



Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Forms of Capital: An Investigation of the Reasons for the Entrepreneurial Success of Romanian Immigrants in North-Eastern Italy

Luca Cavinato

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Master's Thesis from the year 2011 in the subject Cultural Studies - European Studies, grade: A, University of Aarhus, language: English, abstract: The phenomenon of ethnic entrepreneurship does not seem to flourish in Italy when compared with other European countries. An exception is provided by the Romanian group. Specifically, this community seems to be extremely successful on the entrepreneurial level, not only because of the large number of firms they established in the territory, but also because of their rapid and extensive growth in recent years. This phenomenon is interesting and puzzling when considering the discriminatory attitudes of the Italian public opinion towards Romanians and the contradictory Italian immigration policies.

This thesis intends to disentangle the reasons for the entrepreneurial success of Romanians in Italy, taking into consideration the specific location of Padua. In doing so, this study contributes to the debate on ethnic entrepreneurship, by developing the understanding of the multiplicity of factors behind this phenomenon.

Given the scope, a qualitative approach was adopted. Specifically, the core of this thesis is a community-based fieldwork carried out in Padua. Five Romanian entrepreneurs in the territory were carefully sampled and interviewed. Subsequently, their answers have been interpreted, analysed and discussed.

The results suggest that several factors contribute to the entrepreneurial careers of Romanians in Padua. First, the economic landscape seems to be beneficial thanks to abundant market opportunities and to the large presence of SMEs. Second, the characteristics of the Romanian community in Italy are important for their success. Specifically, they seem to be rich in human, cultural and social capital, which hence represent crucial fostering factors for their entrepreneurial achievements. Third, the accession of Romania into the EU in 2007 resulted to be highly related with this phenomenon, as it triggered the proliferation of Romanian firms in the territory. Lastly, the presence of firms from North-Eastern Italy in Romania and the local supportive institutions established in Padua marginally contribute to this phenomenon.

Altogether, this research conforms to previous studies on ethnic entrepreneurship. Specifically, in line with the mixed-embeddedness approach elaborated by Kloosterman and Rath, this thesis suggests that a throughout analysis of this phenomenon needs to take into consideration not only the ethnic group, but also the socio-economic and legal environment of the host country with its institutions.[...]

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