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How Qualitative Social Network Analysis Can Offer New Opportunities in Migration Research

7 – 8 March 2019

University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Interdisciplinary Workshop
**How Qualitative Social
Network Analysis Can Offer
New Opportunities in Migration
Research**

7 – 8 March 2019
University of Neuchâtel

Espace Louis-Agassiz 1
2000 Neuchâtel
Room R.S.38

Organizers

Janine Dahinden
(University of Neuchâtel)
and Louise Ryan
(University of Sheffield)

Participation is free. Please
register for the event until
February 28 by e-mail to:
maelle.redois@unine.ch

Aims of the Workshop

In recent years there has been increasing work on social network analysis (SNA) in relation to migration research, especially with a focus on qualitative methods. On the one hand, the application of qualitative techniques has brought fundamental advances in the field of SNA (Herz et al. 2014, Tubaro et al. 2016). New scholarship using Qualitative SNA has enabled researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how migration impacts on social ties both in the new destination country and transnationally, the resources that migrants can access and share through these ties and how such relationships may change over time (Lubbers et al. 2010, Bilecen 2013, Dahinden 2013, Mazzucato et al. 2017, Ryan & D'Angelo 2017). This has led to new theorizing going beyond simple binaries and static views of relationality in place (Ryan 2011, 2016).

On the other hand, social network analysis has the potential to rectify important epistemological pitfalls of migration research. An increasing number of migration scholars have been calling for more reflexivity within migration research. Prominent targets of criticism are nation-state and ethnicity-centred epistemologies that often inform empirical research on migration and mobility as well as the theoretical conclusions drawn from it (Crawley & Skleparis 2017, Dahinden 2016, Favell 2016, Korteweg 2017, Sigona 2017). Applying the methods and concepts of social network analysis helps to overcome these pitfalls. Social network analysis permits not only to grasp the structure of networks but also to understand the role that migration, transnationality and ethnicity play within these networks and how they interact with other structuring forces like migration regimes, social class, education or gender.

Building upon but also extending that scholarship, this workshop aims to consider how SNA gives us new opportunities to approach migration research differently. The contributions will all discuss these crucial issues.

Thursday, 7 March 2019

Workshop Venue: Espace Louis-Agassiz 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Room R.S.38

11:30 – 12:00

Business lunch with coffee and sandwiches

12:00 – 12:30

Welcome and introduction

Louise Ryan and Janine Dahinden

12:30 – 13:30

Janine Dahinden (University of Neuchâtel, CH)

Understanding Cross-Border Marriages of Descendants of Non-EU Migrants Beyond Ethnicity and Culture

Discussant: Valentina Mazzucato (Maastricht University, NL)

13:30 – 14:30

Louise Ryan (University of Sheffield, UK)

Telling Network Stories: Migrants' Relationality, Identity and Belonging in Place over Time

Discussant: Basak Bilecen (University of Groningen, NL)

14:30 – 15:30

Miranda Lubbers (Autonoma University Barcelona, ES)

Local and Transnational Embedding Processes of Migrants: A Spatiotemporal Network Perspective

Discussant: Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, NL)

Coffee break

15:45 – 16:45

Elena Sommer (Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy, DE)

and Markus Gamper (University of Cologne, DE)

Beyond Structural Determinism in Social Capital Research – Advantages and Challenges of Studying Accessibility and Dynamics of Social Capital of Migrant Entrepreneurs Using Qualitative Approaches

Discussant: Marta Kindler (Warsaw University, PL)

16:45 – 17:45

Alice Altissimo (University of Hildesheim, DE)

and Andreas Herz (University of Hildesheim, DE)

Beyond a Priori in the Study of Mobility: Qualitative SNA as Relational Remedy?

Discussant: Alessio D'Angelo (University of Nottingham, UK)

17:45 – 18:15

Discussion of the special issue

Apéro and dinner

Friday, 8 March 2019

Workshop Venue: Espace Louis-Agassiz 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Room R.S.38

09:00 – 10:00

Basak Bilecen (University of Groningen, NL)

Personal Network Analysis from an Intersectional Perspective: Studying Network Effects in a Transnational Context

Discussant: Elena Sommer (Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy, DE)

10:00 – 11:00

Marta Kindler (Warsaw University, PL)

The Spatial and Temporal Role of Context in Shaping Migrant's Social Networks: The Case of Ukrainian Migrant Workers in Poland

Discussant: Louise Ryan (University of Sheffield, UK)

11:00 – 12:00

Alessio D'Angelo (University of Nottingham, UK)

The Network Refugee: Agency and Social Capital in Southern Italy

Discussant: Janine Dahinden (University of Neuchâtel, CH)

Lunch break

12:30 – 13:30

Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, NL)

From Social Grids to Affective Circuits: Dynamics of Social Connectivity in the Im/mobility Trajectories of West African Migrants

Discussant: Miranda Lubbers (Autonoma University Barcelona, ES)

13:30 – 14:30

Valentina Mazzucato (Maastricht University, NL)

Youth Mobility Trajectories: Bringing Mobility Experiences into Migration Research

Discussants: Alice Altissimo (University of Hildesheim, DE)
and Andreas Herz (University of Hildesheim, DE)

14:30 – 15:00

Wrap-up and next steps

Basak Bilecen
(University of Groningen)
**Personal Network Analysis
from an Intersectional
Perspective: Studying Network
Effects in a Transnational
Context**

This paper fundamentally asks the overarching question of what is the unique contribution of personal network analysis to migration studies? In other words, what we cannot understand or explain without the use of personal network analysis in a qualitative manner? To answer these questions, the first section of the paper briefly reviews the main toolkits of personal network analysis. Next, it demonstrates how network thinking is a different approach than ‘classical methods’ and what makes it unique. When conducted in a qualitative and visual mode, three main arguments for using personal network analysis in migration research are: (1) emphasis on patterns of connections over individual characteristics, (2) exploration of meanings given to certain personal connections, and (3) analyzing individual migration experience through its embedded nature in personal and institutional structures over time and space. The second section critically engages with the applications of personal network analysis in migration studies in general where ethnicity became a dominant category in such research line. Previous studies paid ample attention to with whom migrants sustain and forge personal connections, mainly concentrating on the ethnicity of such personal ties. The main goal of that line of research is to make a general claim as if ethnicity of migrants’ personal ties could be the main proxy of the so-called ‘social integration’ into the host societies. After discussing promises and pitfalls of focusing on ethnicity as the main category, this section argues for an intersectional approach for which personal network analysis has the right toolkit. Against this background, the main argument of this section is the potential of personal network analysis in researchers’ thinking of main analysis categories going beyond ethnicity. After all, anti-categorical approach of intersectionality does not consider any category as more salient than another, but rather the categories important to the researched and their relationships with each other are problematized. The underlying assumption is that the categories continually and mutually construct each other and lead to (re)production of inequalities. In a similar vein, the ‘anti-categorical imperative’ (Emirbayer & Goodwin 1994) of relational sociology takes on relations as the fundamental unit of analysis rather than individuals, groups, or categories. The main argument here is that conducting a personal network analysis from an intersectional perspective enables the researchers to critically investigate preassigned notions of ethnicity, community, and power relations. Thus, this section brings together intersectionality approach with personal network analysis methods promising starting points for migration research. The third section will be devoted to a recent international empirical study the author has conducted in Germany and in the US with Chinese international students and their personal networks qualitatively. After a brief introduction of the study, this section will demonstrate the role of personal network composition in decision-making phase of study place from an intersectional perspective analysis taking into account class, ethnicity, education, and gender.

Janine Dahinden
(University of Neuchâtel)
**Understanding Cross-Border
Marriages of Descendants
of non-EU Migrants Beyond
Ethnicity and ‘Culture’:
A Network Perspective**

Over the last decade, a growing number of scholars have critically engaged with the use of social categories in research on migration and mobility. Scholars pointed for instance to the problematic ways researchers reproduce, by their categories, nation-state, and ethnicity centered epistemologies in migration research. In the context of what has been coined the “reflexive turn in migration studies” scholars have been pleading in this line of critique for more reflexivity and for a de-naturalization of the categories used in research. Social network analysis has the potential to respond to this line of

critique: SNA allows to go beyond a priori assumption about the importance of ethnicity and migration for a given phenomenon. Rather SNA empirically grasps the structure of networks and allows hence, in a second step to investigate the role that migration and ethnicity play within networks and how these categories interact with other structuring forces like migration regimes, social class, education or gender.

This paper addresses these issues through the case of cross-border marriages of the descendants of non-EU-migrants in Switzerland. It is based on narrative-biographical and social network interviews with people born in Switzerland who got/get married to a person from a (non-EU) country of origin of their parents. Cross-border marriages of descendants of (non-EU) migrants are - in Switzerland and in Europe generally - highly stigmatized, politicized and ethnicized (for example by being considered as 'forced' or sham marriages, or as a sign for 'non-integration'). In public and political discourse these marriages are often explained with (essentialized) 'culture', 'Islam' or 'ethnicity'. However, this paper argues that the role of culture and ethnicity in cross-border marriages needs to be critically scrutinized. In fact, the network analysis reveals a wide range of local and transnational relations – beyond kin and intra-ethnic relations – which are important for these marriages. I argue that we can understand such cross-border marriages as particular positioning strategies which are the result of multiple boundary processes (local and transnational) and created in situations of negative external categorization, symbolic deprivation and misrecognition – which becomes visible in the network structures.

Alessio D'Angelo
(University of Nottingham)
**The Networked Refugee:
Agency and Social Capital in
Southern Italy**

The so-called 'Refugee Crisis' in the Mediterranean has been at the center of media and academic analysis for quite some time (Spijkerboer 2016). However, whilst considerable attention has been devoted to the causes and modes of migration and on the humanitarian crisis concerning search and rescue at sea and disembarkations (Crawley et al. 2018), much less is available on the experiences of individual migrants in the weeks and months following their arrival in southern Europe (D'Angelo & Montagna, forthcoming). Moreover, the mainstream narrative is one that looks at these refugees as passive components of large-scale flows, driven by global and national trends such as political conflicts, migration policies, and human-smuggling cartels. Even when the personal dimension is brought to the fore, it tends to be to depict refugees as victims at the receiving end of external forces. Whilst there is no denying that most of the migrants crossing the Mediterranean experience violence, exploitation and are often deprived of their freedom for considerable periods of time (Albahari 2015, D'Angelo 2018), it is also important to recognize and analyze their agency as individuals and the complex sets of relations that they own, develop and use before, during and after travelling to Europe.

In this paper, I focus on the experience of asylum seekers in the Italian island of Sicily, which, when migration to the Mediterranean reached its numerical peak in 2015-2016, was the second main area of arrivals after Greece, and indeed the first before and after that dramatically exceptional period of time. The paper is informed by data from a recently-completed ESRC-funded project ('EVI-MED – Constructing an Evidence Base of Contemporary Mediterranean Migration') as well as additional data collection I conducted in recent years and months.

By presenting the narrative of several refugees, mostly young men from sub-Saharan Africa, I discuss the importance of social networks

in their decision-making process and at every single juncture of their often very long, complex and serendipitous journeys to the Italian coasts. In particular, I examine their first few months of life in Sicily after disembarking to the Italian coasts and their experiences of living in and out of reception centers, interacting with other refugees, state officials, volunteers and local residents. I show how personal relations – old and new, formal and informal – drive processes of social inclusion and exclusion and contribute to re-define identities, belongings, and migration plans.

In doing so, I propose a reflection on the challenges and opportunities of using a qualitative social network analysis approach to research refugee experiences, highlighting the importance, and burden, of personal narratives and how these may change over time and depend on the place and context of the research encounter. My theoretical framework is informed not just by social network and social capital theory in relation to migration (Lubbers et al. 2010, Ryan, Erel & D'Angelo 2015), but also by ideas around the 'presentation of the networked self' (D'Angelo & Ryan, forthcoming), how this changes over time (Ryan & D'Angelo 2017), and its importance in the research process in terms of ethics (Kadushin 2005) and epistemology.

Alice Altissimo
and Andreas Herz
(University of Hildesheim)
**Beyond a Priori in the Study
of Mobility: Qualitative SNA as
Relational Remedy?**

Approaching phenomena through a network perspective allows studying relations and agency as embedded in relationships. SNA in general and especially qualitative SNA-approaches are seen to overcome a priori defined categories in migration research (e.g. to de-naturalize the nation-state; to de-center migration-background) following the "anti-categorical imperative" (cf. Granovetter 1985, Holzer 2010). However, applying a qualitative social network analysis to the study of mobility is not a remedy per se. SNA is not free from methodological assumptions and scholars have to reflect the relationality of (qualitative) SNA (Dépelteau 2013) to see how mobility is (not) reconstructed as a relational phenomenon. Relying on a qualitative study on youth mobility in Europe, MOVE¹, we show both, the surplus and challenges arising from a qualitative social network analysis. Data collection was performed using qualitative ego-centric network maps ("concentric circles") combined with qualitative interviews with young people who are or were abroad for a voluntary service (Altissimo 2016, Altissimo, Bartels, Brust & Herz 2018). The data analysis was performed using Qualitative Structural Analysis (Herz, Peters & Truschkat 2015). QSA is a reconstructive approach with a relational focus, which uses basic ideas of qualitative inquiry (sensitizing concepts, sequence analysis, constant comparison) to facilitate a qualitative social network analysis. While migration research often presupposes that relevant relationships for mobility are to family and/or friends, we can show with the qualitative procedure that relationships do not equal personal actors only, but also include relationships to non-personal actors. Our analysis reveals that the mobility of young mobiles in Europe is structured by a diverse set of relationships to and between various actors, e.g. cities, countries, safe havens, flats, rooms, professional and institutional/organizational contacts as well as prior mobilities of the ego, of family members or peers. As such, qualitative SNA allows to study the dynamic interrelationship between the diversity of relationships in the way they jointly structure mobility. Studying mobility of youth as relational phenomenon we further addressed the question of how space is relevant for relating during mobility. Addressing this question, we revealed shortcomings of our qualitative network approach specifically while analyzing the ego-centric network maps. Because SNA focuses on relationships it tends to essentialize social phenomena as nodes and edges. Given this, the space is rather substantialized as edges where SNA implicitly transports either a vague or a geographically defined conceptualization of space. We discuss how this challenged our

analytic approach and how we adapted QSA to be able to qualify the structuring of relationships and space in a dynamic/relational way.

1 "MOVE: Mapping mobility – pathways, institutions and structural effects of youth mobility in Europe" was an EU project that focuses on the geographical mobility of 18-29-year-olds within Europe. The research from the MOVE project leading to these results has received funding from Horizon 2020 under Grant Agreement N° 649263.

Marta Kindler
(Warsaw University)

**The Spatial and Temporal Role
of Context in Shaping Migrants'
Social Networks: The Case of
Ukrainian Migrant Workers in
Poland**

Migration of Ukrainians to Poland started in the nineties, constituting currently the largest group of circular migrants and probably the fastest growing group of temporary migrants in Europe. Numerous studies claim an 'easy', 'quick' integration and even assimilation of Ukrainian migrants, emphasizing their cultural proximity to Poles (e.g., Stefanska 2008, Grzymała-Kazłowska 2015). However, recent research on social networks showed that Ukrainian migrants have very few ties to Poles, relying mainly on ties to their compatriots (Kindler & Wójcikowska Baniak 2018, Torunczyk-Ruiz & Brunarska, forthcoming). What are the mechanisms behind the formation of such homogenous social networks? The institutional and social context, such as migration policy and attitudes towards foreigners in the receiving society structure the migrants' opportunities to form ties. At first liberal entrance policy and later on facilitated access to the labor market, dynamically changed migrants' access to Poland's territory and to rights to participate in Polish society throughout the last two decades. In addition, the dramatic changes in Ukraine's political situation contributed since 2013 to an unprecedented increase of migrants arriving in Poland, resulting in a significant change in the size of this migrant group. The homophily principle, that is the tendency of similar individuals to associate with one another, occurs also due to demographic factors, for example, a large size of a particular group (baseline homophily) (Lazarsfeld, Merton & Ronkeylaf 1954, Lin 2002, McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001). It means that an individual has a higher chance to meet people who are similar to him or her when the pool of potential contacts like him/her is larger. In addition, Ukrainians have also more chances to form ties, not only because of personal preferences but also due to new institutional structures emerging (in-breeding homophily) (Kindler & Wójcikowska-Baniak 2018).

In this paper, I will examine the interconnection of the temporal and spatial in migrants social network construction, maintenance, and change. I define social networks as a structured pattern of social ties between individuals (Gurak & Caces 1992). Drawing on qualitative data from the study "Migrant networks and integration of Ukrainian migrants in Poland - a quantitative and qualitative approach" (2015-2019). I will carefully choose several cases representatives for particular types of network formation in a different marco-, meso- and micro-level temporal and spatial context to answer the question – how do particular contexts impact the possibility to form, maintain and change social networks? These particular temporal and spatial context impact the possibility of agency and the (non-)existence of particular structures, pointing to how some actors may not use the opportunities they have thanks to their network position, others may respond in different ways to the same constraints (Giddens 1979).

Miranda J. Lubbers and
José Luis Molina (Autonoma
University Barcelona)

**Local and Transnational
Embedding Processes of
Migrants: A Spatiotemporal
Network Perspective**

This paper focuses on the interconnections between the temporal and the spatial dimensions of migrants' social networks. In the research we present, we adopt a longitudinal personal network perspective, to obtain detailed information on the micro-mechanisms involved in processes of local and transnational (dis-)embedding. The richness of the data is further enhanced by employing mixed methods. In particular, we explore how migrants' networks of personal relationships to people residing in the countries of origin and destination change over time (post-migration), and whether these

changes are associated with dynamics in migrants' sense of belonging.

For our aim, we have collected longitudinal personal network data of migrants from five countries of origin who reside in Catalonia, Spain. Informants were interviewed twice (N = 71) or three times (N = 28) between 2004 and 2013. To not only capture their strongest ties, but also a selection of weaker ties, we have asked informants to nominate, in each wave, a fixed number of 45 people they knew and they had contact with, independently of where those people lived. We asked them to include their stronger and most frequently contacted ties. In follow-up waves, respondents first nominated network members and then identified (with the list of names from the previous round) who was mentioned before and who was not. For each network member and in each wave, informants reported on tie strength, type of relationship, tie duration and the place of origin and residence of alters. Furthermore, they were asked to reflect narratively on the changes we observed in the networks at the level of network, cliques, and relationships, following semi-structured questions, to better understand the reasons of these changes and the meaning they had for the respondents. Questions about their sense of belonging in Spain asked in each interview, were also qualitative in nature.

For the analysis, we focused on three concurrent dynamics in personal networks: the evolution and dissolution of existing relationships; the acquisition of new relationships; and the interdependence of these processes across dyads. We illustrate the tendencies with three cases.

Our results suggest that local and transnational embeddedness tend to fluctuate over time, due to recent travels back home or cyclical events such as Ramadan, and that these fluctuations often go hand in hand with sense of belonging. We also found that the more substantial network changes were typically produced by life events, such as the transition from school to work, parenthood, marriage or divorce. In this regard, migrants' network dynamics are no different from those observed for non-migrants, and they are also quite similar across migrant groups. Nevertheless, even though processes are similar, they can lead to very different outcomes if, as is the case, the initial conditions vary (such as a greater initial geographical dispersion in the network). For example, even though all migrants get to know new people via neighborhoods, work places, and schools, some of them become more "integrated" as a result, and others more segregated from the mainstream society.

The results of the study call for more research into networking processes and a greater presence of life course research in studies into immigrant incorporation.

Valentina Mazzucato
(Maastricht University)
**Youth Mobility Trajectories:
Bringing Mobility Experiences
into Migration Research**

Much research on migrant youth focuses on the categories of 1.0 or 2.0 generation migrants or variants in between. In this paper, I argue that these categories hide the varied mobility experiences that youth of migrant background have with their or their parents' country of origin. This particular form of mobility is important for understanding how young people's future aspirations and also their experiences of resilience are shaped when going through a school system. We know from psychological research and migration studies that both aspirations and resilience are important for shaping successful school-to-work transitions. In this paper, I ask why young people of migrant background, irrespective of which category they are in – whether first or second generation – living in similar neighborhoods in Europe, with similar family characteristics and attending comparable schools, have different outcomes in terms of their pursuits after secondary school.

Drawing on examples from a research project that studies the relationship between youth mobility trajectories and young people's post-secondary school transitions, this paper will elaborate on the methodology we developed to map young people's mobility trajectories bringing together elements of SNA with mobility studies. Mobility trajectories are here defined as the moves in space and time that young people make and their concurrent changing family constellations. The paper elaborates on three ways in which such a methodology breaks away from ethnic-centered categories and assumptions about Western-centric notions of nuclear family as the most relevant unit of analysis. First, it puts mobility experiences central to the investigation, allowing for a diversity of mobility experiences amongst young people of migrant background rather than assume them to be the same as do standard categories of first and second generation. Second, it breaks away from the dominant approach of presuming that young people either 'stay behind' or 'follow their parents'. Third, it allows the incorporation of diverse sets of transnational family constellations over time, departing from standard assumption in migration studies that the people whose youth are presently living with are the most relevant for young people's transitions into adulthood or that the nuclear family, whether together or transnational, is the most relevant unit of analysis.

Louise Ryan
(University of Sheffield)
**Telling Network Stories:
Migrants' Relationality, Identity
and Belonging in Place over
Time**

This paper engages with and develops upon three areas of discussion in the field of migration and social networks research. Firstly, following Dahinden (2017), I examine how using a social networks perspective can enable us to go beyond the ethnic lens in researching migration. Secondly, I contribute to work on qualitative social network analysis (cf. Herz et al. 2016, Ryan et al. 2014) by using network visualization embedded in rich, in-depth, longitudinal interviews to examine network content as well as structure. Thirdly, this paper further extends my own on-going work (Ryan 2011, 2016) challenging simplistic dichotomies of bonding versus bridging by examining the dynamic evolution of complex, multi-dimensional social relationships and critically assessing the nature of resources flowing between these ties. But also following Knox et al. (2006), we need to critically engage with the concept of networks. Networks are not a fixed entity to be measured and studied, but a discursive device which we use to make sense of complex and dynamic social relationships. Networks, I argue, are co-constructed through the stories told in words and pictures in interview contexts.

In this paper, I draw upon a reflexive approach to analyze the dynamic, interactive processes through which networks were co-constructed in the interview encounters between myself and two migrant women, interviewed on several occasions over a period of approximately ten years. I then consider what these network stories tell us about the role of ethnicity in relational formation and maintenance in place and over time. Moreover, I also consider what we can learn about how networks both shape and reflect migrant 'embedding' (Ryan & Mulholland 2015) and belonging as spatial, temporal and relational processes.

Joris Schapendonk
(Radboud University)
**From Social Grids to Affective
Circuits: Dynamics of Social
Connectivity in the Im/mobility
Trajectories of West African
Migrants**

Migration studies have a longstanding fascination for the role of social networks in people's relocation processes. In this context, social networks are traditionally framed as an important meso-structure in migration systems as they bind together countries of origin with destination countries (e.g. Boyd 1989). Recent criticism, however, has noted that a rather static conceptualization of social networks – as a grid-like entity of stronger and weaker ties – omits the efforts and energies that are needed to capitalize social capital from social networks (e.g. Pathirage & Collyer 2011, Somerville 2011,

Schapendonk 2015). It is telling, in this respect, that migration scholars have almost blind-stared at Bourdieu's definition of social capital – being known as: “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 51) – while they have seldom paid attention to the sentence that comes right after this frequently cited definition, which is: “These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 51). While the former sentence indeed hints at a semi-structural dimension of networks as it emphasizes the significance of ‘durable relations’, the latter includes the notion that social ties need to be actively maintained in order to make them work (cf. Schapendonk 2015). Therefore, this contribution does not start from ‘the network’ as such, but from the ‘network work’ (Pathirage & Collyer 2011) behind social connectivity. In the framework of my recent ethnographic work on the im/mobility of African migrants, I relate this practice approach to social connectivity to the notion of affective circuits (Cole & Groes 2016). As defined by Cole and Groes, affective circuits are constructed by the myriad exchanges of goods, people, money, emotions and ideas across borders (ibid). In my interpretation, and in contrast to the concept of social networks, the notion of affective circuits leaves more intellectual space for mobility dynamics as well as social frictions that shape many aspects of migrants’ daily lives. In other words, the circuits metaphor emphasizes that social ties are maintained, made and re-made and that the associated expectations are confirmed as well as contested. As such, social connectivity can be seen as another uncertain terrain that is simultaneously navigated (Vigh 2006, 2009) by different actors living in the same ‘trans-world’ (Ernste, Van Houtum & Zoomers 2009). Following this notion, I move away from the idea that migrants are moving because of their social networks. Instead, I aim to illustrate how migrants move through affective circuits.

Elena Sommer
(Max Planck Institute for Social
Law and Social Policy)
and Markus Gamper
(University of Cologne)
**Beyond Structural Determinism
in Social Capital Research –
Advantages and Challenges
of Studying Accessibility and
Dynamics of Social Capital of
Migrant Entrepreneurs Using
Qualitative Approaches**

Since social network analysis has been criticized for structural determinism by Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) in the 1990s, there has been a growing number of mixed-method and qualitative social network analysis studies fostered by debates among proponents of relational sociology on problematic aspects of quantifiable measures of social capital as well as the limitations of quantitative approaches in showing how individual action and social relations mutually influence each other (Emirbayer & Goodwin 1994, Crossley 2010). Qualitative approaches, especially as part of a mixed-method research design, have proved to be fruitful in exploring the contextualized nature of social relations (Bellotti 2016) as well as detecting dynamics and temporal changes (Ryan & D’Angelo 2018).

In migration research, qualitative social network analysis approaches offer opportunities for a more elaborated differentiation of migrants’ social capital going beyond a simplistic categorization into intra-community ties as bonding social capital and contacts to natives as bridging social capital common for quantitative migration studies and often resulting from conceptual ambiguity and the limitation of the available secondary data (Geys & Murdoch 2008, 2010). Such a bonding-bridging dichotomy ignores possible intra-group heterogeneity. In reality, however, different members of the same migrant community can have different social positions in that community and different access to intra-community horizontal and vertical social capital (Ryan 2011). What matters in terms of social capital is not simply an existence of social ties but also the content of those ties and the resources that can be accessed through them. Especially in case of migrant entrepreneurs, business-related social capital results from an interaction of migrants’ resources, opportunity structure and

institutions operating between them (“mixed embeddedness model”, Kloosterman & Rath 1999) involving a number of factors that change over time such as local economic context, politico-institutional context, market extent (migrant market, mixed market, mainstream market, transnational businesses) and business strategy, migrants’ socio-economic status as well as their access to various social networks within and outside migrant community.

In our contribution, we address the challenges and advantages of studying social capital of migrant entrepreneurs applying a mixed-method research design involving semi-structured interviews and standardized sociogram network data collection. Despite certain limitations of the applied procedure to collect standardized sociogram data that we discuss in our contribution, the study illustrates that mixed-method research designs involving qualitative approaches enable a nuanced analysis of migrants’ business-related social capital going beyond simplistic bonding-bridging categorization. The study demonstrates that migrants use various channels to get access to different business-related social ties which serve different purposes for their businesses in terms of transaction costs economics. Further, the outcomes of the study suggest that migrant entrepreneurship should be treated as a dynamic concept as it is common for migrant businesses to gradually alter their initial market strategies, and their entrepreneurial networks correspondingly change over time not only with regard to their composition but also with regard to characteristics of dominating business-related social ties. The qualitative approach used in the study helps explaining the reasons and meanings behind network structures and strategies.
