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THE TRANSFERABILITY AND MOBILISABILITY OF TRANSNATIONAL RESOURCES:

The case of Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland

Abstract

The article presents results from research on migrant entrepreneurs from Turkey in Finland. Previous research on migrant entrepreneurship indicates that transnational ties may play a role in the running of migrant businesses. In this article, I argue that there is a need to analytically make a distinction between the *transferability* and the *mobilisability* of transnational social resources. Distinguishing between the two concepts makes it possible to analyse the utilisation of transnational resources more specifically than a simple descriptive study of transnational ties would allow. To focus solely on the existence of transnationalism might overlook the fact that not all ties and resources can necessarily be utilised by migrants in a given social context characterised by unequal power relations. My research results suggest that a consideration of broader networks of power, including state policies, provides a key to understanding how transnational social resources can be utilised among entrepreneurs in Finland.

Keywords

immigrant businesses • mobilisability • multi-scalar • transnational migration • transnational social ties

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Introduction

The transnational perspective in migration research has enriched the study of economic activities among migrant groups. There is a great deal of evidence of the use of transnational resources in the establishment and running of migrant small businesses. Yet, much of the evidence of the existence of transnational social ties is mainly descriptive, and less knowledge exists of the processes connected to the utilisation of transnational resources. In this article, I argue that it is analytically useful to distinguish between the *transferability* and the *mobilisability* of transnational social resources. This is a distinction that also has wider applicability in research on transnationalism. "Transferability" is a concept I have adapted from the work of Thomas Faist (2000a) and relates to the border-crossing capacity of transnational social ties. "Mobilisability" is a concept I have borrowed from the work of Floya Anthias (2007), and in my analysis, it relates to the possibility of a social actor utilising the transnational resource under study. While transferability describes the ability of a resource to be moved across borders, mobilisability describes the actual value that the resource has in each given social context. This distinction between the two concepts makes it possible to analyse the utilisation of transnationally available resources more precisely than a simple descriptive study of transnational ties would permit. A consideration of the mobilisability of transnational social resources makes the analysis sensitive to structures of unequal power relations. As an empirical example, I here present results from my research on the utilisation of transnational resources among immigrant entrepreneurs from Turkey in Finland. The presentation focuses on those resources available in transnational social ties, e.g. social capital, that the interviewed entrepreneurs potentially can utilise in the running of their businesses.

Transnational perspectives

The early work of migration scholars was often focused on arguing for the necessity of a transnational perspective in studies of migration and the importance of transnational social fields (e.g. Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton 1992). The early academic debates about transnationalism also made the case for a transnational perspective that would take into account the emergence of new transnational communities (e.g. Faist 2000a; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999). Today, the need to overcome deeply rooted "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002) and to avoid an erroneous "container view of society" (Amelina

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& Faist 2012; Beck 1999) is widely accepted in migration research. Likewise, in studies on immigrant entrepreneurship, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the transnational perspective. This includes studies on transnational social ties among migrant small businesses (e.g. Faist 2000b; Katila & Wahlbeck 2012) and studies on "transnational entrepreneurship" as a specific type of business activity (e.g. Drori, Honig & Wright 2009; Jones, Ram & Theodorakopoulos 2010; Morawska 2004; Portes, Haller & Guarnizo 2002).

Transnationalism indicates a social relation over and beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Yet, in transnationalism research, there is reason to still take into account the role of political constraints, including the state and state politics. This has recently been emphasised by Roger Waldinger (2015) in his book *The Cross-Border Connection*, but as many reviewers of the book (e.g. Faist 2015; Glick Schiller 2015; Levitt 2015) point out, the role of the state has always been part of the transnational approach. The pioneering book *Nations Unbound* (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994) had specifically addressed and documented the processes of nation-state building in home and host countries as well as the impact of these processes on the political practices and identities of migrants. The discussion about political constraints relates to more general issues concerning a theorisation of transnational ties. First, the importance of transnationalism always needs to be empirically assessed. The role played by transnational ties needs to be critically studied and cannot be taken for granted. If we as researchers look for transnational ties or almost any other phenomena, we will usually find them. This realisation points to a need to study *negative* cases as well. When are transnational ties important and when are they not? Second, a study of the role of state politics reflects a traditional sociological interest in the role of *the state*. This sociological focus on the role of the state is not in conflict with a transnational perspective. Social relations are not, and have never been, confined by state borders. Still, the modern state, or more precisely, *state policies*, have an impact on social relations, including the transnational relations that span state borders. The state is a social institution and can as such influence the social relations of individuals. Therefore, from the perspective of sociology, there is a need to empirically study the importance and the non-importance of transnationalism, as well as the influence of the state and other social institutions in this empirical context.

Although the state is not a "container", it is a powerful and important social institution. State policies do exist and play a role in the creation and modification of transnational social ties. However, as Nina Glick Schiller (2015) points out in her review of Waldinger's (2015) book, the answer is not to simply add states and state politics to the analysis. According to Glick Schiller, Waldinger's book is actually unable to move beyond a conflation of the social with the boundaries of a polity. What is needed is a truly "multi-scalar perspective" that takes into account the multiple intersecting networks of unequal power that organises the world as we know it today (Glick Schiller 2015: 2276). "A multi-scalar global perspective calls on scholars and policymakers to acknowledge that each state around the world represents the coming together within place and time of the multiple intersecting array of networks that can be analysed as transnational social fields" (Glick Schiller 2015: 2278).

Thus, I argue that a sociological analysis of transnational social resources must incorporate both a focus on transnational social ties and a focus on the networks of power, including the role of the state. The issue at stake is not to prove that transnationalism exists, which it obviously does, but to study how and when transnationalism makes a difference and becomes important in a given social context. The challenge is how to take into account the interconnectedness of different scales, i.e. to include the global, transnational, national and local dimensions in the analysis.

In what follows, I will outline results from my own study of the utilisation of transnational resources among immigrant entrepreneurs. The study provides suggestions for how to analyse transnational social ties and the social capital that these might entail, as well as how the role of the state and state polices need be taken into account in such an analysis. The focus on social capital provides practical examples of how transnational social ties sometimes make a difference and sometimes do not (i.e. the study comprises both confirmatory and "negative" empirical evidences of the utilisation of resources). The results also exemplify the interconnectedness of global, transnational and local scales. To theorise this interconnectedness, I use the concepts of transferability and mobilisability.

The concept of *transferability* relates to the question of the possibility to transfer social capital in transnational social ties, a question that has been theorised in detail in the work of Faist (2000a). According to Faist (2000a), social capital is usually and primarily a local asset, but its transferability increases if transnational networks emerge in the migration process. The transnational social spaces of migrants can supply various types of capital: "economic capital (for example, financial capital), human capital (for example, skills and know-how) and social capital (resources inherent in social and symbolic ties)" (Faist 2000b: 13). Thus, the existence of transnational social ties suggests that immigrant entrepreneurs might be able to utilise resources in both the country of settlement and country of origin (Faist 2000a, 2000b).

The concept of *mobilisability* relates to the possibility to mobilise existing social resources by specific social actors (Anthias 2007). Anthias largely relies on the perspective of Bourdieu's (1986) understanding of social capital that always operates in a given social context and presupposes a continuous series of social exchanges. Thus, the value of social capital is never absolute and the possibility to mobilise resources depends on the social context. Unequal power relations significantly influence the possibility for a social actor to utilise social ties and networks. Anthias (2007) argues that the notion of social capital should be confined to mobilisable social resources. With small-scale enterprises, the role of ethnic social ties is a case in point. "Ethnic ties may be resources available to actors but they may not always be effectively mobilised or mobilisable by some social actors in particular contexts" (Anthias 2007: 801). The importance of social ties for the operation of businesses cannot be taken for granted and must be critically assessed in empirical research (e.g. Anthias & Cederberg 2009; Ryan 2011).

The perspective of Bourdieu is useful in this critical assessment, but a shortcoming of Bourdieu's notion of capital is that it focuses on an analysis of social stratification within national societies. Many migration scholars have therefore argued that the theory needs to be supplemented with a transnational perspective in order to study how migrants are situated within transnational social spaces and global networks of power (e.g. Erel 2010; Nowicka 2013). As described in *Nations Unbound,* transnationalism has provided migrants and their families with new opportunities for material and social positioning and "crucial to these projects has been the differential access to economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) provided by transnational kin networks" (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994: 86-87).

Transnational social capital among migrant entrepreneurs

Previous research on immigrant entrepreneurs suggests that social ties constitute resources that the entrepreneurs can utilise in establishing businesses (e.g. Light & Gold 2000). In Economic Sociology, economic actions are seen as embedded in a social context, which influences the establishment and running of businesses (Portes 2010). The concept of social capital is useful for describing the access to various types of collective resources that are available to members of a social group in a given social context (Bourdieu 1986). In the literature, it is suggested that the active utilisation of social capital and social networks is particularly consequential for migrants and members of ethnic minorities who are self-employed in small-scale enterprises (e.g. Anthias & Cederberg 2009; Bloch & McKay 2015; Portes 2010; Ryan, Erel & D'Angelo 2015). Thus, social capital is important for self-employment, but the possibility of mobilising it depends on the social, economic and political contexts. While studies on entrepreneurship and social capital generally tend to focus on the micro level, i.e. the individual entrepreneur or the daily operation of firms, the macro-level focus on globalisation and political economy is still largely missing in entrepreneurship literature. A global focus on power dynamics has often been a fundamental part of studies on transnational migration, but it has seldom been the focus of studies on migrant entrepreneurship. An exception is the article by Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2013) that looks into the political economy of the opportunity structure of migrant entrepreneurs, using the town of Halle (Saale) in eastern Germany as an example. The article outlines how the relative positioning of cities within hierarchies of uneven power can enable or impede the pathways of economic emplacement of migrants.

In general, research on immigrant entrepreneurship has predominantly examined entrepreneurship in a locally or nationally bounded context. Transnational economic activities have often been regarded as a distinct form of business activity separate from other activities, and consequently, studies on "transnational entrepreneurship" largely constitute a separate research tradition in the field of entrepreneurship studies (e.g. Drori, Honig & Wright 2009; Elo 2014; Honig, Drori & Carmichael 2010; Sequeira, Carr & Rasheed 2009). Transnationalism is a feature that to some extent can be found among most immigrants. Yet, many of the studies of "transnational entrepreneurship" find that transnational economic activities are relatively rare and limited to a small number of immigrant businesses. This is especially true if the activities are understood in a narrow sense as economic transactions related to the homeland, an approach that ignores both other transnational activities as well as the informal economy. For example, Portes, Haller and Guarnizo (2002) examined the prevalence of cross-border transnational entrepreneurship among Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants in the USA. They used data from a large survey to measure the extent of economic transnationalism. The findings suggested that transnational enterprise was relatively uncommon and mostly restricted to males and more educated and skilled immigrants. In addition, Jones, Ram and Theodorakopoulos' (2010) study of the dynamics of transnational Somali business activity in Leicester in the UK supports the argument that transnational entrepreneurship is likely to be the preserve of a minority of minorities; the reason they found for this was that the political–economic context imposed harsh constraints upon Somali business activity, which could not be circumvented by the utilisation of transnational links.

The discussion about the possibility to utilise transnational social ties relates to the question of the *mobilisability* of social capital (Anthias 2007). The question that needs to be addressed by research is how transnational social resources, e.g. social capital, can be *mobilised* as a resource. This mobilisation is not always successful, and its outcome seems to depend on many different factors operating on local, national and global scales. Studying the running of immigrant businesses requires a consideration of both the resources available in transnational social spaces and the opportunity structures of the local context. Furthermore, the possibility to mobilise social resources depends on wider social, economic and political contexts, including the state and state policies. These state policies are often part of more general global networks of power, which also need to be included in the analysis. In what follows, I apply these insights to my study of the utilisation of transnational social ties among Turkish entrepreneurs in Finland.

The case of Turkish-owned businesses in Finland

Immigrant entrepreneurs from Turkey have been a focus of my research interest since the early 2000s, which provides me with the possibility of analysing the running of businesses over an extended period of time. The results presented in this article are based on semi-structured interviews with Turkish-born restaurant entrepreneurs in Finland, conducted on their business premises. In this article, "Turkish" refers to people born in Turkey and citizens of Turkey, since this was the way the original sample of interviewees was selected. In 2001–2002, interviews were conducted with 27 self-employed persons (26 men and one woman), as well as 11 employees in Turkish-owned businesses (nine men and two women) (cf. Katila & Wahlbeck 2012: 300). In 2014, additional interviews were carried out in a follow-up study with nine of the self-employed men who were still active in the restaurant sector and available for an interview. According to the population register of 31 December 2014, the number of people born in Turkey living permanently in Finland was 6,326, encompassing 4,459 men and 1,867 women. Finland has a high proportion of intermarriage between male Turkish immigrants and Finnish women (Martikainen 2007), and in the interviews, many entrepreneurs declared that they had arrived or stayed in Finland because of a Finnish spouse (Katila & Wahlbeck 2012).

According to the Finnish Trade Register, there were about 300 firms registered by entrepreneurs from Turkey in 2010. A clear majority of the entrepreneurs were men, and the firms were mostly small businesses concentrated in the fast-food restaurant sector, mainly selling kebabs and pizza (refer Wahlbeck 2007 for a discussion of the labour market dynamics that forces many immigrants to work in this sector). The present study therefore focuses on this line of business. While international literature describes the tendency towards concentration in one line of business in combination with an urban spatial concentration of an ethnic minority (Light & Gold 2000: 9-15), in Finland, a clear spatial concentration of the Turkish immigrants and their businesses is not the case: the trade register lists Turkish-owned businesses located all over the country. The results of my research indicate that immigrants can establish restaurant businesses and utilise transnational social ties and resources also in remote and rural areas with few immigrants (Wahlbeck 2007; for a similar conclusion concerning Russian entrepreneurs in Norway, see Munkejord 2017). In Finland, many immigrants face a difficult labour market (cf. Martikainen, Valtonen & Wahlbeck 2012). As it

tends to be difficult for immigrants to find a job, many are forced into self-employment. This was clearly indicated also by the Turkish interviewees. As in other Nordic countries, the restaurant sector provided them with the possibility of both employment in a business and self-employment (Urban 2013; Wahlbeck 2007).

My interviews focused on the utilisation of transnational social ties for both the establishment and running of the businesses. While the start-up phase of restaurant businesses has been the focus of a separate article comparing Chinese-owned and Turkish-owned immigrant businesses in Finland (Katila & Wahlbeck 2012), here I focus on the later phases, i.e. the running and expansion of Turkish-owned restaurant businesses over an extended period of time. In what follows, I present results from my interviews with kebab shop owners and provide examples of successful and unsuccessful utilisation of transnational resources. The presentation discusses both the transnational *transferability* of resources and the *mobilisability* of the resources in question.

The transferability of resources in transnational social ties

The Turkish entrepreneurs interviewed in this study had relatives all over the world and continuously kept in touch with relatives and friends abroad. Not surprisingly, there were extensive transnational social ties among the entrepreneurs, but what was the role of these ties in the running of businesses? The results from my interviews in 2001–2002 suggested that transnational social ties were utilised especially during the initial stages of the establishment of small businesses in Finland. The first entrepreneurs conceived of starting a business from examples abroad (Wahlbeck 2007). Since similar businesses did not previously exist in Finland, the equipment and know-how had to be acquired from abroad. This suggests that the transnational social ties among Turkish immigrants significantly enabled the initial start-up of Turkish-owned businesses in Finland in the 1980s and 1990s (Katila & Wahlbeck 2012). Some of the early businesses proved to be very successful and were still operating during my follow-up study in 2014, although a majority of the early businesses had closed down.

After the initial start-up of the first Turkish-owned kebab shops, the positive role played by transnational social ties seems to have become less pronounced among the entrepreneurs. In the 2000s, there was no longer a need to utilise transnational social ties to acquire the equipment and know-how needed in kebab shops. These resources were locally available in Finland already in the early 2000s, from companies that distributed both restaurant equipment and food supplies. The largest Finnish meat processing company in the kebab line of business, Beofood Ltd, was established by an immigrant from Turkey in 1993, and it has since operated in close cooperation with large Finnish wholesale chains. As this example indicates, the kebab line of business has grown into a large industry involving both large and small companies. The kebab industry of today is neither Finnish nor Turkish and can hardly be described as “ethnic” in any sense. Likewise, the entrepreneurs in this line of business access a variety of transnational social ties, only some of which are “ethnic”. Kebab businesses in Finland operate in a multi-scalar environment (cf. Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2013), consisting of complex supply chains and powerful corporate actors.

As Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2013) outline, transnational social fields are characterised by uneven hierarchies of power. Consequently, not all social actors have the same opportunity to utilise the resources available in these fields. Likewise, I argue that although the businesses in this study are situated within transnational social fields, the entrepreneurs are seldom able to *utilise* their transnational social ties. Somebody may ask why it is not considered a utilisation of a transnational social tie when the entrepreneurs buy imported products from a wholesaler? As mentioned before in this article, economic sociology suggests that all economic transactions are embedded in a social context. Thus, any economic transaction can perhaps in some sense be interpreted as a *utilisation of a social tie*, but in the case of transactions between entrepreneurs and wholesaler in this study, the question remains if this social tie is *transnational*? As defined earlier in this article, transnationalism indicates a social relation over and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. The entrepreneurs in this study predominantly bought their products from the large Finnish wholesale firms (e.g. Kesko). These wholesale firms import products through complex supply chains, which may be transnational. However, when the entrepreneurs bought these products they did it from the local outlet of these wholesale firms and paid the product directly to the wholesaler. Thus, the economic transaction in question is between the entrepreneur and the wholesale firm in Finland. The restaurant of the entrepreneur and the wholesale outlet may even be situated in the same city. Thus, the economic transaction between the entrepreneur and the wholesale company is not realised over and beyond the boundaries of the nation state, which is the defining feature of a transnational relation. Thus, although the perspective of Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2013) suggests that an economic transaction between a retailer and a wholesaler is part of a transnational social field, the transaction in question in this study does not constitute a *utilisation* of a transnational social tie of the entrepreneur. In the case in question, the transnational actor who imports the goods and makes the profit is the wholesaler, not the entrepreneur. Although the goods are imported, the entrepreneur is only a customer at the end of a long supply chain. The kebab businesses in this study are part of transnational social fields, but the entrepreneurs themselves are seldom in a position of power in these fields, which are characterised by uneven networks of power. My results indicate that most kebab shop owners find it hard to navigate the business environment for the benefit of their own businesses. The successful entrepreneurs who have been able to expand their businesses constitute a minority, and small kebab businesses were still prevalent in 2014.

The kebab business has developed into a competitive line of business. Running a kebab shop involves a continuous need for new goods and services, including employees, and not all resources needed are available locally at an affordable price. Utilising transnational social ties to gain access to goods and services may provide a competitive advantage for small business owners. The utilisation of transnational social ties in business transactions is a defining feature of the so-called transnational entrepreneurs. As mentioned above, research on transnational entrepreneurs largely constitutes a separate research tradition focusing on economic transactions. This research has shown that the transnational social ties of immigrant entrepreneurs support the import and export of goods between countries of origin and settlement (Honig, Drori & Carmichael 2010; Portes, Haller & Guarnizo 2002; Sequeira, Carr & Rasheed 2009). Therefore, the interviewees were asked about their import and export activities and the role of transnational social ties in this context. Many expressed an interest in utilising their transnational social ties for international trade. However, a more surprising result was that the kebab shop owners still rarely bought products directly from abroad in 2001–2002, and this had not increased by 2014.

Although the entrepreneurs did have many contacts and kept in touch with entrepreneurs in Turkey and Europe, these personal contacts had seldom developed into successful business relations. Some small business owners had tried to import or export goods, but these undertakings had hardly ever been long-lasting. In an interview in 2001, a relatively successful kebab entrepreneur in his 40s described his experiences in importing goods from Turkey:

> Q: How often do you visit Turkey?
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> A: The number of [annual] visits I make to Turkey varies. Sometimes it is only once a year. Sometimes I have made visits four or five times a year, when I had business-related issues in Turkey, related to marketing. At the moment, it is one or two times a year. I plan to go in the beginning of [next] year. It depends on my work, but if my work allows, I go one or two times.
>
> Q: Could you please tell me more about the businesses you run?
>
> A: All my companies basically operate in the same line of business. The restaurant business, a bar, different types of kitchen appliances and equipment. At the moment it is the restaurant business, but from time to time I have imported kitchen appliances from Turkey and sold them over here.
>
> Q: So, you are involved in import and export as well?
>
> A: Yes, but not continuously. I only do it if there is an opportunity for it. We have done it at times. It really depends. [...] I have received help from my family [in Turkey]. We help each other a lot. [...] Since I come from a business family, I am open to all possibilities. It all depends on the situation. But the restaurant provides an income and is today easy to run. Importing from Turkey turned out to be demanding and I don't do it anymore. Importing goods from Turkey to Finland is complicated. There is bureaucracy involved.

As described in the quotation above, the entrepreneurs often had access to the transnational social ties that enabled import and export of products between Finland and Turkey. The interviewee quoted above generally had good business connections and extensive social ties in Turkey. Still, the entrepreneurs did not necessarily utilise these transnational social ties for international trade since other business activities were easier to manage. In general, the obstacles to trade were not related to the utilisation of the ties as such but to the mobilisation of the resources in the social and economic contexts in Finland. Similar products were already available in Finland, and the entrepreneurs found it difficult to get a foothold in the market. The large Finnish wholesale chains play a crucial role in the distribution of products to retailers in Finland, and the entrepreneurs found it difficult to have their own imported products distributed by these chains. For example, one interviewee had made an attempt to import textile products from Turkey during my study in 2001–2002. These products never really found their way to customers in Finland, since Finnish wholesale chains were not interested in distributing the products to retailers, and the business folded after a couple of years.

Furthermore, importing entails bureaucracy and various practical obstacles that were not considered worth the effort that would be needed, especially in cases in which similar products easily could be bought from a local outlet of a wholesale chain. For example, in 2001–2002, several interviewees mentioned attempts to import spices from Turkey to be used in kebab shops. However, the import of foodstuffs from Turkey is subject to EU food import regulations, which makes it bureaucratic. In my follow-up study in 2014, it turned out that importing spices had become unnecessary for the entrepreneurs, since Finnish wholesale chains had started to import similar spices and the entrepreneurs were able to easily buy these directly from the outlets of Finnish wholesale chains. As this example indicates, even the microeconomic transnational transactions of the entrepreneurs are connected to state policies, international trade agreements and the macroeconomic power structures of global trade and local competition with already established corporations.

The mobilisability of transnational social resources

As indicated above, the results of my interviews revealed that the interviewees often had access to valuable social ties that existed as a consequence of a personal migration history. With the help of these social ties, goods and business services could potentially be obtained abroad and transferred to Finland. As outlined in the examples mentioned above, the "transferability" of transnational resources (Faist 2000a) was not a problematic issue. This would suggest that the immigrants from Turkey would have a very good possibility of becoming "transnational entrepreneurs" as outlined in the literature (e.g. Honig, Drori & Carmichael 2010; Morawska 2004; Portes, Haller & Guarnizo 2002). However, the opportunity structure in Finland is different compared to that in Turkey. Products from Turkey might not be competitive in a local business context in Finland, or there might be various obstacles to getting the products on the market. This indicates that the transnational transferability of resources is not enough; the key question for the utilisation of resources is the local *mobilisability* of the resource in question. The mobilisability easily becomes dependent on particular features of the local markets, including both informal social networks and formal trade and tax regulations.

Thus, the role of the local and regional opportunity structures including supranational entities such as the EU needs to be considered when analysing the business operations of Turkish-owned restaurants in Finland. Since a large and spatially concentrated Turkish population does not exist in the country, the Turkish entrepreneurs must immediately compete with other firms for Finnish customers. The running of kebab businesses can be seen as connected to changes in the Finnish restaurant sector and in consumer culture in general (Hirvi 2011; Wahlbeck 2007). The 1990s were favourable for the entrepreneurs; the Finnish authorities supported self-employment in various ways, and competition in the restaurant sector was not as stiff as it later became when both the number of immigrants and their restaurant businesses grew significantly. This underlines the importance of studying the changing opportunity structures and barriers to entrepreneurial activity as they have been configured both over time and place (cf. Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2013). Consequently, the local opportunity structure in Finland has provided the possibility of establishing businesses of a particular type but has also limited the options available to the entrepreneurs.

Most kebab shop owners in Finland run small businesses without any regular employees. The owners of these small businesses tend to work long hours, but in cases where the business had been successful, expansion requires the recruitment of employees. In this situation, the recruitment of *reliable* employees becomes an issue for small business owners (cf. Bloch & McKay 2015).

The owners of kebab shops in this study needed somebody who could run the shop while they were away, and they also desired a flexible workforce whose hours and salary would vary depending on the business situation. Recruiting from abroad would provide the possibility of finding employees who would suit the requirements of the entrepreneurs. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they knew male relatives in Turkey who were interested in working in the restaurant sector in Finland, but the Finnish authorities have not provided work permits for such employees. This was described, for example, by an entrepreneur when looking back at his career during an interview in 2014:

> Q: Looking at the history of the restaurant business, is there anything you would have done differently?
>
> A: Well, looking back at how things were before, I would have needed more employees. I have had many employees over the years, but if they were good they decided to open their own shop, and then they started to compete with me. Many times I have had difficult situations and the business survived only because of my hard work. [An employee] left me and I had to do his work myself. [...] The challenge is really to find good employees; not everybody can work here [in the kebab shop] and I need somebody who can work the whole day. I knew many people in Turkey who wanted to come to Finland and help me, but I did not get permission to employ someone from abroad. It was not possible. That was a big problem.

As this response indicates, Turkish restaurant entrepreneurs have not been able to utilise their transnational social ties to recruit people from abroad. Finnish authorities have always been reluctant to grant permits for those who wish to move to Finland to work in the restaurant sector. The Finnish authorities' reasoning is based on labour and migration regulations and laws, primarily the Aliens Act (2013/1218) and various national guidelines issued by the government, as well as regional policies of the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres). According to the Finnish Aliens Act (2013/1218, 73§), residence permits for employment are based on a consideration to "establish whether there is labour suitable for the work available in the labour market within a reasonable time" and whether the applicant has the sufficient economic means of support. Because unemployed restaurant workers have been available in the labour market in Finland, it has not been possible to hire a person from Turkey. The entrepreneurs are expected to recruit the needed personnel from among the registered unemployed in Finland, regardless of the social ties involved and without consideration of the specific demands of the kebab business.

The above-mentioned laws and official regulations provide a concrete example of the influence of state policies, particularly immigration policy, on the ability to mobilise the resources available in transnational social ties. Clearly, the state regulates the labour market and business operations in many ways. The fact that the state has the power to do this may have both positive and negative consequences for migrants, but it limits the opportunities for entrepreneurs to expand their businesses. To expand a restaurant business would require flexible and reliable employees who accept the difficult working conditions of kebab shops, including irregular hours, late nights and weekend work (cf. Wahlbeck 2007). These conditions may contribute to the strong gender division among the work force of the kebab shops; there are very few female employees and even fewer female business owners in this type of business. The alternative to expand into other lines of business would probably require both capital as well as skilled and expensive labour that the entrepreneurs cannot afford. Thus, the entrepreneurs often find themselves "trapped" in the fast-food sector, where they can run a small business themselves by working for long hours. In my interviews in 2014, some of the interviewees were running small kebab businesses still after 12 years, while a majority had closed down, and only a small minority had been able to expand or move into other lines of business.

In this business context, newly arrived young male migrants, especially asylum seekers, have turned out to be a source of cheap and compliant labour for the entrepreneurs in this study. Recently arrived migrants are often the only type of employees that the entrepreneurs can afford. Newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers are in a vulnerable position, without knowledge of labour legislation and the formal and informal rules of the labour market. They may work for a low salary under difficult working conditions and can, as trusted workers, be irregularly employed or even exploited by the entrepreneurs (cf. Bloch & McKay 2015; Wahlbeck 2007). Thus, these migrants and asylum seekers are regarded by the employers as a more flexible work force than other employees. Although the recruitment of labour from Turkey is impossible, other types of transnational migration flows exist and can be utilised by employers due to migrants' unequal positions of power in the Finnish labour market. Asylum seekers have only temporary legal status, and their right to work is restricted in Finland. Since 2004, they have had the right to work after a few months of being in the country.

The precarious labour market position of these employees is, of course, connected to the official labour and immigration policies of the Finnish state. Furthermore, to seek international protection can be seen as a form of transnational migration that very concretely is produced, directed and regulated by state policies, in both the country of origin and asylum. At the same time, these state policies are also part of international migration regimes and related to global structures of labour, including EU and UN policies and global income disparities. State policies in the field of migration, especially in the EU, are not created fully independently by sovereign states but tend to reflect broader political, ecological and economic developments; global power structures and local policy arrangements. The vulnerable situation of recently arrived refugees and migrants in Finland is partly a consequence of the asylum and migration regimes of the EU, while the need to work for a small salary under difficult working conditions must be understood as being related to the global division of labour. From this perspective, the Turkish-owned small businesses are connected to issues of global political and power disparities, oppression and social justice. The migrants, therefore, need to navigate intersecting multi-scalar power structures in order to make a living either as self-employed restaurant entrepreneurs or as restaurant employees.

Conclusion

Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland have mainly established small fast-food outlets in the restaurant sector. These entrepreneurs have had access to resources available in transnational social ties, which can provide social, economic and human capital of benefit to the running of businesses (Faist 2000a, 2000b). Yet, the results of this study reveal that the entrepreneurs also have experienced various difficulties in mobilising the resources available in these transnational ties. The results suggest that an active involvement

in international trade, the recruiting from abroad and a general expansion the businesses in Finland have all turned out to be difficult for the kebab shop owners, despite the fact that transnational social ties could provide access to crucial resources to do so. These results indicate that the *transferability* of resources is not enough. To provide useful social capital, the resources also need to be *mobilisable* in a given social context (Anthias 2007; Bourdieu 1986). Regardless of the amount and strength of social ties and networks, one must also be able to successfully utilise the available resources (Anthias 2007; Cederberg 2012; Ryan 2011). The present study found it beneficial to analyse the results from a multi-scalar perspective, whereby the opportunity structure has to be analysed within multiple intersecting networks of unequal power, operating globally, nationally and locally, as well as within migrant groups (Glick Schiller 2015; Jones, Ram & Theodorakopoulos 2010). This enabled an analysis of when and how transnationally available resources can be utilised by the migrant entrepreneurs.

The results presented in this article have indicated that states, national policies and wider power structures in many ways influence the ability to mobilise transnational resources. I would like to stress that this consideration of states and national policies does not necessarily constitute a problematic "container view of society" (Beck 1999) and does not question the need for a methodological transnationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). Rather, my study suggests that the power structures and institutional frameworks of immigrant transnationalism need to be taken into account in empirical research on transnational phenomena, which may or may not lead to the conclusion that the role of states is central in the phenomena under study. In this sense, the results support the multi-scalar approach to transnationalism, where the role of the state is not taken for granted and is only one element in the analysis of power relations (Glick Schiller 2015: 2277).

In the present study, the role of the state becomes very visible in the immigration policies of the Finnish state. Yet, these policies can be seen as connected to global structures of power rather than being sovereign national policies. In a world with increasingly restrictive immigration policies in most states, the possibilities to build and utilise transnational social ties will become increasingly difficult. The results of the study also reflect the importance of changes occurring in global structures of power. The arrival of asylum seekers created a new precarious work force, which constituted a change in the business environment of the kebab businesses that was related to global patterns of inequality rather than to Finnish national policies.

The article also supports the approach that has previously been described as a contextual understanding of transnationalism in this journal (Anthias 2012; Haikkola 2011: 157), i.e. transnationalism needs to be studied in relation to the social context in which transnationalism is lived and in which it makes a difference for the social actors involved. As previous research on immigrant entrepreneurship has outlined, transnationalism can constitute a significant aspect of the operation of migrant businesses. Yet, to understand the role of transnational social ties among immigrant entrepreneurs, the role must be analysed contextually. Consequently, I argue that to understand the transnationalism of immigrant small businesses, the key question is not to prove that transnational social ties do or do not exist among the entrepreneurs. The aim of research should instead be to describe how and to what extent these ties constitute resources in a given social context, which should not be automatically conflated with a polity. To achieve this aim, I argue that it is useful to analytically make a distinction between the *transferability* and the *mobilisability* of social resources. To focus solely on the transnational transferability of resources is not enough and might overlook the fact that not all resources are necessarily equally valuable in each social context. We must also focus on the mobilisability of transnational resources in a given social context, which makes the multiple intersecting networks of unequal power more visible.

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