

Norwegian entrepreneurs (1880-1930s) and their “new America”: a historical perspective on transnational entrepreneurship and ecosystem development in the Russian Arctic

Roddvik, Irina Nikolskaja¹; Leick, Birgit²; Roddvik, Viktor³

¹Faculty of Computer Sciences, Engineering and Economics, Østfold University College, Norway

²Department of Business and IT, School of Business, University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

³Independent Writer and Author, Oslo, Norway

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination, and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record.

Roddvik, I. N., Leick, B. & Roddvik, V. (2022). Norwegian entrepreneurs (1880s-1930s) and their “new America”: a historical perspective on transnational entrepreneurship and ecosystem development in the Russian Arctic. *Journal of Management History*, 28(4), 530-552. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMH-11-2021-0067>

© 2022, Emerald Publishing Limited. This AAM is provided for your own personal use only. It may not be used for resale, reprinting, systematic distribution, emailing, or for any other commercial purpose without the permission of the publisher.

Full reference – please cite as:

Roddvik, I.N.; Leick, B.; Roddvik, V. (2022). *Norwegian entrepreneurs (1880-1930s) and their “New America”*: A historical perspective on transnational entrepreneurship and ecosystem development in the Russian Arctic. In: *Journal of Management History*. DOI: 10.1108/JMH-11-2021-0067.

**Norwegian entrepreneurs (1880-1930s) and their “New America”:
A historical perspective on transnational entrepreneurship and ecosystem development
in the Russian Arctic**

Irina Nikolskaja Roddvik (corresponding author)

Associate Professor in Marketing, Østfold University College, Faculty of Computer Sciences, Engineering and Economics, BRA veien 4, 1757 Halden, Norway. E-mail: irina.n.roddvik@hiof.no

Birgit Leick

Professor in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of South-Eastern Norway, School of Business, Department of Business and IT, Gullbringvegen 36, 3800 Bø, Norway. E-mail: birgit.leick@usn.no

Viktor Roddvik

Independent writer, 0772 Oslo. E-mail: viktor.roddvik@gmail.com

Biographies

Irina Nikolskaja Roddvik is Associate Professor in Marketing at Østfold University College in Norway. She has doctoral degrees in philosophy and international marketing. Her current research focuses on SMEs and international communication, international business from an historical perspective, and behaviour theories in marketing/entrepreneurship.

Birgit Leick is Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the School of Business (Department of Business and IT) of University of South-Eastern Norway. She is a German business economist with a habilitation degree in economic demography. Her current research interest is the nexus of firms and regional development, and current research projects address regional entrepreneurship in the Nordic sharing economy and creative entrepreneurship in peripheral locations.

Viktor Roddvik is an independent writer and researcher. He has more than 150 publications about Russian and Eastern-European studies. One of his last books is dedicated to the integration of immigrants into the Norwegian labour market.

**Norwegian entrepreneurs (1880-1930s) and their “New America”:
A historical perspective on transnational entrepreneurship and ecosystem development
in the Russian Arctic**

Structured abstract

Purpose

The paper presents a historical case study of Norwegian transnational entrepreneurs (1880-1930s) and the ecosystems that they founded in Russia’s Arctic periphery. Drawing from the contemporary transnational entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystem literature, and inspired by AnnaLee Saxenian’s concept of “brain circulation”, we explore the journey and impact of these entrepreneurs in a time of evolving political turbulence.

Design/methodology/approach

We apply a mixed-methodology approach, drawing from nine qualitative interviews held in 2021 and secondary material, including historical books, a podcast, videos, and archival data.

Findings

The Norwegian entrepreneurs were both “pulled” by and “pushed” to the Russian region, their “New America”, where they could apply their personal skills and exploit their rich social and financial capital in order to establish a local entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, radical political change altered the context, which led many of the entrepreneurs to re-migrate to Norway.

Originality

The paper presents an original, novel case study on the historical role of transnational entrepreneurs across different cultural settings, their impact on a foreign peripheral location, including social-network building, and evolving political change in the historical context. The findings are relevant for contemporary management literature.

Research limitations/implications

The paper demonstrates the role of the political context for contemporary entrepreneurship and management research, as transnational entrepreneurs and international expatriates remain vulnerable to political change.

Practical implications

Public-policy actors and managers in companies need to support highly-skilled transnational entrepreneurs, including expatriates, in a setting with turbulence, crisis, and even war, in order to foster the sustainable contribution of entrepreneurial migrants to regional economic development across different countries.

Keywords

Transnational entrepreneurship, brain circulation, industry development, social-community building, social capital, entrepreneurial ecosystem, foreign business, cross-border entrepreneurship, historical case study.

Introduction

“In 1913, a correspondent from Moscow reported in the Norwegian publication ‘Tidens Tegn’ about the new opportunities for Norwegian investments in Russian cities. He encouraged Norwegian investors to act quickly and compete with other Western countries and invest before Russian trade and industry reached such a level that they would become independent of foreign investment. The article referred to Russia as a ‘New America’. The correspondent claimed that Norwegian exporters all too often stuck to traditional Western European markets. They should instead invest in Russia where one could expect an average of ten per cent higher returns than in other countries.” (Roddvik, 2020, adapted from Nielsen, 2014, p. 483)

Norwegian entrepreneurs settled in the Russian city of Arkhangelsk (Archangel) between 1880 and 1930, as this excerpt from a Norwegian podcast published in 2020 highlights. Attracted by abundant business opportunities, equipped with know-how, skills, and social and financial capital, many of these entrepreneurs were “pulled” during these decades to the city in the Russian Arctic High-North to establish themselves as entrepreneurs in a new setting, a “New America”, as Nielsen (2014, p. 483) calls it. From the viewpoint of history, while the United States of America were the main magnet for entrepreneurs around the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Baines, 1994; Hatton and Williamson, 1992), the present paper pays attention to the historical temporary entrepreneurship that took place between the two neighbouring countries of Norway and Russia: during this period, already established, but still opportunity-hungry Norwegian businessmen emigrated to Russia, which was an attractive target market for Western European entrepreneurs because of the vast expanses of land with abundant natural resources and business opportunities through bilateral trade. From the 1880s onwards, their transnational entrepreneurship was strongly incentivised by the Russian government; however, in the aftermath of the February and October Revolutions in Russia in 1917, the pressure was mounting to “push” these Norwegian entrepreneurs out of the region, even to expel them, which ultimately led to their gradual exit both from the region and from the industries that they had established through their entrepreneurial endeavours for almost 50 years (Astrup, 2011).

Considering this background, the present paper will explore the historical case of selected Norwegian entrepreneurs in Russia's Arctic High North through the lens of the following modern entrepreneurship theories:

Firstly, our theoretical foundation will be the concept of transnational entrepreneurship (Crick and Chaudhry, 2014; Drori *et al.*, 2009), including Saxenian's (2006) argument about the brain circulation of skilled migrants and their social capital (Putnam, 2000; Anderson and Jack, 2002), in connection with a historical political context (Wadhvani, 2016; Wadhvani *et al.*, 2020). While context is increasingly acknowledged as an important factor that drives entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011), the present paper will illustrate the specific influence of the emerging political change and disruption on transnational entrepreneurship and migration in a cross-cultural setting (Brieger and DeClerq, 2019). The case study presented will highlight how the political context firstly encouraged such entrepreneurship, and then, subject to political regime-change, disturbed, and even destroyed, the entrepreneurial achievements created in the location by the foreigners. However, our case study will also illustrate how the temporary migration of the entrepreneurs – interpreted as a specific form of brain circulation that involved important social networks both at home and abroad (Saxenian, 2006, 2002a, b; Chand, 2019) – supported the building of social capital across two national contexts, even though this final re-migration was mostly enforced by the regime-change.

Secondly, we build upon the recent literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems (Acs *et al.*, 2017) and industrial development embedded in the entrepreneurial ecosystems. By tracing the process of how the historical transnational entrepreneurs established themselves in the foreign location and modernised the local timber and lumber industries and associated trade relations, which was a novelty at that time in Russia (Nielsen, 2014), we depict the impact that the entrepreneurs made in terms of the establishment of a local entrepreneurial ecosystem (Acs *et al.*, 2017). As our case study will highlight, their entrepreneurial activities were closely connected with their social-community building, which jointly laid the foundations for the growth of the industries during the period from 1880 to approximately 1930 (Astrup, 2011). Since an important element of the historical ecosystem was the presence of social institutions, it can be shown that, even today, the historical memory of the past ecosystem still continues to persist; the modern city of Arkhangelsk has been strongly influenced by the heritage of former Western European settlers, including the Norwegian entrepreneurs (Nielsen, 2014; Astrup, 2011), and still reflects a local

mentality of welcoming foreigners, particularly Norwegians, to the peripheral region in the Russian Arctic High-North.

By presenting a historical empirical case, this paper makes a twofold contribution to contemporary entrepreneurship and management theories: firstly, the paper demonstrates from a historical perspective how the individual entrepreneurs of the past contributed to the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems, including their social institutions (Acs *et al.*, 2017). Thereby, we provide evidence that opportunity-seeking entrepreneurs have always been at the core of industrial development and regional economic growth, as modern concepts, such as the industry cluster, the regional innovation system, and, more recently, the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature, all conceptualise (see Acs *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, the case study presented illustrates the role of the political context (Wadhvani, 2016; Wadhvani *et al.*, 2020), particularly in times of political regime-change, and its effect on transnational entrepreneurs (Drori *et al.*, 2009), including their enforced “brain circulation” (Saxenian, 2006) and re-migration to Norway. By this token, the paper contributes both to research on the political context and entrepreneurship (Wadhvani, 2016) and to a historical management perspective (Tennent, 2021), which are two under-studied perspectives in contemporary entrepreneurship and management studies.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: the next section provides the theoretical framework of the paper, which is followed by another section on its contextualisation. Subsequently, the methodology and research design will be introduced. The next sections are the empirical analysis and discussion, which is followed by a section providing the conclusions, implications, limitations, and research outlook.

Literature review

Transnational entrepreneurship and migration

Transnational entrepreneurship (Crick and Chaudhry, 2014; Drori *et al.*, 2009) represents a modern phenomenon of our contemporary business world and drives entrepreneurial activities on a global scale through migration, diaspora communities, and social networks (Vinogradov and Jørgensen, 2017; Bagwell, 2015; Ojo, 2012). According to Drori *et al.* (2009, p. 1001), transnational entrepreneurship “*involves entrepreneurial activities that are carried out in a cross-national context and initiated by actors who are embedded in at least two different social and economic arenas*”. Bailetti (2018, p. 34) defines the phenomenon as “*a cross-border investment to acquire, combine, and recombine specialized individuals and heterogeneous assets to create and capture value for the company under conditions of institutional distance and uncertainty*”. As a concept, transnational entrepreneurship is closely linked to international entrepreneurship theories, but focuses on the individual migrant as the enterprising individual in a foreign-market setting (Crick and Chaudhry, 2014). Hence, it takes place in cross-cultural contexts, given the various ethnic backgrounds of the individuals migrating and setting up enterprises; indeed, transnational entrepreneurship has been associated in the literature with highly-skilled immigration (Maslova and Chiodelli, 2018), ethnic diaspora migration (Bagwell, 2015) and/or the non-Western refugee immigration of the first and second generation(s) (Beckers and Blumberg, 2013) – to name just some of the most influential research streams. For some transnational entrepreneurs, “pull factors” in terms of opportunities in a foreign-market setting are more important than necessity-driven motives, while other individuals migrate in order to secure a living for both themselves and their families abroad out of sheer necessity (von Bloh *et al.*, 2020; Fairlie and Fossen, 2018). Hence, drawing from these variegated definitions and understandings from the literature, which establish notions of modern transnational entrepreneurship, we establish the following working definition for the purpose of this paper: *transnational entrepreneurship represents cross-border entrepreneurship by resourceful enterprising individuals operating across different national, cultural, and political contexts.*

Historically, transnational entrepreneurship has been documented, for example, for Western Europeans leaving Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (*e.g.*, Berghoff and Spiekermann, 2010). As such, the phenomenon is closely associated to the great emigration movements of the past that targeted, for instance, Northern America (today’s countries of the USA and Canada) and Latin America (Alonso, 2007). For example, starting in the sixteenth century, British settlers went to the USA in search of religious freedom, followed in the

nineteenth century by other Western Europeans from Germany, Ireland, and Scandinavian countries, who sought to escape poverty, famines or religious persecution, or simply wanted to pursue economic opportunities in a new setting (Zhong and Balatova, 2015). In the present paper, we will use the concept of transnational entrepreneurship, or transnational entrepreneurs, from a historical perspective by focusing on cases of Norwegian entrepreneurs migrating to Russia's Arctic periphery in search of business opportunities in the timber and lumber industries. Thus, our historical case study is contextually embedded in the greater migration movements during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when young (mostly male) Europeans or entire families left their home countries, driven by famines and/or a lack of opportunities to sustain a living at home, or were attracted to the prospect of a new life and new business opportunities elsewhere (Baines, 1994), often in the Americas (Hatton and Williamson, 1992). More specifically, we explore a local community of Norwegians as part of a diaspora community of immigrant Western Europeans (such as the Germans, Swedes, and the Dutch) in a Russian region.

Transnational entrepreneurship and brain circulation

For this historical perspective, we are inspired by AnnaLee Saxenian's (2006, 2002a, b) analysis of the Silicon Valley cluster and its underlying social networks that were established by transnational migrants, including entrepreneurs, from emerging economies in Asia (Taiwan, India, the People's Republic of China) and Israel. What distinguishes the entrepreneurs that Saxenian (2002b, p. 28) studies from other transnational entrepreneurship, *e.g.*, diaspora communities of migrants working in low-wage sectors abroad, is that "*foreign-born engineers and scientists in Silicon Valley have created social and professional networks to mobilize the information, know-how, skill, and capital to start technology firms*". Hence, her core interpretation of transnational entrepreneurship is that migrants reside temporarily in different cultural contexts and shift resources (knowledge, skills, and social and financial capital) *across* these contexts. Saxenian's (2006) key argument here is that these highly-skilled enterprising individuals were involved in the so-called "brain circulation", *i.e.*, a temporary migration between the USA and their home countries, which contributed greatly to a resource transfer into the industrial development and social-network building in the Silicon Valley. At the same time, the brain circulation and its effects represented a leverage point for the home countries of these migrants to re-gain and temporarily retain their skilled enterprising individuals who

brought skill-updates from their work in the Silicon Valley cluster back home with them (Saxenian, 2006). Importantly, these temporary migration movements across the two national and cultural contexts involve social networks alongside the purely business-driven networks; thereby, the highly-skilled enterprising migrants in the Silicon Valley industry were able to exploit professional and social networks developed both at home and abroad (Henn and Bathelt, 2017).

Saxenian's seminal case study of the Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 2006, 2002a, b) demonstrates the role of transnational entrepreneurs for the development of a technology-driven high-growth industry; more specifically, it shows how the temporary migration of skilled individuals between two national and cultural settings functioned for the updates of, and investment in, their skills and knowledge. However, her original concept tells us little about transnational entrepreneurship in less technology-driven contexts. Following Chand (2019, p. 19), however, the brain circulation of migrant entrepreneurs can be more generally interpreted as "*being constantly engaged with the COO [country of origin], so that the benefits of immigration are available to both countries*", which distinguishes the concept from a brain drain that associates transnational entrepreneurship with a loss of human, social, and financial capital for the home country (Chand, 2019).¹ Hence, among the temporary highly-skilled transnational entrepreneurs that are responsible for the brain circulation with its concomitant benefits for the home-country context, there are also expatriates, such as highly-skilled managers who have been deputed from the headquarters to a company's foreign subsidiary (Delios and Bjorkman, 2000) and benefit from the resource-rich networks in their home countries in order to invest their high skills and social capital into a company's foreign subsidiary (Bresnahan *et al.*, 2001). Hence, human capital in connection with social networks and the skills of exploiting social networks across different national and cultural contexts may be derived as key benefits because of transnational entrepreneurship and brain circulation (Saxenian, 2006).

Furthermore, in order to understand the present paper, it is important to note that the historical transnational entrepreneurs studied were challenged by the increasing political turbulence in the foreign location over time, which "pushed" them to embark on brain circulation. Therefore,

¹ In addition, Chand (2019, p. 8) stresses that brain circulation does not necessarily mean a return migration or continuous commuting over years between the home country and the foreign country, but "only" requires migrants to constantly engage with the home country.

their return migration was partly involuntary, whereas Saxenian's (2006, 2002a, b) concept describes the context of a high-tech industry in a growing economy with little disruption or turbulence due to political change.

Transnational entrepreneurship, brain circulation and social capital from an entrepreneurial ecosystem approach

As Saxenian (2006) goes on to show, transnational entrepreneurs contributed significantly to the social-network building in her Silicon Valley case study, which supported regional economic development. Thus, for the purpose of our analysis, we also draw from a territorialised understanding of an entrepreneurial ecosystems approach, which emphasises the systemic nature of networked relationships between entrepreneurs and their surrounding organisations (on the biological origins of the entrepreneurial ecosystem concept and definitional issues, *cf.* Cavallo *et al.*, 2019). What is interesting to the present study is the territorialised, regional understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems, which Acs *et al.* (2017, p. 2) describe as a focus on “*the interdependence of actors in a particular community to create new value*”. Acs *et al.* (2017) also point to the related previous concepts that such an entrepreneurial ecosystem approach builds upon, *i.e.*, industrial districts, industry/regional clusters, and regional innovation systems. Hence, following Acs *et al.* (2017, p. 2) and Stam and Spiegel (2018), we define an entrepreneurial ecosystem as a *territorialised system of interdependent transnational entrepreneurs who create value in terms of industrial development and social-community building for the territory in which they operate*.

We assume that transnational entrepreneurship, organised as a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem, supports economic development and social-community building through the resources, skills, and knowledge that entrepreneurs invest both at home and in the foreign-market context (Henn and Bathelt, 2017; Lin, 2010; Collins and Low, 2010; Halkias *et al.*, 2009). Our key argument is that the transnational entrepreneurs provide social capital, *i.e.*, the capital residing in social structures (Adler and Kwon, 2002), to both the home country and the location in the foreign market. The literature discusses two key forms of social capital: bonding social capital (establishing close, trust-based ties in narrow homogeneous circles) *versus* bridging social capital (establishing loose, weaker ties in broader and more heterogeneous

circles) [Anderson and Jack, 2002; Putnam, 2000]. Both forms are important to develop entrepreneurial networks (Anderson and Jack, 2002). Thus, the social capital that transnational entrepreneurs establish in the two contexts through temporary migration, brain circulation, and the transfer of resources is based upon both bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Through both levers, industrial development and the establishment of social communities around the industries can be facilitated (Eklinder-Frick *et al.*, 2011; Iyer *et al.*, 2005).

The context of the case study

The entrepreneurial community of Norwegians located in the Russian city of Arkhangelsk (Archangel) has its roots in a movement of settlers (starting around 1814) in the Barents region who were engaged in the so-called “Pomor” trade, the small-scale trading of fish, wheat, leather, and natural resources between the Northern Norwegian and Arctic regions in Russia. The Pomor trade between Norway and Russia represents a century-long tradition to which individuals and communities, including businessmen, have been committed. From 1860 onwards, Norwegian colonists had settled on the Russian Kola coast in the Barents region where they fished and sold various products. Roddvik (2020) estimates that there were approximately 260 Norwegians who had settled permanently or for a certain period on the Kola coast.² The Norwegian entrepreneurs studied in this paper took part in the temporary or permanent migration to the Russian Arctic during the years between 1880 and 1914 *circa, i.e.*, until the outbreak of World War I, and the subsequent February and October Revolutions in Russia in 1917.

The regional context studied is the Russian city of Arkhangelsk and the surrounding area (Map 1). During the period studied, the political situation in the area changed quite radically for the Norwegian settlers: until approximately 1914, the immigration of Norwegian and other Western European businesspeople was strongly encouraged and incentivised by the Russian authorities

² Ovsyankin (2000) wrote in his book that, in 1913, 464 foreign nationals lived in Arkhangelsk. In addition, according to the 1923 census, 165 subjects from Germany, 34 from Finland, and 24 from Norway lived in Arkhangelsk. In 1897, the local population in the city was 20,882 inhabitants (Vishnevsky Institute of Demography of NRU-HSE, 2013). It is important to note that we do not know whether the registered local inhabitants from 1897 were ethnic Russians or foreigners with a Russian citizenship.

through a positive investment climate towards these individuals. Norwegian entrepreneurs could sign favourable long-term contracts for land use which enabled them to invest into timber and lumber industries (Roddvik, 2020).³ The entire region at that time was ruled both by ethnic Germans, Dutch, and Russians, which might explain the openness to welcome other European migrants and entrepreneurs. Hence, the local political *élite* was supportive of such transnational entrepreneurship.

Map 1 about here

The timber and lumber industries were the most important industries in Arkhangelsk and the surrounding area at that time. According to Astrup (2011), citing Björklund (1984), while only a few foreigners had a business in these industries in 1890, 44 per cent of these industries were already owned by foreigners in 1900. Astrup (2011) also reports that the foreign entrepreneurs came from England, Germany, France, The Netherlands, Sweden, the Baltic region, and Norway. From 1900 to 1912, Russia doubled its exports of timber; at the end of the 1890s, already 20 sawmills were established in the Arkhangelsk area, whereas, in 1900, the number had grown to 33, and to 40 in 1913 (Astrup, 2011). Almost 20 of the 40 sawmills (1913) were owned by foreigners, partly by Norwegians (Astrup, 2011).

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the subsequent February and October Revolutions in 1917, and the ascent to power of new Soviet government, the previously positive climate towards investment by foreigners changed, and new policies of the Soviet government and their local authorities destroyed many of the entrepreneurial achievements that had been created by the Western entrepreneurs, including the Norwegian entrepreneurs. In their case, more and more obstacles were implemented which forced many of them to return to Norway (both after World War I and well into the 1920s). In the end, the formerly privately-run timber and lumber industries were nationalised, and subsequently started to decline. Hence, the political change

³ Already from the eighteenth century, the Russian Tsar had invited foreigners to his state on preferential terms: completely free entry, assistance with all kinds of trade and industry, free practice of faith, *etc.* The reformer, continuing the traditions that had been developed by that time, tried in every possible way to ensure that the Russian people learned from foreigners in order to become more skilful in commerce and trade (Ovsyankin, 2000).

had brought an end to the migration and entrepreneurship by Norwegians in the Russian Arctic by the end of the 1920s.

Methodology and research design

In terms of methodology, the paper builds upon a mixed-methodology approach consisting of personal interviews and secondary material with the aim of providing narrations (Johansson, 2004) about the individual journeys of these historical transnational entrepreneurs, their contributions to the development of the local timber and lumber industries, and their social-network building in Arkhangelsk, Russia, and Norway. It emphasises the role of political context for an entrepreneurship topic (Wadhvani *et al.*, 2020) through first-hand memories about the topic studied, based upon qualitative interviews with respondents who still possess memories of this topic. Building upon their memories, we apply a qualitative and inductive case-study approach in line with Yin (2009) and Eisenhardt (1989). More specifically, nine personal interviews were conducted in 2021 with four managers of business companies, one manager of a business network, one employee in a Norwegian university, one historical writer, two representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGO), and one member of the family whose close relative had been involved in the historical events in Arkhangelsk as described in this paper (Table 1). The latter interview with a descendant of a Norwegian entrepreneur (the Norwegian Wicklund family; the descendant is the author Viktor Roddvik), which is based upon a podcast (Roddvik, 2020), represents a key resource for the case study. For this interview, first-hand accounts from the family history were the basis for the information provided (in line with oral history approaches, *cf.*, Sommer and Quinlan, 2009). The other eight interviews conducted are different in nature, as the informants provide in-depth or complementary information about the phenomena studied, which is in line with some general principles of inductive and qualitative research in business/entrepreneurship studies (*cf.*, Yin, 2009; Neergaard and Uihøi, 2007).

Table 1 about here

The research design of the interview sample⁴ was set up according to purposive sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994). All the interviewees have the commonality that they hold long-term experiences related to the Norwegian-Russian co-operation in the Arctic, in particular, the city of Arkhangelsk. In addition, the interviewees selected all have personal memories of this topic. In order to identify appropriate interviewees, the authors used the available information through documents (*e.g.*, reports, internet pages, newspaper reports, *etc.*) stemming from research fieldwork in 2019/2020 when the podcast about the historical case was introduced. Moreover, in 2021, additional interviewees were identified and contacted through snowballing techniques. These extra interviews with informants that possess knowledge of the historical context explored served to safeguard the high trustworthiness of the memory-based accounts provided by the descendant of the Wicklund family because the additional informants confirmed the narratives provided. Thematically, all nine interviews focused on the transnational entrepreneurs, their journey from Norway to Arkhangelsk (and back to Norway or to a different location, if relevant), and their contribution to local industry development and social-community building. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and processed into individual case vignettes, which subsequently enabled the authors to establish interpretations concerning the conceptual approaches, as outlined in the literature review.

In addition to the interviews, secondary literature was used, which presents the historical material about the timber and lumber industries in Arkhangelsk and the Norwegian-Russian co-operation in the Arctic area. Examples of the historical material include published books (mostly in Norwegian or Russian) on the Norwegian entrepreneurs, the industries, the international trade affairs at the time, and the region (Abrahamsen, 2015; Nielsen, 2014; Myklebost and Bones, 2012; Astrup, 2011; Jentoft, 2001; Ovsyankin, 2000; Fraser, 1996, 1986; Sejersted, 1989), or archived documents that were made available⁵ (a methodological approach, as advocated by, *e.g.*, Bowie, 2019). This material also includes seven videos (Taibola Assemble, 2021a, b) that provide additional information about the context of the study and present examples of the modern co-operation between the Russian Arkhangelsk and the Northern Norwegian town of Vadsø as twin cities as well as the Norwegian impact on the regional business development of Arkhangelsk.

⁴ See Wadhvani *et al.* (2020, pp. 10-11) for a closer description of the variety of historical case studies in entrepreneurship research.

⁵ The archived documents stem from the private archive of the Wicklund family; one author is a descendant of this family and owner of the private archive.

Empirical analysis: Narrations from Arkhangelsk

Transnational entrepreneurs from Norway in the Russian Arkhangelsk

The Norwegian entrepreneurs described in this paper founded their businesses in the Russian Arctic region of Arkhangelsk based upon the existing Pomor trade because this trade institutionalised and legitimated both the flow of goods and migration between Norway and Russia (respondent 1). For this migration, Peter the Great had played an important role as he had built the Russian fleet in Arkhangelsk, used knowledge from masters in trade and industrial production from Holland and Germany, encouraged Russians to learn from foreigners and, in particular, built upon the experiences of Scandinavians during his reign (respondent 5). Hence, in the Arkhangelsk region, the experiences of foreign businessmen were highly appreciated, as they were considered to be skilled in Pomor trading (respondent 5). The attitude in Arkhangelsk of the nineteenth century was thus open and welcoming to foreigners, and free trade with Western Europe represented an important source of the city's wealth. The port of Arkhangelsk was built earlier than the port of St. Petersburg (respondent 3), and the port of Murmansk did not exist before 1930. Hence, Arkhangelsk was the main port for the Pomor trade during the period studied (respondent 2), through which all parts of Russia were connected. Thus, at that time, Arkhangelsk was the centre of Russian free trade with the West. Many foreigners from Western Europe, notably Germany, Holland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, came to Arkhangelsk to settle there, and their capital and knowledge were welcome (respondents 5 and 7): *“Talented people, [with] good brains could come to Arkhangelsk and start a business and a new life”* (respondent 8).

The Norwegian entrepreneurs studied in this paper came to Arkhangelsk mainly with the goal of starting a business in the timber and lumber industries. Equipped with knowledge and skills as to their production and logistics methods, and with sufficient financial capital, these foreigners were of unique value for the less modernised Russian industries (respondent 2). The logistics skills of the Norwegians were important for the timber and lumber industries because large distances needed to be covered in the vast country. To cite an example (Astrup, 2011), the

Norwegians possessed an advantage, compared to the Russian entrepreneurs, in the optimisation of wood-cutting and wood-processing (for instance, concerning the quantities of wood to be cut and the operations of workers during this process) and the transportation of the wood to the timber and lumber factories. The Russian timber at that time was of a unique quality, which made it attractive to export Russian timber and lumber from Arkhangelsk. Moreover, the sawmills of the Norwegian entrepreneurs with their steam-powered frame saws were technologically advanced (Astrup, 2011). The port was a key node in this logistics infrastructure that the foreigners used for their trade. Roddvik (2020) describes the situation as follows: *“In the middle of the nineteenth century, the wave of industrialisation came to the Nordic countries. The need for timber increased both in the Nordic countries, in the United Kingdom and on the continent. Deliveries were picked up further and further east. Norwegians were well known in the European timber market and became pioneers in the production of and trade in timber in neighbour countries.”*

An example of the entrepreneurs engaged in the timber and lumber trade can be found in Adolf Fredrik Wicklund, who met Norwegian migrants in Arkhangelsk, as respondent 9 recounts: *“He had contacts with the Norwegians from the Northern part of Norway, who moved to Arkhangelsk. Their message was that Arkhangelsk is a good place to start a business with a good diaspora of Norwegians, good networking and fruitful co-operation with the local authorities. It was also said that Arkhangelsk had a good infrastructure, with its port, and that they faced a lack of know-how and capital. The city was open for investors from abroad. My great grandfather came to Arkhangelsk and established a construction company.”*

However, the transnational entrepreneurs also wished to emigrate from Norway, at least temporarily, and start a new life abroad, which resonated with their entrepreneurial spirit. Respondent 8 reports about these Norwegian entrepreneurs: *“They had experiences which were needed, they had a wish to move and to start the new life, and they had capital.”* Respondent 9 states the following: *“My family has roots from Arkhangelsk, both Norwegian and Russian roots. My great grandfather was born in the region of Troms in the Northern part of Norway. He was a construction entrepreneur and an architect. But he had lost his wife and wanted to try the new opportunities in a New America.”* More examples of such entrepreneurs seeking a new life are discussed in Roddvik (2020): *“Egil Abrahamsen ... [was] one of those [people] who tried to create a life in the timber and sawmill industry in Northern Russia. Abrahamsen*

travelled to Russia at the age of 15 and eventually got key positions in various Norwegian companies that became involved in the timber business”, and: “another Norwegian pioneer was Johan-Arnt Lund. He settled in Arkhangelsk around 1890. He also seems to have travelled to Arkhangelsk to learn Russian. The Pomor trade could make it useful to master Russian. ... he aimed to return to Northern Norway in order to be better equipped to conduct business with Russians.”

Temporary migration and entrepreneurship between Arkhangelsk and Norway

Because of the special mentality in Arkhangelsk, many individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit wanted to settle in this free port city, and the information that there was an appreciation of talent, ideas, and entrepreneurship by the locals was known to foreign businessmen through Russia’s trade partners (respondents 5 and 6). Notably, the port presented new business opportunities for the establishment of many industries, including the timber and lumber trade, and the fishing trade (respondent 6). Moreover, the regional businessmen from Arkhangelsk were themselves active in starting international trade relations, as respondent 6 states: *“People from Arkhangelsk were good in trade and travelled long distances to Norway to establish trade connections with the Norwegians. They learned a lot and brought this knowledge home.”* This regional mentality attracted Norwegian entrepreneurs who were equipped with valuable resources that they could invest in Arkhangelsk (respondent 6): *“Foreigners brought knowledge and competence, they came with new and innovative ideas, new technology, new languages and culture, European habits.”* (respondent 7). Respondent 9 reports this in a similar vein: *“They [the Norwegian migrants] brought technical innovation to Arkhangelsk, and they had capital, good and close connections to Norway.”*

The Norwegians who emigrated to Arkhangelsk mostly planned a temporary migration – with the aim of returning to Norway after some years, as respondent 9 reports: *“They were temporary workers who worked in Arkhangelsk to make money in a New America. Many of them were expatriates who were sent by their companies to support the Norwegian investments in Russia.”* Despite their initial plans, some of them settled and stayed permanently in the Russian Arctic, as respondent 9 furthermore states: *“As long as the investment climate remained positive for the Norwegians, Norwegians and other foreigners enjoyed working and living in Arkhangelsk,*

and they established families and settled in the city. Many of them obtained the Russian citizenship.” Examples of the latter entrepreneurs, according to Roddvik (2020), include Johan-Arnt Lund, who married a local woman and raised a family in the Russian Arctic, and Martin Olsen, who also remained there until his death (Table 2). More generally, Norwegian entrepreneurs who married and established a social life in their “New America” settled in Arkhangelsk permanently.

Table 2 about here

However, almost all the other Norwegian entrepreneurs returned to Norway when their companies were nationalised by the Soviet government. Interestingly, the changing political climate during or after the February and October Revolutions in 1917 took them by surprise – and many had to leave the city both unprepared and involuntarily. Notwithstanding this, they were able to pursue their professional careers using the skills and networks that they had developed in Arkhangelsk (Table 2). Roddvik (2020) and Astrup (2011) report on this drastic change in the aftermath of the revolutions: for example, a large Dutch-Russian company called “*Russnorvegoles*”, which was originally established in 1913 and was now owned by the Soviet government, was formally registered in London in 1928 after the company had forced out all the Norwegian members of staff and closed its Oslo office. Whether it was the nationalisation of formerly privately owned businesses, or the increasingly hostile climate within nationalised companies is unclear, but this radical change marked the end of the Norwegian entrepreneurship in the Arkhangelsk timber and lumber industries that had lasted for almost 50 years, according to Astrup (2011).

Industry development and social-community building in Arkhangelsk: towards building a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem

Social networks in the diaspora community and with Russians

Throughout their journey, the Norwegian transnational entrepreneurs maintained close networks with their home regions in Norway, while they were building up the local timber and lumber industries in Arkhangelsk. They worked to create more modern transport infrastructures in the region, which this Northern Russian periphery is still benefiting from today (respondent 8). An important pre-requisite for their success in industrial development was that Norwegian settlers and local Russians in Arkhangelsk understood each other – with the result that the Norwegian entrepreneurs and their families became closely integrated into the local networks (respondent 1).

They also managed to build social communities around the industries that they had established, as respondent 9 reports: *“They participated in Arkhangelsk city life with musical parties, concerts, celebrations, visits. My grandfather met my Russian grandmother during one of these concerts in the church. Many Norwegian men married Russian woman and contributed to the political and social life. The Norwegians were strong in their social networking.”* Rodd vik (2020) also reports (based upon Nielsen, 2014) that the Norwegians lived close to each other in the houses – and factories that they had built: *“Ola Sæther has examined the telephone directory for Arkhangelsk for 1912. Many of the Norwegians lived in the main street in Arkhangelsk, the Troitsky prospect. Here were also the Norwegian lumber companies side by side, as well as the Norwegian consulate.”* As Rodd vik (2020) furthermore reports, this part of Arkhangelsk was called “Nemetskaya Sloboda”, the German or, more generally, foreign, district. It was a city quarter with many families with Western European background living there. As respondent 8 states about this community of Norwegians and other Western European migrants in Arkhangelsk: *“Foreigners married Russians, stayed there, and created a special diaspora community, for example, the Nemetskaya Sloboda community. Many of the foreigners, such as Norwegians, received Russian citizenship and were active in local politics and in the administration of Arkhangelsk.”*

As these quotations highlight, the Norwegian entrepreneurs established close social and professional communities in the Russian city. Respondent 8, moreover, reports that the *Nemetskaya Sloboda* community united all Norwegians and other Western foreigners as a diaspora through the social institutions established there, such as the church or the school, both of which organised cultural events – even though the foreigners in the diaspora community had different nationalities. As their communication was in German, which was the main language

of all the foreigners in Arkhangelsk (respondent 8), they were able to build an intensive network (respondent 9): *“My great grandfather spoke German well and he learned Russian. He quickly became a part of Nemeckaya-Sloboda, and it helped him to establish business contacts and private contacts. His close friends became the two Norwegian entrepreneurs Olsen and Stampe, who were owners of the big sawmill ‘Stella Polaris’”, and: “Norwegians and other foreigners had a church, a club nearby the church, their kids went to the school for foreigners. The Norwegians Martin Olsen and Carl Stampe were key persons in Arkhangelsk, as they were the first Norwegian timber traders in the Northern Russian region who set up their company [Olsen, Stampe & Co. in 1884; Roddvik, 2020]. The Norwegians organised their networking, they supported each other, celebrated important festive days together, were close friends, and partners in business.”*

Notwithstanding the existence of close professional and social networks within the diaspora community, respondent 9 reports that the Norwegian entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk also understood the importance of becoming integrated into the Russian community and lobbying for their own interests with the local Russians. Because of this, many of the foreigners in Arkhangelsk were engaged in the local administration; for instance, the Norwegian entrepreneurs Stampe and Olsen were on the board of directors of several Russian companies at that time (respondent 9). Respondent 9 also reports: *“My great grandfather took the Russian way to present himself. He adopted his father’s name. Things like this were quite normal for foreigners in Arkhangelsk. The Norwegians wanted to be included in the Russian community and therefore adapted their names to the Russian.”*⁶ Some of the entrepreneurs made impressive careers in the foreign location, one of whom, for example, was the son of the Norwegian entrepreneur Wicklund (respondent 9): *“my great grandfather invited Stampe to be a godfather. After that my great grandfather had died, his son, that is, my grandfather, started to work for Olsen and Stampe. Later he also became a trade agent and counsellor, and worked for the entire Norwegian business community in Arkhangelsk.”* The cultural assimilation of the Norwegian entrepreneurs was an important stepping-stone to their career. Thus, such foreign pioneer entrepreneurs formed the core of what can be considered as a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem in the peripheral Russian location.

⁶ The adoption of a patronymic Russian surname was a common practice for these entrepreneurs to increase their visibility in the Russian language and thereby become more accepted by local communities. The patronymic names were, however, artificial; for instance, if the first name of the entrepreneur’s father was “Zacharius”, the entrepreneur created the name “Zacharievich” as his patronymic surname.

A local entrepreneurial ecosystem that influences the mentality still today

Respondent 7 stresses that the timber and lumber industries that the Norwegian entrepreneurs had founded, such as the factory of “Stella Polaris” by the Norwegians Olsen and Stampe, represented the basis for developing further industries around the timber and lumber industries, e.g., shipping, building, and construction. Many Norwegian entrepreneurs were involved in this industrial diversification (respondent 7), as they used more advanced technologies and had the capital needed to start and develop new industries. For example, the Norwegians Olsen and Stampe with their company (established in 1884) played a key role, as Roddvik (2020) states (referring to Nielsen, 2014): “*Olsen, Stampe & Co. were operating four sawmills in the beginning of the twentieth century with a total of 20 saw frames and were one of the largest timber producers in the Arkhangelsk area*”.

Another key company was Bache & Vig, established in 1911, which built a sawmill in Onega, close to Arkhangelsk (Roddvik, 2020). The company had to be registered in Russia, and the owners had personal responsibility for the company’s debts. They had signed an agreement with the Arkhangelsk government to lease land for 25 years and build in return “*a six-frame sawmill with stake carving and the buildings necessary for such a facility, such as a manager’s residence, a chairman’s residence, workers’ housing, an office building, a pharmacy and hospital, etc.*” (Roddvik, 2020). This sawmill was built from scratch, with the frame saws being delivered from Norway, the steam engine from Sweden, and the steam boiler from Germany. According to Roddvik (2020, citing Astrup, 2011), there were already four sawmills in Onega – a town with a population of not more than 3,000 inhabitants. Hence, as this example highlights, the Norwegian entrepreneurs laid the foundations for industrial development in the city of Arkhangelsk and the surrounding Russian Arctic area.

When it comes to the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem, several respondents report about the huge impact that the Norwegian entrepreneurs made on its emergence and development. The respondents report about the current situation and how the historical Norwegian entrepreneurs influenced it. For instance, respondent 1 states that there still exists a living memory about the

Norwegians in the region of Arkhangelsk, and it means that, even nowadays, Norwegians are still welcome to the region as these foreigners had once built up many industries and social networks. Furthermore, respondent 2 reports that the connections between Norwegians and Russians in the Arctic had never stopped even though they were “frozen” in the times of the Cold War (from 1949 until 1989/1990). On an informal level, the communication between Norwegians and Russians has always existed (respondent 2), and this is of value for both modern Norwegians and Russians in the Arctic. As an example, respondents 1 and 2 both point to the twin cities of Vardø (Norway) and Arkhangelsk (Russia) that have collaborated in many projects in the past decades, including entrepreneurial start-up support.

Nowadays, however, the infrastructural situation for the ecosystem is different (respondent 4). While the “old” Norwegian entrepreneurs travelled to Arkhangelsk with its huge port, all trade connections between Russia and Norway were moved to Murmansk before the outbreak of World War II (this is a port which is accessible throughout the whole year). Murmansk offered shorter journeys to both Norway and Finland, and it outcompeted with Arkhangelsk. All newer infrastructure developed in the region has since then neglected the former key trade port of Arkhangelsk (be it modern shipping or train hubs, be it airports or their connections), as respondent 4 furthermore reports. Notwithstanding this, Arkhangelsk still represents an important production and fish trade location, but the situation is different nowadays: “*The ecosystem has changed, it could not work as it did before*” (respondent 4).

Of greater importance is the impact that the historical Norwegian entrepreneurs made on the social and cultural institutions that they had established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Respondents 3 and 4 state that the word “Norwegians” has a positive connotation for local people from Arkhangelsk because Norwegians built many of the social/cultural institutions, such as a Lutheran church, which is being used as a concert hall today (Roddvik, 2020). The local historical and ethnographical museum plays another important role in keeping the memories that the Norwegians and other foreigners had left in Arkhangelsk alive today (respondent 8). Moreover, a Pomor festival exists with the participation and support of local Russian firms to celebrate the “*foreign historical footprints*” of this tradition (respondent 3). In 2010, an honorary Norwegian consulate was re-opened in Arkhangelsk, which started more

business-related co-operation between local Russians and Norwegians (respondent 4).⁷ As respondent 3, furthermore, states, the Norwegian impact is still visible through the buildings that they had constructed, the local culture they had influenced, and the narratives of the people about their work in the past. In addition, many descendants of foreigners, who had lived here in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, still live in Arkhangelsk today (respondent 3).

Discussion

The narrations about the Norwegian entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk illustrate that they can be considered as historical transnational entrepreneurs (Drori *et al.*, 2009), who operated across two different national, cultural, and political contexts. The political context becomes particularly evident in the narrations: as the political regime changed around the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent February and October Revolutions of 1917, more and more obstacles obstructed the engagement of these foreign entrepreneurs and finally forced many of them to re-migrate to Norway. Hence, an enforced brain circulation (Saxenian, 2006; Chand, 2019) is an element associated with their transnational entrepreneurship: when the Norwegian entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk were forced by the emerging political regime-change to return to Norway or to a different Western location during or after the 1917 Revolutions and the subsequent installation of the Soviet Regime, they could exploit the skills and the social networks which they had acquired during their years and decades in the foreign location, even though their financial capital and investments were largely lost. However, this enforced (rather than voluntary, *cf.*, Saxenian, 2006, 2002a, b) brain circulation does not affect all of the selected Norwegian entrepreneurs portrayed; some of them remained in Arkhangelsk and collaborated with the Soviet authorities, which appreciated their skills and knowledge as a valuable asset. These entrepreneurs were able to save their business, including the investments that they had made. Hence, the first key finding from the historical case study is that transnational entrepreneurship, including brain circulation, is affected and even disturbed by external factors, such as radical political change and turbulence, because such turbulence increases the stakes of the permanent settlement in the foreign location. Even though their entrepreneurial achievements were physically and financially disrupted, the transnational entrepreneurs

⁷ Ovsyankin (2000) writes that, in 1916, there were six foreign consulates in Arkhangelsk: Great Britain, France, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium.

portrayed were, at least partly, nonetheless able to benefit from their strong social capital and the updated skills from their years and decades in Arkhangelsk.

As a second important finding, the historical narrations illustrate that these (temporary or permanent) migrants had a major impact both on the development of local industries and on the establishment of social communities, as they had invested their skills, knowledge, and capital (both financial and social capital) in the foreign-market context, and contributed to regional economic development. The Norwegian transnational entrepreneurs, indeed, laid the foundations for an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Arkhangelsk (Acs *et al.*, 2017) which partly persisted after many of the Norwegians and other Western European foreigners had been forced to leave the region due to the increasing political turbulence. Most notably, their social contributions (*cf.*, Haugh, 2021) are worth mentioning: the Norwegian entrepreneurs portrayed in this paper engaged both in establishing bonding social capital (through their close connections within the local Norwegian and Western European diaspora communities) and in bridging social capital (through their loose connections with the local Russians populace, including the authorities and local politicians) [*cf.*, Anderson and Jack, 2002]. Through this diversified social capital established in the Russian region (*cf.*, Eklinder-Frick *et al.*, 2011), the Norwegian pioneers founded important social institutions that are still in use today and that convey their entrepreneurial spirit even two or three generations later. Hence, this finding provides evidence that cultural factors, such as an entrepreneurial mentality, a specific work culture, *etc.*, are an integral part of a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem (Acs *et al.*, 2017). Notably the social capital developed through the various social communities and networks in the ecosystem (Eklinder-Frick *et al.*, 2011; Putnam, 2000), including the institutions that they founded, played an important role in the development of the ecosystem over time. Altogether, the Norwegian transnational entrepreneurs contributed to the establishment of this territorialised system of interdependent entrepreneurs that interacted intensively with the aim of creating value in terms of industrial development and social-community building for the foreign region.

However, a third key finding is that the historical political context (Wadhvani, 2016) determined the fate of the entrepreneurial endeavours of many Norwegians; as foreigners, they were increasingly exposed to the growing instability of the political context: while, at the beginning, when the Norwegian entrepreneurs began to settle in Arkhangelsk (1880-1910s), the

political conditions in Russia were, in general, and in the Arkhangelsk region, in particular, supportive of such transnational entrepreneurship, this climate changed quite radically from 1914 onwards and during World War I. Radical political regime-change and the associated turbulence finally put these *a priori* favourable conditions on hold and led to the exit of many Norwegian entrepreneurs from the formerly promising market with its abundant investment opportunities. While the intensive and diverse social networks that they had built in the foreign location represent a general strength that they could build upon, the close ties also implied a certain “blindness” on the part of the entrepreneurs as they became assimilated as foreigners in Arkhangelsk. This led to their tendency to overlook the political regime-change that was brewing up before their eyes. Hence, another important finding is that the transnational entrepreneurs, who had to leave their investments in Russia behind, in quite an unprepared fashion, were more vulnerable to the politically-changing context, as they faced financial losses and lost access to part of their social capital in the foreign country as they became migrants returning to their home region.

Concluding comment, implications, and research outlook

A key lesson from the historical case study of Norwegian entrepreneurs in the Russian Arctic is that enterprising individuals with foreign backgrounds can have a significant impact on the establishment and growth of industries in a foreign location, and that they can also facilitate social-community building across both the home and the foreign countries. Such transnational entrepreneurs can thus lay the foundation for regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. However, another important lesson is that a political context that provides radical regime-change can disturb and even destroy their entrepreneurial endeavours and achievements, even though the historical memories may persist.

With these two key lessons, the paper inspires contemporary entrepreneurship and management theory and practice in the following ways: economic growth phases facilitate the transnational entrepreneurship of skilled, resourceful individuals, for example, when there are shortages of domestic entrepreneurs and businesspeople in the target country, and foreign talent is needed to establish and expand industries abroad. During such phases of economic boom, transnational entrepreneurship can have an important effect on industrial development and social-community

building in a foreign location. However, during times of increasing political uncertainties and crisis, such as the outbreak of a regional/global war or crisis, transnational entrepreneurs – like all migrants and immigrants to the foreign locations – become exposed to major instabilities induced by the political regime-change in the foreign location; this drastic change obstructs their entrepreneurial endeavours in economically tougher times. Similar challenges exist for expatriates with their entrepreneurial behaviour, even though expatriates are formally employed in an international corporation outside the foreign market (Dutta and Beamish, 2013). In a nutshell, the historical study of Norwegian entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk during the period from 1880 to the 1920s shows us the duality of the opportunities and dilemmas that transnational entrepreneurs, including expatriates, have to face. Our key findings can provide important lessons for such entrepreneurs in the contemporary VUCA context (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity; *cf.*, Bennett and Lemoine, 2014), particularly through global crises (*e.g.*, the current COVID-19 crisis).

In the light of this key lesson, our main public-policy implication is to highlight the need to support *per se* resourceful, yet temporary transnational entrepreneurs in times of global crises, as their contribution to the development of industries, social networks, and even entrepreneurial ecosystems is of high value, particularly when uncertainties in markets and the external political environment are on the rise. Regional and national initiatives, such as financial and non-financial support programmes for transnational entrepreneurs during periods of economic hardship, can support these individuals to maintain and expand their companies in the foreign location.

Finally, it is important to state some limitations to our research: firstly, the paper uses a historical single-case study that covers a specific sector during a specific time period and illustrates the involvement of a specific migrant group that was embedded in a broader setting of a Western diaspora community; hence, the explanatory power of our case study for the theory-building on the topics studied should be validated against other historical case studies of such transnational entrepreneurs, their migration journeys and their contributions to entrepreneurial ecosystems. Such research should ideally include (i) more sectors, and (ii) a broader range of transnational entrepreneurs (*e.g.*, from all Western countries from this era in a foreign location) and analyse (iii) a longer period in history. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there is little research on historical cases of entrepreneurial ecosystems with the

involvement of transnational entrepreneurs, even though recent calls have been made to pay more attention to such research (Wadhvani *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, our methodological approach does not fully exploit an oral history approach; interviews with family members, relatives and descendants of all the Norwegian entrepreneurs described would add a greater trustworthiness to the historical accounts provided and create a richness of material that would uncover additional details. However, given the limitations that we were facing whilst conducting this research, we could not incorporate oral history. In a similar vein, it was not possible to use all the archival material that we could access for the purpose of this paper. In the light of this, future research should extend the findings established by means of a broader methodological approach that allows a full exploitation of historical documents and individual memories through oral history and the processing of archived material.

References

- Abrahamsen, E. (2015), *Vinter i Seregovo-skogen. Erindringer fra det norske telasteventyret i Russland*, Orkana, Stamsund.
- Acs, Z.J., Stam, E., Audretsch, D.B. and O'Connor, A. (2017), "The lineages of the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach", *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp.1-10.
- Adler, P.S. and Kwon, S.W. (2002), "Social capital: Prospects for a new concept", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp.17-40.
- Alonso, B. (2007). "The other Europeans: Immigration into Latin America and the international labour market (1870–1930)", *Revista De Historia Económica / Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp.395-426.
- Anderson, A.R. and Jack, S.L. (2002). "The articulation of social capital in entrepreneurial networks: a glue or a lubricant?", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp.193-210.
- Astrup, Y. (2011), *Norske pionerer i Kvitsjøens skogindustri fra 1880 til 1930*, Norsk Skogmuseum, Elverum.
- Bagwell, S. (2015), "Transnational entrepreneurship amongst Vietnamese businesses in London", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp.329-349.
- Bailetti, E. (2018), "Transnational entrepreneurship: Distinctive features and a new definition", *Technology Innovation Management Review*, Vol. 8 No. 9, pp.28-38.
- Baines, D. (1994), "European emigration, 1815-1930: looking at the emigration decision again", *Economic History Review*, Vol. 47 No. 3, pp.525-544.
- Beckers, P. and Blumberg, B.F. (2013), "Immigrant entrepreneurship on the move: a longitudinal analysis of first-and second-generation immigrant entrepreneurship in the Netherlands", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 25 No. 7-8, pp.654-691.

- Bennett, N. and Lemoine, J. (2014), “What a difference a word makes: Understanding threats to performance in a VUCA world”, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 57 No. 3, pp. 311-317.
- Berghoff, H. and Spiekermann, U. (2010), “Immigrant entrepreneurship: The German-American business biography, 1720 to the present. A GHI Research Project”, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, Vol. 47, pp.69-82.
- Björklund, J. (1984), “From the Gulf of Bothnia to the White Sea: Swedish direct investments in the sawmill industry of Tsarist Russia”, *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp.17-41.
- Bresnahan, T., Gambardella, A. and Saxenian, A. (2001), “ ‘Old economy’ inputs for ‘new economy’ outcomes: Cluster formation in the new Silicon Valleys”, *Industrial and Corporate Change*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp.835-860.
- Brieger, S.A. and De Clercq, D. (2019)”, Entrepreneurs’ individual-level resources and social value creation goals: The moderating role of cultural context”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp.193-216.
- Bowie, D. (2019), “Contextual analysis and newspaper archives in management history research”, *Journal of Management History*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp.516-532.
- Cavallo, A., Ghezzi, A. and Balocco, R. (2019), “Entrepreneurial ecosystem research: present debates and future directions”, *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp.1291-1321.
- Chand, M. (2019), “Brain drain, brain circulation, and the African diaspora in the United States”, *Journal of African Business*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp.6-19.
- Crick, D. & Chaudhry, S. (2014), “Inside the transnational entrepreneur”, Fernhaber, S.A. and Prashantham, S. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to International Entrepreneurship*, Routledge, London and New York, pp.102-114.
- Collins, J. and Low, A. (2010), “Asian female immigrant entrepreneurs in small and medium-sized businesses in Australia”, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp.97-111.
- Delios, A. and Bjorkman, I. (2000), “Expatriate staffing in foreign subsidiaries of Japanese multinational corporations in the PRC and the United States”, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp.278-293
- Drori, I., Honig, B. and Wright, M. (2009), “Transnational entrepreneurship: An emergent field of study”, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 33 No. 5, pp.1001-1022.
- Dutta, D.K. and Beamish, P.W. (2013), “Expatriate managers, product relatedness, and IJV performance: A resource and knowledge-based perspective”, *Journal of International Management*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp.152–162.
- Eklinder-Frick, J., Eriksson, L.T. and Hallén, L. (2011), “Bridging and bonding forms of social capital in a regional strategic network”, *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 40 No. 6, pp.994-1003.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989), “Building theories from case study research”, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp.532–550.
- Fairlie, R.W. and Fossen, F.M. (2018), “Opportunity versus necessity entrepreneurship: Two components of business creation”, CESifo Working Paper Series No. 6854, CESifo, Munich.

- Fraser, E. (1996), *The Dvina remains*, Corgi Books, London.
- Fraser, E. (1986). *The House by the Dvina. A Russian Childhood*, Corgi Books, London.
- Halkias, D., Nwajiuba, C., Harkiolakis, N., Clayton, G., Akrivos, P. and Caracatsanis, S. (2009), “Characteristics and business profiles of immigrant-owned small firms: the case of African immigrant entrepreneurs in Greece”, *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp.382-401.
- Hatton, T.J. and Williamson, J.G. (1992), “What drove the mass migrations from Europe in the late nineteenth century?”, NBER Working paper series, historical paper no. 43, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Cambridge.
- Haugh, H.M. (2021), “Social economy advancement: from voluntary to secure organizational commitments to public benefit”, *Journal of Management History*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp.263-287.
- Henn, S. and Bathelt, H. (2017), “Transnational entrepreneurs and global knowledge transfer”, Bathelt, H., Cohendet P, Henn, S. and Simon, L. (Eds.). *The Elgar Companion to Innovation and Knowledge Creation*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp.638-651.
- Iyer, S., Kitson, M. and Toh, B. (2005), “Social capital, economic growth and regional development”, *Regional Studies*, Vol. 39 No. 8, pp.1015-1040.
- Jentoft, M. (2001), *De som dro østover. Kola-nordmennenes historie*, Gyldendal, Oslo.
- Johansson, A.W. (2004), “Narrating the entrepreneur”, *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp.273-293.
- Lin, X. (2010), “The diaspora solution to innovation capacity development: Immigrant entrepreneurs in the contemporary world”, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp.123-136.
- Maslova, S. and Chiodelli, F. (2018), “Expatriates and the city: The spatialities of the high-skilled migrants’ transnational living in Moscow”, *Geoforum*, Vol. 97, pp.209-218.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks.
- Myklebost, K.A. and Bones, S. (2012), *Caution & Compliance. Norwegian-Russian Diplomatic Relations 1814-2014*, Orkana Akademisk, Stamsund.
- Neergaard, H. and Ulhøi, J.P. (2007). *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar. Cheltenham.
- Nielsen, J.P. (2014), *Russland kommer nærmere. Norge og Russland 1814-1917*, Pax, Oslo.
- Ojo, S. (2012), “Ethnic enclaves to diaspora entrepreneurs: A critical appraisal of black British Africans' transnational entrepreneurship in London”, *Journal of African Business*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp.145-156.
- Ovsyankin, E.I. (2000), *Arkhangelsk kupecheskij (Merchant Arkhangelsk)*, Archconsult, Arkhangelsk.
- Putnam, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

- Roddevik, V. (2020), “ ‘Russia - a new America?’ Norwegian investments in Russia 1830-1930.” Podcast for the Norwegian-Russian Chamber of Commerce (NRCC) – NRCC meeting. Available at <https://vimeo.com/480548418/eac0c510d7> (accessed 1 March 2022)
- Saxenian, A. (2002a), “Silicon Valley’s new immigrant high-growth entrepreneurs”, *Economic Development Quarterly*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp.20-31.
- Saxenian, A. (2002b), “Brain circulation. How high-skill immigration makes everyone better off”, *Brookings Review*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 28-31.
- Saxenian, A. (2006), *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in A Global Economy*. Harvard University Press, Harvard, MA.
- Sejersted, F. (1989), “Veien mot øst”, Langholm, S. and Sejersted, F. (Eds.), *Vandringer. Festschrift til Inger Semmingsen*, Gyldendal, Oslo.
- Sommer, B.W. and Quinlan, M.K. (2009). *The Oral History Manual*, Altamira, Lanham.
- Stam, E. and Spigel, B. (2018), “Entrepreneurial ecosystems”, Blackburn, R., De Clerq, D., Heinonen, J. and Whang, Z. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, SAGE, London, pp. 407-422.
- Store Norske Leksikon (2020), “Arkhangelsk”. Available at <https://snl.no/Arkhangelsk> (accessed on 2 March 2022).
- Taibola Assemble (2021a), “Welcome to Pomorie – Old Arkhangelsk, parts 1 to 5”, Youtube videos in Russian and partly English language. Available at <https://youtu.be/I9VIK0IKQCE> (Part 1); https://youtu.be/P2G0eN_Nq0E (Part 2); <https://youtu.be/6TGj-ibRAZA> (Part 3); <https://youtu.be/-2p44d89pv0> (Part 4); <https://youtu.be/gergtAWOaII> (Part 5) (Accessed 2 March 2022).
- Taibola Assemble (2021b), “Pomor Festival and Pomor trade”, Youtube videos in Russian and partly English language. Available at <https://youtu.be/Kgyqkzoknvc>; <https://youtu.be/SXBg5JNxJ5c> (accessed 2 March 2022).
- Tennent, K.D. (2021), “Management and business history – a reflexive research agenda for the 2020s”, *Journal of Management History*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp.80-98.
- Vinogradov, E. and Jørgensen, E.J.B. (2017), “Differences in international opportunity identification between native and immigrant entrepreneurs”, *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp.207-228.
- Vishnevsky Institute of Demography of National Research University-Higher School of Economics (NRU-HSE) (2013), “The first general census of the population of the Russian Empire in 1897”, *Demoscope Weekly*, No. 933 – 934. Available at http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_gub_97.php (Accessed 1 March 2022).
- von Bloh, J., Mandakovic, V., Apablaza, M., Amorós, J.E. and Sternberg, R. (2020), “Transnational entrepreneurs: opportunity or necessity driven? Empirical evidence from two dynamic economies from Latin America and Europe”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 46 No. 10, pp.2008-2026.
- Wadhvani, R.D. (2016), “Entrepreneurship in historical context: Using history to develop theory and understand process”, Welter, F. and Gartner, W.B. (Eds.). *A Research Agenda for Entrepreneurship and Context*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp.65-78.

Wadhvani, R.D., Kirsch, D., Welter, F., Gartner, W.B. and Jones, G.G. (2020), “Context, time, and change: Historical approaches to entrepreneurship research”, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp.3-19.

Welter, F. (2011), “Contextualizing entrepreneurship—conceptual challenges and ways forward”, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp.165-184.

Yin, R.K. (2009), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. SAGE, Thousand Oaks.

Zong, J. and Batalova, J. (2015), “European immigrants in the United States”, *Migration Policy Institute*. December 1, 2015. Available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org> (accessed 10 November 2021).

Map 1: Map of the Arkhangelsk region in the Northwestern part of Russia



Source: Store Norske Leksikon, Section Geography. Available at: <https://snl.no/Arkhangelsk> (accessed 2 March 2022).

Table 1: Overview of the interviews held (October-November 2021)

Interviewee no.	Experiences from	Interviewee's position
1	Norwegian and Russian Arctic and Arkhangelsk	Manager in a Russian business company, who worked for a longer period in the Northern-Russian Arctic environment. Has in-depth knowledge about Arkhangelsk.
2	Norwegian and Russian Arctic and Arkhangelsk	Norwegian manager in a business company, who worked for decades with Barents issues and the Norwegian-Russian co-operation in the High North.
3	Norwegian and Russian Arctic and Arkhangelsk	Russian manager in a business company, who lives in Arkhangelsk and works with projects related to Pomor connections between the twin cities of Vardø (Norway) and Arkhangelsk (Russian Federation).
4	Norwegian and Russian Arctic and Arkhangelsk	Norwegian manager in a business company, who worked with Russian-Norwegian co-operation from the 1980s onwards, specifically related to projects in the High North.
5	Norwegian and Russian Arctic and Arkhangelsk	A Norwegian journalist and writer, who worked in Russia for five years and wrote several books about Russia and Norwegian-Russian co-operation.
6	Arkhangelsk and foreign impact in Arkhangelsk	A retired Russian employee of a Norwegian university, who was born in Arkhangelsk, lives in Norway and works thematically with the Norwegian-Russian co-operation in the High North.
7	Norwegian-Russian co-operation	A manager in a Norwegian-Russian NGO, who lives in Arkhangelsk.
8	Norwegian-Russian co-operation	A representative of a Russian NGO, who works on the heritage of the foreigners during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Arkhangelsk and studies their impact on the city and region of Arkhangelsk.
9	Norwegian-Russian co-operation and Norwegian connections with Arkhangelsk	Viktor Roddvik. A member of the Wicklund family, which was involved in the timber and lumber entrepreneurship in Arkhangelsk from the end of the nineteenth century and well into the beginning of the twentieth century. The family had moved from Northern Norway to Arkhangelsk and lived and worked there until the 1930s.

Table 2: Some Norwegian entrepreneurs in Arkhangelsk and their entrepreneurial journeys

Norwegian entrepreneur (company)	Description of the journey
Martin Olsen (company Olsen, Stampe & Co.)	Martin Olsen and Carl Stampe jointly established a sawmill in Arkhangelsk and expanded their business over the years. Olsen went to Arkhangelsk together with Johan-Arnt Lund twice: for the first time in 1879, and later in 1890. Both Norwegians wanted to learn Russian and start a business. Olsen eventually adopted Russian citizenship and gained central positions in the city administration, for instance, as a member of the city council. Stampe, who was Olsen's co-owner in the company, died in 1917. At that time, Olsen, aged 67, had already sold much of his property, which was thereafter taken over by the Soviet state. Olsen first stayed in Arkhangelsk after the Soviet authorities had taken over Russia's High North in 1920, but he was arrested and charged with sabotage. However, he was released after a short time in prison and later appointed director of a London-based office of the Soviet state-owned forestry company <i>Severoles</i> . The Soviet authorities needed his professional expertise for their own timber exporting activities. Olsen died in London in 1924. Before his death, he had taken precautions to have his fortune accessible in the West.
Johan-Arnt Lund (company Kobylin og Lund)	Lund went to Arkhangelsk first in 1879 and then, again, in 1890. He joined forces with the Russian Aleksei Kobylin and established the company <i>Kobylin og Lund</i> , a sawmill operating in Arkhangelsk until its nationalisation in 1920. Lund moved from Arkhangelsk to Oslo (at that time, the city's name was Kristiania) in 1916. His son and his son-in-law, Einar Anviktook, care of his business in Arkhangelsk until it was taken over by the Soviet authorities during the 1920s. Lund tried to establish a estate agency in Oslo, but he lost his money and moved to Riga (in Latvia today). Around 1928, he moved back to Narvik, Norway, where he died in 1933.
The Wager family (company Bache & Wager)	The Wager family held leading roles in the lumber industry in Sweden, Finland, and Russia for three generations. Andreas Bache (the younger) became a manager for two lumber factories in Arkhangelsk until the High North was taken over by the Soviet authorities in 1920. Later (between 1922 and 1928), the family tried to revitalise their business interests when two brothers from the family moved back to Russia and worked for the company <i>Russhollandoles</i> in Arkhangelsk, which was one of three foreign companies with a licence to operate in Arkhangelsk. However, when the Soviet authorities "pushed" the foreign-led wooden industry out of Arkhangelsk in 1926 and 1927, the Wager brothers left Russia. One of the Wager brothers started a lumber company in Sweden, but his business did not develop well. He continued to work in a factory that produced socks where he served as a chairman of the board and later as a human resource director.
Thorleif Bach and Jens Vig (company Bache & Vig)	Thorleif Bach never lived in Russia, but he had invested in property in Arkhangelsk which was lost

	<p>after 1917. He died in 1920. His company, the timber mill of <i>Bache & Vig</i>, led by his Norwegian partner, Jens Vig, was in operation until 1920, and later it entered into co-operation with the Soviet government under the name of <i>Russnorvegoles</i>. Jens Vig lost all his fortune in Russia, but he continued as a lumber broker in the Norwegian city of Drammen. He worked as a head of the lumber business in <i>Katfos Factory</i> (Drammen, Norway) and later as a consultant for <i>Solberg Tegleverk</i>, a brick company (Drammen). He died in 1965.</p>
<p>Egil Abrahamsen (no business owner of a company, but had worked in different positions in Arkhangelsk)</p>	<p>Egil Abrahamsen worked in Arkhangelsk when he was a 15-year-old boy, first, in forestry, later as a sawmill manager in Onega, both before and after the Revolutions of 1917. When <i>Russnorvegoles</i> was taken over by the Soviet authorities in 1928, he was offered a job in London for the (then) Russian-owned company. In 1930, he started to work in the bank <i>Wm Berndt's Sons & Co</i> (later <i>Grindleys</i>) in England, which held close contacts with the Arkhangelsk timber and lumber industries. He moved back to Norway during World War II when he temporarily lost his position in the bank and lived in his cottage where he subsisted by fishing, agriculture and the lumber trade. In 1945, he continued to work in the same bank in England until he was retired in 1953.</p>
<p>Adolf Wicklund and his son Arnold Wicklund (no business owners of a company, but had worked for Olsen, Stampe & Co. in Arkhangelsk)</p>	<p>Adolf Wicklund had worked as a businessman in Arkhangelsk but died before the Revolutions of 1917. His son, Arnold Wicklund, born in 1886 in Arkhangelsk, of a German mother, who had also lived in Arkhangelsk during that time, worked for Olsen and Stampe from the age of 15. Later, he became a Norwegian councillor and trade agent in Arkhangelsk, who supported the Norwegian companies and entrepreneurs who visited Arkhangelsk. He was married to a Russian woman and applied for the Russian citizenship which he, however, did not receive/obtain. He had invested in property and stayed in Arkhangelsk as a diplomat, who protected Norwegian interests until 1938. He had to leave for Norway when he was accused by the Soviet authorities in a fabricated case known as “the case of the Norwegian council” of being a spy. He returned to Norway with his wife and two daughters and continued to work in various positions for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a bank, and an investor in real estate projects. He died in Oslo in 1967.</p>
<p>Fredrik Prytz (company Prytz & Co)</p>	<p>Fredrik Prytz bought a sawmill in 1915 and acquired two more mills later. He also had a key role in the <i>Russian Forest Industry Ltd.</i> (RFI). After the nationalisation and Revolutions of 1917, Prytz was given a central role in working order to find a solution for compensation of the Norwegian companies for their losses. In 1928, he participated in the sale of the Norwegian and Dutch shares in <i>Russnorvegoles</i> when the Soviet authorities became the owners of the company. Prytz was a small owner in this company, but he had a favourable contract with the company, given his competence.</p>

	<p>The sale of <i>Russnorvegoles</i>' shares turned the company into the British company <i>London and Northern Trading Co.</i> This British company had formerly owned a sawmill in Arkhangelsk, and therefore, it had business contacts with <i>Russnorvegoles</i>. <i>London and Northern Trading Co.</i>, together with the Dutch company <i>Atilius and Prytz</i>, created a consortium which owned, for a short period of time, the shares of <i>Russnorvegoles</i> before they were sold to the Soviet authorities. Prytz continued to be an investor during the 1930s with a focus on agriculture and land property/real estate in rural areas. He also became a politician and proclaimed that the Soviet Union was a great danger for the economic and political influence in the Northern part of Russia. He joined the Quisling government in Norway in 1942 and died in 1945. His property was confiscated after World War II.</p>
--	---

Source: Own compilation based upon Roddvik (2020), Astrup (2011) and Nielsen (2014).