

Belongingness in Migrant Entrepreneurship: Navigating Social and Emotional Connections in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems **alternativ: Migrant Entrepreneurs Belongingness in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: A Critical Exploration**

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Overview

Entrepreneurial success is traditionally framed around resources, innovation, financial capital (Dutta & Sobel, 2018), as well as the multifaceted embeddedness of entrepreneurs within their ecosystems (Solano et al., 2022; Lassalle et al., 2020). However, belongingness is an equally critical but less visible factor influencing entrepreneurial outcomes—the emotional and psychological connection entrepreneurs feel within their communities and ecosystems. Belongingness, as a core human need, transcends mere participation, providing individuals with a sense of being accepted, included, and connected to something larger than themselves (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gireesan et al., 2022).

For marginalised groups such as migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, belongingness extends beyond emotional connection; it becomes a form of symbolic capital that shapes their capacity to succeed within socio-economic contexts (Vershinina & Rodgers, 2019; David et al., 2024). It encompasses the bonds formed with networks, peers, and the broader environment, severely impacting access to resources, collaboration, and business growth. Yet, these entrepreneurs often encounter additional barriers to integration, highlighting the need to understand belongingness as a dynamic component of entrepreneurial ecosystems (David & Terstriep, 2024).

This track aims to deepen the understanding of belongingness as a critical element in shaping entrepreneurial agency, decision-making, and long-term success within local or transnational ecosystems. By examining the role of social ties, emotional support, and psychological inclusion, we seek to illuminate the social dynamics underpinning entrepreneurship and their contributions to building inclusive, resilient ecosystems. Special attention will be given to how entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups navigate these environments, foster meaningful connections, and embed themselves within socio-economic systems. Ultimately, this exploration highlights the importance of belongingness in fostering innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable growth in entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Themes and Topics

A central theme of this track is the **intersection between belongingness and entrepreneurial embeddedness**. Research could explore how emotional and social ties contribute to or hinder the embedding of entrepreneurs within their ecosystems (Bolzani & Mizzau, 2018). This can include studies on migrant entrepreneurs who may experience exclusion, limited networks, or institutional barriers, making it difficult for them to fully integrate into their local entrepreneurial landscapes (David et al., 2024).

Another critical topic is how entrepreneurial ecosystems foster (or fail to foster) a **sense of belonging** for diverse groups. Studies could focus on how different social markers such as ethnicity, gender, migration status, and socio-economic background affect entrepreneurs' experiences of inclusion and belonging. This track seeks to examine how ecosystems can be more inclusive and promote belongingness as a means to boost overall entrepreneurial engagement.

The **psychological aspects of belongingness** are also of interest. How does the lack of social and emotional support influence the entrepreneurial mindset, resilience, and decision-making? Research could delve into the mental and emotional toll of exclusion, how it impacts entrepreneurial persistence, and how ecosystems can support the emotional well-being of entrepreneurs through stronger community ties.

Lastly, this track welcomes **policy-oriented research** that investigates how belongingness can be fostered at the institutional level. How can policies and programs aimed at migrant entrepreneurs and other underrepresented groups facilitate deeper emotional and social integration? Comparative studies that highlight best practices across regions and ecosystems are encouraged.

Submissions to this track can explore but are not limited to the following research questions:

- How does the sense of belongingness impact entrepreneurial performance and growth, particularly for marginalised groups such as migrant entrepreneurs?
- To what extent do emotional and social ties influence entrepreneurial embeddedness within a regional ecosystem, and if so, in what ways?
- How do ecosystems facilitate or inhibit a sense of belonging for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds?
- What policies and practices can enhance entrepreneurs' psychological and social well-being, contributing to their success?

Expected Contributions

We anticipate contributions from scholars in entrepreneurship studies, sociology, psychology, and migration studies. This track encourages theoretical, empirical, and methodological papers that employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. Contributions that explore the intersection of belongingness with entrepreneurial agency, resilience, and embeddedness, particularly in the context of marginalised entrepreneurs, are particularly welcome.

Relevance to the Conference

The focus on belongingness in entrepreneurship is timely as global discussions around inclusion, diversity, and resilience in entrepreneurial ecosystems continue to grow. By exploring belongingness, this track addresses an essential gap in the literature, expanding our understanding of entrepreneurship's social and emotional dimensions.

This track invites scholars to challenge traditional success narratives in entrepreneurship that focus solely on individual agency and financial capital, instead centring entrepreneurs' social and psychological experiences. The findings from this track can inform both academic discourse and practical interventions, helping to shape more inclusive, supportive, and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystems across the globe.

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