

## Report on Participation at the BCE Conference 2026

**Bremen, 29–30 January 2026**

I had the opportunity to participate in the BCE Conference 2026, held on the 29th and 30th of January at the Haus der Wissenschaft in Bremen. The event brought together scholars, practitioners, and community actors working on migrant and minority entrepreneurship, offering a rich environment to learn from diverse academic contributions and practical experiences. The conference explored themes of belongingness, connectedness, and embeddedness within migrant and refugee entrepreneurship, providing an excellent platform to understand current debates and research directions in the field.

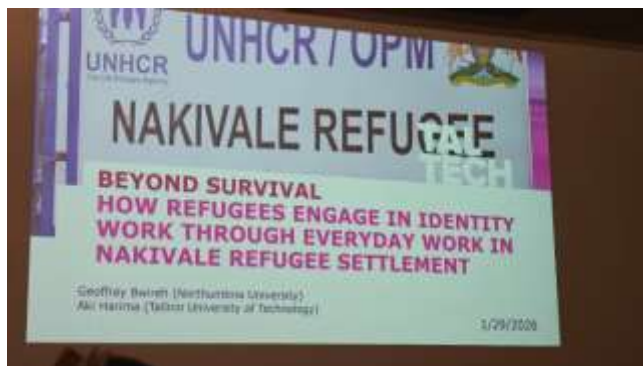


The conference opened with a keynote speech by Professor Monder Ram from Aston University, a highly recognized scholar in minority and migrant entrepreneurship. His presentation emphasized the persistent division between academic research and practical action and called for stronger mechanisms to bridge this gap. He argued that social science is most impactful when it goes beyond explanation and contributes directly to processes of change. Professor Ram illustrated how research outcomes can collaborate with municipalities, enabling policy transfer and fostering inclusive local development. He also stressed the importance of participatory and articulatory research approaches in which members of the community are actively involved, recognized, and compensated for their contributions. His examples highlighted how community participation not only enriches research but also strengthens social belonging, which is

essential for migrant entrepreneurs. A central message was that what happens after research is completed is often more important than the publications alone; when research strengthens connection, belonging, and practical outcomes, it creates meaningful impact for entrepreneurs.



Following the keynote, the first day continued with parallel academic sessions covering a wide range of themes related to migrant and minority entrepreneurship. Many papers focused on entrepreneurial motivations among migrants, highlighting how entrepreneurship may arise from necessity, financial pressures, or as a pathway for self-expression and identity formation. Some researchers examined motivational theories linked to the evolving phases of migration and settlement, while others presented demographic analyses or methods such as virtual network sampling to better understand migrant ecosystems. These works showed how migrant experiences are diverse and often shaped by personal history, social contexts, and varying forms of belonging.



Other sessions explored the role of support programs and institutional frameworks in shaping migrant entrepreneurial journeys. For instance, research on women migrant entrepreneurs in Germany examined whether existing support programs truly enhance business outcomes or simply replicate existing barriers. Another discussion questioned whether current feelings of belonging among migrants predict long-term integration and how belonging evolves over time. Several papers emphasized that support structures must recognize the specific needs of different groups, rather than assuming a uniform migrant experience.



The theme of intersectionality also played a central role, particularly in presentations dealing with identity, gender, and migration. These sessions highlighted how multiple identities coexist and interact in shaping entrepreneurial experiences, sometimes opening doors and sometimes creating significant obstacles.

One of the most striking contributions in this area was a study on Latin American women entrepreneurs, which drew on theories from the Global South to challenge Eurocentric assumptions. This work resonated with my own research interests, as it emphasized alternative narratives, empowerment processes, and the value of contextual knowledge from the Latin American region. It presented a richer and more nuanced image of the continent and its entrepreneurial actors.

The second day began with a panel discussion on migrant entrepreneurship and ecosystem inclusion, featuring established scholars and practitioners working on these topics. The panel examined how ecosystems can either include or marginalize migrant entrepreneurs, depending on how institutions, networks, and community actors engage with them. This conversation reinforced the idea that ecosystems are not neutral; rather, they reflect existing social structures that can constrain or empower migrants in different ways.



Throughout the remaining sessions, many papers explored the relationship between identity and resource mobilization, showing how an entrepreneur’s self- perception and social identity influence their ability to navigate and make use of entrepreneurial ecosystems. Discussions also focused on how migrant entrepreneurs build networks that often extend beyond ethnic or local boundaries, including transnational and virtual networks. The presenters highlighted that many migrants seek not only to sustain their own businesses but also to support their communities, balancing economic and social goals. Another recurring theme was the importance of self- determination and recognition, particularly the idea that migrant entrepreneurs should first be seen as business people rather than primarily as migrants.



Several contributions examined the role of incubators and support organizations, arguing that these institutions often act as gatekeepers and are not always adapted to the realities of culturally diverse entrepreneurs. Many presenters questioned the lack of intercultural competence within such programs and emphasized the need for approaches that recognize different ways of thinking and different entrepreneurial trajectories. The notion of decolonizing entrepreneurship was also discussed, emphasizing the importance of placing people and their lived experiences at the center of program design.

Overall, participating in the BCE Conference 2026 was an enriching experience that allowed me to explore ongoing debates in migrant and minority entrepreneurship. The event strengthened my understanding of the connections between research, community engagement, and practical impact. It also highlighted the importance of inclusive, culturally sensitive support structures and the need to rethink conventional entrepreneurial frameworks. Many discussions aligned closely with my own research interests, particularly concerning identity, community belonging, and the experiences of minority entrepreneurs from Latin America. I left the conference with new insights, connections, and ideas that will contribute to my academic and professional work moving forward.

