Identifying Channels into Business for Somali-Swedes in the UK

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Abstract

Many Somali-Swedes have over the years moved on to the UK to start businesses. What channels do they use to enter into business in the UK? What can we learn from their stories? This article makes a contribution to the field of immigrant migration, integration and entrepreneurship by identifying and analysing what channels Somali-Swedes use to integrate into the UK labour market through entrepreneurship. The analysis is based on interviews, observations and field notes from Birmingham, Leicester and London. The results suggest that Somali-Swedes use different channels to start business in the UK, such as socialization, belonging, community, cultural bonds and heritage, informal banking, public flexibility, free business introduction and making use of experience.

Keywords: Immigrant migration, immigrant entrepreneurship, integration, business, Somalis, UK, Sweden

I. Introduction

This article attempts to identify and analyse channels that Somalia-born migrants, who left Sweden for the UK, use to start and run business in the UK. These paths are identified by Somalis themselves and, in the analysis linked to existing/relevant literature. This sheds light not only on how primary stakeholders navigate in the UK business environment but also on why they did not start businesses in Sweden but decided to leave the country. The article highlights Somalis' individual experiences, their migration choices, their thoughts and concerns.

Somalis often express frustration over the integration challenges they face in Sweden (Carlson, 2013). In the UK as well, they have encountered many barriers to integration such as lack of references and prior work experience, difficulty in getting qualifications from Somalia validated, unfamiliarity with the culture, discrimination, over-reliance on word of mouth for job openings, lack of fluency in the English language (Block, 2004).

Given these difficulties to enter the Swedish and UK labour markets, starting business has been perceived as an escape from unemployment for Somalis. One reason for this is that they have proved to be entrepreneurial in Somalia and other countries (Carlson & Schölin, 2016). This seems true not least for those who migrate from Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands to the UK (Ram, Theodorakopoulos & Jones, 2008). This view is substantiated through my own interviews with Somalis and Somali business organizations in Sweden and the UK.

An important question arose from these interviews: if Somali-Swedes can pursue businesses in the UK, why can't they do so in Sweden? This question triggered a desire to learn more about Somalis going into business in the UK, about the motivations they have, the paths they follow, the stories they tell. To dig into these issues, I approached a number of Somali-Swedes who are running businesses in the UK in order to identify and analyse channels that enabled them to do so. The insights from this research can hopefully be of use for policymakers, researchers, business start-up organisations and Somalis.

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II. Literature Review

There are within in the field of immigrant entrepreneurship two views as to why immigrants start businesses relevant to this study. It can be

(a) a result of heritage, i.e. by being raised in a culture where entrepreneurship is needed or cultivated (Quirin, 2004);

(b) a way out of unemployment or to circumvent labour market segregation. This view is shared by several authors, who all agree that immigrant entrepreneurship has become important in Europe, especially to integrate immigrants into labour markets (Waldinger, 1989). The way immigrants end up in business in European countries is explained by national historical factors, concentration of immigrant communities, discrimination, commercial and industrial production in different locations, technological developments and globalization. Self-employment is described as an alternative way to create job opportunities for immigrants and their co-ethnics (Oliveira, 2004).

Upward mobility vs. blocked opportunities

Approach (b) is widely diffused in the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, describing business as a viable route for migrants' "economic incorporation", the integration of immigrants and their children (ibid.). Starting a business is described as a possibility to overcome barriers (blocked opportunities) and to improve one's economic results in the host society through upward mobility, which may lead to self-sufficiency. However, these approaches also refer to starting business sometimes being "an economic dead-end for immigrants" (ibid.), portraying immigrants as having long working hours and low incomes and being subsidized by unpaid family labour (Barrett, Jones & Mcevoy, 1996).

Barriers and opportunities

Many authors have identified different barriers and opportunities for immigrants to start businesses. Some of these are funding, qualifications, support institutions, social capital and ethnic markets.

Funding (financial capital) is recognized as a prerequisite for and a barrier to immigrant businesses. Some authors argue that lack of funds and discrimination of immigrants trying to get bank loans are factors affecting immigrants' efforts to start businesses (Oliveira, 2004).

"Required" (educational) qualifications are described as a determining factor helping immigrant entrepreneurs to leave labour-intensive and small-scale production sectors to expand their businesses (ibid.). Lack of such qualifications is of course a barrier.

National and municipal governmental organizations, business associations and third-sector institutions carry out important support functions for immigrant entrepreneurs. Some of these institutions may provide training and coaching to small entrepreneurs as well as other forms of support, such as in the areas of finance and networking, e.g. lowering license requirements for starters, opening preferential access to credit systems and allowing for a period of trial and error without losing the right to receive social security benefits (ibid.).

Social capital is identified as crucial for immigrants (refugees) when starting businesses (Bizri, 2017). Social capital is considered as trust coming from community, family and friends. Other authors stress the importance of social capital as an asset for Somalis engaging in business in the UK (Ram et al., 2008). Social capital implies collaboration. Some highlight a collaborative dynamic in social entrepreneurship and describe social capital as helpful when immigrants start and run businesses (De Bruin, Shaw & Lewis, 2017). Social capital can influence immigrant entrepreneurs'

upward mobility, with the support of networks of suppliers, customers and other ethnic entrepreneurs, creating "bridges" to other networks outside the inner circle. As a consequence, immigrants can "create jobs and be active agents, shaping their own destinies by setting up their own businesses" (Oliveira, 2004).

Social capital may lead to the creation of or participation in ethnic markets. According to several contemporary studies, first-generation immigrants focus on supplying their own ethnic community with products or services, thus developing ethnic markets. Some authors suggest that immigrants should break out of this market to be able to succeed as entrepreneurs (Barrett et al, 1996). Others argue that ethnic minority businesses have multiplied in the UK due to a "deregulated economic policy regime" and been boosted by a "growing range of support initiatives" (Ram et al., 2008). These authors pay attention to the fact that there are different sources of advice when starting ethnic minority businesses, such as family and friends, accountants, public support agencies, banks and solicitors/lawyers.

The mixed embeddedness theory

The theory of mixed embeddedness describes immigrant businesses as shaped by their social capital networks and by the surrounding commercial and institutional environment (Kloosterman, 2010). This framework suggests that migrants are subjected to different structures, which may interact and generate or impede economic opportunities. For instance, a migrant having a specific educational and ethnic background may locate herself in a city where there are certain local regulations and institutions. These authors suggest that all of these factors create opportunity structures.

Kloosterman's theory illuminates how opportunities can – or cannot – open up for immigrant entrepreneurs as an outcome of the interaction of different forces. However, it does not explain why some entrepreneurs may start their own businesses and succeed despite problematic networks and surrounding commercial and institutional environments. Other authors explain that this theory lacks the element of agency (Ram et al., 2008).

Cultural perspectives

In studies of immigrant entrepreneurship, there is a focus on categorizing migrant entrepreneurs by their ethnicities; this can generate bias and exclude individual factors that may be decisive for immigrants to start and grow their businesses (Mitchell, 2015). Even though Mitchell emphasizes the importance of studying entrepreneurship from a cultural or ethnic perspective, he reminds us that this may be misleading and may not explain all the facets of entrepreneurial outcomes. The cultural perspective implies that some cultures are more pre-disposed to business than others. Immigrants are seen as representatives of their group, nationality or country, with particular characteristics.

Minority businesses in the UK

A low level of regulation and a number of support initiatives characterize the UK and stimulate ethnic minority businesses. Some authors explain that ethnic minority businesses (EMBs) are regarded as "significant contributors to the nation's small business population" (ibid.). They explain that a wide range of support initiatives in the UK boost the growth of businesses.

Although there has been an impressive growth of minority businesses in the UK, these authors find that lack of access to finance and to public sector business support are important barriers. Support initiatives have been created, such as special programmes focused on EMB clients, incorporation of an ethnic dimension with mainstream provisions, sector-based approaches, financial and strategic initiatives. Even so, many challenges are still not addressed, such as data collection on

EMBs, sufficient efforts to engage EMBs in business support programmes, promoting sectoral diversification, sharing good practice and improving evaluation (ibid).

Somalis in the UK

A report on the Somali Diaspora in the UK from IOM estimates a Somali population of between 108,000 and 200,000 people and points out that "the current statistics do not reflect the actual figures of the labour migrants, refugees and EU-born individuals and secondary migrants from other EU countries who are currently residing in England and Wales" (Hassan et al., 2013). These authors suggest that the UK harbours Europe's largest Somali community (ibid., Harris, 2004). Another author estimates that approximately 114,000 Somalia-born immigrants were residents in the UK in 2014 (Muir, 2010). Others argue that the number of Somali residents in the UK is far bigger when taking into account Somalis living irregularly in the country (Toms & Thorpe, 2012). The difference in the estimates of the number of Somalis living in the UK is due to the fact that the UK census does not include the ethnicity "Somalis" (UK Parliament, House of Commons, 2006).

Somalis in business

Some authors clarify that Somalis encounter difficulties coming from a collapsed State, but nonetheless search for opportunities through business (Mohme, 2014) and end up transforming places into commercial hubs (Carrier & Lochery, 2013). Somalis' tendency to start businesses is seen as conditioned by Somalia's history of trade due to the country's strategic location at the horn of Africa, close to Ethiopia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Quirin, 2004).

Somalis in business are also seen as influenced by their nomadic lifestyle, which pushes them into migrating to different places, where they find opportunities to survive a harsh life. This view, however, does not explain alone why Somalis enter business and continue doing so when their basic needs are met, such as housing, education and healthcare. According to some authors Somali entrepreneurship has a deeper meaning; it is intrinsic to Somali culture and influenced by historical trade connections and relationships (ibid.; Carrier & Lochery, 2013).

Somali business, families and belonging

Nibbs describe belonging as an experience of fitting in (Belonging, 2014). Belonging is also linked to a place (Belonging, 2009). Families in combination with business are shown to create engagement that generates belonging. Families are seen as key-actors in the Somali business start-up phase but also for business continuation and development (Carrier & Lochery, 2013). These authors stress that Somalis cooperate within families and with relatives when creating and running businesses.

Brinkemo is another author who discusses the importance of Somali families (Brinkemo, 2014). Although he does not discuss Somalis in business specifically, he emphasizes the importance of Somali clans, their internal rules and support networks. Family connections are strong and embrace other people than just mother, father and offspring, which differs from family patterns in Europe. This view complements Carrier, extending the scope of families and therefore the number of people who may contribute to Somali businesses (Carrier & Lochery, 2013).

Somali families beyond geographic borders

Transnationalism is a strong force contributing to Somali business networks in the UK, e.g. in Leicester (Jones et al., 2010). Preconditions for Somali transnationalism can be observed: Somalis reside in several countries in Europe, such as Germany, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, and Italy (Henning et al., 2011). The UK turns out to be the country hosting the largest Somali community in Europe (Harris, 2004; IOM). Somalis, of course, also reside in many other parts of the world.

The split up families and their connections in different countries in Europe can be seen as an advantage for Somalis (Osman, 2012). Different studies show that Somali family networks facilitate business, working as a source of mutual support, information exchange and financing (Ram, et al, 2008).

Somalis in Sweden

In Sweden, Somalis have been seen as an ethnic group that has difficulty in integrating into the labour market. Some authors point out to how Somalis integrate poorly in Sweden and move on to become business owners in countries like the US and UK (Carlson, 2013; Carlson & Schölin, 2016). There are several hypotheses about this poor integration in Sweden, such as the number of business regulations, demands for formal requirements and education, the Swedish language, comparatively generous welfare benefits and authorities set on directing individuals' every step.

III. Method, Material and Challenges

In the summer of 2016, I conducted 39 semi-structured interviews with Somalia-born business owners, a focus group discussion with four women, made observations and took field notes. I identified Somali secondary migrants' (business) perspectives and experiences in the UK. These interviews were conducted in three different cities in the UK where there is a concentration of Somali businesses and where I had existing contacts prior to and during the fieldwork: London, Leicester and Birmingham. The neighbourhoods approached were St Matthews and Southern District in Leicester and Small Heath in Birmingham. London was added towards the end of the fieldwork because respondents from Leicester and Birmingham mentioned the powerful presence of Somalis and their businesses in Southall and Streatham Hill.

For the specific purpose of this article, I selected interviews with eleven Somalia-born business owners, seven women and four men, who had first migrated to Sweden and subsequently to the UK. They had, at the time of the interviews, spent on average 11 years in Sweden and 12 years in the UK; some basic information on the respondents is provided in an appendix. This article is based on questions involving Somalis' learning experiences to become business owners. Although the sample is admittedly very small, it can hopefully offer some insights representative of the many more Somali-Swedes active in business in the UK, insights, which may be elaborated in future studies.

My research was influenced by prior conversations with Somali entrepreneurs and other Somalis in Sweden between 2012 and 2016, who pointed out this phenomenon of Somali secondary migration from Sweden to the UK and US. They explained how proud they were of Somalis who migrated to these countries, referring to them as "successful" business owners.

I consequently wished to understand what respondents in the UK had experienced in connection with their migration choices and integration paths into business. To begin with, I was in touch with local Somali business organisations in Birmingham and Leicester. I learned about the neighbourhoods where the businesses are located and decided to contact business owners by myself. To do so, I asked questions about their migration history (previous migration countries), personal background (education, work before migrating to the UK, experiences in owning businesses), personal history in the UK (education and work), company history in the UK (motives, ideas, financing, suppliers, employees, rent, regulations and opinions about the entrepreneurial environment), learning experiences (mentors, education for business and networks), and future plans (company future, whether they think about returning to Somalia). The empirical data were schematized and interpreted through summaries, fieldwork diaries and tables.

A challenge when providing a background to the reader is the lack of figures on how many Somali-Swedes are residing – let alone running businesses – in the UK, which made me focus on qualitative data. Anyway, the Somali Community Organization in Birmingham claims that about

80,000 Somalis have moved to Birmingham from other European countries! The Somali Business Organization in Leicester estimates that approximately 20,000 Somalis migrated to Leicester during the last decade. These organizations have their own statistics and they argue that city councils cannot map everyone who lives there if they do not pay taxes and that no public data on business owners' ethnicity are gathered (Hassan et al., 2013).

Another challenge was to interact with and understand interviewees' perspectives on their situation. My role as a woman with previous experience as an entrepreneur in Sweden helped me understand respondents' answers about challenges when starting a business. My education as a coach and therapist helped me keep an open mind and listen to their stories. Respondents were ready to share their stories, which makes me thankful for the opportunity to grasp perspectives not previously displayed.

IV. Analysis of Business Channels

Socialization

The word "socialization" is adopted here because respondents used it during the interviews. Somali business owners expressed their entrepreneurial learning experiences in terms of socialization. This meant for them meeting "their people" and "interacting with other people". Interaction resulted in finding business-related information, financing, understanding and handling governmental requirements and regulations and finding channels to make a living, expanding their businesses and enjoying life.

Socialization refers to social capital, networks and ethnic markets (Barrett et al., 1996; Bizri, 2017; Bachkaniwala et al., 2001). 'Socialization' confirms how important networking is for Somalis but also how business is entrenched in Somali culture (Osman, 2012). One respondent said that there is *'no socialization in Sweden. You can't do something with the people, you know'*. He explains why he migrated to the UK: *'In Sweden, I know you cannot be like this if you don't do this and that'*, referring to how restricted he felt to socialize, integrate and start his business. He used the word socialization several times.

The presence of Somali community NGOs seemed to work as an external support platform if individuals could not find what they needed by themselves or with help from families and friends. In my contacts with these business support organizations, I came to understand that most people who turn to them are newcomers or have been living in the country for only a few years.

A respondent mentioned that the reason why she wanted to live in the UK (and not in Sweden) was mainly because of the social and business environment that allowed her to socialize and run her business. She said: *'Here, the neighbours (from different countries) give food to each other. In Sweden, you don't even talk to each other.'* Socialization meant not only getting business contacts but also interacting with people from the same and other ethnicities.

Belonging

Belonging implies that respondents identify themselves as agents of their lives in the UK (Jones et al., 2010), being able to accomplish their dreams motivated by their feelings and emotions (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). Some of them described themselves as "British".

The sense of belonging in the UK could be motivated by an experience of being discriminated against in Sweden (choosing to "fit in" with the UK instead (Nibbs, 2014), and "connected to a place" (Hooks, 2009) but also by identifying the host culture as receptive and accommodating towards one's own. A respondent referred to his feeling of discrimination in Sweden when he flew back "home" to Stockholm to explain why he decided to live and start a business in the UK:

"When visiting Sweden last time, the airport officer asked me to be in a line for non-EU citizens. When I showed my Swedish passport, she felt it was difficult to hide her face. British people would never ask how long you have been here and when you will go back home. In Sweden, all immigrants must leave [sometime in the future]. This does not exist here in the same way. You do not feel segregated."

The same respondent managed to start three businesses in the UK, and employs more than 40 people in one of them. In Sweden, he had an unstable job as a "language support teacher" (or study counsellor) to other immigrants.

Another respondent confirms the existence of belonging as a channel into business, by saying that it was *'easy to integrate in the UK. There is no problem with British people. No one asks questions such as where are you from, when are you going back?'* Another respondent argued that racism in Sweden was a reason for a lack of belonging: *'too much prejudice against black people there in Sweden'. 'Neighbours did not even say hi. Here, it is better relations with foreigners.'*

For respondents belonging could mean living in a "multicultural environment" in the UK. This was seen as a positive factor for one respondent who had approached the local Somali community and the Somali business organization to help him get his first contacts to start a business. He felt as being part of the environment and explained how he learned to run and expand his business: *'I get help from friends to buy products, get contacts and I also do Internet search to find solutions.'* His contacts could be Somalis but also British.

Community

Respondents refer to "community" as their ethnic network, where they mobilize social capital. The Somali community offers networks for creating support, exchange and ideas. Families and friends may support each other, supplying labour free of charge but also knowledge and money (Brinkemo, 2014; Carrier & Lochery, 2013). Products may be exchanged and resellers may offer better payment deals to end customers. Somali accountants and specialists in different working areas may offer knowledge to countrymen, either for payment or for free.

Respondents identified a "community feeling" crucial both to run businesses in the UK but also to live there. One of them said that *"….although she would like to return to Sweden because of clean streets, good healthcare and childcare, Sweden did not offer her this "community feeling" with other Somalis"*.

Cultural bonds and heritage

Just as in the literature (Harris, 2004; Quirin, 2004), respondents argue that they see themselves and other Somalis in general as business people. Respondents argue that childhood experiences with family business were factors that influenced them to start and run businesses. A respondent argued that she learned about and enjoyed doing business with her mother, who was her mentor in business. Another respondent said, 'business is the only thing I can do', referring to her past.

Besides family business experiences, respondents attributed feelings of life fulfilment to running business. Starting and running business allowed them to be creative and feel free (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Meeteren & Pannier, 2014), although they explained that they often worked more than ten hours a day and some of them only made enough revenue to support themselves.

Cultural bonds and heritage took their dreams to another level: accomplishment. Through contacts with friends and teachers they got mentors to take their ideas to the level of execution. A respondent said that a friend of hers became her inspiration and support to start a business. Another respondent identified a teacher in the UK as his business mentor, who supported him during the start-

up processes by motivating him to accomplish his dream. Today, this respondent is engaged in three businesses.

Informal banking

Informal banks were identified as a channel into business. Respondents solved the lack of funding by means of creating informal funding possibilities.

By collecting money from families or other shop owners, respondents managed to get start-up capital for their businesses. They used this channel for procuring products and paying bills. Women in the same shopping mall collaborated as an informal bank to help each other finance their business activities. Everyone who wanted to join in deposited 50 pounds a month and could (in order of urgency) take out the total monthly amount to buy something for their store when they needed, with the requirement that they kept paying the monthly fee. One respondent paid her suppliers with money from this "bank". Although this informal banking allowed them to finance each other's business needs, they did not say anything about how it helped their businesses expand or diversify.

Public flexibility

Respondents referred to government regulations in terms of "public flexibility". The higher level of flexibility (or better regulations) when starting and running businesses in the UK was mentioned by respondents as a positive factor compared to Sweden. This confirms studies that points to the supportive regulations in the UK that enable immigrants to start businesses (Ram et al., 2008).

In my contacts with city councils and local employment offices, I understood that there was a high degree of freedom for respondents to find their ways forward. This confirms the discussion of those who claim agency as an important factor in immigrant businesses (ibid.). In contrast to Sweden, where one is required to follow different plans and steps laid out by public organizations, Somalis could start a business without having to go through public organizations to get a decision on whether they could start a company or not, and whether their idea was feasible. Furthermore, the UK offered tax reduction, which helped respondents collect money to reinvest in their businesses or at least try it out for a year to see if their business idea was fruitful. These respondents did not have similar experiences in Sweden. From my own experience, I know that Sweden does not offer tax reduction for small business owners as an incentive to start up, and taxes are higher than in the UK. A respondent argued that *'the Swedish government encourages people to stay at home and get lazy. They don't encourage people to be their own [start a business].'*

Free business introduction

"Free business introduction" was the name respondents gave to business education and courses. This goes hand-in-hand with "public flexibility". A free introduction into business offered by authorities is a channel leading to cooperation between authorities and business owners and to education on business regulations, according to respondents.

This introduction comprised a three to four-week business course, which was described positively by business owners. Nonetheless, one respondent said that it was hard to start her business after the course. She claimed that she had absolutely no previous business education (apart from the introduction); it was her first time in business and all other shops offered the same products.

This introduction created an impression that the UK authorities are *'flexible and cooperative if you are honest with them and show them you have a serious business and make money'*. This was seen as encouragement from *'the British government to start companies. They are flexible. We Somalis are born business people. We are famous for our businesses.'*

Self-identification as business people and public support by means of tax reductions and courses worked as successful stimulus to start businesses (Ram et al., 2008). A respondent added that he would like to have paid taxes in Sweden because he is a Swedish citizen but couldn't do it. *'I am a Somali-Swede and Sweden is my second country after Somalia. But I do not want to borrow money. I worked and I saved to start my business here. That is why I chose Britain.'*

Making use of experience

Life and work experience is a part of social and human capital. I decided to discuss it separately though, taking into account the problem based on lack of validation of immigrants' skills and lack of education (Oliveira, 2004). Lack of validation of immigrant skills can be a challenge, especially if their experiences stem from being entrepreneurs. How to match entrepreneurs to vacancies in the labour market and validate their experiences formally? Oliveira et al. (2008) describe 'required qualifications' as barriers for immigrants to integrate into the labour market, referring to experience from several European countries dealing with migrants.

Past experience in business and Somali cultural business heritage play an important role for Somalis (in this study) to enter into and succeed as business owners. In Sweden, Mohamed highlights the lack of inclusion of Somali cultural heritage by the Swedish authorities working with Somali integration (Mohamed, 2016). In the UK, Somali business owners are allowed to use their experiences to try out their business ideas in cooperation with authorities and taxes are reduced during the start-up phase.

Starting business in the UK does not require formal merits, long-term previous education and clearance of the business idea by someone else. Education is also enabled through private initiatives. *'In Sweden, you need certificates, and two years [enrolment] in SFI [Swedish for immigrants]. Here, if you have got experience, you can start from scratch.'*

Although experience may lead to fulfilling formal requirements in some cases in Sweden, my experience is that it is likely that unemployed newcomers or immigrants applying for a job at the Public Employment Agency will end up following plans for how they are supposed to write CVs and seek jobs, based on their references, past work, formal education and merits. Not following these plans means not getting economic assistance during unemployment or when new in Sweden. This makes it difficult for some immigrants to save money to start businesses. An occupation as business owner is also not an option when registering at the Swedish Public Employment Agency. First, a person without income must look for work and can only start business in special cases, when officers have decided so. The individual agency to change one's life situation is handed over to authorities, and individuals must first follow regulations, although they could in many cases manage to start-up businesses generating much higher revenues than the economic assistance they get. Respondents in this study show that it is possible to rely on experience, even though it may originate from outside Europe. In the case of business, it becomes even more plausible, as transnational connections exist which may facilitate business development.

Four women in a focus-group interview identified the importance of experience, instead of formal requirements, in the UK. They managed to keep their businesses running and got more contacts after they started their shops. One of these women explained that she had experience in running the same kind of business in Somalia. Another respondent explained that business was in her "blood", adding that 'business is the only thing I know'. Yet another explained however that she did not have business experience but was pushed into business by friends, family and acquaintances.

Somalis' channels into business and mixed embeddedness theory

The mixed embeddedness theory offers a framework to analyse immigrant entrepreneurship by connecting public, social and private organizations (Kloosterman, 2010). These different "levels" may interconnect with each other, enabling different "opportunity structures". This research reveals

that these opportunity structures are created through different "channels" which interact with each other beyond a linear time frame.

In a nutshell, several channels into business have been identified: socialization, belonging, community, cultural bonds and heritage, informal banking, flexible public authorities, free business introduction courses and making use of experience. Below, there is an illustration of how these admittedly sometimes overlapping channels are interconnected:

Past   Present   Future
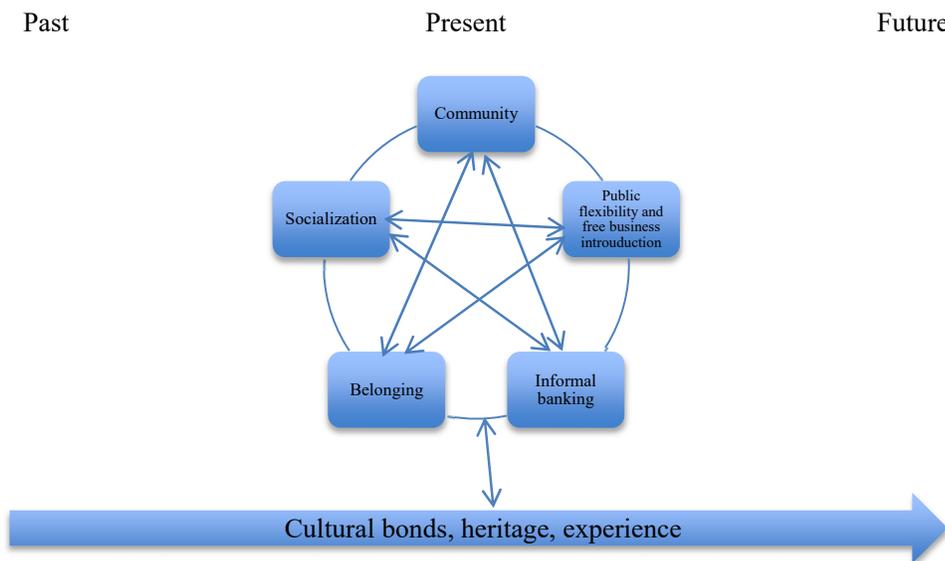
These identified paths work as channels, originating from the past, connecting to the present and creating the future.

Through socialization, respondents create networks and platforms for businesses. Belonging creates a channel to the society, where there is positive exchange between business owners and their localization; business owners feel as though they are part of the city and become actors, and society benefits from it. Here, the interpretation of belonging means 'to merge into the society and feel that you belong'.

The Somali community creates opportunities for socialization. It becomes a channel through which socialization extends outside the family environment.

Cultural bonds and heritage create a channel from the past into the future, making business creation possible, where Somali culture and business experiences are highlighted. Some of the Somali shops are related to selling and buying products from fellow countrymen not only from the UK but also from other parts of the world. Cultural bonds and heritage create trust and facilitate business actions.

Informal banking becomes a channel into business start-up, development, maintenance and partnership with authorities. During start-up, co-financing can be provided by family and friends but also by other business owners in the same shopping mall.

Public flexibility creates a channel of cooperation between authorities and business owners serving the interest of both since authorities are normally interested in reducing social welfare dependency and increasing tax payments whereas business owners want to execute their ideas and support their families.

Cooperation from the public sector by offering free business introduction courses creates a channel to business for those without experience as business owners but also for those who would

like to understand better how to create a partnership with authorities. This enables people with entrepreneurial ambitions to be creative and agents of their own life.

The opportunity for trying out ideas, based on past experiences, becomes a possibility for stakeholders to test their businesses, not that of merely acquiring education and formal merits. This allows especially those business people who do not have education or knowledge accredited by society to try out their ideas in the market.

V. Conclusion

In sum, this article identified and analysed different channels through which respondents have started businesses. Some of the earlier channels derive from previous generations due to cultural bonds and heritage, being established before Somalis migrate. Others come from interaction with the local ethnic and wider community. Yet others stem from public incentives and partnerships. These channels are projected from individuals and from different, already created, initiatives and groups. The number of channels, the level of their development and interaction comprise a sea of possibilities for individuals to start-up businesses and continue running them in the UK.

The factors identified and analysed in this article shed light on why respondents started businesses in the UK. The results point to different (although overlapping) paths into business, e.g. socialization, belonging, community, cultural bonds and heritage, informal banking, public flexibility, free business introduction courses and verifying experience through business.

My conclusion is that Somali-Swedes started businesses in the UK through the entry path of socialization. The lack of interaction with local Swedish people as well as a lack of role models possibly blocked them from integration through business in Sweden, thus nurturing a belief that it is hard for them to accomplish their business dreams in Sweden. Although many respondents identify Sweden as a beautiful and safe country where social welfare works better than in the UK, creating business seems to be a more attractive way of life together with people who share similar values and allow respondents to take back control of their creativity. This may lead to a feeling of happiness, belonging and success.

This article illustrates Somali-Swedes' channels into business in the UK, which may simultaneously shed light on why they do not start businesses in Sweden. Respondents indicate a belief that Sweden is not the right place for them to create business and socialize with people sharing similar values. This indicates that Swedish authorities could do more to encourage socialization, to nurture a feeling of belonging and interaction as a means of integrating migrants who experience similar challenges. Making use of migrants' experiences and letting them verify their ideas in the market, and not slavishly require fulfilment of labour market plans, could help migrants find ways into the labour market by themselves. Verifying merits and educating migrants may be positive but is also a way of indoctrinating and making them feel that they are not adults who can be agents of their own lives based on past experience. Stimulating and supporting some of these channels may create a quicker outcome of socioeconomic integration through employment or business.

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Appendix

This article builds upon interviews with eleven Somalia-born entrepreneurs, who have migrated from Sweden to the UK. They had, at the time of the interviews (2016), spent on average 11 years in Sweden (ranging from 1 to 22 years) and 12 years in the UK (ranging from 2 to 24 years). Some basic information about the respondents is provided in the following table:

Table A1: Respondent's characteristics

Sl. No.	Gender	Age	Education	City	Business
1	Male		Elementary	Leicester	Cafeteria
2	Male	47	College	Birmingham	Travel agency
3	Female	40	Elementary	London	Clothing store
4	Male	42	Elementary	Leicester	Department store
5	Female	40	Elementary	Birmingham	Clothing store
6	Female	44	Elementary	Birmingham	Cafeteria
7	Male	45	University	Birmingham	Home care
8	Female	35	Elementary	Birmingham	Clothing store
9	Female	40	High school	Birmingham	Clothing store
10	Female	45	Elementary	Birmingham	Clothing store
11	Female	40	High school	Birmingham	Clothing store