***Abstract***

This paper examines the decision-making process of Polish Migrant Entrepreneurs (MEs) using the theoretical lens of opportunity recognition, which has not been yet applied to MEs. First, the paper provides empirical evidence on Polish MEs in Glasgow on; the incremental nature of their entrepreneurial decisions, their ability to perceive opportunities in the community niche market located in the local opportunity structure, and on the role played by the household context, highlighting that starting-up is an household and not an individual decision. Second, building on the opportunity recognition literature, the paper proposes the concept of *haphazard entrepreneurship* in the case of MEs. The concept encompasses notions of serendipity, mixed-embeddedness, and recognises the importance of household migration and settlement strategies on entrepreneurial decision-making.

## ***Keywords***

Migrant Entrepreneurship, Polish Migration, Household Context, Opportunity Recognition, Serendipity, Haphazard Entrepreneur.

## **Introduction**

Migrant entrepreneurs are embedded in relationships and in community-based social networks, in which they find customers and labour for their new ventures (Deakins et al., 2009; Jones and Ram, 2010). However, the relation between the starting-up and (household) migration decisions is yet to be further empirically explored, which this paper proposes to achieve using novel qualitative evidence collected among 21 Polish migrants considered within their household context. These Polish migrants joined the UK in 2004 as part of the migration wave from former Eastern Bloc countries to the UK (Home Office, 2009; Drinkwater et al., 2009), and subsequently started a business in Glasgow.

Research on migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurship has given particular attention to the relationship between the entrepreneur and their social networks (Deakins et al., 2007; Jones and Ram, 2010; Zhou, 2004; Rumbaut and Portes, 2014; Wang and Altinay, 2012). The specificity of migrant entrepreneurs (MEs) and ethnic minority entrepreneurs (EMEs)

compared to entrepreneurship among native entrepreneurs is the specific access to co-ethnic resources and the role played by their community as a market (Barrett et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2000; Werbner, 2001; Waldinger, 2005; Foley and O'Connor, 2013; Deakins et al., 2009; Deakins et al., 2007; Kloosterman, 2010). These debates on social capital have been extended to consider the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship in migrant and ethnic minority groups by considering their social, historical and local contexts (Carter et al., 2015; Deakins et al., 2007; Kloosterman, 2010; Jones et al., 2014; Nwankwo, 2013) but have so far not given sufficient focus to the household context (Welter, 2011; Carter, 2011), especially regarding the influence of migration and settlement strategies on entrepreneurial decision-making.

To reach a better understanding of MEs' decision-making processes in the contexts in which they operate, it has been suggested, e.g. Ram and Jones (2008), to apply theoretical frameworks from other disciplines or scholarly traditions, including from the broader entrepreneurship field. Interestingly, the framework of opportunity recognition used in this paper, developed by authors such as Ardichvili et al. (2003), Busenitz et al. (2003) or more recently by Dew (2009) or Tang and Khan (2007), and applied to other areas of entrepreneurship, has not yet attracted scholars' attention within the field of migrant entrepreneurship research. We claim that applying this lens enables researchers to better capture the relation between the context (including the household context) and entrepreneurial decision-making by focussing on opportunity recognition at the individual level (the entrepreneur) within the contexts in which they are embedded. In other words, such a lens helps answering the following research question: how do the social and household contexts influence Polish MEs' entrepreneurial decision-making process to start-up a new venture?

To understand opportunity recognition and decision-making processes among Polish MEs in Glasgow, the paper builds on qualitative empirical findings on this population. Data were collected among entrepreneurs considered within both their household context and their community, with a particular attention given to their perceptions.

Findings of this study suggest that entrepreneurship among MEs is an *ad hoc* answer to household migration objectives, consequence of MEs' perception of opportunities within the host country's opportunity structure. Entrepreneurial decisions and opportunity recognition processes among Polish MEs (in this study) are *haphazard* in nature. While further research is needed before generalising to MEs from other communities, this haphazard nature of entrepreneurship echoes with Dew's (2009) concept of accidental discovery and serendipity in entrepreneurship and thus leads to this paper's proposition of the concept of *haphazard entrepreneurship*, as an application of opportunity recognition's concepts into the field of ME research. Exemplified by the qualitative data collected during the fieldwork with Polish MEs in Glasgow, the concept encompasses dimensions of serendipity, knowledge accumulation within the host country's opportunity structure (including but not limited to the community as a market), as well as the recognition of the importance of household migration and settlement strategies on entrepreneurial decision-making among MEs.

After a critical discussion of recent debates related to the mixed-embeddedness of MEs in social and local structures, complemented by theoretical frameworks on opportunity recognition and serendipity in the wider field of entrepreneurship, the contextual background

of the study is presented. Then, the findings on the decision-making process among Polish MEs in Glasgow are presented in two sections; the ability of MEs to perceive, recognise, and exploit opportunities in Scotland's opportunity structures, and the role played by the household in this process, which is a novel empirical contribution of this paper. Finally, the discussion section brings together the findings on opportunity recognition and settlement strategies to justify the proposition of the new concept of *haphazard entrepreneurship* in the field of ME research.

## **Theoretical background**

To understand the role of contextual dimensions (such as community and household) on decision-making processes among MEs, this paper builds on the literature on MEs' (mixed) embeddedness in structures of relations and institutional contexts. Having identified the critical aspect of opportunity identification and creation among MEs within local opportunity structures, the paper bridges those debates with the theoretical lens of opportunity recognition in the wider entrepreneurship literature, to apply this lens to ME research.

### *The embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs*

Research has emphasised the distinctive features of migrant entrepreneurs compared with their native counterparts (Ram and Jones, 2008) or *mainstream entrepreneurs* (Jones and Ram, 2010). Among those features, the role of the community of co-ethnics in providing access to specific resources (Deakins et al., 2007; Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Waldinger, 2005), flexible and cheap labour (Jones and Ram, 2010; Phizacklea and Ram, 1996), and informal support and advice (Smallbone et al., 2003) is widely documented. These distinctions with the mainstream population are even more prevalent for the first generation of MEs (Deakins et al., 2005; Rusinovic, 2006).

Most importantly, MEs and EMEs (E/MEs) recognise opportunities within their community niche market (Rusinovic, 2008; Jones et al., 2000), that they access through social ties – or networks – and shared identity, thus creating opportunities in this market because of cultural proximity (Werbner, 2001). Indeed, as argued elsewhere (Sepulveda et al., 2011), the community-based niche market is based on cultural traditions and provides opportunities for MEs - who are therefore best positioned to identify those opportunities - to start-up new ventures (Engelen, 2001; Werbner, 2001).

The ability of E/MEs to interact with opportunities is embedded in a set of social relations (Carter et al., 2015; Wang and Altinay, 2012; Kitching et al., 2009), as well as within the institutional context in which they operate (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Engelen, 2006; Welter and Smallbone, 2011). This current debate is ongoing in the wider entrepreneurship literature on contextualized entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011; Zahra et al., 2014) or on the flourish literature using the concept of *social capital* to understand the issue of resource access among MEs (Birch and Whittam, 2008; Ferri et al., 2009; Deakins et al., 2007; Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Foley and O'Connor, 2013; Stoyanov et al., forthcoming; Jack et al., 2004). More specifically, considering the MEs' specific characteristics compared to their native counterparts, those contextual dimensions have been central in the ME literature under the

umbrella term of *mixed-embeddedness* (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman, 2010; Jones et al., 2014).

In this view, MEs are embedded both within a set of social relations including migrant networks (Zhou, 2004; Waldinger, 2005), and within the wider social, institutional, and economic contexts in which they operate (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Engelen, 2006). For instance, while the role of social structure (networks and social ties) on economic action refers back to Granovetter (1985), Smallbone and Welter (Welter and Smallbone, 2011; Smallbone et al., 2014) highlight the importance of the institutional framework on entrepreneurial activities in Central and Eastern Europe. However, as pointed out by Welter (2011), the household dimension of the contextual embeddedness of ME has not yet been researched. Yet, the household has been considered while regarding family labour in ME businesses (Wang and Altinay, 2012; Fong and Ooka, 2002; Phizacklea and Ram, 1996) or while looking at rural entrepreneurship (McElwee and Bosworth, 2010; Carter, 2011). Moreover, the role of household on migration decision-making has been widely debated in the migration literature, most recently regarding Poles in the UK (Ryan and Sales, 2013; D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011; White and Ryan, 2008; Ryan et al., 2008). However, the household has not been considered as a contextual dimension for entrepreneurship activities in relation to migration objectives in the ME literature; a gap that this paper proposes to address.

#### *Mixed embeddedness and opportunity structures*

By integrating social relations and the wider institutional context as part of the contextual dimensions enabling and constraining MEs actions, including their ability to perceive, identify, or create opportunities in the host country, the mixed-embeddedness perspective states that MEs respond to situational (i.e. non-generic) local conditions, provided by the local opportunity structure (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Lassalle and McElwee, 2016). Within these local opportunities structures, MEs recognise or create opportunities in the community niche market due to cultural proximity and shared identity (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Storti, 2014; Werbner, 2001; Waldinger, 2005). Like other entrepreneurs, MEs operate in changing and uncertain environments (Ardichvili et al., 2003), and take actions based on judgmental decision-making (Casson, 2005) guided by their idiosyncratic perception of the local opportunity structure. This calls for applying the opportunity recognition lens - as developed in the wider entrepreneurship literature - to MEs studies.

### **Entrepreneurs and opportunities**

#### *Degree of alertness, accidental discovery and serendipity*

Debates on opportunity identification and recognition in entrepreneurship relate back to Kirzner's (1978) seminal work and his definition of the entrepreneurs as an opportunity spotter. Later contributions by Shane and Venkataraman (2000) on the individual-opportunity nexus, or by Sarason et al. (2006) on structuration theory, have contributed to define the relation of the entrepreneur with opportunities. Going beyond *opportunity-driven* and *necessity* in entrepreneurship as argued by Williams (2008), entrepreneurial decisions are responses to the

perception of opportunities in a specific context, attention is given to the entrepreneurs' actions within the opportunities recognition process (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Moreover, according to Ardichvili et al. (2003); Busenitz (1996); Kirzner (1978), the entrepreneur's individual degree of alertness impacts on their ability to recognise opportunities in a given business environment (see also Tang and Khan, 2007). However, this alertness is influenced by their history (Welter, 2011), and by context-influenced idiosyncratic interpretations of the interplay between opportunities and the venturing process (Sarason et al., 2006; Garud et al., 2014), as well as by strategic capabilities (Westhead et al., 2009; McElwee and Bosworth, 2010). As discussed above, alertness is also influenced by the entrepreneur's social ties (Granovetter, 1985; Davidsson and Honig, 2003), therefore emphasising the embedded nature of opportunity recognition.

Ardichvili et al. (2003) present opportunity recognition as the accidental discovery of opportunities. They contrast it with systematic analysis and search for opportunities, whereas Tang and Khan (2007) propose to integrate them. However, since entrepreneurs are embedded in both structures of networks and institutions (as discussed above), the ability of the entrepreneur to identify opportunities within the opportunity structure is (at least) partly accidental and influenced by experience and entrepreneurial learning (Holcomb et al., 2009; Wang and Chugh, 2014).

Nevertheless, experiential learning is unplanned since the entrepreneur face unintended changes in uncertain contexts, as pointed out by the literature on heuristics and decision-making in entrepreneurship (Dew, 2009; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Following Schwartz et al. (2011), there are information gaps in the market, and the entrepreneur relies on bounded rationality (Simon, 1991) to take judgmental decisions (Holcomb et al., 2009; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Casson, 2005) based on their alertness or on their level of opportunity confidence (Davidsson, 2015; Ardichvili et al., 2003). Thus, the entrepreneur assesses and addresses those gaps using their individual risk-aversion level based on their idiosyncratic perceptions of the environment. This highlights the importance of happenstance behaviours - as developed by Krumboltz (2009) in career management - among entrepreneurs. Applied to entrepreneurship by Dew (2009) under the notion of *serendipity*, it refers to the combination of contingencies, knowledge, and search - bounded by time and rationality - impacting on the entrepreneur's ability to identify and recognise opportunities (this ability is referred to as *sagacity*). Thus, discussion on heuristics and serendipity in entrepreneurship emphasises the entrepreneur's ability to adapt to a fast changing environment and thus to recognise opportunities in a specific opportunity structure. As pointed out by (Dew, 2009; Holcomb et al., 2009) the process of opportunity recognition is possible only once the entrepreneur has accumulated knowledge about the environment, hence developing their alertness to opportunities in this specific environment.

Whether opportunities pre-exist or are co-created by the entrepreneur and the context is still under debate (Garud et al., 2014; Alvarez et al., 2013; Davidsson, 2015), contextual dimensions influence entrepreneurial perceptions of opportunities, and hence impact on their judgemental decision-making processes. In addition, the ability to identify, recognise and create those opportunities is a subjective and idiosyncratic process of interpretation of the contexts by the

individual (Sarason et al., 2006), even though the perceptions (of opportunities and risks) are somehow shaped by the environment - as for instance *entrepreneurial mindsets* (McElwee and Smith, 2012). Entrepreneurship is indeed a complex phenomenon (Anderson et al., 2012) at the intersection of constructs of the individual, opportunities, modes of organising and the environment (Busenitz et al., 2003) or at the interplay of structures and the entrepreneur (Mole and Mole, 2010).

However, taking a closer look at the opportunity recognition decision-making processes of entrepreneurs (emphasising entrepreneurial action) and at the interplay between opportunities and contexts, is a perspicuous focus of this paper for further theorisation in the field of ME. As a new and clearly bounded phenomenon, the population of Polish MEs in Glasgow provides an interesting case to exemplify the discussion on the importance of social and household context on entrepreneurial decision-making.

## **Methodology**

This research was designed to capture the contextualised experiences of Polish MEs in Glasgow, focussing on Polish citizens, who migrated to the UK after the European Union (EU)-enlargement to A8 countries in May 2004, and started-up their business in Glasgow afterwards. The reasons for selecting this population relate to debates and political agitation around the recent wave of migration from former Eastern Bloc countries to the UK, making this phenomenon and the question of occupation and settlement (e.g. through entrepreneurial activity) worthy of investigation (Home Office, 2009; Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010).

Following an inductive research design (with inclusion of elements of abductive research in the sense of Klag and Langley, 2013), this research aims at capturing and understanding the decision-making processes by providing rich contextualised understanding (Weick, 2007), and by focussing on the experiences and sense-making of Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow within the contexts (migration, social relations, entrepreneurial opportunity structure, community, and household), in which they are embedded. Thus, during the interviews, the interviewer was exploring in particular depth the question of household migration objectives, the embeddedness of the entrepreneur within the Polish community in Glasgow as well as their start-up experience<sup>1</sup>.

### *Background*

In 2004, Polish nationals and citizens from other accession economies were legally entitled to enter the UK in search of employment. This led to an influx of Polish migrant workers exceeding the numbers forecasted by UK government officials with 400,000 workers *registered* between 2004 and 2007, and probably close to a million migrants (Home Office, 2009; Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010; Drinkwater et al., 2009; Krausova and Vargas-Silva, 2013). Questions of settlement and integration in the host society are crucial

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<sup>1</sup> Although those questions were not directly formulated to ensure that the interpretations remains the interviewees' (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977).

issues in migration, researching migrants who started a business in the UK thus provides interesting insight on households' decision to settle and stay in the UK. Importantly, participants in this research are economic migrants who have secured a job in the UK prior to emigration using employment agencies based in Poland (part of the migration industry). This ad hoc institutionalised channel acts as an emigration gatekeeper to the UK's labour market, primarily for low-skilled and low-paid occupations; usually as factory or construction workers, butchers, or cleaners (Garapich, 2008; Drinkwater et al., 2009; White and Ryan, 2008), occupations in which participants of this study were engaged in before they started-up their own business. Since this research is interested in the influence of contextual dimensions (including social embeddedness and household) on entrepreneurial decision-making processes, it is worth noting that a large share of participants have partners and families (nineteen out of twenty-one), being either married with children (fourteen) or engaged in a relationship (five), which is higher than for other post-2004 Polish migrants in the UK (38% married, Drinkwater et al., 2009).

#### *Data collection and sample*

Qualitative research was chosen to collect novel empirical evidence on Polish MEs' experiences (Klag and Langley, 2013). By conducting in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs triangulated with other sources of information (see below), a qualitative research provides deeper explanations of the contextualised actions of entrepreneurs, as a way to capture the *richness* of their real world experience (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Weick, 2007). In-depth interviews focussed on the perceptions of the individual (Dodd and Anderson, 2007; Cope, 2005) in the different contexts in which they recognise opportunities and take decisions, such as the opportunity structure, the community, and the household. Qualitative data for this paper were collected during a fieldwork consisting of 21 in-depth interviews with Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow identified (see next) and selected according to the following criteria: the respondent should have arrived in the UK after 2004 and started their own business (solely owned by Polish citizen(s)). All sectors, genders, ages, or marital statuses were considered (see Table 1), although the researcher limited the interviews with entrepreneurs in the (specific) construction sector to two interviews to include a wider variety of businesses. In the end, respondents identified run small entrepreneurial ventures (one to five employees) in diverse sectors, from hairdressing, car repair, delicatessen to IT services. Identification of participants was achieved through various sampling techniques; through personal networks within the Polish community, through purposive sampling, or through Polish community Internet portals and newspapers. Finally, a few interview contacts were identified using a snowballing technique until the data reached saturation (Eisenhardt, 1989). These in-depth interviews with Polish entrepreneurs were complemented with five interviews with key informants (support institutions, including Business Gateway, community gatekeepers of the migration industry), observations, and informal conversations with the entrepreneurs and their spouse when possible (eight) for triangulation purposes. Although not directly presented in the findings as illustrative quotes, these complementary interviews helped the researcher to understand the contextual dimensions in which MEs are embedded. The 60-120 minutes in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs were all conducted in Polish language by the researcher to capture cultural

nuances, as argued by Welch and Piekkari (2006) and were all reported using a full handnote technique (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977).

### **Insert table 1 here**

After coding, the narratives were analysed in relation to the entrepreneurs' contexts (Gartner, 2007). In addition to starting themes, such as start-up or the role of the community, other themes emerged from the data following the inductive process of this research, as for instance; the role of the household in the entrepreneurial decision-making, the positive perception of the conditions in the Scottish opportunity structure or the incremental nature of the entrepreneurial process. Interestingly, sixteen respondents explicitly compared their experiences with those of entrepreneurs in Poland, having either been entrepreneurs in Poland themselves or informed by relatives, therefore insisting on the favourable conditions found in the Scottish opportunity structure. Subsequently, quotes exemplifying specific aspects of each themes were selected to illustrate the argument (Klag and Langley, 2013).

This paper is not claiming for empirical generalisability (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and presents some limitations due the qualitative nature of the fieldwork; including idiosyncratic perceptions of the participants, or other interview biases (e.g. the moment when the interviews were conducted). Likewise, the specific focus on Polish ME in the specific context of Glasgow requires further research in different spatial and social contexts. Nevertheless, formulating emergent theory related to perception and decision-making entrepreneurial processes is stemming from deep and broad empirical data (Welch et al., 2011).

## **Findings: the household and the opportunity structure**

### *Starting-up as an undocumented process*

The findings highlight the undocumented and incremental nature of decision-making processes among Polish MEs in Glasgow both at the start-up phase and in later stages of development of their businesses. Polish MEs lack career plans when they arrive in the UK and only a few intended to start-up their own-businesses. As it emerged from the analysis, starting-up is an incremental answer to job dissatisfaction in the UK (rather than unemployment) and aligns with household settlement strategies. In spite holding a higher degree, Poles face barriers to entering the British labour market and finding a commensurate and well-paid occupation. These barriers remain because of the lack of language skills, poor knowledge of the local labour market, and the employers' reluctance to understand or recognise Polish qualifications as reported by all respondents, and evidenced by other studies on Polish migrations in the UK (White and Ryan, 2008; Drinkwater et al., 2009). Consequently, Poles are engaged in physically demanding jobs, such as factory or construction work, cleaning, etc.

Considering their migration aspirations, Polish migrants leave their current employment when they become more familiar with the host country, and when spouses and children finally join them in Glasgow. At this point, the decision to create a business is an exit strategy from low status employment, thereby fulfilling the desire to improve their standard of living and social

status. Entrepreneurship is thus envisaged as a way to regain dignity, pride, and motivation to succeed.

*There in Poland, I was like the queen and here a cleaner.*

M. Delicatessen, manager of a large office in Poland

Indeed, in addition to working in lower-skilled and more physically demanding jobs than they had in Poland, interviewees also feel undervalued because their jobs do not match their expectations or their skill levels.

*I have worked during one year and a half in a factory. The work was really hard, really monotonous. I was doing parts for fridge. It was a whole thing; it was a new experience in life, despite hard work. It is here in Scotland that I have taken the decision to start-up. When we left Poland with my wife, we did not have any specific plan to establish a business. Nothing special in mind. We have decided during this year. The work at the factory was really exhausting. I had never worked in a factory, at the beginning it seems ok but then it becomes so exhausting to go every day.*

D. bookshop

Thus, participants engage in entrepreneurship for lifestyle reasons aimed at achieving a better livelihood, a satisfactory status and occupation, and/or flexible working conditions. Those lifestyle reasons fall between necessity (unsatisfactory low-skilled job) and opportunity (wish for flexible working times, status). However, their decision to start a business is undocumented, unplanned, and often the outcome of a hunch or entrepreneurial *flair*<sup>2</sup>. Their entrepreneurial strategies are thus incremental and *ad hoc*. Polish entrepreneurs do not have preconceived strategies, nor do they prepare a business plan or benchmark their business strategy prior to starting-up. Despite this lack of planning, the interview data suggests that Polish business start-ups are successful and *satisfactory* in the participants' view.

The start-up process is perceived by the participants as easy and straightforward, and elements of flair features clearly in various interviews. The choice of sector, business, location, offer of products and services, targeted market, advertising, and further business development are unplanned and based their perception of the opportunity structure (set of contextual dimensions in which the ME is embedded and operates, as presented above).

*We only had to go online and register the company. 15 minutes altogether.*

*Yes, roughly £5000, nothing more. That's all we needed to rent the local, buy the desks and laptops as well as the printers.*

K, IT.

As commonly expressed by most of the participants (twenty), starting up and running a business *easy* – or at least *easier* than in Poland –, as only a small amount of capital is required to start-up a venture and due to the minor amount of bureaucracy involved. Other elements of the opportunity structure in Scotland stimulate start-up, such as discounts in business rates through the Small Business Bonus Scheme (under £25,000 rateable value), VAT exemption (under £73,000 turn-over a year), and income tax credits for self-employed. In addition, there

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<sup>2</sup> This is an attempt translate the meaning of the participants' statement.

is little paperwork required for starting-up and running a small business, such as those in which Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow are engaged (especially compared to Poland). Likewise, there are fewer controls to the business, and these aim at helping the business owner rather than punishing them, as opposed to the situation in Poland (of which most Polish MEs in Glasgow are aware from previous experiences or through relatives and friends). After a few years of living in the UK, Polish entrepreneurs perceive Scotland's opportunity structure as extremely favourable to new venture creation, especially since they accumulated knowledge of the opportunity structure and savings to start-up.

*Yes, it is straight forward. At the beginning, there is only the language barrier. Only the language barrier has prevented me from starting up earlier or doing it faster.*

I. Hairdresser. (entrepreneur in Poland)

*It was really easy. Generally it is straight forward. I am self-employed which makes it even easier. Registration is done through the Internet, it is far easier from what I have heard about it in Poland.*

P. IT. (father entrepreneur in Poland)

The ease of the start-up process and the small amount of finance required<sup>3</sup> partially explains why unhappy factory workers can start-up a new business venture as a solution to poor job satisfaction as the above cases demonstrate. Thus, starting-up is an incremental and undocumented response to the entrepreneurs' situation after a few years in the UK, including their engagement in low-skilled and low-paid occupations.

#### *Recognising opportunities*

Polish MEs recognise or create opportunities within the Polish community niche market in Glasgow and hence have a more favourable perception of the local opportunity structure. Yet again, Polish entrepreneurs rarely rely on benchmarking, and the opportunity spotted does not seem obvious or viable at a first glance without prior knowledge of the Polish community.

*I could see that Scottish hairdresser cannot cut hair properly; they do not know how to do a nice haircut. They really lack skills.*

A. Hairdresser

The identification of the start-up conditions in the opportunity structure once again reveals the importance of flair in a favourable entrepreneurial environment. The ability to perceive opportunities within the opportunity structure is crucial to explain motivation to start-up, and the choice of sectors. Most Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow perceive opportunities within the Polish community niche market relying on their understanding of the needs and preferences of fellow Polish migrants in Glasgow.

This is facilitated as they serve (almost exclusively) a Polish clientele. Indeed, for a large majority of the businesses studied, the Polish community is the primary, or even the only market targeted by a new business venture, despite attempts to reach a broader client base<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Between £4,000 and £10,000 for start-up in all the case studies.

<sup>4</sup> Twelve respondents rely primarily on the Polish community as a market. For another seven, the Polish community remains an important part of their customers' base.

Although local clients are potentially available, the businesses studied strongly relied on the Polish community as customers.

*Almost all our clients are Poles. I think it is because of the language barriers. Sometimes I have to ask three or four times to understand a question with the locals [...] We are trying to reach more and more locals with the advertising, the flyers.*

M. Garage

*We had some issues at the beginning with advertisement. At the beginning we were looking for Polish clients. There are now more and more Scottish people, men and women. But in general, I would say that most of our clients are Poles.*

M. Hairdresser

Most of the entrepreneurs serve the enclave Polish community with ethnic goods such as food, Polish computer programmes, or mainstream products and services (e.g. legal advice, car repair, hairdressing). In addition, all the participants advertise their businesses on the Internet via Polish migrant websites such as *emito.net* or *Glasgow24.pl*.

It is easier for an entrepreneur to trade within their community of co-ethnics because they have a better understanding of its needs than their British competitors have. As well as sharing a language, Polish entrepreneurs are *culturally* aware of what fellow Polish migrants are looking for, especially since Polish entrepreneurs are post-2004 migrants themselves. Polish entrepreneurs know the main products to sell to Polish migrants (e.g. popular Polish sausages brands, Polish books for children, etc.). On the supply side, Polish entrepreneurs are connected to Polish networks in Scotland or in Poland. In both cases, they know where and what to order from central purchasing agents or directly from suppliers in Poland. Finally, Polish MEs are embedded in the Polish community's social networks and thus make use of social media for advertising purposes. Thence, Polish MEs recognise opportunities within their community market due to their embeddedness in (newly) established networks, and to their understanding of fellow migrants' needs.

#### *The role of Household in entrepreneurial decision-making*

A crucial finding of this research is that entrepreneurial decision-making (including start-up) is a household decision and aligns with household migration strategies. This calls for further attention to be given to the household context in entrepreneurship.

First, the fieldwork highlights the household-led nature of entrepreneurial behaviour for the 19 Polish entrepreneurs engaged in a relationship; both partners are actively taking part in the decision-making process, independent of who starts-up. Furthermore, entrepreneurial decisions (start-up or later business developments) are also discussed and negotiated by the couple. Second, entrepreneurial decisions are household-oriented. In other words, entrepreneurial actions are driven by household objectives; the standard of living and desire for stability. Indeed, Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow start-up for lifestyle reasons, including aspirations for improved and flexible work conditions, wish for independence, status, and, importantly, prospects for the household's future. Thus, starting-up is an ad hoc response to changing settlement strategies (negotiated within the household).

*At the beginning, I thought that I will come for one year, make money and go back to Poland. Then, my wife and my daughter came. It has been five years that I say I will go back in five years time.*

A. construction

*My business [when I was in Poland] was struggling on the coast. I thought I could go to the UK. There was an opportunity here to make some money and bring it back home. My wife first agreed, but after 3 months and another 3 months, she decided to come with our daughter.*

P. construction.

These exemplify the change from a sojourner strategy to open-ended settlement. Migrants' plans change over time as their relationship with the home country become weaker and ties with the host country strengthen. However, there is no clear-cut division between those migration strategies. Following White and Ryan (2008), there is a continuum from transience to settlement influenced by their life experiences in the UK since 2004.

The socialisation process in the UK also contributes to explaining the changes in migratory plans among participants. In their migration experience, Polish MEs establish networks and new friendships. In other words, they become embedded in social networks (even if only within the post-2004 Polish migrant community in Glasgow). In addition to developing emotional commitments, they commit financially, e.g. taking loans, repaying mortgages, etc. Consequently, their perception of the household situation (children, household stability, couple's relationship, mortgages or other settlement elements) is crucial in understanding their entrepreneurial decision-making process. Children are enrolled in local schools, which most participants perceive as being better than Polish schools, and become bilingual and bi-cultural. Household strategies strongly affect the migrants' decision to stay, as confirmed by other studies on Polish migrants in the UK (e.g. Ryan and Sales, 2013), and hence to start-up a new venture.

*We are not going back to Poland. We have a house and our children are now better in English than in Polish, they can write better in English. Here we bought a house and here we will stay. From the beginning I was sure that we will stay, yes.*

M. delicatessen. (Female entrepreneur)

*From the beginning I knew that we came here to stay. I knew because of the children, I knew that we had to place them in a Scottish school.*

I. restaurant. (Female entrepreneur)

Finally, whereas socialisation and increasing emotional and financial commitments strengthen settlement of Polish migrants in the UK, time weakens the prospects for a potential return to Poland, as they face depreciation of their qualifications back in Poland (see also, Fihel and Grabowska, 2010). This is primarily due to their engagement in deskilled occupations at arrival in the UK, as well as their lack of awareness of existing (and up-to-date) opportunities, lack of recognition for recent work experience and lack of relevant social capital back in Poland.

The decision to start-up, as well as the one to eventually settle is strongly motivated by the household context. Importantly, despite risks of relationship breakdown during the initial

stages of the migration process, and despite a lack of clear career plan generating further uncertainty, migration is perceived as an opportunity to improve the household's stability<sup>5</sup>.

*Our husbands were the first to arrive here and then we came, we found a school for the children, a Scottish school. It was haphazard that it was in Scotland.*

M&I. restaurant.

*I started from zero. My wife and my son arrived three months later, when I had a flat, a car. When I had a base. And then I came back to Poland to bring them over here.*

D. bookshop.

Thus, for the participants engaged in relationships, migration and starting-up are part of a household – rather than an individual – migration strategy. Unlike many other Polish migrants who engage in pendular migration or went back to Poland (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010), Polish entrepreneurs recognise an opportunity to start-up their own business within the Glaswegian opportunity structure, and hereby improve their living conditions through ad hoc and incremental entrepreneurial decision-making negotiated within and influenced by the household context. The importance of the household context in understanding MEs' decision-making - exemplified by Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow - is a crucial empirical finding of this research, especially considering changing migration patterns.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

This paper provides a contextual understanding of Polish MEs' entrepreneurial decision-making processes by highlighting the importance of the household context and of the community on the ME's ability to recognise opportunities and on their (incremental and ad hoc) entrepreneurial decision-making. Although undocumented and often the outcome of entrepreneurial *flair*, start-up decisions and recognition of opportunities within the community niche market align with household migration and settlement objectives. Building on those findings, and by applying the opportunity recognition lens within ME research, the paper subsequently proposes the concept of *haphazard entrepreneurship* for MEs.

### *Uncertainty, sagacity, and perceptions*

Despite lack of prior knowledge or experience in the sector in which they start-up, and lack of English proficiency, Polish MEs recognise opportunities within the local opportunity structure based on their perception and flair. As for sagacity, the concept of flair emphasises the importance of *accidental* decisions based on serendipity (Dew, 2009). However, sagacity presupposes the existence of prior knowledge, which is lacking in Polish entrepreneurs' opportunity recognition process. Therefore, we propose that MEs' *flair* stands for; the MEs' (understood as household units) ability to spot opportunities (in the community niche market) in a new opportunity structure (the host country), enhanced by gradual knowledge

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, whereas men usually acknowledge the change of migration strategies (as noted earlier), women had firmer expectations and plans than their husbands before migrating.

accumulation (Holcomb et al., 2009). Their decision-making is based on undocumented processes of research, intuition (Sadler-Smith, 2004) and practical heuristics (see Dew, 2009). Moreover, flair for MEs refers to the outcome of decision-making processes involving household migration strategies (in which job dissatisfaction, lifestyle choices, and household settlement and stability objectives are included). Indeed, although the literature on serendipity in entrepreneurship considers contingencies and the entrepreneur's ability to adapt to a fast changing environment, in which they seek satisfactory outcome (Schwartz et al., 2011), Dew (2009); Krumboltz (2009) do not take into account the dimensions of household, migration and community in the opportunity recognition process. Those are central to studies on ME and calls for a specific concept in ME studies, to capture specific characteristics MEs, such as the confrontation of entrepreneurs by a new opportunity structure, in which they may not have access to all relevant information and cultural codes, their embeddedness in specific community networks (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman, 2010) and the importance of the migration experience.

### *Haphazard entrepreneurship*

Polish entrepreneurs in Glasgow exemplify the ad hoc approach to entrepreneurship due to their lack of planning or pre-conceived entrepreneurial strategies. This paper thus proposes to conceptualise this insight emerging from the findings under the term *haphazard entrepreneurship*. The concept is useful as it applies theoretical developments of opportunity recognition within the field of ME research, to provide a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomenon among MEs. Haphazard entrepreneurship encompasses the features of serendipity and accidental opportunity identification and recognition (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Dew, 2009; Krumboltz, 2009; Tang and Khan, 2007) and combines them with the importance of community (Werbner, 2001; Waldinger, 2005), knowledge accumulation (Holcomb et al., 2009) (in the host country), and household migration strategies. While MEs accumulate experience in the host country, their perceptions of opportunities and risk evolve, and the opportunity recognition process is repeated at various business development stages. As this paper reveals the importance of the community, perception of a (favourable) opportunity structure and of the household context on Polish MEs' incremental decision-making, this calls for conceptual development on spontaneous or haphazard entrepreneurial behaviour.

A key feature of the proposed concept of haphazard entrepreneurship is the consideration of distinctive contextual factors influencing MEs' decision-making; the household context and the embeddedness within the migrant community, in which MEs access specific resources and recognise opportunities not visible to other entrepreneurs (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Rusinovic, 2008). The *haphazard entrepreneur* pursues incremental entrepreneurial strategies, and their entrepreneurial decisions are mostly spontaneous and influenced by; household considerations, such as dissatisfaction with employment, commitments in the host country, and by their (positive) perception of the opportunity structure in Glasgow.

This paper does not attempt to identify one holistic entrepreneurial characteristic. On the contrary, it recognises the complex nature of (migrant) entrepreneurship, including the mixed-embeddedness of MEs within their community and their environment, as well as their perception of change and uncertainty. Applying the opportunity recognition lens to ME

research enables scholars and practitioners to capture the incremental nature of entrepreneurial decision-making among MEs and highlights the role of household migration strategies on opportunity recognition.

Entrepreneurship is an ad hoc response to job dissatisfaction as well as to incremental household settlement strategies; this is a valuable contribution for policy-makers to take into account when considering possible directions while supporting settlement and facilitating migrants' social inclusion into the local society. Indeed, encouraging and supporting lifestyle entrepreneurship in Scotland for migrants (not only from Polish backgrounds) stimulates job creation and helps retaining migrants in satisfactory occupations (Deakins et al., 2005). Given the link between household settlement and entrepreneurial decisions, it is crucial to support MEs not only for starting-up but also to ensure the sustainability of their businesses. A welcoming receiving society benefits from migrants' integration within their labour market as well as in entrepreneurship (Deakins et al., 2005). To ensure that MEs are not too constrained within their limited community market, further support could be provided to MEs on gaining access to wider networks outside of their community (Cheong et al., 2007) and policy-makers should ensure that MEs are supported in their attempt to grow outside their community niche market.

To date, the range of these conclusions is limited by the set of data collected from a single population of entrepreneurs in a given context and would benefit from being expanded to MEs from other communities in various locations. Longitudinal studies conducted among a specific population of entrepreneurs would be useful in this respect. The individual's life stages may influence their ability to recognise *ad hoc* opportunities in the same manner than it does for Polish entrepreneurs settling in Glasgow, such as having children, paying for a mortgage, being unemployed, or career dissatisfaction as explanation for the incremental and changing entrepreneurial strategies among MEs.

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**Table 1**

Type of Business	Gender
S. computer-shop	M
M. garage	M
L. travel agency	F
B. delicatessen	M
U. book-shop	M

M. hairdresser	F
P. body-shop	M
A. construction	M
K. hairdresser	M
M & I, restaurant	F
L. legal adviser	F
H. legal adviser	M
P. construction	M
I. Hairdresser	F
A. Boxing School	M
K. IT	M
R. garage	M
A. Hairdresser	F
M. Driving School	M
M. Delicatessen	F
P. IT	M