Time, entrepreneurial experience(s), and the meaning of place: using migration discontinuities to decipher variation in Cumbria, England.

Abstract

In this paper we explore how does the meaning assigned to place influence entrepreneurial choices (regarding knowledge resources), and innovation outcomes in rural areas. Drawing insights from the ideas of Alfred Schütz we argue that processes of innovation in rural Cumbria (North West England) stretch beyond geographical boundaries not only because of the absence of local knowledge generating organizations, though this undoubtedly may act as the trigger, and the background of key actors. Entrepreneurial choices, in our view, are influenced by meanings of place that are neither objective nor shared but individual: shaped by direct experiences and through experiencing the experiences of others in chronological time and through the life journeys of the entrepreneurs concerned.

Introduction

In a suggestive and influential contribution to the debate Welter posited that entrepreneurship 'can be better understood within its historical, temporal, institutional, spatial, and social contexts, as these contexts provide individuals with opportunities and set boundaries for their actions' (Welter, 2011: 165). She illustrated the point through an outline case of a young female entrepreneur in rural Uzbekistan, where post-socialist institutions and resurgent Islamic values help explain her choice of entrepreneurial pursuit (home-based, craft and low-income). This multi-dimensional understanding of context underpinned the emergence of *place* as a key conceptual construct in the field of entrepreneurial studies (Johannisson, 2013; Lang et al, 2013). Within this intellectual setting, entrepreneurs are viewed as embedded in places which socially frame resources and opportunities (Mckeever et al, 2014; Parkinson et al, 2016). Thus, place, in this body of literature, is inherently socially constructed: contributing in bridging the divide between endogenous and exogenous theoretical constructs (Bouchikhi, 1993). This view constitutes a significant advance on earlier, and rather narrow and objectivist, conceptualizations of context in terms of the region: as a specific spot in

space with a material form, for example in physical infrastructure, resources, people, and institutions.

More recently Kalantaridis et al (2017) questioned this social constructivist view. They argued that place is neither independent and given, as is the case with the concept of the region, nor shared – in the sense of a common meaning among rural dwellers. Instead, they argued, place is inextricably linked with the actor: positioning the active relationship between place and actor center-stage. This thesis breaks new ground in the conceptualization of place (as advanced in economic geography) but falls within the confines of a long tradition of subjectivist views in the field of entrepreneurial studies. This tradition goes back to the ideas of the Austrian School (von Mises, Hayek, Kirzner, and Boettke to name but a few) and more recent research revolving around the concept of entrepreneurial experiences (Berglund, 1999; Politis, 2005; Morris, 2011). Our paper aspires to advance this thesis further exploring *how meanings of place, as both subjective and malleable through time, shape entrepreneurial actions*?

In doing so, we draw insights from the work of Alfred Schütz, who is uniquely placed to bridge the Austrian School and research around the concept of experience: as he engaged directly with early advocates of the former School (and particular von Mises) (Augiers, 1999), whilst experiences lie at the core of his work. Our approach is used in deciphering empirical data from a conducive empirical setting: innovation actions in rural Cumbria (North West England). We chose to focus on innovation for two reasons: firstly, because it constitutes a clear situation where present actions aspire to alter future states of affairs (on account of the novelty inherent in the concept), and secondly, because it enables us to

distinguish and decipher a set of actions taken in order to attain it. The choice of the specific rural setting in England is also purposeful. This is because Cumbria, alongside other parts of the countryside of England and other advanced market economies, experienced rich patterns of migratory discontinuities (such as traditional rural-urban and return movements, urban-rural mobility, and increasingly international migration) that accommodate the study of differential experiences upon what was historically viewed as strong and homogeneous communities (Ashkins, 2009; Cheshire et al, 2013).

We argue that innovation actions in this place are not the outcome of recent chronologically variable entrepreneurial (through return migration, in-migration or immigration) arrivals using existing networks of contacts to cut across geographical boundaries in order to get access to distant sources of knowledge. Instead they (innovation actions) are influenced by the meaning assigned to place, however, this (meaning) is neither objective nor commonly shared (that is the result of a process of contestation or negotiation). It is subjective and shaped by the personal experiences, both direct and through experiencing the experiences of others, accumulated in chronological (outer) time and through the life journeys (i.e. in inner time) of the entrepreneurs concerned.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next Section explores the relevant body of literature: exploring place and experiences in the field of entrepreneurial studies, articulates a subjectivist theoretical construct, and provides an outline of existing research in this (rural) type of setting. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection processes, the identification of some of the key variables used in the analysis, and limitations. Then we present the findings of our research: including both quantitative and qualitative data. Lastly we offer some conclusions.

The Literature, and a Subjectivist Construct in a Rural Context

Place-based Entrepreneurship

The call for the study of entrepreneurs within the context in which they operate is not new (Low & MacMillan, 1988). However, the manner in which the external socio-economic environment is understood has changed considerably over time. Early research was linked with the concept of the region, and, thus, influenced in large part (but by no means solely) by ideas coming from economic geography. The region within this body of literature is an objectivist construct that is two dimensional: i) it occupies a specific spot in geographical terms, and ii) it has a material form, for example in physical infrastructure, resources, people, and institutions (Habraken, 1998). Moreover, it is viewed as more or less externally given, and, therefore, entrepreneurs have to adapt their strategies to prevailing conditions (Smallbone et al., 1999).

More recently, researchers began to use the concept of place focusing on how humans collectively assign qualities to the material and social 'stuff' gathered in a locale: ours or theirs, public or private, new or old to name but a few (Gieryn, 2000). Thus, place is 'not only materially carved out of space but interpreted, narrated, understood, felt and imagined - …[its] meanings pliable in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time and inevitably contested' (Gieryn, 2000: 455). These meanings are the outcome of contestation (or negotiation) (Martin, 2003; Massey, 2005; Pierce et al., 2011), shared understandings that enable actors to make 'sense of the physical form and content of a particular place' (Thanem, 2012, 444). They are experienced by individuals as both durable over time (for example prevailing institutions, norms, communities) (Harvey, 1996), whilst continuously being

revisited and subtly changed by actors (Massey, 2005). Building on this, McKeever et al. (2014) illustrate how entrepreneurship may recreate, renew and reify a purposeful identity for places and their future – focusing particularly in two depleted communities (see Parkinson et al, 2016 for a detailed outline of discursive disconnections between enterprise and deprived contexts).

This conceptualization of place (in entrepreneurial studies) is confronted with two challenges. Firstly, whilst it addresses the spatial, social and institutional aspects of the context (Welter, 2011) it tends to overlook the temporal dimension. Time is present in the sense that entrepreneurial actions in time *a* may bring about social change and influence place in time *a+1*. However, there is no consideration of time (and different conceptualizations of it) in a defined setting for entrepreneurial action (i.e. within time *a*). This is despite the fact that entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a process taking place in historical time (McMullen and Dimov, 2014), and the growing acknowledgement of the complex interfaces between past, present and future (Korsgaard et al., 2015). Secondly, even though the emphasis is on a shared understanding of place, there is widespread acknowledgement of differentiation of the meaning assigned to place by individual entrepreneurs. To use the example of Welter (2011) place may have a different meaning in the case of a male entrepreneur in Uzbekistan, a female of Russian origin (and thus Orthodox), an older woman who advanced managerially during the socialist era, or an immigrant woman leading a foreign venture in the Uzbek countryside. Conceptually this is captured through the introduction of the concept of mixed embededdness: used primarily in the case of immigrant entrepreneurship it explores the embeddedness of actors in social networks of immigrants as well as the socioeconomic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement (Kloosterman and Raith, 2003). In the case of international entrepreneurship the concept of

mixed-embeddedness is used to denote engagement in networks in both the home and host country. It is this increased mobility of both ventures and individuals across places and through time, and its implications (and potential erosion) on shared meanings of place that support the need for a new conceptualization of place-based entrepreneurship.

This re-conceptualization cannot be attained within a social constructivist setting. This is because the latter builds on Mead's view that it is impossible to conceive individuals outside of social constructs: 'there is no private thought, no consciousness, and no personality unmediated by a meaningful social symbol' (1934: 159). We argue that an alternative can be sought into a subjectivist view that allows instead individual experience to process social constructs (Leadbeater, 1989).

A Subjectivist View

Our point of departure, in line with the bulk of existing research on entrepreneurial experiences (Berglund, 1999; Politis, 2005; Morris, 2011), is that entrepreneurs make sense of the external world using a scheme of interpretation that comes from their past experiences. Experiences form the key construct in the way meaning actually unfolds in actor minds, and, in turn, determines their actions (Koppl, 2001). Experiences are biographically determined, i.e. they enter the actor's consciousness through everyday life, such as contact with customers and suppliers, face-to-face interaction with other local businesses, and reading professional and local business magazines (Yu, 2003). This means that the stock of experience held by each entrepreneurial actor may differ, on account of a number of discontinuities in their life-course (such as a migratory move) (Berger and Berger, 1976). These experiences, when typified and crystallized into routines and rules of thumb, are used in order to receive, select and process external information. The outcome is a process of continuous change (learning)

whereby new experiences may lead to reinterpretation of existing or generation of new information, which can lead to the modification or even rejection of existing (experience constructed) patterns used by entrepreneurs (among other actors).

The centrality of individual experiences in our research raises the specter of criticism: i.e. that it obscures the many ways in which actors can be shaped by institutions and different forms of collectivity: i.e. a community, system or network (Crossley, 1996). We address this issue through a key contribution coming from Schütz's work: the distinction between two types of experience. The first concerns experiences entrepreneurs encounter directly through their life journeys: experimenting with new products, transacting with customers and suppliers in the marketplace to name but a few. The second involves experience of receiving the experience of other people, such as parents, teachers and fellows, when we talk and interact with them (Schütz, 1962). This could involve (technological) knowledge accumulated in the past, as well as common concepts, beliefs and practices shared by others: commonly identified with the term 'institution' in the existing body of literature.

Both direct experiences and receiving the experience of other people occur in time. Both types of experiences are drawn from the past: the life-journeys of individual entrepreneurs. These two types of experiences, in-turn, determine actions taken in the present with the aim of influencing (or even determining) future states of affairs (Zaner, 1961). The introduction of experiences has, in turn, implications for the conceptualization of time: as there may be an apparent divide between time as (objective) chronology and time as the life-journey of individual entrepreneurs. This is captured by Schütz through a suggestive divide between outer and inner time that here is usefully deployed for the purposes of our research. The former, often identified with the term chronological time is shared among all actors and is

measured by clocks and watches using commonly agreed units – such as years, months, days and hours (Schütz, 1945). Inner time, on the other side, is individual: involving the continuous flow of experiences produced by the interpenetration of heterogeneous, purely qualitative moments. 'These elements structure themselves and interpenetrate like the notes of a melody where every note extends into the next in an organic, unbroken whole' (Mazzutto, 2006: 7). These two dimensions of time are related: in the sense that entrepreneurs act in outer time, but experience the outcomes or implications of their actions as individual streams of consciousness in inner time.

So, what are the implications of the introduction of a subjectivist view? We believe that it challenges the commonality of meaning of institutional, political and social factors but it does not signal a return to an atomist and context-less view of entrepreneurship. Place and institutions remain important but are not externally given. They are formed (and reformed over time) through personal experiences acquired both directly and through 'experiencing' the experiences of others. In this intellectual setting, individuals are located in a place but are not confined to it. Moreover, as new experiences emerge … More specifically, the assignment of different meanings to the same place may lead to different interpretations of information particularly regarding the resources that are available within the place. This, in turn, influences entrepreneurial perceptions of the nature of the opportunity and the resources that must be accessed from distant geographical localities in order to exploit this opportunity (i.e. introduce innovation) (Yu, 2003). The outcome is different actions regarding the means and the ends (innovation) pursued by entrepreneurs.

Rural Innovation and Migration as a Research Setting

There is a widely held view in the literature that innovative activity is not evenly distributed across space but clustered in specific places, which possess large numbers of actors (firms, universities and policy bodies) connected through a dense network of linkages that facilitate the flow of resources, and particularly knowledge (Srholec, 2011). A corollary of this is that places that do not possess knowledge generating organizations, linked closely with a sizeable and vibrant enterprise sector may record relatively low incidence of innovation. Rural areas[1], by virtue of their small population of enterprises and the absence of higher education provision and R&D facilities (Kalantaridis and Bika, 2011) are often viewed as examples of unfavorable settings for innovation (Bosworth and Willett, 2011). However, empirical evidence, drawing from developed countries (especially in Europe), shows considerable incidence of innovative activity in rural areas (Keeble and Vaessen, 1994; Cosh and Hughes, 2003; Isaksen and Onsanger, 2010; Kalantaridis and Bika, 2011).

Innovation in these empirical settings is often linked to the ability of rural enterprises to tap into distant sources of knowledge[2] (Dinis, 2006; Isaksen and Onsanger, 2010; Kalantaridis and Bika, 2006a; 2011): this access is often facilitated by migrant and returnee entrepreneurs[3], who are equipped with diverse networks of contacts acquired during periods of work in urban areas (Berry, 1976; Panebianco and Kiehl, 2003; Agarwal et al, 2004).

[1] The decline of agricultural pursuits led to news ways of seeing rurality: as a structural, symbolic, discursive or power terrain (Halfacree, 1993). For the purposes of this paper rurality is defined as a spatial category dominated by large open spaces and, relative to the national context, small settlements (with population density of less than 150 inhabitants per square kilometre – as defined by the OECD).

[2] We adopt a broad definition of knowledge that includes both information (i.e. data that give meaning by reducing uncertainty, equivocation or ambiguity) and know-how (i.e. more complex products of learning such as interpretation of information) (Huber, 1991).

[3] We use a definition drawn from the Austrian tradition, in order to align intellectually with Schütz's work: whereby, the entrepreneur is the economic agent who applies reason to deal with uncertainty, coming from the fact that the entrepreneur does not know how other actors will act (Mises, 1966). In doing so, s/he has to draw upon his/her experience of other actors' past value judgements and actions to deduce their future conduct.

These entrepreneurs act as conduits that strengthen the linkages between rurality and the global economy (Raley and Moxey, 2000; Stockdale and Findlay, 2004; Bosworth, 2010; Bosworth and Willett, 2011).

There is only modest research exploring the interface between migrant entrepreneurship and the meaning of rural place. Pahl (2007) argues that urban dwellers move to rural places in search of community, but their migratory move may actually lead to the demise of what they are seeking. This is also reflected in the notion of a 'Differentiated Countryside' (Lowe et al, 2003) where the conflicting demands of change and preservation produce socially contrasting ruralities. More recently, Bosworth and Willett (2011) explored entrepreneurs' perceptions of rural areas and implications for the linkages created between migrant start-ups and place based on empirical work in Northumberland and Cornwall (England). They argue that whilst all new arrivals view rural place as 'behind the times', some of them (in Cornwall) perceive this as an attraction, whilst others (in Northumberland) as an obstacle to be overcome. This view transforms the latter group into drivers of change, and is reflected in their business activities. More specifically, such migrant entrepreneurs carry out all their transactions within the place, rather than taking advantage of linkages established during their life in urban settings. In contrast, in the case of Cornwall the ventures created by migrants remain detached from the place reinforcing stereotypes of local people and divides between those locally born and new arrivals.

Methodology

Data Collection

The nature of our research question and the decision to adopt a subjectivist ontology were critical in determining the data collection methods. Reflecting the two elements of the research question (i) the implications of migratory discontinuities on innovation actions, and (ii) the assignment of meaning of place, two distinct methods were used. The first, like many previous studies aiming at capturing rural innovation actions (Smallbone et al, 1999; Cosh and Hughes, 2003; Kalantaridis and Bika, 2006) involved a survey[4] of 110 innovative enterprises. Sectoral inclusivity (shown in Table 1) was essential in capturing breadth (as there can be profound differences in actions between sectors. This was achieved using the results of the UK Innovation Survey 2012 for rural Cumbria for stratification purposes. The average sectoral divergence of the enterprises surveyed from the population of innovative enterprises was 2%. Agricultural enterprises were not included in the UK Innovation Survey and given their importance in Cumbria we included eight such enterprises in our survey.

Table 1. The Sectoral Composition of the Enterprises Surveyed

Sector	**Percentage of Enterprises Surveyed**
Agriculture	7
Manufacturing	29
Other secondary industries	1
Construction	15
Trade	9
Transport	3
Hotels and Restaurants	8
Business Services	23
Other Services	5
Total	**100**

We tried to be inclusive in the identification of enterprises for our survey using a number of commercial directories, databases and websites. Three screening questions were used in order to establish eligibility (i.e. that they were innovative in the eyes of the entrepreneurial actors).

[4] Survey data can be used to capture actors views describing a phenomenon under investigation within a social phenomenological philosophical setting (Aspers, 2004).

Some 177 enterprises were contacted between September 2012 and March 2013 in order to achieve 110 valid interviews, giving us a response rate of 62%. This is viewed as very satisfactory if placed in the context of comparable studies (Smallbone et al, 1999; Kalantaridis and Bika, 2006). A structured interview schedule focusing on i) the characteristics of the enterprise, ii) the nature and the processes of product/service innovation as well as process innovation, iii) output markets, iv) the attributes of the entrepreneur, and v) enterprise performance was used.

In order to address the second element of the research question we used in-depth interviews in order to construct cases (in common with many studies using the concept of place e.g. Martin, 2003; Pierce et al, 2011; Thanem, 2012). Cases were drawn from the innovative enterprises surveyed and explicitly aimed at "working backwards from events" (Welch et al., 2011: 749). The selection process was based on the following three criteria: i) variety in entrepreneurial origin and type of innovation pursued ii) richness of the data in relation to the experiences of the innovative entrepreneur iii) balance between the rather prosperous and more accessible East and the more peripheral and formerly industrial West of Cumbria. The in-depth interview schedule included questions about 'how' and 'why' these rural entrepreneurs went ahead or not with innovations (focusing on causes-of-effects rather than effects-of-causes). Data (including interviews, financial reports, government statistics and online newspaper records) were collected in September 2013 and analysed for a total of six cases but only four cases are presented here for reasons of space and clarity. Each of these case presentations takes a story telling form, offers an opportunity to learn (Stake, 1994) and most importantly, integrates context analytically into the explanation rather than simply using context (as a description) to enhance understanding (Welch et al., 2011).

The case study data analysis consisted of a series of steps (with the audit help of 'peer debriefing'), searching for within-case similarities coupled with cross-case differences or in other words "the simplicity of the overall perspective" (Eisenhardt, 1989: 547). As a first step, we thus coded the interview script data in terms of four key themes that are customarily encountered in the innovation literature: *innovative enterprise, networks of innovation, and innovation actions*. However, we felt that the addition of *entrepreneurial origin* as a fourth key theme would capture the background influence of social agents and the micro-dynamics underpinning innovations. In a second step we purposefully looked for and then came up with two theoretical associations that enabled us to take into account secondary data information and collapse the previous four themes into a new narrative of rural innovation: *meaning of rurality and combination of resources*. This led to a final reordering of the case study data in order to develop a reconceptualization of *place-based actor-constructed systems of innovation*.

Operationalizing Key Concepts

Existing research in the field of rural studies focuses either upon a simple divide between locally-born and in-migrant entrepreneurs (Keeble and Tyler, 1995; Raley and Moxey, 2000; Bosworth and Willet; 2011) or more complex conceptualisations of origin: focusing on those locally-born, returnees (i.e. born locally-migrated-returned), in-migrants, and immigrants (Kalantaridis et al. 2017). Moreover, we also explored inner and outer time dimensions of migratory discontinuities adding a radically new dimension to existing research.

These migratory discontinuities underpin an emphasis on what Schütz would have perceived as inner time. This is reinforced by the emphasis placed on innovation processes and the use of resources as experienced by entrepreneurial actors. More specifically, they were asked to

focus upon knowledge that was used in a specific process of product/service or process innovation. This prompted respondents to draw upon their experiences, and limited the scope for misinterpretation. An analytical divide between knowledge used in idea generation and the implementation of the idea was deployed in both instances. Information about the type of source (for example customer, supplier, university etc.) was captured, alongside data regarding the frequency of interactions.

Limitations

Before proceeding with the presentation of the findings it is important to identify two limitations of this study. Firstly, rural Cumbria is by no means typical – if such a type exists – of rural areas in the UK and beyond. This means that the results cannot be readily generalized, however, it provides an interesting case, in the diverse rural space. Secondly, whilst migration constitutes the key discontinuity used in our research, on account of its growing importance in the advancement of rural areas, this (in the case of rural Cumbria) involved invariably voluntary mobility. Migration linked to crisis and displacement may provide new and fascinating insights into entrepreneurial meanings of place. Research in the field of entrepreneurial studies suggests other discontinuities that may be of importance: social change and mobility and changing perceptions of gender – indeed it is rather disappointing that all cases examined here involved male entrepreneurs.

Survey Findings: Migration and Processes of Innovation

Migration Patterns

Our survey findings suggest that types of migratory discontinuity are linked with differences in entrepreneurial and enterprise characteristics. Not unexpectedly, given the fact that they

lived all their lives in rural Cumbria, only 14% of locally-born entrepreneurs possess higher education qualifications: in contrast to 83% among immigrants (numerically accounting for 6%). However, in the case of the latter qualifications are rarely aligned with the industrial sector of their ventures. This combined with the fact that they started their ventures soon after they moved in the locality (mean age of 30.5) indicate that entrepreneurship may be linked with limited alternative employment opportunities. Returnees and in-migrants (28% and 51% of the total interviewees) are educated to degree level or above at 50% and 64% respectively. Innovative entrepreneurship in rural Cumbria appears to be male dominated. Females account for 25% of in-migrants, one in five for returnees and locally born, whilst they are non-existent among immigrants. There is however, significant disparity regarding business inheritance: reported by 40% of locally-born and 7% of returnee entrepreneurs, but (as expected) being non-existent among the other two types. This, in turn, influences the early age of involvement in entrepreneurial pursuits (just 28) and the sectoral and size characteristics of the enterprises run by those born locally who are involved heavily in traditional pursuits, construction (31%) and agriculture (19%), and running larger ventures – mean employment of 30 persons (2008).

Some interesting patterns emerge regarding the inner and outer time of migration. More specifically, the majority of arrivals particularly among returnees are historical, i.e. more than ten years prior to data collection. In this grouping this is nearly 90%. This is combined in many cases (48%) with only modest time period spent outside the locality, i.e. less than five years. The figures for historical migratory moves among in-migrants and immigrants are 80% and 50% respectively: indicating weak local linkages particularly for the latter. This combined with the push to entrepreneurship discussed previously may explain the micro-size of the ventures immigrants? run (employing just 9.6 persons). In terms of outer-time, the greatest concentration of new arrivals is between 1990 and 1995 – some 17% of the total. This period was particularly

important for in-migrants, as some 30% of the total arrived in these five years. Interestingly, this was an era where there was a shift of manufacturing employment from urban to rural areas in the UK as part of the ruralisation of industry phenomenon (North and Smallbone, 1996; Smallbone et al, 1999). In fact, a common pattern among this grouping is that arrival is linked with salaried employment. It is indeed six years after migration at a mean age of 39 years old that they engage in entrepreneurial pursuits often in manufacturing (35%) and to a lesser degree business services (32%)

Innovation Actions

Innovation in rural Cumbria is the outcome of extensive use of external (to the firm) knowledge resources, particularly in the case for locally-born and returnee entrepreneurs. In both types, three quarters or more (up to 90%) use external sources of knowledge for both idea generation and implementation in both product/service and process innovation. Moreover, they both access knowledge resources that mostly come from the region, which also constitutes their main output market and input source (Tables 2 and 3). Thus, their response to the specificities of being located in a defined rural place centres around proximity. This differs significantly, when compared with in-migrants and immigrants: who rely less (below half of cases) on external knowledge sources for idea generation. Entrepreneurs falling in these two types of migratory discontinuity use geographically distant knowledge resources (i.e. nationally and internationally) that aligns well with the fact that they serve distant markets (Tables 2 and 3). Thus, their response to a defined rural place involves distant interactions. In most instances (and across all types of migratory discontinuity) knowledge resources come largely through vertical linkages. Even the differential geography of knowledge resource strategies does not result in disparities regarding the type of linkages used. There is also considerable similarity in the frequency of

interactions, by type of migratory discontinuity: ranging from 5.4 times per month in the case of returnees to 12.9 among locally-born entrepreneurs. Those using geographically distant sources occupy positions between these two values.

Table 2. The Geographical Origin of Knowledge Sources used for Product/Service Innovation implementation and Output Markets

	Locally-born	Returnees	In-migrants	Immigrants	Recent arrivals	1990-1995 arrivals
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from the region	43	43	35	0	25	40
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from elsewhere in the UK	57	57	55	60	58	50
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from international sources	0	0	10	40	17	10
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from national sources that also sell elsewhere in the country (2008)	75	50	88	100	78	81
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from international sources that also sell internationally (2008)	N/A	N/A	100	0	44	56

Table 3. The Geographical Origin of Knowledge Sources used for Process Innovation implementation and Input Markets

	Locally-born	Returnees	In-migrants	Immigrants
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from the region	40	60	0	0
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from elsewhere in the UK	40	40	83	0
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from international sources	20	0	17	100
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from national sources that also use national non-labor inputs (2008)	100	100	100	100
Percentage of enterprises using knowledge from international sources that also use international non-labor inputs (2008)	0	N/A	100	50

We have also looked at differences in innovation actions on account of inner and outer time migratory attributes. In doing so we focused solely on product/service innovation as the numbers involved in process innovation were rather small to allow useful comparisons in the case of relatively recent arrivals (i.e. up to ten years prior to the conduct of the survey) in comparison to historical ones (inner time), and those who moved to Cumbria in the early 1990s (outer time). Recent arrivals rarely developed ideas about product/innovation drawing solely on internal resources: just over 10% of cases, in comparison to nearly half of historical ones. Not unexpectedly, there are differences in the geography of external knowledge resources: with relatively recent arrivals accessing twice as often as their historical counterparts those located beyond the national boundaries (17% and 9% respectively). The use of such geographically distant knowledge resources does not align well with output markets. In the vast majority of cases this knowledge came through vertical relationships, whilst there were precious little differences in the frequency of interactions.

Those entrepreneurs who arrived in Cumbria during the early 1990s rarely (just 5% of cases) used solely knowledge resources internal to the firm. The geography of knowledge resources varies little between this grouping and all those arriving at different times. However, the alignment of knowledge resources and output markets is better among early 1990s arrivals than others. Whist vertical relationships were the most commonly used, a significant minority of entrepreneurs arriving at this time used knowledge from horizontal and policy knowledge resources. This may explain the significant difference in the frequency of interactions: a mean of just 2.3 per month in comparison to 7.8 for others.

Overview

The quantitative evidence presented here shows that there are considerable differences in innovation actions by entrepreneurs who experienced differential types of migratory discontinuity. These findings pose a number of questions that merit further investigation: how do in-migrants, with experiences shaped outside the area, are able to achieve combinations of knowledge and markets that auger well for success? Why do the combinations created by immigrants differ significantly from those of in-migrants, and bear greater resemblance with those of the returnees, despite their profoundly different experiences? What are the effects of the passage of inner time after the migratory move on differential access to resources? And what is the value attached to the place by entrepreneurs belonging in different migration patterns?

Case Studies

Locally-born entrepreneur

Peter, born in West Cumbria, is the only son of a family of tenant farmers who succeeded in cheaply purchasing their own farm in the 1970s (200 acres landholding). As a school boy his preference for a farming life course was marked by "a week off for a work placement at British Steel at Workington [finding out] I wasn't really interested in working there". Thus, he spent "all (his) childhood in helping out (his) father" thus experiencing the previous generation's experiences (who stayed here because "a rolling stone gathers no moss"), and became partner in the family dairy farm aged twenty four initiating the succession process. He started his own family aged thirty ("[so] now I am married to a chartered accountant who scrutinizes every decision I make on the farm). The completion of the succession process with the retirement of his parents when he was thirty-two prompted him to raise capital

selling all 60 cows (other than the young stock) and purchasing a milking robot was bought two years later to replace the previous high-manpower milking system.

With the benefit of hindsight he marks production gains rather than labor savings as the inner time advantage of installing a milking robot for his farm leadership; it allows individualized focus on each cow in his direct experience ("I have achieved the highest yield … last year on the milk records") and production efficiency "so we have still got the (profit) margin" provided that it is the buyers that decide "what price they are going to pay us". "This machine works 24 hours a day, whereas before we were spending 4 hours morning and night actually milking the cows and feeding the calves … it doesn't over or under milk the quotas … cows' health is improved". The milk quota produced (and the "cost of having to either rent or purchase the quota to make sure you weren't being penalised by producing too much") is sold in the local cheese factory whose existence as a clear point in outer time represents a key factor in Peter's innovation action plan: "as long as the processes are in the county as well then we have got somebody here to purchase our produce".

For process innovator Peter going to the regional agricultural college as a youngster was an eye opener in terms of direct experience: it helps "you get to see how other systems operate, how technology can be helpful". He also relied on the local press as an indirect source of technological information. It was under the influence of his wife (an experienced chartered accountant), who had helped him to come up with a business plan that included a bank loan, that he gained the resolve to invest in the acquisition of a milking robot after a 10-15 year period of "looking at them" in his supply chain network. Outside help such as other regional users' experiences ("how they found it worked on their farms") were actively sought in relation to the exploitation side of the innovation and regular fortnightly contact with his

salesman was kept throughout the process of installation so he could learn from the experience of others in the supply chain. Some 90% of inputs used in his business come from elsewhere in the country.

Living in Cumbria was not a choice that could be questioned in Peter's technology driven plans: "it isn't the handiest place to come to; you are by yourself, but we do like living here; this is my home". Interestingly, it is the installation of a milking robot that has solved farm labor availability issues mostly related to the local labor market competition defined by the outer time arrival of Sellafield in the area after the war: "we have to benchmark ourselves with the biggest local employer which is the Sellafield site and the wages they pay and the time their staffs have off. Not everybody can get a job there but they like to have the similar sort of wages to people that work there". The lack of regional government subsidies for Cumbrian farmers is another outer time constraint that has influenced his inner time entrepreneurial decision-making regarding the size of his capital investment: "If I was in Scotland I might have been better-off. I could have had 2 machines for the price of one".

Returnee entrepreneur

John, who comes from East Cumbria, went to Liverpool as a young man in order to study architecture and after this he spent another four years gaining direct work experience in a big national building company. These direct experiences were important when, upon his return to the area in his late twenties, where he succeeded in a fifth generation family business (established 1872), entailing an accumulated body of experiences of well-known others. The work of the business is mostly local. Distinction e.g. "they don't do it to the same standard as we do it" and lower costs achieved through integration "from design to finish of the building

… this is obviously more economical for the customers" is what drives their business model that is clearly based on trial-and-error experiences.

The incremental innovations introduced by the company include building energy-efficiency, thermal insulation and solar products, and more recently, tanking out houses affected by regional flooding taking place between 2005 and 2009 and greatly influencing available local business opportunities. Innovations launched between 2008 and 2011 are however part of a long-term strategy to experiment "material wise" and prioritize resource efficiency in local construction, reflecting policy directives and increasingly consumer preferences. This has helped the company to remain competitive: "we just offer the package … a product which is from a drawing board to conception. Not many people do that. Not in a business this size' (14 employees).

This returnee entrepreneur uses knowledge directly encountered outside Cumbria and remains vigilant on the national supply chain changes (e.g. via monthly interaction for the latest 'tanking out' product innovation): it is his inner time returnee experience that imbues entrepreneurial alertness to such opportunities ("you keep your eyes open, don't you?") and allows him to incrementally exploit relevant gaps "bit by bit (just working on it)". Indeed, he sources more than four fifths of non-labor inputs from within the area. Underfloor heating as an outer time technology is something that John first saw in the press over the years and then became an inner time experience-based extension of an existing building competence: "So the architect on that job would have specified it 10 years ago… and from then we thought right OK we can probably offer this as a service now". To this extent, other professionals' experiences are not left unnoticed by John, whilst inner time entrepreneurial selection (e.g.

packaging) among existing outer time technology options (e.g. underfloor heating) emerge as being his key business strength.

Whilst lifestyle choices underpin his location in the sense of "our business is here because we want to live (and bring up our children) here … this is home", John also recognizes that Cumbria for those "who have come in from outside, is a museum". The area is understood as evolving rather than deficient and it is a new management structure that has become John's answer to both his own and previous generation's experience of the local suppliers' unwillingness to engage in multitasking or efficient coordination of building activities: "at some point our fathers decided right we may as well have our own joiners here … take the whole shooting match on … because we couldn't get (them) to work". In this inner time multigenerational entrepreneurial journey ("we were always changing things"), roles are combined in various ways, but values and cognition do not significantly diverge: "we still stick to traditional building methods because first and foremost the building has got to stand up hasn't it … we are still here because of our reputation".

In-migrant entrepreneur

Nicholas was born in England and became heavily involved in height-related sports during University. For the next eight years he experienced a free lifestyle that combined climbing as a hobby with cash-in-hand jobs e.g. making stained glass windows ("when I finished University, I carried on climbing because in those times it was easy to stay unemployed … I could be in and out of work easily. You know not having any money is not an issue for me"). However, it was his subsequent work as an industrial abseiler in the London window cleaning industry that directly marked the transformation of his hobby into a commercial activity. His wish to be close to nature prompted him to leave London and move to East Cumbria in 1992

to take over a job in a Cumbrian outdoor equipment company. Dissatisfaction with the direction of travel of the company prompted him together with his future wife (a marketing expert) and a fellow employee (a training manager) to leave the company in order to start a manufacturing venture in 1997.

Nicholas as an experienced mountaineer "had an idea for a (safety) harness and thought you know we could probably make that … this harness ended up being chosen as what was called a millennium product by the design council". The origin of the idea behind this radical innovation can be accurately traced to the application of his direct experience of climbing both as a hobby ("using these lightweight sporting methods like rope access … a new way of being safe, if that makes sense") and as a profession ("why don't we take a complex rescue team that the fire services use at the moment and put it in a rucksack and teach them how to use it. It didn't rely on a single special device but rather on an internal way of thinking and so we created this little system that you could stick in a rucksack with a couple of ropes and they started putting one of these rucksacks on every fire engine"). Interestingly, it is national sales that drive this high-growth company (57 employees).

In addition to the horizontal contacts that fellow colleagues represent, customers themselves emerge as another important structural link with the flow of knowledge from the outside world (via regular fortnightly contact). Working around the outer time constraint of poor regional production structure enables him to combine 'thinking' innovation in terms of "a global opportunity for what we do" with 'doing' innovation as the direct experience of constructing things oneself in rural Cumbria ("so we got a tailors dummy from Kendal, a second hand sewing machine, some samples and we stitched together a thing that we thought would work … we had one [local] machinist to start with and she is still with us"). Working

away, endows Nicholas with other valuable direct experiences in the supply chain: “in our previous job I had supplied just one or two fire services with some very simple bits of equipment … and noticed a slight trend”. However, the exploration and exploitation of alternatives are simultaneously put into entrepreneurial use because a relative detachment from outer time local experiences (e.g. “the [local] K shoes manufacturer had people [sewing machinists] dangling for 5-10 years with the threat of closure [finally closing down in 2003 and spelling the end of Kendal’s 154-year history of shoemaking]”) encourages him to become open in how the ‘new’ is conceived, practiced and presented: “So you were kind of a chameleon with this new thing. It needs to be presented to different counties in different ways”.

For Nicholas “to innovate in Cumbria is exhausting” but he will not move because “a lot of the things that I love to do are here. My family is here … [but] there is more to life than business”. He goes on to argue that “you can end up in a very small geographical area and it can give you quite a small perspective on some things. I don’t think Cumbria is a very outward looking place and that doesn’t help … people aren’t thinking oh now I have developed my initial skill in X what can I do now … it takes us 2 years to take one of those people and turn them into trainers”. This experience of the local culture makes him embrace an unchanging view of the place (and its resources) “(there is no [brownfield] land [for building on] available in Cumbria for business development”) and a strategy that finds strength in self-direction and autonomy (“we are very sort of self-contained … so for quite a number of things we actually have the answer rather than the question … stepping in, do it yourself, not enough delegation; that habit actually stays with you”). Interestingly, it is this combination that leads him to engage in divergent radical thinking (variation).

Immigrant entrepreneur

Reza studied physics in Iran and subsequently, left home because he "wanted to go and see more" for a postgraduate degree in Germany and moved here in his early twenties where he soon met his future wife whose place of origin is Cumbria. This makes him the most recent arrival of all cases examined in our paper. He worked in restaurants all over the county for five years before he launched in 2005 his first food outlet, in partnership with his former Iranian employer. Financial difficulties prompted him to move into business on his own and with money borrowed from his sister back home in Iran, he has since 2010 been running a profitable Italian restaurant that sells tasty food cooked in a wood-burning stove.

He is now a restaurateur in East Cumbria who places emphasis on maintaining high standards of food and customer service provision (4 employees) given he had been "seeing it work before … [travelling] in different places in the world". In his own everyday business experience, this is a process that is underpinned not by radical change but by refinement: "we have changed it and changed it. We have made a really good sauce. We make perfect dough; fresh every day … I am not saying we are the best but we try to be best". There is another local restaurant with a wood-burning stove but without the direct experience of its owner, so "they are quiet … because they do not do good (Italian) food", whilst for him "there is no mistake acceptable. I won't just close my eyes and let it go".

Reza manages to combine a local presence with all the distant networks and skills that his Iranian ethnic roots have endowed him with, to exploit a familiar innovation by capitalizing on his own experiences ("I lost my mother when I was 20 so you know I have been living on my own and [experimented with] cooking since then") and those of others: "an Iranian friend in America who used to have a takeaway business in Cumbria, but bought a few good

domains when the [outer time] internet [dot-com] came about and has been selling pizza ovens since 2004, (sold me this stove) … [whilst] my sister is an architect and I asked her to draw in 3D on a computer for me". He spoke himself many times per month to these key actors during a firsthand involvement in installation: "these are all built by myself; the walls, the ceiling, the oven – everything here with my own bare hands. I haven't employed anybody to do that". On the other hand, technological innovation is combined with labor management skills in his business model: "people come and ask for a job and I keep the good ones … I pay much more than a lot of places around here". His sister-in-law has also been working "with us since we started".

Immigrant entrepreneur Reza considers himself attached to Cumbria and avoids "feeling like a stranger", whilst at the same time does "everything local because the money comes back to us eventually in profit". In his everyday experience of the district, "the tourists are an advantage but without the local business we wouldn't survive" and his local "workers" are his "assets". He has embraced a serial entrepreneur identity since his arrival ("I want to start a Persian restaurant next"), but also refused to experience negative stereotyping within the locality where he operates: "I was never a cowboy because I always tried to do my best wherever I previously worked … [all] depends on how you behave".

Overview

The evidence presented illustrates the profoundly different meaning of place held by different entrepreneurial actors. Nicholas' in-migrant ability to (relatively) detach himself from the 'disadvantageous' place, tapping into direct experiences, allows him to be open to how innovation is practiced and facilitates his ability to align the geography of knowledge and markets. Reza, despite also tapping into direct experiences mostly formed outside the study

area, demonstrates a need ‘to belong’ and a sympathetic view of the place. This leads him to utilize indirect experiences from personal/non-business connections outside the place, whilst remaining focused on local markets: underpinning the poor alignment with output markets (a trend identified in the survey results for both immigrants and returnees). The positive meaning returnee John attaches to Cumbria is also formed both by direct experiences and through experiencing the experiences of others – in this case with an increased emphasis on their historical (and multigenerational) character. This shapes his view of knowledge from outside the place as central in engaging with incremental innovation aimed for the regional market. This also provides an interesting proximity in meanings and choices, that are constructed differently (in terms of direct or indirect experiences and where they are gained), between John and Reza. Of particular interest is Peter’s sympathetic view of rural Cumbria that is formed not only by direct experiences but also through experiencing the experiences of others in the vicinity. This meaning of Cumbria is more or less engrained in the very nature of his long-running family venture: enabling the attainment of innovation outcomes on the basis of proximate sources of knowledge that align well with markets. This offers a suggestive contrast to the case of Nicholas: together providing insights into the potential divergence of innovation as a collective process.

Conclusions

The adoption of insights from Schültz enables us to push the meaning of place further: deciphering differences in the meaning of the very same place assigned by actors, who build on direct experiences and the experiences of others. Our paper used migration discontinuities as the particular relevant means of capturing diversity in experiences in rural settings, though this could be enriched further in future research if the motivations behind the migratory

move, i.e. whether this is voluntary (opportunity and lifestyle driven) or involuntary (crisis and displacement driven) in nature, are taken into account. Moreover, different types of divide (for example in terms of gender, family, ethnicity, religion and others) may be used in other studies exploring meanings of place. The outcome of this (differential meaning) is a move away from place as an independent influence upon actor choices regarding innovation actions in rural areas, towards one that is viewed as inextricably linked with the actor. More importantly our paper introduced a two-dimensional (i.e. inner and outer) concept of time in the analysis: and explored its implications in the meaning of place as well as innovation actions in rural Cumbria. This depicted considerable differentiation but fell short from exploring the evolution of the meaning of place in entrepreneurs (within a defined migratory discontinuity) with the passage of inner and outer time.

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