

Theoretical Overview of Immigrant Entrepreneurship

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Theoretical Overview of Immigrant Entrepreneurship. In this article we review several different concepts related to immigrant incorporation in the labour market through self-employment. We also examine the main theoretical currents concerned with explaining the phenomenon, occasionally with particular attention to culturalist, ecological and interactive factors typical of the North American environment. However, the European case requires a new model, based on social embedment, analysing both market determinants and context of reception, which are usually stricter. Finally, we go on to the new perspectives of research that understands consolidation of immigrant entrepreneurs as a logical transnational action. Sociología 2009, Vol. 41 (No. 3: 199-221)

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Introduction

For more than forty years, a new field of research in economic relations has studied the proliferation of businesses run by immigrants or ethnic minorities. These initiatives, derived from the concept of *ethnic economy*, deal mainly with Korean businesses in Los Angeles or Cubans in Miami, although at present, it has become more of a phenomenon of expansion³, going beyond an exclusively North American model.

In a bibliographic review, different concepts and theories are found to have developed to interpret or describe a multicausal phenomenon. So, for example, one starting hypothesis is that self-employment is an anachronistic and endangered form of employment. (Weber 1958; Vidich – Bensman 1960;

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³ In Spain, the proliferation of businesses run by immigrants is just beginning, although this is no obstacle to business initiatives expanding in host cities or metropolitan areas with immigrant populations. So the literature that approaches this situation in our country is not very extensive, although there is no lack of case studies on specific cities or neighbourhoods. (See, among others, Beltrán 2000; Moreras 2002; Cebrián – Bodega 2004; Arjona 2004, 2006; Solé – Parella 2005, Arjona 2006)

Castles – Kosack 1973) However, others emphasize the economic and social success of such businesses. (Light 1972; 1980; Bonacich 1973; Rajman – Tienda 2003; Smart 2003) Similarly, some research has found that such initiatives are the result of an optional affinity for business (Bonacich 1973; 1975), as compared to other more structural or interactionist views. (Waldinger et al, 1990) In any case, these contradictory interpretations reveal a complex reality involving some important as yet unanswered questions.

Therefore, in this article, we review different concepts and theories that attempt to explain the proliferation of business initiatives. We also assess what is good about them, gaps in them and controversial theories, and then we add the latest advances and new lines of analysis in the field of ethnic enterprise.

On the Concept of *Ethnic Economy*

A conceptual network has grown up around ethnic enterprise relations in attempts to explain the different situations, finding that middleman minorities, enclave entrepreneurs, ethnic economy and ethnic enclave economy are all related.

Bonacich's pioneering studies on ethnic relations are based on the split labour market, the fragmentation of which causes ethnic antagonism⁴. Faced with this situation, immigrants design an opportunistic migratory project, trying to save as much as possible and return home soon, which makes self-employment the best choice. Bonacich calls these individuals *middleman minorities*. In this sense, the term minority implies subordination as well as smaller numbers⁵. The concept of *middleman* is more complex, since it is in a paradoxical situation in which economic success on one hand appears mixed with limited political power on the other.

Nevertheless, the essential characteristic of this view is self-employment in family businesses located in poor neighbourhoods or immigrant ghettos, mostly occupying job niches in the secondary sector abandoned by natives, although it is true that at present they have also moved into middle class neighbourhoods and perform activities in the services sector. In any case, they hardly establish any ties with the social structures in the community in which they carry out their economic activities. For example, a Moroccan who runs a business in a neighbourhood occupied mainly by Senegalese would be a middleman.

Along with this view, international literature makes reference to *enclave entrepreneurs*. They are defined mainly by co-ethnicity, both in their use of

⁴ In the words of Bonacich (1972: 549) "The term antagonism encompasses all types of inter-group conflict, including, in the first place, ideologies and beliefs – such as racism and prejudice – and later behaviour – discrimination, lynching, riots – and finally, institutions – laws that perpetuate segregation."

⁵ Although, for certain periods, the minority could sometimes become a numerical majority, such as the case of the Chinese in Western Malaysia or Singapore.

social structures and geographic location. That is, businesses that operate in immigrant neighbourhoods, where the majority are co-ethnics – not the case with middleman minorities – and there is a network of co-ethnic social ties that makes them self-sufficient, with no need to compete on an open market. Continuing with the above example, in this case the Moroccan has a business that only supplies co-ethnics who live near him.

In both these models, the difference is conditioned by the social and relational structures of the economic transactions, although these differences have no perfectly delimited sociological boundaries. How should a Moroccan entrepreneur who lives in a mostly Moroccan neighbourhood, but whose customers are mainly from another community less represented in that area be labelled? Again, we think that he is a skilled middleman who opens a business taking advantage of the opportunity offered him by a concentration of immigrants in another neighbourhood.

The second heavy focus of research in international literature distinguishes between ethnic economy and enclave economy. Light (1972) and Bonacich and Modell (1980) were the first to develop the concept of ethnic economy. For their construct, they primarily differentiated general economy employment from employment minority businesses create for themselves. As above, these authors base their theory on the premise of a split labour market caused by ethnic antagonism, the final result of which is the appearance of ethnic minorities, which end up being the seeds of an ethnic economy. As a result, these authors state that ethnic economy includes any immigrant who is an employer, self-employer or is employed in co-ethnic firms. In this sense, “The contours of an ethnic economy are defined by race, ethnicity, or national origin and its defining feature stems from the economic advantages afforded

At the present time, studies on ethnic economy continue to be included in the theory of *middleman minorities* (see, among others, Min 1996; Yeung 1999; Kim 1999 and Lee 2002), although elements of the interactionist approach have been incorporated, overcoming the strictly culturalist current to which the concept seems to be initially linked, so recent studies assess economic independence of immigrants and ethnic minorities more, and not just middleman minorities. “Economic independence, whether partial or total, represents a basic mechanism of self-defence for immigrants and ethnic minorities faced with exclusion and the disadvantages they have in the rest of the labour market. This allows them to overcome those disadvantages and they themselves can negotiate the terms of their participation in the labour market from a certain position of strength. (Light, 2003: 1) This new perception clearly shows that the ethnic economy functions, in the first place, as an internal labour market, protecting immigrants from competition on the general labour market, so that during times of recession in the general economy, where there is no

demand for labour, there are still collective migratory flows being employed in the ethnic economy. The internal functioning of this labour market allows co-ethnic salaried workers to set up their own businesses in turn (Bailey – Waldinger 1991; Waldinger 1993, Jiobu 1998), since they have the skills for creating their own businesses and teaching others what they have to do for it to work. (Waldinger 1985; Portes – Bach 1985; Portes – Manning 1986) Therefore, the ethnic economy often becomes a “school for entrepreneurs”. (Light et al, 1994)

In the second place, when they become totally independent of the general market, entrepreneurs belonging to the same sector, but from different origins – Jews, Japanese and Chinese, for example – interconnect, creating inter-ethnic economies that compete with the open mainstream markets.

This recent concept of an ethnic economy opens two main paths for analysis in current studies on the phenomenon. On one hand, job and social mobility among the members of the group that creates opportunities – employees and employers – and, on the other, variations in the level of economic integration, either of immigrants who enter the general economy through co-ethnic employment, or of ethnic minorities in different social contexts. (Light – Karageorgis 1994)

The concept of ethnic economic enclave comes from the literature on the split labour market⁶ (Averitt 1968; Doeringer – Piore 1971; Piore 1974), where several other elements are added to the concept of ethnic economy. (Zhou 2004) In the first place, the permanence of the business; in the second place, economic activities that are not exclusively commercial, but also include production for a general market; in the third place, a variety of trade beyond the succession of employment niches left by the natives; and finally, the territorial variable, that is, businesses must be concentrated in a certain physical area where the networks are. (See Light – Bonacich 1988; Waldinger 1993; Logan – Alba – McNulty 1994)

The first authors to refer to ethnic enclaves were Portes and Wilson (1980) and Wilson and Martin (1982) in their studies about Cubans in Miami. Both studies begin with a distinction between the *core economy*, characterized by large, vigorous, healthy companies, from the *peripheral economy*, characterized by backward businesses with scant development. Enclave economies emerge from this peripheral economy. After the arrival of a first wave of immigrants with a significant economic, human and social capital, they settle in a certain area and set up a large number of businesses and companies. From here they are supplied with cheap labour, taking advantage of

⁶ However, the origins of ethnic enclave theories also have a reference in the middleman minority. In the enclave, relations between entrepreneurs and employees are also ruled by ethnic solidarity. (Massey 1988)

the successive waves of co-ethnics who arrive; and, thanks to this concentration, an integrated cultural component is also generated based on *ethnic solidarity* (Massey 1988: 31) and executable trust. (Portes – Zhou 1992) Therefore, while this process is successful in the enclave, new businesses will continue to proliferate, surpassing the postulates of the split market theory, which emphasise “obligatory” incorporation of immigrants in the secondary labour market. Furthermore, with this new use of space, the assimilation forecast by the authors of the Chicago School is slowed down, since within the enclave, ethnic group identity is revived and revitalized, benefiting economic success of the entrepreneurs. In all, what seems clear is that ethnic enclave economy is less frequent than ethnic economy. In this sense, Haller (2004) believes that large ethnic enclaves, such as those created by the Koreans in Los Angeles and the Cubans in Miami do not exist in Europe.

Nevertheless, the special delimitation of firms and opportunity structure in the enclave have awakened a debate concerning real possibilities for success. In this sense, Sanders and Nee (1987) maintain that the more segregated a group is, the worse its chances of economic improvement are. They question the empirical work of Portes, since he included both owners and employees in the category “enclave workers” in his research on Cubans in Miami, swelling the percentage. They also doubt that upward mobility within the enclave is so generalized. Mobility may be achieved by entrepreneurs, but enclave workers – who are usually cheap labour – have poor working conditions and are in a servile position to the employer in terms of gratefulness.

In their reply, Portes and Jensen (1987; 1989) define the ethnic enclave based on the labour offer, that is, entrepreneur use of resources is due to the ethnic social network, which finally allows upward social mobility. This way, isolation benefits the ethnic group, since it increases its income and accumulation of capital (both human and social). Furthermore, these authors clarify that different relationships may exist between immigrants and the enclave, that is, first, those who live and work in the enclave area; second, those who work in this area, but live outside of it; third, those who live in the enclave area, but work outside of it, and fourth, those members of the ethnic group who neither live nor work in the enclave area. As may be surmised from the above, working in the enclave does not always mean living in it; but it can become a sort of shelter, where individuals can find work without having to depend on mainstream employers or acculturation.

However, neither the concept of ethnic economy nor the ethnic economic enclave specifically refer to the system under which the businesses are held or their regulation. That is why later, *ownership* is distinguished from *ethnic control*. Light and Gold (2000: 5) note that, “these definitions are only valid for describing the *ethnic ownership economy*, which is only one component of

ethnic economy and the enclave, and not the whole". An *ethnic ownership economy* is defined by the ownership of the businesses. This has the effect of hiring co-ethnic employees with a wider margin of profit for the owner. In contrast, "*ethnic-controlled economies* exist when, and to the extent that, co-ethnic employees exercise an appreciable and persistent economic power on the workplace, due to their numerical clustering, numerical preponderance and organisation, but also by external, political or economic mandate" (Light – Gold 2000: 23), in such a way that these immigrants are able to make decisions on matters related to salaries or contractual frameworks that regulate the relationships between workers and employer.

Moreover, both the ethnic-controlled economy and the ethnic ownership economy have formal, informal and illegal subsectors. (Tienda – Raijman 2000) The formal sector is made up of businesses that pay taxes and are officially registered. The informal sector includes businesses which produce legal goods and merchandise, but neither pay taxes nor are officially recognised. (Bourgeois 1995) The illegal subsector is made up of businesses that manufacture or distribute prohibited products or merchandise, including drugs, gambling and counterfeit documents.

In any case, the fact is that at the present time there are quite a lot of unknowns still to be resolved concerning the concepts derived from the ethnic entrepreneur, gaps that must be undertaken in detail in future studies. Thus, for example, not much is known about the conditions necessary for an enclave to emerge, the costs and benefits of working in this type of ethnic enterprise, company size, services and products offered customers, marketing, or whether the ethnic labour market has the characteristics and properties of primary, secondary or own market. These questions and their variables undoubtedly affect both spatial, social and cultural logic and economy.

Faced with these and other difficulties posed, many authors prefer to speak simply of *ethnic economy* (Waldinger 1993: 450) or of *ethnic enclave*, as a specific case of the first. (Light – Bonacich 1988; Light – Karageorgis 1994; Logan – Alba – McNulty 1994; Light – Gold 2000; Zhou 2004) Thus, as Tienda and Raijman (2000: 442) state, "the *ethnic economy* is intended only to distinguish whether work opportunities for a specific group are exclusive or inclusive, irrespective of the residential clustering of interdependent firms, which is a unique attribute of an ethnic enclave. Accordingly ... we refer to *ethnic economy* as the general concept and *ethnic enclave* as a specific case."

The following table illustrate these concepts; on the one hand, included within the general concept of ethnic economy, the three main types that can occur: middleman minorities, enclave entrepreneur and ethnic enclave economies, on the other hand, we distinguish between ownership and control, which refers the ownership of the business and is

a variable that can be given in any of the foregoing types of entrepreneurs, because the important thing here is whether the owner of the business or only exercised control over it.

Table 1. How Ethnic Economies are Formed and their Typology

ETHNIC ECONOMIES		
<p>MIDDLEMAN MINORITIES – Derived from the <i>Middleman minorities</i> and <i>Split labour market theories</i>. – Entrepreneurs who plan to stay a short time, want to save fast and go home – In an intermediate position between economic success and scant political power – Seeds of ethnic economies.</p>	<p>ENCLAVE ENTREPRENEUR – Derived from the <i>Middleman minorities theory</i>. – Entrepreneurs who take advantage of the ethnic clustering in certain areas of the city – Self-employed and self-employers, unpaid family workers, co-ethnic employees.</p>	<p>ETHNIC ENCLAVE ECONOMIES – Derived from the Dual Labour Market Theory – An ethnic economy clustered around a territorial core – Territorial clustering of businesses, economic interdependence.</p>
OWNERSHIP OR CONTROL		
<p>FORMAL – Made up of businesses that pay taxes and are officially registered</p>	<p>INFORMAL – Includes businesses that produce legal goods and merchandise, although they neither pay taxes nor are they officially registered.</p>	<p>ILLEGAL – Made up of businesses that manufacture or distribute prohibited products or merchandise, including drugs, gambling and counterfeit documents</p>

Source: Author.

Explanatory Theories on the Development of Ethnic Economies

There are many currents of thought on the appearance of immigrant business initiatives⁷ in the societies where they are set up. However, the three most likely categories distinguish the culturist, ecological and interactionist views, typical of the North American environment (Waldinger et al, 1985), to which must be added the theory of mixed embeddedness, developed in Europe. (Kloosterman et al, 1999)

The culturist view, pioneer in this field, maintains that certain immigrant groups have an optional affinity and qualities required for success in business, or in other words, immigrants opt for self-employment either because of a commercial tradition, or for religious reasons, that provide the individual with ample knowledge of his profession. Thus, for example, this is the argument offered by Glazer (1955) to explain the business practice of Jews in the United States, also valid for the Chinese, Japanese, Indians or Koreans. (Light 1972;

⁷ Certain classic economic sociology papers (see for example, Marx 1976; Weber 1958; Wirth 1928; Schumpeter 1975 or Simmel 1977) refer to horizontal commercial activities of certain ethnic and religious minorities. Even certain ideas are reflected in some explanatory theories of ethnic economy, such as the theory of ecological or cultural disadvantage.

Bonacich 1975; Kim 1981)⁸ Therefore, according to this theory, the differences in labour market incorporation of different groups may be explained by their distinctive economic backgrounds, and success or failure of their enterprise is framed by certain unique cultural traits. (Suttles 1972; Light 1972; 1980; Bonacich 1973; Rajjman – Tienda 2003; Smart 2003)

In parallel – and along with this culturist current – is the theory of disadvantage. When E. Bonacich (1973) delves into the origin of business initiatives, she maintains that they are created as cultural and economic responses to a split and hostile labour market (*reactive ethnicity*), generating *middleman minorities*. That is, exclusion from the labour market usually forces immigrants to seek sustenance in trade through self-employment. This gives rise in the group, on one hand, to search for intra-group networks based on ethnic solidarity (Light – Bonacich 1988); on the other, self-exploitation – of their family and salaried co-ethnics – who ensure their stability and mobility by reducing risks and costs. Thus, Bonacich (1973) identified family businesses as a mechanism of adaptation of temporary workers or *sojourners*.

As a result, solidarity, skills and the split labour market are elements necessary for an ethnic business to appear; in other words, there must be a labour niche and exploitation of resources for the enterprise.

The culturalist explanation and the analyses of Bonacich are not without criticism. On one hand, cultural variables leading to setting up a business do not in themselves explain the process. Fairlie and Meyer (1996) point out that there is no clear correlation between business tradition and self-employment at destination. Light and Rosenstein (1995, 2001) explain the case of Cuban entrepreneurs in California along the same lines. In their explanations, Portes and Zhou (1992) recur to other factors that have more to do with assets than with an original commercial, business tradition.

Furthermore, the immigrant workers are not always temporary (sojourners) nor do they have the intention of going home as assumed by Bonacich, but become settlers –such as the Jews and Koreans-. This may be due to the fact that individuals who plan to return shortly to their countries rarely make the investment or effort observed in middleman minorities.

However, some of the culturalist postulates are still valid today, partially explaining why the enterprises of certain communities in the U.S., such as Koreans, Jews, Pakistanis, etc., are usually more frequent and lasting than others, for example Mexicans.

The second stream of thought attempting to explain business initiatives is the *ecological* theory. Its arguments include two lines of analysis: in the first place, they start out by comparing modern economies and economies in the

⁸ Waldinger et al (1985) call this peripheral literature, understood as studies oriented toward knowledge of Chinese and Japanese-American groups, which mainly explore the business success and social mobility of Asian minorities.

hands of a small business class. In the second place, the crucial factor is the pattern of spatial succession, first among residents, neighbours and then, the small business class. (Aldrich 1975)

Consequently, ethnic businesses are only opened when there are services and job offers that the global economy does not satisfy. This situation derives from the progressive abandon by the mainstream population that had small businesses, to become part of a more global, profitable market. Immigrants then move in and occupy labour niches in spaces that have been abandoned (*vacancy chain*).

In this sense, one of the most significant works that moved the “analysis of succession in the residential area” to “succession in business ownership” was done by Aldrich and Reiss (1976). These two authors studied the change in control of certain local-economy businesses, from natives to immigrants, in three North American cities. Their results showed that, on one hand, while the proportion of white merchants diminished the percentage of Black Porto Rican entrepreneurs increased. On the other, the new white entrepreneurs relocated their activities in areas where they made more profits and there were fewer immigrants, while the immigrants, faced with the impossibility of settling in socially better areas, were forced to locate in places abandoned by the natives, setting up their businesses there and making profits that the first already considered non-existent.

Later Aldrich (1980) himself found a significant correlation in Great Britain between the percentage of Commonwealth-country population and shops run by Asians and Indians. So the growth of ethnic businesses is related to the demand for ethnic products and services that the population cannot find anywhere else and therefore makes them competitive and profitable compared to the general market.

In the third place, the interactive model is determined by economic postulates. Its starting proposal maintains that there is an interconnection between the internal resources enjoyed by the community and the external opportunity structure. Or, in other words, self-employment is a response to the split labour market and opportunities blocked to immigrants, although they depend on the adequacy of what the groups can offer to what their consumers demand (Waldinger 1984), an idea that comes basically from ecological proposals.

This theory suggests that ethnic businesses proliferate in industries where demands of the developed economy are in equilibrium with the informal resources of the ethnic population. (Light – Rosenstein 1995) As a result, the owners of ethnic businesses are competitive with mainstream owners. This is demonstrated by a series of case studies carried out in New York (Gallo 1983; Waldinger 1984; Freedman – Korazim 1985), in which immigrant owners use

the resources available to them to solve the problems that arise in small business.

Therefore, according to the interactionist model, the appearance and maintenance of ethnic businesses is the result of an ethnic strategy that is determined by the characteristics of the group and the opportunity structure. (Waldinger – Aldrich – Ward 1990) From this combination of factors, these authors base their proposal on four basic pillars: market conditions, access to ownership, predisposition and mobilisation of resources. Market conditions are determined by the potential ethnic products and open, non-ethnic markets; access to ownership depends on government policies and free business without competition for labour. Predisposition is defined by the desires of the immigrants and migratory characteristics – knowledge of language, business training, seasonal migration, etc. Finally, mobilisation of resources is made up mainly of co-ethnic ties that provide cheap labour to this sector, to the point that they sometimes come directly from their countries to work in those companies – own labour markets – (Waldinger 1985; 1986; Wong 1997) and, at the same time, some employees acquire skills to set up business on their own, becoming a school for entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, this integrating current is the one most widely accepted in American literature, although it is mainly valid for the North American setting and has been shown to be insufficient to explain the phenomenon outside of the Anglo-Saxon world. Thus, for example, the institutional framework and economic and political context in which the entrepreneur enters is undervalued.

Finally, in the European framework, explanations have emerged that emphasise the context of reception and the legal-regulatory frameworks as key elements in the formation of ethnic entrepreneurs. This model, called *mixed embeddedness*, “social embedment”, originates in the studies of Kloosterman et al (1999). Compared to the position of *interactionism* – focused on excessive economicism⁹ – the concept of *fit* or *mixed embeddedness* introduces an own opportunity structure¹⁰ which includes both consumer demands and the regulatory regime. (Kloosterman – Van der Leun – Rath 1999: 257)

In the *mixed embeddedness* theories, ethnic economies depend on the adequacy of what groups can offer and what they are allowed to offer, plus what the relationship between consumer demand and what groups offer, as in the North American model. Therefore, the tendency of governments toward a certain ethnic group is as important as the demands of the potential customers. So any analysis

⁹ Here economicism means the hidden assumption that consumer demand is the only thing that ethnic enterprise has to satisfy, forgetting equally important dependence on regulatory regimes. (Light 2002)

¹⁰ Based on globalisation, the theory of mixed embeddedness can be analysed from a broader framework, by asking how ethnic economies adapt to the global opportunity structure. Globalisation widens demand and the repertoire of consumer tastes, promoting businesses that offer exotic and cultural specialty products and services. (Collins et al., 1995: 101; Romney 1999: 130)

in the European setting on ethnic economy must be approached taking into account not only social networks used (embeddedness), but also the socioeconomic structure and institutional policy in the host society, since it is in this area where part of the immigrant opportunity structure is going to be defined, beyond their human capital.

This proposal is ratified by Rath and Kloosterman (2000) in their study of the success of Turks in the Netherlands where they discover that it basically depends on the permissiveness of authorities, even though they know of the existence of informal business practices – non-payment of taxes, non-registration, etc., and even illegal practices.

In view of the above, Kloosterman himself (2000) puts forward a typology for embeddedness models. In the first place, the Neo-American Model, typical of the United States and repeated in Australia, Ireland and England, covers countries where economic adaptation has undergone considerable development and significant employment rates are accompanied by low salaries, with very little government control of redistribution and public services. These premises make it very attractive for immigrants to set up a business, to the point where in some cities and in certain minorities the self-employment rate is better than for the natives.

In the second place, the Rhineland model, in Austria, France, Luxemburg and Germany, is an approach contrary to the above: high salaries and job security in exchange for high unemployment, which leads to strong state control of migratory flows, with strong impediments and obstacles for immigrant insertion in the labour market. It is therefore a model characterised by an *insider/outsider* structural dichotomy. In this case, the self-employment rates among the immigrants are no higher than for the natives. (Haller 2004)

Finally, the *Nordic model*, characteristic of Denmark and Sweden, is based on strong state control of the economy/industrial network similar to the Rhineland model. The real difference is in an awareness revolving around active labour market policies, expansion of the welfare state and gender equality. In this model, the proliferation of ethnic entrepreneurs is lower than elsewhere; the regulation of labour relations and equal opportunity policies makes immigrants opt for insertion in the open economy market.

It may be surmised that considerable effort has been made to fit the social and economic reality of entrepreneurs to the European framework, however, the situation of the Spanish case does not respond to any of the models described. The most appropriate would be the Rhineland model, but with significant variants. In fact, the economies in the Southern European countries¹¹, among which we include Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal, have some distinctive characteristics:

¹¹ So as not to go into the characteristics of the migratory system in Southern Europe, see Arango (1993).

very high percentages of underground economy –over 35 per cent– in such sectors as agriculture, shoes, domestic service, etc., high unemployment rate in comparison to other States in Central and Northern Europe, enormous regional differences, increased temporary and insecure employment – mainly in agriculture, construction, personal services and the restaurant and hotel business – versus stable and well paid jobs. We therefore dare to define a model more in agreement with this reality that we are going to call, following the Anglo-Saxon terminology *South-European Model*. In this model, ethnic entrepreneurs have to overcome an enormous number of obstacles to reach their goal of setting up a business and for it to prosper, so they remain at the expenses of external contextual decisions with very little margin for internal business initiatives.

New Advances in Research

The previous sections are dedicated to the development of a theoretical and conceptual framework on the ethnic economy from a classical analysis, highlighting the concern of researchers for classifying and defining the situation in a national context. However, studies now go a step further and focus on new forms of interpretation of the migratory movements, more ambitious, taking into account events that are beyond the control of a border state. Therefore, in the framework of global economic transformation, ethnic economy must also be assessed beyond the local or national contexts they are located in, since one of the basic characteristics of migratory processes is the transnational way of life¹². The appearance of this new opportunity structure leads researchers in this phenomenon to break with the conceptual and analytical structures of past tendencies, emphasising new opportunity structures and the novel elements this concept contributes – balance, diversity, density, regular movement, etc. (Waldinger – Fitzgerald 2004)

Transnationalism encompasses all “...the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” “Immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders (distinguishing here international relations – among several nations – multi-national – among several nations – and transnational – represented by the non-institutional actors of civil society.) Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, religious or political, that span borders are called *transmigrants*. An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that these transmigrants sustain in both home and in the host societies... Transmigrants take actions, make decisions and develop

¹² Guarnizo (2004: 57) defines, this concept in the following terms: “Transnational life refers to a broad panoply of cross-border social, cultural, political and economic relations that emerge, intentionally or unexpectedly, from the pressure of migrants to maintain and reproduce at a distance their home socio-cultural setting.

subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect simultaneously to two or more nation-states". (Basch et al, 1994: 7)

In this way, transnationalism gives rise to new structures and forces that determine ethnic business relationships. Portes et al (1999) forwarded a three-sector transnationalism typology (economic, political, socio-cultural) on two levels of institutionalisation (high and low) and define transnationalism as measurable occupations and recurring activities that require regular sustained cross-border relationships over time. In the economic sector they distinguish, according to the level of institutionalisation, between sellers of the informal economy that cross borders with their products and the large multinational corporations that invest in underdeveloped countries. The political sector may include from slightly institutionalised actors, such as immigrant associations, to consulates and embassies. Finally, in the socio-cultural sphere, high institutionalisation is observed in musical or cultural events organised by public administrations and the low level in festivals organised by immigrant associations¹³. Many ethnic entrepreneurs fit perfectly in this description, since they are the main hub of union for all three sectors, generally on a level of low institutionalisation.

In traditional trade, economic networks are based on trust and on moral ties dictated by a common ethnicity or cultural heritage –origin, religion, language. For the transnational entrepreneur, in contrast, these networks do not necessarily have to be linked to the family or relatives, and even demonstrate the existence of weak and out-of-context ties. (Granovetter 1973; Yoon 1995) Or, in other words, strong ties – family – in the transnational logic can be less important and beneficial than weak exclusively professional ties. Thus, transnational networks tend to be diverse: some entrepreneurs are oriented more toward their home countries, while others are toward the hosts; some have more open limits, while others have a very exclusive number of members, etc. (See Gold 2001) That is, for the transnational business relationship, networks are very important sources of capital assets.

Concerning the functioning of transnational enterprises, recent research¹⁴ has shown that transnational activities are not affected as much by the same causal processes, such as structural disadvantages associated with the immigrant, that affect ethnic business relations. Therefore, in the logic of transnational economics, there may be very highly skilled immigrants who have left well-paid salaried jobs to begin their own business activity, making

¹³ For further reading on these sectors of action and levels of institutionalisation. (See Escrivá 2004)

¹⁴ Rather a lot of literature has appeared in the United States studying the relationship between transnationalism and business relations. (Grasmuck – Pessar 1991; Portes – Guarnizo 1991; Durand et al., 1996; Gold 1997, 2001; Mahler 1999; Guarnizo 1997; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Li 1997; Vertovec 2004; Wong 2004; Roudometof 2005; Moldenhauer 2005, among others) These case studies have attempted to explain a wide variety of situations in transnational business relations, analyzing the advantages to the entrepreneur of his business acquiring a transnational character.

good use of their skills, their biculturalism and transnational networks. (See Portes et al., 1999; Gold 2001; Light et al., 2002; Guarnizo 2004). On the other hand, there may also be other less qualified immigrants who have also shown a similar tendency toward transnational business relations, although their practices seem to be oriented more toward sending remittances to their country of origin. (Itzigsohn 1995; Goldring 1996; Popkin 1999) However it is observed that when these groups carry out small-scale transnational activities, but with signs of power, the governments of origin promote and/or sponsor such transnational business relationships.

Landolt *et al* have designed an excellent classification for analysing the appearance and consolidation of the new ethnic enterprise fabric from the transnational viewpoint. According to them, four types of transnational enterprise can be distinguished: “The first type is related to financial services that include informal remittances and that are performed by agencies, financing companies and banking entities to take advantage of the investments. The second type is the “import/export” of diverse materials that include manufactured durable and perishable goods. This is the transfer of exotic handicrafts from relatives who act as informal couriers (...) (Here they distinguish two subtypes: one, travellers who deliver mail and other products to family members every time they travel and, two, entrepreneurs who cross from one side to the other with their suitcases full of products that they will later sell in the street) or formally, the products sent by businesses and trading companies – by land, by sea and by air. The third takes in several different cultural businesses, including, on one hand, commercial music films, videos or CDs and on the other, products related to the culture of origin, books, musical materials, generally imported in the language of the immigrant. The fourth includes industry, operating as separate units of a business or as a single company because of national limits. The fifth and last type are *return migrant microenterprises* that are set up by returnees, such as restaurants, video stores, laundromats, car sales and repair. This is a business that is set up in the place of origin with the wages of the migratory worker and the personal economies hoarded in the United States”. (Landolt et al, 1999: 296)

Therefore, the first cases of transnational enterprise in the classification above, the model of a multi-management network based on franchises and outsourcing, under the umbrella of a large multinational corporation, may also be co-ethnic. This type of multi-management generates an interwoven fabric of strategic alliances that makes them very competitive, both on the open and ethnic markets. They also change the inter-enterprise structure for this, organizing themselves horizontally, getting all the information from the markets and overcoming some of the pernicious effects of their constant changes.

It is also beneficial to control or be the owner of transnational companies insofar as refers to job security, economic independence, income and social recognition by co-ethnics – both in the host country and country of origin. However, these advantages are often exclusively for individuals and do not automatically expand collectively. Researchers find that transnational ethnic business activities regularly have repercussions on only a small minority of group members, and their weight in the balance of recognition of economic, social and political success is relative. (Itzigsohn et al., 1999; Portes et al., 2002) In fact, the transnational business relationship can impose a whole new game full of obstacles and difficulties, in which not all transnational practices positively affect social mobility and escape from split markets. (Gold 2001; Arjona – Checa 2005)

To summarise, transnational business relations can often be observed to create more opportunities for individuals in the group than an impact on the whole ethnic group or community.

In Conclusion

This text covers, from the first studies to the present, the conceptual and theoretical network explaining how immigrants are incorporated in the job market as self-employed labour, a phenomenon that surpasses the simple fact of registering as such.

The concepts included in the notion of ethnic economy – middleman minorities, enclave entrepreneurs, ethnic economy and enclave economy – can be used interchangeably and lead to confusion when they are not the same. Thus for example, ethnic minorities and enclave entrepreneurs are analytically different categories which make the concept of ethnic economy a catchall phrase which may be a starting point or endpoint for any definition or situation related to entrepreneurship. This conceptual confusion explains, according to Zhou (2004), the discordances existing among studies faced with the same phenomenon. That is why in no case should the economic enclave be confused or equated with a ghetto. Since the enclave is not only equivalent to the concentration of persons or of businesses in a certain area, but defines the social environment and group identity. The clustering of ethnic businesses reaffirms the identity of belonging to the group. (Pecoud 2004)

Among the different explanatory theories – the cultural theory of the enterprising spirit, the ecological approach, the interactive approach and the theory of mixed embeddedness – the last two explain the process the best, although the first is the best for the North American setting and the second for the European. Furthermore, the other two approaches complement and explain the complex phenomenon of the ethnic entrepreneur.

In spite of it all, and due to the complexity of the Spanish case, we introduce a new model (*South-European Model*) more appropriate to the particular characteristics of the labour market and strict regulatory regime. This is because, despite the desire of immigrants to open their way in business, the receiving context forces them to work in job niches reviled by mainstream labour, at the same time they are watched suspiciously by those who have achieved some success in business.

However, new theories must be found in the various approaches that delve deeper and more exclusively into the differences between these businesses and the open market, explaining the differences that come from the origin of the entrepreneurs, of whether the differences stem from their strategies, employer-employee relationships, the products offered, customers, physical location or a combination of them all. And in any case, what elements most influence the entire process, why and under what conditions, etc., and whether the logic is similar for all communities. On the other hand, there is no census that confirms whether the proper functioning of the ethnic economy pertains – within the split labour market – to the first segment or the second or whether, to the contrary, it is a different segment that shares characteristics with the other two, in which case we might have to allude to an ethnic niche construct as a leveraging element in the ethnic economy.

The traditional analysis of ethnic entrepreneurs is dedicated towards an idea of territoriality associated with the target company; however, current studies show an employer engaged in logic of transnational social and economic relations, which are beyond the control of the state border.

Moreover, transnationalism is a basic element explaining how today's ethnic economy functions, where the idea of a business fabric made up of small, informal businesses and circumscribed to the space where they are located must be broken with. Nevertheless, as we have seen, transnational relationships do not necessarily impact in the same way on the individual and the community. Results and conclusions are still poorly defined because they are based on cases studies and not on more global analyses.

In conclusion, and following Rath and Kloosterman (2000), we propose different levels of analysis of ethnic businesses that help to solve the matters now under review: first, approach the study of the ethnic entrepreneur individually from the beginning, in order to find out the motives leading them to go into business and find out their innovating character. In the second place, study what elements in the opportunity structure they use, making special emphasis on the density and size of networks, as well as trust between co-ethnics. Third, find out the political-institutional framework in which the business is framed and their transnational character. Finally, although based on

case studies, compare and seek out elements in common with international studies.

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