Book Review

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Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs: History, Cases, and Frontiers
by: Ivan Light, Léo-Paul Dana and Didier Chabaud
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The 'immigrant' and 'refugee' entrepreneurship has come to be a significant lens through which researchers, scholars and policymakers interpret migration and economic integration with innovation. The book, *Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs: History, Cases, and Frontiers*, edited by Ivan Light, Léo-Paul Dana and Didier Chabaud is a timely and comprehensive piece of scholarly work that connects the dots of the theory, empirical evidence, and policy relevance. The book is based on literature, multi-sited case-studies, and all these points are based on the historical, contemporary, and transnational outlooks providing an excellent point of view on the economic and social impact of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.

Part 1: foundations – defining the field and historical theory

The first chapter, 'Immigrant, ethnic minority, and refugee entrepreneurs: introducing the field by the two editors' (Ivan Light and Leo-Paul Dana), is a prelude as it focuses on the significance of introducing rigorous research beyond academia to outer world. The authors recognise the socio-political urgency of comprehending the business of immigrants and refugees due to the overall underestimation of their economic and social contribution in spite of the vast amount of scholarly research. This chapter outlines the purpose of the book as it offers the reader, whether students or scholars as well as informed laypeople, a high-level but overarching introduction to the subject of migrant entrepreneurship, placing personal agency in structural, social, and policy realms.

Chapter 2, 'History of theory: immigrant entrepreneurs' by Ivan Light builds on this base following the intellectual development of the field. Light documents the conflict between the paradigms of structuralist social science and the necessity to consider the entrepreneurial agency. By offering the notion of mixed embeddedness, he brings together the views on structural and agency-based approaches and states that the

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entrepreneurship of immigrants should be viewed as an outcome of both social and economic opportunity structures and mediated by social and cultural capital. This theoretical prism gives the framework of the following empirical and conceptual investigations of the volume.

Part 2: case studies – empirical insights across time and space

Part 2 provides a set of various case studies on how theory is applied and applied to the empirical contexts, in the ways the agency and the structure interplay between geographical, temporal, and socio-political frames.

Chapter 3 by Leo-Paul Dana focuses on Azorean returnees, who had worked in North America, but came back to Portugal and engaged in self-employment. With the help of qualitative interviews, Dana emphasises that the decision to establish businesses was made with the help of socialisation with other returnees and savings made. These enterprises were not necessarily aimed at growth but were a personal gratification and earning. The mixed embeddedness framework by light echoes the findings of Dana that a mixed embeddedness entails interaction between individual agency and structural and social opportunities.

The analysis of immigrant entrepreneurship in Germany by Maria Elo (as presented in Chapter 4) shifts focus to the micro-level motivations to the macro-level structures. Elo demonstrates that migrant businesses become more and more involved in mainstream markets and global value chains. Her article emphasises a contribution by national structures and entrepreneurial ecosystems to opportunity making, which supplements the personal and social resources that Dana discusses.

Chapter 5, authored by Stefan Lang, Maria Ivanova-Gongne and Jonas Lagerstrom, explores the topic of refugee entrepreneurship in the EU, and how the policies of reception, legal barriers and the attitude of the society affect the entrepreneurial paths. The authors highlight the heterogeneity of refugees in terms of skills, resources, and motivations showing that structural circumstances have a powerful impact on the situation even in case of the strong agency.

Orly Meron contributes to the historical dimension in Chapter 6; she examines the topic of Jewish immigrant entrepreneurs in late Renaissance Italy. Meron uses Milan and Tuscany to demonstrate how culture resources and institutional support gave the Jewish immigrants the ability to fuel economic growth noting similarities to modern situations where structural opportunity and social capital is at the centre of entrepreneurial success.

Chapter 7 of Antoine Pecoud studies German-Turkish entrepreneurship and combines ethnography with the social-political analysis. Pecoud demonstrates how the Turkish migrants cope with labour market exclusion and social prejudice, and one of their strategies is to start a business to be integrated in the society. The chapter emphasises the symbolic and monetary worth of ethnic business, which points to structural constraints, discriminating recognition, and entrepreneurial toughness.

All these case studies together demonstrate the multi-scalar and comparative aspects of immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship. They depict that although entrepreneurial agency is universal, the contextual structural, cultural and policy firms in which it is exercised change diverse by space, time and community.

Part 3: theoretical frontiers – values, practices, and inclusion

The last part of the volume develops theoretical knowledge. A heuristic framework connecting the economic and social values is developed by Edwards, Ram and McCarthy (Chapter 8), and it shows that the micro and small business are directed by the goal of profit and more consequential familial, communal and moral and ethical aspects. This framework works in tandem with the mixed embeddedness approach as it brings in the interaction between value systems that are informed by culture in business decisions.

Calin Gurau (Chapter 9) goes further to include transnational migrant entrepreneurship, in which he focuses on transnational capital, the capacity to capitalise on networks and knowledge in both home and host countries. Gurau explains the implementation of entrepreneurial agency across borders by migrants in a practice theory perspective, reflecting the globalised and multi-locational aspect of modern immigrant business practice.

Lastly, Natalia Vershinina (Chapter 10) asks the question of whether entrepreneurial ecosystems are inclusive of marginalised and transnational entrepreneurs. She claims that mainstream ecosystems tend to favour the native-born entrepreneurs, and they leave the immigrants who depend on parallel networks. Vershinina demands the incorporation of the variety of support systems that are culturally-appropriate to nurture truly inclusive entrepreneurial settings that focus on the policy relevancy and systemic equity.

Contribution and significance

Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs: History, Cases, and Frontiers has several useful merits:

1 Theoretical synthesis: Mixed embeddedness and social, cultural and transnational capital and values and ecosystem inclusivity models are powerful analysis tools in the hands of the scholars.

2 Empirical richness: The book addresses the modern Europe, transnationality, and past circumstances, demonstrating consistency and variation in immigrant entrepreneurship.

3 Policy relevance: Chapters suggest the possibilities presented by legal, economic and social structures, which gives guidance of inclusive policies and entrepreneurial ecosystem development.

4 Education value: The book is neither too easy nor too complex and this is what makes it a comprehensive source to students, novice scholars and policy makers.

Conclusions

The book has managed to achieve its goal of balancing theory, empirical research and practical applicability. The fact that it has cautiously combined historical, modern, and transnational approaches, as well as how it has considered the social values and ecosystem inclusivity, makes it a vital source of information to scholars, educators, and

practitioners working in the field of migration, entrepreneurship, and economic integration. The editors offer an ultimate guide to the comprehension of one of the most powerful and vibrant phenomena of the 21st century by illustrating that immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship is both socially embedded, economically strategic and culturally mediated.

References

Light, I., Dana, L-P. and Chabaud, D. (2025) *Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs: History, Cases, and Frontiers*, Springer Nature, Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland.