'Adopting place': How an entrepreneurial sense of belonging can help revitalise communities

This study considers the differentiated ways in which entrepreneurs may embed themselves within place to better understand the nature of embeddedness and the processes behind both intended and unintended entrepreneurial outcomes. Whilst research has long shown that embeddedness can enable and/or constrain entrepreneurial activities, the micro-level processes behind such activities are often unacknowledged lacking detail of how, why and when embedded social values relate and integrate with enterprise in various places, thus advancing a somewhat static, one-dimensional conceptual understanding. This study attempts to broaden the understanding of embeddedness engaging in context sensitive theorising from the findings of a qualitative case study in Great Yarmouth, a depleted town on the coast of East Anglia, in England. Through introducing the notion of 'adopting place' we delve deeper into what it means to be spatially (dis)embedded, how this reflects a much more complex and dynamic understanding of embeddedness, and how such embeddedness can instigate change and regional development (or lack thereof), progressing a reconceptualisation of place itself.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; migration; embeddedness; belonging; place

1. Introduction

Whilst entrepreneurship literature was initially slow to contextualise research, the field has come a long way in more recent years (Welter et al. 2019). Entrepreneurship scholars have begun to embrace the notion of place and the experiential dimensions of spatial context (Kibler et al. 2015; Korsgaard et al. 2015a; Müller and Korsgaard 2018). This has seen an increase of research into the interactions between the spatial, social and the institutional (Lang et al. 2014; Wang 2013). Such a movement can give light to how entrepreneurs embed themselves within place, how such embeddedness gives access to local resources and networks, as well as how this can be extended beyond physical locations to communities and neighbourhoods which are supportive of entrepreneurial ventures that bring benefits to the local area (Anderson 2000; Dahl and Sorenson 2012; Jack and Anderson 2002; Lang and Fink 2019; McKeever et al. 2015;

Muller and Korsgaard 2018; Peredo and Chrisman 2017). However, despite the field's recent progress, research is still yet to capture the richness of entrepreneurship "as a commonplace social phenomenon" (Welter et al. 2019, 324).

Arguably, this is because much of the research regarding entrepreneurship and place tends to prioritise outputs (McKelvie and Wiklund 2010) focusing on macro-level outcomes, valorising wealth creation, and treating place as an instrumental resource (Dodd et al. 2021; Patriotta and Siegel 2019; Welter et al. 2017). Not only does this fail to capture the complexity of the relationship between entrepreneurship and place, but it also looks beyond the unique characteristics of place – thus taking for granted the micro-level contextual actions behind the embedding process, serving to produce rigid, binary-like notions of embeddedness which lack detail of how, why and when embedded social values relate and integrate with enterprise (McKeever et al. 2015; Müller and Korsgaard 2018). Such an oversight leaves entrepreneurial embeddedness within place as seemingly mysterious with most entrepreneurs discovering their location by chance (Berg 2014) raising notable implications for research evoking questions of what it is to fit in or to feel marginalised. Should entrepreneurs stick to their places of birth surrounded by the people and the industries they know? Would this mean that migrating and non-local entrepreneurs with less local social capital will face more barriers within place than embedded 'locals'? Such questions remain unanswered as most contemporary research has avoided looking at how entrepreneurs contingently embed themselves within place, therefore neglecting to delve deeper into the *how*, *why* and *when* of the relationship between entrepreneurship and place (Parkinson et al. 2017; Wright and Stigliani 2013).

An opportunity thus emerges to explore this through the individual micro-level contextual processes of entrepreneurs, enabling a better understanding of the differentiated nature of their embeddedness and subsequently reflecting a much broader notion of what it means to be (spatially) embedded. In this study, we therefore ask and explore the research

question what is the nature of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place? It should be noted here that we embrace 'place' not only as a specific spot in geographical terms that has a material form (resources attached) but also as something flexible that is interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined – holding different meanings to different people, cultures and temporalities (Gieryn 2000). Our research makes use of a qualitative, case study approach to accommodate the broadness of the research question and allow for entrepreneurs to be investigated in a 'real-life' dynamic and holistic setting. We chose Great Yarmouth, a depleted town in the east of England, as the ideal context to examine differentiated embeddedness within place as "capitalistic relations are less robust, [and] the entrepreneurial process can, and from time to time does, adapt and follow a different approach" (Johnstone 2013, 78). The town relies on a diminishing tourism and a depressed fishing industry, however in more recent years, the offshore energy sector has attracted a lot of new business ventures to Great Yarmouth, providing a compelling, yet contrasting economic and social structure.

Our study provides a research insight into the nature of (spatial) embeddedness, and more specifically what it *means* to in-migrant and local entrepreneurs. The contribution of this paper is threefold: (1) through introducing the notion of 'adopting place' we explain how and why in-migrant entrepreneurs dynamically embedded themselves within a place they made their own (even if, or especially because, it is depleted); (2) we explore how this helps to broaden the understanding of embeddedness through the differentiated use of the concept by local entrepreneurs who preferred to invest in family bonds and social ties but seemingly lacked a feeling of local responsibility to bettering the town in which they were raised; and, (3) we discuss how our findings have potential implications for entrepreneurship and regional development theory as it demonstrates how such varying embeddedness can instigate change, ultimately contributing towards a reconceptualisation of place itself via entrepreneurial agency. This step towards a broadened, dynamic notion of embeddedness moves us beyond the current

mixed embeddedness and bridging literature (Korsgaard et al. 2015a), disregarding the idea of in-migrant entrepreneurs as outsiders and instead understands more about how and why they electively embed themselves within place, allowing them to integrate with the local community and continuously develop 'place as it could be'. As such, one-directional plans to 'incentivise' entrepreneurs to depleted places may be inefficient. In this fashion, it adds to the body of work studying the historical interplay between governments and entrepreneurs, showing how policy often creates the conditions which in turn enable entrepreneurs to become change agents (Kalantaridis et al. 2019; Bika 2012). Most importantly, it repositions the research focus away from prioritising entrepreneurial outputs (Dodd et al. 2021) and instead explores embeddedness as a condition that is dynamically nurtured over time.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we review the theoretical background, followed by a comprehensive overview of the qualitative approach and methodology used. The remainder of the paper will outline the findings of the individual voices of the entrepreneurs, situating and substantiating these within the temporally variable social manifestations of the 'collective voice' before a discussion will evaluate and assess their relevance and value. To conclude the article, we briefly sum up our contribution, limitations, and make suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Entrepreneurial spatial embeddedness

It has long been acknowledged that entrepreneurial activity is fundamentally "conditioned by the dynamics of the entrepreneur and the social structure" (Jack and Anderson 2002, 468) with the wide-ranging social and institutional conditions of place influencing entrepreneurs' micro-level processes (Thornton 1999). It is these well-known set of processes which enable entrepreneurs to take advantage of local conditions and capitalise on 'embeddedness'.

Embeddedness has a long history (Granovetter 1974, 1985) with research tending to focus on *socio-spatial embeddedness* combining notions of social capital and networks (Scott 2006; Salder and Bryson 2019). Whilst this positions the entrepreneur as a complex social agent situated within a dense structure of socioeconomic relationships, embeddedness is frequently approached as individuals' exposure to social relationships which 'inescapably' aid or impede economic action (Granovetter 1985; Uzzi 1997). This instrumental use of embeddedness imbues a strong sense of economic purpose, focusing excessively on value whilst neglecting to explore the what, when and how of value and society's role in shaping this, sharply separating the economy from society (Granovetter 1985; Krippner 2001).

Previous research has demonstrated how embeddedness can create opportunity and improve performance (Jack and Anderson 2002; Lang and Fink 2019), enable entrepreneurial activity despite contextual resource constraints (Alsos et al. 2014; Korsgaard et al. 2015a; Müller and Korsgaard 2018) and allow actors to serve as important local political and social forces (Berglund et al. 2016; Somerville and McElwee 2011). In this body of work, the spatial effects of entrepreneurial embeddedness (e.g., opportunity creation and wealth) and "how the relationship between entrepreneurs and communities influences entrepreneurial practices and outcomes" (McKeever et al. 2015, 50) remain the analytical priority. It therefore appears the intellectual search is for the effects-of-causes, prioritising outputs over the causes-of-effects explanations (McKelvie and Wiklund 2010; Dodd et al. 2021). Such prioritising therefore seems to have come at the expense of developing more nuanced conceptualisations of embeddedness with much research relying on a somewhat static, single-layered notion of the concept assuming a binary-like state of entrepreneurs being either embedded within place or not. Little work has been done to show that there might actually be variation to embeddedness not only in terms of levels (e.g., territorially bounded society, network, individual), degree (e.g., strength, intensity, extensiveness) and forms (e.g., economic transaction, information

exchange, and social relationships) (Dacin et al. 1999; Hess 2004) but also nature; different entrepreneurial outcomes may indeed be produced by varying development of embeddedness.

We aim to address this by working with a coherent embeddedness that moves from ego-centred to whole networks and relatedness (Knox et al. 2006) and explains what it means for entrepreneurs to be spatially (dis)embedded using context as "a means of providing explanation" (Welch et al. 2011, 751). A wider appreciation of the *all-round* social and institutional circumstances, micro-level interactions and material practices that help to construct the place(s) in which entrepreneurial activities are embedded is of importance to better understand the nature of embeddedness (Krippner 2001; Simsek et al. 2003) and "reach beyond the economic characterization of entrepreneurship as impersonated by the *homo entrepreneurus*" (Patriotta and Siegel 2019, 1195). We therefore consider varying kinds of embeddedness alongside the social, including relational, structural and cultural as well as the notion of dis-embedding to holistically build such a picture. *Relational embeddedness* refers to the "nature of relations that individuals have with specific other individuals … [that] has typically quite direct effects on individual economic action" (Granovetter 2017, 17). *Structural embeddedness* reflects a strategic form of embedding surrounding the impact of the overall structure of the network that individuals are embedded in (Salder and Bryson 2019), defined by Granovetter (1985, 18), as the "contextualization of economic exchange in patterns of ongoing interpersonal relations". *Cultural embeddedness* refers to "the role of shared collective understandings in shaping economic strategies and goals" (Dequech 2003, 462). Indeed, whilst theory does put forward the idea of dis-embedding – "asignifying rupture" describing spatially cut off social bonds (Hess 2004, 182) – and re-embedding – capturing more dynamic identity positions that often offer agency in novel ways (Berglund et al. 2016) – further exploration into the specific micro-level processes behind these varying kinds of embeddedness can contribute

towards greater scholarly knowledge of what it means for entrepreneurs to be spatially (dis)embedded over time.

We vow for an enhanced theoretical understanding of "what works for whom in which circumstances?" (Nielsen and Miraglia 2017, 40) (albeit without creating easily transferrable entrepreneurial practices from one context to another). This paper consequently aligns with the thinking of Welter et al. (2017, 311-312) and fully embraces entrepreneurial heterogeneity and differences, allowing for a "panorama of ideas, context(s), methods, outcomes, and paradoxes that would see entrepreneurship more broadly". Approaching research in this manner appreciates that entrepreneurial embeddedness reflects histories of cohesion and unfolds differently in different contexts, offering the chance to explore the concept across geographies or industries, uncovering hidden variation over time and negating its presumed instrumental nature (Müller and Korsgaard 2018; Welter et al. 2019). A mixed embeddedness perspective provides the source of entrepreneurship heterogeneity needed for such further exploration as it accounts for variability in terms of region of origin, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and economic, social and cultural resources. Its open-endedness moves us beyond the monocausal explanations of entrepreneurial action through exploring how entrepreneurs can be embedded at the intersection of demographic and socioeconomic changes, taking into account the variation in the composition of migration and entrepreneurship with respect to human, social and financial capital as strategic resources in a wider societal context (Kloosterman and Rath 2018). Appreciating 'how' (rather than 'how much') entrepreneurs are embedded within their socio-cultural and institutional settings helps to understand what shapes entrepreneurial actions (Kloosterman and Rath 2018), thus transcending the instrumental idea of direct dyadic, personal networks (Granovetter 1985) and instead unpacking the differentiated relationships between the micro-level of the entrepreneurs and the meso and macro-level, allowing research to embrace and contribute towards new multi-layered conceptualisations of embeddedness.

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2.2 Entrepreneurial elective and selective belonging

Belonging has been extensively covered within anthropology and identity scholarship as sense of community, place identity or simply the sense of place (Smith 2018). We define it as the affective bonds of place attachment (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001). Indeed, when bonds between people and place become stronger, people develop senses of belonging to that place (Haartsen and Stockdale 2018) with research suggesting that a longer length of residence results in a heightened sense of belonging and greater levels of place attachment (De Cremer and Blader 2006; Kohlbacher et al. 2015; Livingstone et al. 2008; Scannell and Gifford 2010). Here we employ the concepts of 'elective belonging' (Savage 2010; Savage et al. 2005) and 'selective belonging' (Watt 2009), theorising residents' choice in their ability to 'escape' from place, revealing the ways in which entrepreneurs may be variously embedded, and therefore expanding on the instrumental notions of embeddedness as found in Granovetter's work.

Savage (2010, 116) defines elective belonging as "the way that middle class people claimed moral rights over place through their capacity to move to, and put down roots in, a specific place which was not just functionally important to them but which also mattered symbolically". He contrasts this with more conventional notions of belonging: nostalgia and dwelling. We operationalise elective belonging herein as entrepreneurs' opting in to migrate, put down roots, and affectively bond with place's multiplicity of contexts, both functionally and symbolically. In doing so, elective belonging positions choice against history as in-migrants encounter 'locals' with historical attachments to place thus offering insights "between mobile incomers and stable locals; between those exercising "choice" and those fixed in place; the agent and the object, all of these embedded in the mobilization of present against past" (Savage 2010, 116). Watt (2009, 2875) goes on to further these ideas finding individuals "subscribed to a spatially *selective* version of the elective belonging discourse". We therefore operationalise selective belonging as entrepreneurs' opting out of identification and

participation within place in order to disconnect from areas, people and practices that are perceived as less desirable (Haartsen and Stockdale 2018).

Such ideas indicate both an elective and selective sense of belonging within place can be created through cultural and social constructions along with local interactions, personal experiences, and individual actions and beliefs (Anderson and Gaddefors 2016). Evidently, belonging is an emotional experience (McManus et al. 2012) and one which may therefore offer key insights through the phenomenology of 'being-in-the-world' – that of experiencing place and the individual meanings attributed to such experiences (Dodd et al. 2013; Heidegger 1962). Appreciating this variability positions belonging as performative, being created, recreated and altered through micro-level entrepreneurial actions and practices (Bell 1999; Marshall 2002) which variously embed entrepreneurs within the social, relational, structural and cultural conditions of place. This suggests the (re)creation of elective and selective belonging within place can therefore serve to establish and sustain varying kinds of (dis)embeddedness, helping to broaden the understanding of the concept and "how people can be embedded in a familiar everyday world yet feel they do *not* belong there" (May 2011, 370).

We put forward that these ideas about belonging, meaning, and experience offer a conceptually powerful viewpoint to discover and begin to explain variability within embeddedness where we have come to expect sameness. In doing so, a sense of elective and selective belonging can better link micro-level perceptions with mobility, actions and processes (McManus et al. 2012), therefore connecting the individual entrepreneur to the conditions of place and subsequently acting as a means to explore the inter-relational dynamics between entrepreneurs and their varying embeddedness. Drawing on theories from outside the entrepreneurship field in this manner provides an avenue to overcome the shortages of the preoccupation with macro-level outcomes (Welter et al. 2019), instead allowing researchers to talk about the 'becoming' of the variables (Jackson et al. 2019). This offers us the chance to

empirically explore the pathways of *how*, *why* and *when* entrepreneurs embed themselves within place in depth (Parkinson et al. 2017; Wright and Stigliani 2013) and how, in turn, this may contribute towards new, broadened, multi-layered notions of embeddedness. This reflects a context sensitive approach to embeddedness aiming to refine it through seeing the macro as "constituted from lots of different micros" (Jackson et al. 2019, 25).

3. Methodology

3.1 The case study

A qualitative case study research design is employed here engaging with entrepreneurship in Great Yarmouth as the case and 'unit of analysis'. This aligns with previous research which has argued the need for qualitative studies of localised entrepreneurial processes in order to gain a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship and place (Hindle 2010; Trettin and Welter 2011). We chose to study Great Yarmouth as it has been a well-known UK seaside resort since the early 1700s, however the arrival of low-cost package holidays abroad has left the tourism industry dwindling from its heydays of the 1960-70s (House of Lords 2019), thus diminishing the sense of identity and purpose for the town. This, coupled with a shattered fishing industry as a result of overfishing and quotas (Great Yarmouth Borough Council 2016), has led to the area having multiple wards amongst the most deprived 10% in the country (MHCLG 2019) represented by high levels of worklessness, an unemployment rate of 5.6% (UK average 3.9%) (ONS 2020) and the lowest ranked provision of education, skills and training out of 326 local authority areas (House of Lords 2019). Such circumstances have negatively affected underlying aspiration levels, contributing to reduced social mobility (House of Lords 2019) leaving a local feeling of discontent and, in this sense, the community has become 'depleted'. Despite this, the case study offers an interesting scope for research as the area's energy industry is a major base for North Sea gas, oil and renewable energy ventures, playing a vital role in

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supplying 25% of the UK's energy (Great Yarmouth Borough Council 2016). The opportunistic and investable business setting facing outwards towards the North Sea combined with the seemingly lacking inward-facing town can support creative entrepreneurial intentions to emerge through utilisation of the local conditions and the unique circumstances of the host community (Johnstone 2013) alongside allowing more transparent social processes to appear due to its close-knit, small, and somewhat isolated, yet distinct geographic location (Polèse and Stren 2000). This offers a rich, diverse and almost dichotomous environment for researching heterogeneous entrepreneurs to capture their variability and begin to understand why such variability exists (Gehman et al. 2018). Such a process can broaden embeddedness theorising by focusing on "the set of driving forces that underlie and produce the patterns that we see empirically" (Gehman et al. 2018, 291).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

To gain access to entrepreneurs, purposive sampling was employed using the local authority's dataset for local business rates. Whilst this dataset may omit a few smaller entrepreneurs operating out of homes rather than purpose-built facilities, it is the most comprehensive list available for both domestic and in-migrant businesses in the region. The key selection criterion was that the businesses be privately-owned independents, as this implies a stronger emotional tie between the entrepreneurs, their ventures and, most importantly, place (Byrne and Shepherd 2015). The dataset was then combed through row by row to delete businesses which were not privately-owned and any multiple entries, with the remaining list then checked for business sectors using the Valuation Office's analysis codes and our knowledge of local ventures (as seen in Table 1). In 2018 twenty randomly selected entrepreneurs underwent in-depth interviews, ensuring that the variety of local voices were heard by using sectoral quota and that the sample was large enough to produce themes. In order to explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and embeddedness as impacted by its spatial context, the functional view of

entrepreneurship is apt (Kalantaridis and Bika 2006; Korsgaard et al. 2015b). This perspective understands entrepreneurship as a process "putting together factors of production" and recombining resources (including relationships) to create value whilst emphasising an open attitude towards 'everyday entrepreneurship' and the types of value that these entrepreneurs can create; "this function is commonly, although not exclusively, performed by individuals" (Kalantaridis and Bika 2006, 112; Welter et al. 2017). This choice reflected our ontological stance where "opportunities do not exist until entrepreneurs create them through a process of enactment" to generate value (Alvarez et al. 2013, 307) and thus ensured that our research design encompasses entrepreneurial agency and experience. Concentrating on entrepreneurs within a small town in this manner can contribute to theory, broadening notions of embeddedness through appreciating how entrepreneurial micro-level processes form, adapt and continuously develop whilst weaved in within the conditions of place (Salder and Bryson 2019).

The interviews took place at company premises eliciting natural, flowing conversations (averaging 61 minutes), asking and allowing the entrepreneurs to recount 'stories' of Great Yarmouth and decide what was pertinent themselves (Byrne and Shepherd 2015; Cope 2011). Ten of the entrepreneurs were in-migrants, originally hailing from a variety of locations across England and Scotland before moving to Great Yarmouth. This provided an insight into not only their relationship with place, but also how this compared and contrasted to the locally 'born and bred' entrepreneurs. The profile of the interviewees (Table 2) evidences the variety of business ventures, entrepreneurial origin, size and sectors underpinning the data obtained. The respondents have been given pseudonyms at all points of reference with precise and detailed information being omitted to ensure anonymity and safeguard the ethical aspect. Nineteen respondents were white British with one entrepreneur (Amir) identifying as British Asian, replicating the 96.9% white British profile of Great Yarmouth (ONS 2013).

[INSERT TABLE 1 AND TABLE 2 HERE]

This primary material was complemented and triangulated with local media and internet sources that discussed four critical events emerging out of the entrepreneurs' stories with regards to place: outer harbour construction ("the outer harbour, there's been a hell of a lot of money pumped into that but it's not utilised to its full potential" [Keith]); empty shops on the high street ("you go into the town centre now and there's nothing but banks and empty shops" [Luke]); tourism decline ("it's behind the times, nothing to offer anymore. It will never die, but it has drastically declined" [Phil]); and increasing unemployment ("people are caught in that 2nd/3rd generation unemployed and that's really hard to break" [Richard]). These events were purposefully chosen based upon their impact and prevalence within multiple entrepreneurs' stories. Table 4 illustrates quotes included from online sources that reflected the 'collective voice' and were pertinent to the micro-level contextual processes of entrepreneurs, whilst demonstrating how local and national media perceived the same critical events, thus serving as our 'embedded unit of analysis' that summarises the social constructionist point of view about Great Yarmouth. The critical event keywords and relevant synonyms were subsequently entered into three local newspaper archives (Great Yarmouth Mercury, Eastern Daily Press and the Norwich Evening News) and internet search engines (e.g., finding relevant evidence in online publications such as the World Weekly or even mainstream national newspapers such as the Guardian or the Independent) backdating ten years. This not only offered an additional source of evidence and opportunities for triangulation, but also permitted the case study to extend its reach, elongating the time perspective to reveal temporally variable social manifestations and thus provide a firmer basis for developing theory (Welch et al. 2011).

Drawing on multiple analytic tools in this manner strengthens evidence and enhances context sensitive theorising through exploring how individual micro-level processes are closely tied to issues of history, culture and power within place (Bakhtin 1984; Foucault 1983). This

enabled the research to single out the time-bound origins, cultural assumptions, and core ideas of place and what it is comprised of (Fairhurst and Putnam 2019). Situating and substantiating findings within the conditions of place highlights the variability in one's data and how this may be represented collectively as well as allowing analysis to explore how much variability exists in actors' individual relationship with place. The integrative methodology therefore adds value by making another avenue available; offering a shared understanding of Great Yarmouth from the 'collective voice' of the secondary sources allows an interesting angle for analysis when compared and contrasted with the individual voice and lived experiences of the entrepreneurs. This multi-source evidence serves to increase the validity of the data (Korsgaard et al. 2015a; Miles and Huberman 1994) as it embraces inductive coding and ties it directly to the sociohistorical and cultural fabric of place. Such methods enable an empathetic and a temporally sensitive view of how the entrepreneurs' environments may have developed in a disjoint manner and how this may have subsequently shaped entrepreneurial behaviour over time. Forming interpretations from the situational and sociohistorical consequently allows research to dig deeper into the data and provide a much more holistic and nuanced understanding of the nature of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place.

An inductive approach was used to analyse the participants' stories of Great Yarmouth stemming from their in-depth interviews. This allowed the data to be broken down, conceptualised, and rebuilt in new ways, providing the opportunity for new theory to emerge (Charmaz 2014). We began the open coding of the entrepreneurs' stories using line-by-line analysis, generating conceptual ideas from the chunks of data and enabling the entrepreneurs' relationships and feelings to be contextualised (Gibbs 2007). Such a process was combined with going over the online sources of secondary data (e.g., reports, newspaper articles, newsletters) to understand the particularities, history and macro context of Great Yarmouth. We analysed the key points made by each interviewee situated within the 'collective voice' of

Great Yarmouth allowing us to identify a set of 1st order categories. The six 1st order categories from the case (i.e., locally born and bred; local sense of ownership; local financial investment; duty of localised care; locally-minded decision-making; and local futures) we identified focused on how and why the entrepreneurs were engaging with place and depicted various forms of sense-making.

We then looked for connections that would enable us to further build the 1st order (informant-centric) categories into a smaller amount of 2nd order (researcher-centric) themes (Gehman et al. 2018). The analysis proceeded systematically and iteratively, moving fluidly between the data and the literature until patterns emerged which were then developed into 2nd order themes about the interviewees' heterogeneous entrepreneurial actions within, and aspirations for, the town with a particular focus on the research question underpinning our study. In this stage of our analysis it became clear that locally born interviewees had predominantly told us entrepreneurial stories that would accept 'place as it is' highlighting nonparticipation within certain elements of the town and looking further afield for any additional socioeconomic resources needed. By contrast, in-migrant interviewees frequently narrated how they pursued 'place as it could be' after migrating to the town, putting down roots and 'adopting place' as their own focusing on the opportunity potential and long-term improvement of Great Yarmouth as a whole in order for it to have the resources they need in the future. Data analysis continued searching for connections and theoretical links between these 2nd order themes resulting in 'varying entrepreneurial embeddedness within place' becoming our aggregate theoretical dimension. The corresponding data structure is shown in Fig. 1 with the categories and the relationships between them reported below in the findings.

[INSERT FIG. 1 HERE]

4. Findings

Having set out to explore the nature of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place, our findings make use of elective and selective belonging to understand the embedded experiences, feelings and relationships going on within Great Yarmouth and how this was explained in the form of entrepreneurial stories. To present our findings we shall separate this passage into two sections. Firstly, we offer our findings of embedded local entrepreneurs accepting 'place as it is' viewed through our six 1st order categories. Secondly, we compare and contrast this with the in-migrant entrepreneurial stories to illustrate their differentiated embeddedness towards 'place as it could be' through the notion of 'adopting place'. Table 3 and 4 respectively offer additional primary and secondary data further evidencing this distinction.

[INSERT TABLE 3 AND 4 HERE]

4.1 Embeddedness through accepting place as it is

The general consensus of local entrepreneurs was that being born and bred within Great Yarmouth was almost like being dealt a bad hand in life. The majority of locally born entrepreneurs repetitively conveyed the depleted sense of Great Yarmouth and its negative connotations. Despite a longstanding presence in place, entrepreneurs such as Gary, a restaurateur since 1996, and Gordon, the 2nd generation of a longstanding waste management company, displayed an almost helpless attitude of "being stuck between a rock and a hard place" (Gordon) as they felt they could neither move away from the town nor offer much contribution or remedial measures towards its positive development:

> "If it was just a purely business-based decision and nothing else then I would have probably gone somewhere else. If I could just pick it up and move, then I would" (Gary).

Whilst this may largely be accredited to the local entrepreneurs experiencing Great Yarmouth's depleted nature and thus greater obstacles to business venturing for longer periods of time, it does illustrate their spatially selective sense of belonging; an appreciation of the local ego-

centred ties beyond enterprise serves to embed local entrepreneurs within place's social sphere, thus advancing a begrudging acceptance for 'place' in its current form.

Furthermore, Richard, an in-migrant entrepreneur providing marine services to the energy industry since 2006, details how the local entrepreneurs of Great Yarmouth often demonstrated a lack of ownership for the town in which they reside.

> "If you ask anybody where they live, most people here will tell you they don't live in Yarmouth, they'll live in [one of the villages] or whatever. Anything but use the words 'Great Yarmouth'" (Richard).

Such reluctance to use the words 'Great Yarmouth' indicates a form of boundary making – what Bourdieu (1991, 239) terms "the power of naming". Indeed, Stuart, a 5th generation property investor, illustrated how local entrepreneurs frequently distanced themselves from Great Yarmouth as a whole, as well as the attempts to revitalise it:

> "I've always been very negative of Great Yarmouth, I don't know why, it could be that deep down I'm a snob and I don't particularly like Great Yarmouth as a place, I never have … it's a ghost town" (Stuart).

Rejecting wider local networks, actions and external bonds deeming them unworthy reveals a form of structural dis-embedding, in turn allowing a focus of time and resources into individually forwarding their ventures whilst remaining spatially selective in their sense of belonging.

These ideas continue when taking into account the local entrepreneurs' attitude towards local financial investment. Whilst Sam, a locally born and bred entrepreneur of a marketing agency since 1989, acknowledged the need to "pull together when times are tough" others felt quite the opposite. Despite a longstanding presence in place with strong familial connections it seems that the local entrepreneurs' feelings towards investing in the local area were often dwarfed by the economic assumption that there is little point in rejuvenating depleted towns as they are the antithesis of modern, thriving environments:

> "I don't think it [investment] is worth it. I think other areas will just decline as quickly as things are being improved and then you'll be back to square one" (Rick).

Rick, an entrepreneur in the construction industry since 2010, furthers the notion of local entrepreneurs accepting place 'as it is' through renouncing local financial investment, seemingly lacking empathy when talking about the town's depleted nature.

Whilst some local entrepreneurs have recognised the issues that the town faces and how to potentially overcome them, a recurring theme of accepting Great Yarmouth 'as it is' was due to a lack of care and compassion from the majority of locals towards bettering the place in which they were raised:

> "Other towns … the thinking has always been what can we get done collectively for our region, whereas Yarmouth isn't that, it tends to be lots of individuals fighting their own corner" (Gavin).

> "I'm out to make a living and that's it. I don't really care as long as I make a living from it" (Rick).

Here, Rick and locally born and bred Gavin, a servicer to the energy industry since 2008, both portray a selective sense of belonging revealing the tendency of local entrepreneurs to engage in a form of structural and relational dis-embedding. Such actions depict a one-way acceptance between them and the town; a willingness to 'take' but less likely to collectively 'give back' as this was not deemed worthy of further socioeconomic investment.

Additionally, the local entrepreneurs further demonstrated a display of independence when it came to influencing holistic decision-making within Great Yarmouth. They preferred to "row their own boat" (Stuart) rather than work together with local authorities and decision-makers to positively develop the town.

> "I don't think that they [local authority] understand the sector … the borough council has never made up its mind whether Great Yarmouth is an industrial town or a tourist town so it has ended up playing both cards badly" (Gavin).

The longstanding differences of opinion between the local entrepreneurs and the local authority, as evidenced by Gavin's above excerpt, has only exacerbated the cultural dis-embedding of local entrepreneurs from the town.

Most local entrepreneurs felt that the town had already "had its day" (Stuart) with the future offering little, if any, positive change at the local level. Whilst Sam alluded to the benefits of "inside knowledge" as a local, the majority carried the heavy burden of local history feeling trapped in a place described as "the end of the line" (Gordon) which Chris, at the helm of family-owned coach business founded in 1910, suspects "[isn't] ever going to see how good it was again". This reiterates bleak feelings of futileness from the local entrepreneurs, resulting in few attempts to think beyond their selective sense of belonging: "this is where my friends and family are so this is where I'll stay" (Rick). Despite this socially embedding individuals, the poignant lack of positive outlooks emerging from local entrepreneurs' stories seemingly takes the depleted nature of Great Yarmouth as a 'given' – something which is so ingrained and beyond redemption it nullifies any agentic efforts to overcome it, thus demonstrating an overwhelming acceptance of 'place as it is'.

To further evidence this theme the 'collective voice' of the secondary sources not only gives a background of Great Yarmouth but also demonstrates the dominance of the social construction in its own right, how it is portrayed in the media, and how this situates and substantiates the findings within the disjoint environment experienced first-hand by the entrepreneurs (additional evidence in Table 4). Through discussing repetitively the critical events of an underperforming outer harbour, further decline in tourism, an increase of empty shops and high unemployment this 'as it is' version of the 'collective voice' demonstrates a local feeling of shock, unrest, disappointment and concern:

> "Latest unemployment figures reveal that an area of Great Yarmouth has one of the highest rates of people claiming unemployment benefits in the United Kingdom ... The figures were last night described as 'shocking'" (17/05/12 Eastern Daily Press, Colleen Walker, Great Yarmouth Mayor).

The 'collective voice' then goes on to reveal the impacts of accepting 'place as it is' without effectively addressing the negative cycle of depletion:

> "Walk around Great Yarmouth and it's not hard to find empty shops crying out for new life … once bright windows have given way to a boarded-up bleakness" (20/09/18 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Liz Coates, journalist).

Here the 'collective voice' reinforces the town's need (and arguably ignites subsequent in-migrant entrepreneurial action) of role models and change agents. Indeed, the depleted nature of the town as depicted here argues against investing financially in order to create a stronger business environment as well as investing in the social conditions and relationships of place to combat the negative cycle. It therefore seems to align with the thinking of local entrepreneurs; presenting apathy as a justifiable response and encouraging a desensitisation to the town's current condition and efforts to overcome it.

4.2 Embeddedness through adopting place as it could be

When talking about being locally born and bred from Great Yarmouth, in-migrant entrepreneurs such as Keith, originally from Norwich and now a ship chandler of a local firm dating back to 1898, offered his viewpoint as to why the town has become depleted:

> "I think because of its situation and because it's slightly deprived, I think there are more draws that lead people away from Yarmouth than lead people to it … the high level of unemployment results in lower wages, it's a negative cycle" (Keith).

Richard, originally from Aberdeen and present within the town since 2006, relayed his concerns about how this negative cycle has affected attitudes to newcomers, work and subsequent attempts to break the causal nexus:

> "Do they actually want us here? Do they actually want this work? … They don't really care" (Richard).

Despite the in-migrant entrepreneurs evidencing resistance from some locals, their elective sense of belonging manifested through their offering of alternative socioeconomic practices, catering holistically to the depleted nature of place, in order to "get the right attitude … [and] see things change" (Richard):

> "What we're trying to do is encourage females into an industry which they think might not be suited for them … they don't necessarily have to do the hairdressing, the beauty

and the admin, there are other skills they can go in to and I don't think they are aware
of that" (Nicole).

Nicole, in business since 2010 who moved to Great Yarmouth as a young adult after her parents bought a hotel and subsequently elected to belong there, demonstrates a desire to embed herself within the structural relationships of the whole community through the provision of local opportunities, training, and awareness for young women in order to broaden their horizons and increase future human talent pools. Such actions signify that being locally born and bred is less relevant regarding active contribution to the area's positive development, thus reinforcing the role of the in-migrant entrepreneurs 'adopting place' as their own through shaping it 'as it could be'.

The in-migrant entrepreneurs also noted that although locals would prefer not to take ownership or be associated with Great Yarmouth, they would not follow the same path:

"Although we're not from here … we've been here for a long time, we're established
here, we belong here … I wouldn't move for the life of me" (Amir).

Amir, a photographer within the town since 2012 originally from Hertfordshire, demonstrates local ownership through explicitly mentioning his sense of elective entrepreneurial belonging within, and attachment to, the town. The actions of in-migrant entrepreneurs 'adopting place' as their own in this manner enabled feelings of reciprocity as the local community was perceived as a key stakeholder in their business venturing further evidenced by Adam, a manufacturer from nearby Suffolk who began his venture shortly after moving to Great Yarmouth in 2013:

"We kind of see it that [our business] isn't actually owned by us, it's owned by
Yarmouth, that's how the people feel here. We might be the custodians of it but actually
the legacy of [our business] still belongs to Great Yarmouth and the people of Great
Yarmouth" (Adam).

Such feelings of acceptance and belonging served to increase the in-migrants exposure to the social conditions and relationships of place, allowing them to integrate within, and provide ideas involving, the host community:

> "If people are unemployed, we photocopy their CVs free of charge. It's nothing major
> but it's a little thing to help other people" (Amir).

These feelings of elective belonging evidenced through the in-migrants' socioeconomic activities enhance individuals' social embeddedness within the town, serving as an integral component of the local structure through using their knowledge of the local social conditions to help overcome the often-negative circumstances prevailing in depleted communities.

The in-migrant entrepreneurs' readiness to financially invest in the depleted town portrays a distinct level of trust and faith towards shaping and developing Great Yarmouth more widely into a stronger local business environment:

> "This is the first new office in this area for 10 years … Why build a big fancy building
> on the beachfront in Yarmouth? It shows if we can do it, why can't other people?"
> (Richard).

Their significant investment of long-term assets implies a lengthy elective belonging within place spurred on by an absence of financial backing from their local counterparts. Luke, a retailer originally from Kent who relocated for his girlfriend, further relays stories about how they were prepared to not only invest in the local area, but in the people and their businesses as well:

> "We could [buy] cheaper online but we'd prefer to support business in that local sense
> … you have sympathy for other businesses because we are in the same situation, that's
> what businesses need ... you go into the town centre now and shops are closing down
> left, right and centre" (Luke).

Their individual actions consequently immerse themselves in the extant social conditions of place, embedding and integrating them within the relational ties to the community as they feel the emotional bonds and social benefits outweigh the negative economic signals of depletion, thus providing a pathway for in-migrant entrepreneurs to 'adopt place' and shape it 'as it could be'.

Looking out for the area's best interests was a reoccurring theme for understanding the in-migrant entrepreneurs' embeddedness within place. Adam's excerpt describes how caring

for the town as a whole had become their duty due to a lack of management and responsibility from both the local authority and the 'locals':

> "I think the borough [council] need to work in partnership with businesses [to revitalise Great Yarmouth] but the problem is a lot of businesses don't see the benefit as they're here for themselves and that's it, they don't invest back into it. I'd like to think everybody is responsible" (Adam).

A sense of elective belonging has created purpose for the in-migrants' businesses other than solely making economic gains and that purpose manifests itself as a duty of localised care. Positioning themselves firmly within the wider social and economic structure of place in this manner not only serves to establish and sustain their varying types of embeddedness but also reveals how they felt accepted within the community, inspiring a responsibility to 'give back' and improve Great Yarmouth where possible.

> "If I had my completely business head on, you could probably cross off a lot of the stuff we've done for Yarmouth … but we are a part of Yarmouth" (Adam).

Whilst some superficially saw this as an additional cost, all agreed the beneficial social outcomes were worthwhile, thus 'adopting place' as their own, disregarding the traditional nature of leaving community revitalisation as the responsibility of local authorities and other 'locals'. In this sense, they portray themselves as positive role models for the whole area which could inspire others to follow suit and offer increased measures for community development.

Many of the in-migrant interviewees also recalled how their actions, perceptions and demeanour hoped to, or already had, influenced holistic decision-making within the local authority and/or town to encourage further beneficial development and progression towards 'adopting place as it could be':

> "We've got to pull together. I try and knock into them [employees], it's about changing their mind-set … it's for us, it's paid your wages, it's your household it's supporting, it's my household it's supporting, it's for us. We've got to think further than [ourselves]" (Peter).

Through his elective sense of belonging Peter, a sculptor-turned-fabricator since 1997 who moved up to Great Yarmouth to 'escape' London, reveals his feelings towards cultural

embeddedness through his aspirations to collectively change the local mind-set and develop its long-term prosperity. Such actions inadvertently position the in-migrant entrepreneurs as change agents, attempting to increase the town's positive social forces and overcome its depleted nature (Bika 2012).

Additionally, all of the in-migrant participants demonstrated varying embeddedness within place through their aspirations for its development and having a vision of local futures.

> "I'm an outsider if you like, I've come here, and I'd never go back to a big city. You know I feel I belong; I like it just the way it is. On the business level there really needs to be more done you know but that's what we're working towards" (Matthew).

Matthew, who first moved to Great Yarmouth in the 1990s and then founded his engineering venture in 2003 after redundancy from the energy industry, explicitly mentions how he had experienced the transition from being an "outsider" to belonging. His excerpt provides an insight into why in-migrant entrepreneurs elected to embed themselves and their ventures within the wider conditions and relationships of place and how this can consequently nurture varying types of embeddedness. Such a process clearly inspired in-migrant intentions of positively developing the town as well as revealing their yearning to put down deep-set roots:

> "We like where we live and want to invest in the Great Yarmouth area and the people, we've got children, and we see it as very important that we put our roots down here … it's opportunities for my children and my children's friends and I want Great Yarmouth to be a success" (Simon).

Simon, an engineering entrepreneur from Middlesex who holidayed as a child in Great Yarmouth before permanently relocating in the 1980s, reflects the desire of the in-migrant entrepreneurial stories working towards building a better business environment for the future generations "to make it as secure as possible" (Simon) with the hope that, in turn, future generations could continue the cyclical relationship to benefit the town and further develop 'place as it could be'.

The 'collective voice' further demonstrates the aspiring theme of 'place as it could be'. It recognises that future initiatives need to take increased measures to implement strategic plans, assess risk and positively develop place, albeit with a sectoral focus:

> "This development work will ensure that the facilities at Great Yarmouth are some of the best anywhere for delivering large-scale offshore wind farms … we hope that our [future] plans will continue to create jobs and investment in the region for decades to come" (31/01/17 Maritime Journal, Charlie Jordan, Scottish Power Renewables Project Director).

In the critical event of the problematic outer harbour this has been demonstrated by an 'outside' company coming into the town and leading by example – reminiscent of the actions of our in-migrant entrepreneurs. Through paying tribute to the decline in tourism, empty shops and unemployment, the 'collective voice' further reflects the in-migrants' accounts, acknowledging the hardship of the town and the presence of a negative cycle which requires long-term remedial action to develop 'place as it could be':

> "People in the town said more must be done to increase employment opportunities ... there isn't enough work in the tourism industry for 52 weeks of the year" (17/05/12 Eastern Daily Press, Michael Jeal, Borough Councillor).

Interestingly, the similarities between our in-migrant entrepreneurial stories and the collective accounts become more pronounced as they both recognise a need for increased confidence in the town and an obligation to cater for the *entire* business environment rather than select specific sectors (and therefore leave behind others) in order to progress Great Yarmouth.

5. Discussion

To explore the answers to our research question regarding the nature of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place we shall cover here the threefold contribution of this paper.

Firstly, we introduce the notion of 'adopting place' as an important, but previously unacknowledged manifestation of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place. Our evidence shows that through electively belonging, it was the in-migrant entrepreneurs who became variously embedded within place, willing to 'adopt' the town as their own by caring for it and

engaging in socioeconomic practices towards the benefit and improvement of Great Yarmouth 'as it could be'. This very nature of the in-migrant entrepreneurs' relationship with place has led us to propose 'adopting' as a distinctive manifestation of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place that draws heavily on the family metaphor and merits theoretical consideration in its own right. In Triseliotis et al.'s (1997) seminal text on familial adoption, this is depicted as a three-way relationship involving the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and the transitioning child. We recognised in our case study a similar three-way relationship albeit between the local entrepreneurs, the in-migrant entrepreneurs, and the depleted town. Through opting in to belong there and immersing themselves and their ventures within the social fabric and varying conditions of place, in-migrant entrepreneurs combined micro-level entrepreneurial processes alongside identity positions that break with local tradition and offer agency in novel and unexpected ways, ultimately 're-embedding' themselves (Berglund et al. 2016) and thus capturing the notion of 'adopting place'.

Secondly, acknowledging the presence of 'adopting place' broadens notions of embeddedness by demonstrating that individuals variously (dis)embedded themselves within the social, structural, relational and cultural conditions of place (Simsek et al. 2003) yet they developed this in inherently different ways. The majority of local entrepreneurs in this study (with some exceptions) presented themselves as increasingly detached from the culturally embedded community practices and socioeconomic processes aimed at regenerating the town with the emerging picture that they had learned to live and accept 'place as it is'. 'Swimming with the current' (Blair-Loy 1999) inadvertently helps to embed these entrepreneurs in social, political, and economic contexts, which, however 'unjust' they may appear in an expanded perspective, serve the actors well within their own personal and professional lives due to an appreciation of locally-based ego-centred kinship and social ties. Indeed, the presence of family and friends and familiarity with the local community reveals they were firmly embedded within

the social networks of place (Salder and Bryson 2019), yet their ideas of nostalgia resonate with the decline of the community, offering an account of how place has moved symbolically and culturally away from the conditions and values prized by residents in earlier times (Savage 2010). The local entrepreneurs are therefore selective in their belonging in that they identify against elements of the local business environment and culture (Haartsen and Stockdale 2018), abjuring the negative signs of depletion, supplementing localised resource deficiencies from further afield and thus giving rise to a dis-embedding *process* from such elements and conditions of place. Whilst on the surface this may appear that most local entrepreneurs lacked a feeling of responsibility to 'give back' to Great Yarmouth, this can arguably be attributed to a low future time perspective. This is a feeling that ambitious future goals are typically unattainable as in the 'here and now' local entrepreneurs experience they have little resources or agency to change their current situation, thus their time perspective is oriented towards coping with the present (Guthrie et al. 2009), often built upon a string of negative past experiences (Lévesque and Stephan 2020). It is not that locals do not care about the future of place, it is just that their prolonged exposure to the challenging nature of the town increases (albeit variably) their pessimism and creates inertia in everyday entrepreneurship, whilst at the same time making them conservative in their emotional investments outside of their own family and friends. Interestingly, this notion was also expressed collectively through the result of the 2016 EU Referendum. Great Yarmouth was the fifth highest area in the whole of the UK to support the Leave Campaign (71.5%); residents demonstrated a similar acceptance of Great Yarmouth 'as it is' relinquishing the help and support of those from outside of the town (i.e., the EU).

By contrast, all the in-migrant entrepreneurs articulated a greater sense of elective belonging and this arose precisely because the local was not something to avoid (Watt 2009). Having moved to a place with which they had few, if any, prior ego-centred networks, for a

variety of reasons, they came to be highly vested in it. Electively 'choosing' Great Yarmouth conveys great symbolic meaning, providing a means for the in-migrant entrepreneurs to become variously embedded within place without having to carry the heavy burden of local history or such a string of negative past experiences. In this process, "history as resource is wrested from the grasp of the [locally] "born and bred"" who can remember and placed in the reflexive grip of the recently arrived who cannot because they were not there (Savage 2010, 133). This allowed the in-migrant entrepreneurs to be much more open towards changing the status quo through envisaging the positive future possibilities of the whole town, remaining focused on the opportunity potential and long-term improvement of their locality to benefit residents and to develop the resources they need in the future. We saw that the in-migrant entrepreneurs would variously embed themselves and respond to the local social conditions and relationships within place evidenced through their continuing efforts to overcome the negative signs of depletion (Salder and Bryson 2019). These actions reveal that they *dynamically* maintain local embeddedness, 'adopting place' to develop it 'as it could be' in a way that locals who remain "trapped in the past cannot" (Savage et al. 2005, 207). Thus, elective belonging applies to the in-migrant entrepreneurs, facilitating their varying embeddedness within place by dint of using and developing localised resources alongside the local entrepreneurs; being an active member of the local community ('doing' place) enhances senses of belonging, varying embeddedness and feelings of being accepted and integrated into the whole community (Bika and Frazer 2020; Haartsen and Stockdale 2018).

Drawing on sociological theorising beyond the field of entrepreneurship in this manner offers an appreciation of elective and selective belonging, enabling a better understanding of the multiple ways through which entrepreneurs embed themselves within place, what this means to individuals, and how both local and in-migrant entrepreneurs develop such embeddedness in fundamentally different (and complex) ways. This reveals (dis)embedding to

be a dynamic process of continual renewal and reconfiguration, reflecting the needs, wants and desires of individuals as they co-constitute, adapt and respond to alterations in endogenous and exogenous processes (Salder and Bryson 2019) to support different perspectives of place: taking it as a given and 'accepting place as it is' or adopting it as their own to develop 'place as it could be'. This is a process that continually reshapes the relationship between entrepreneur and place, positioning embeddedness as much more complex than mere networks, residence or locality, as something which is not binary nor achieved as a single event at a certain level, but something which is multi-layered and dynamic. Fig. 2 depicts the grounded model generated by the data structure of this dynamic process of entrepreneurial embeddedness within place.

[INSERT FIG. 2 HERE]

The one-directional instrumental thinking on embeddedness advocated by Granovetter and frequently employed within entrepreneurship research would be unable to capture such complexity as it imbues embeddedness with a strong sense of economic purpose, treating place as an instrumental resource to create economic value facilitated by entrepreneurial networks, distinctly separating the economy from society (Granovetter 1985; Krippner 2001). Repositioning the focus of entrepreneurship research (Dodd et al. 2021) our findings counteract this, actively demonstrating the multi-dimensionality of embeddedness over and above being instrumentally network-based; like our local entrepreneurs, individuals can be embedded in local networks yet variously dis-embed themselves from place whereas, like our in-migrant entrepreneurs, individuals can be variously embedded within place without necessarily being embedded in local networks. Not only then can entrepreneurial actions be variously embedded, but embeddedness can continuously impact upon entrepreneurial intentions for a variety of socioeconomic reasons and, as demonstrated here, perspectives for place. We therefore argue that embeddedness needs to be considered beyond Granovetter's instrumentally-bound network-focused sense in order to develop more inclusive entrepreneurship research

appreciative of the heterogeneity of urban form, function, experience and economy (Salder and Bryson 2019).

These ideas also contribute to mixed embeddedness in regional development (Korsgaard et al. 2015a), seeing in-migrant entrepreneurs electively 'choosing' to embed themselves within their new place, unwilling to engage in the 'trade-off' between balancing 'internal' embeddedness and the maintenance of external links where they no longer have a physical presence (Meyer et al. 2011), thus forming an integral part of the local structure (Kalantaridis and Bika 2006). Most importantly, it disregards the idea of dis-embedded outsiders that are seen here as being cut-off spatially from their original locality but also as re-embedded into the "matrix of their new location" (Jankowicz 2003, 107). This goes against literature suggesting that a longstanding relationship with place (since 'when' one lived there) would result in a heightened sense of belonging and greater levels of place attachment than 'outsiders' of a group (De Cremer and Blader 2006; Kohlbacher et al. 2015; Livingstone et al. 2008; Scannell and Gifford 2010). In doing so, it also contributes towards the elective and selective belonging literature by revealing how it was locals who were spatially selective in their belonging rather than newcomers to place as frequently discussed in prior research (Haartsen and Stockdale 2018; Savage 2010; Watt 2009).

Our findings therefore suggest that policy initiatives and local authorities' aims to attract and incentivise entrepreneurs to an area (and thus 'adopt' them) may be inefficient because they assume a "one-way relationship" between entrepreneurship and an externally given context (Welter 2011, 175). Contrarily, we have illustrated how and why this was to be the other way around in our case study as the in-migrant entrepreneurs became the adopt*er* of place which is constantly evolving. It has subsequently become clear that elective and selective strategies of belonging invoke change and mobility (Haartsen and Stockdale 2018). Both provide a story about being embedded within a certain place and how this goes hand-in-hand

with the processes of change and regional development (place as it could be) or lack thereof (place as it is). These two opposing ways of situating people around the contested stakes of place leads us to our third and final contribution – that 'adopting place' can move towards the reconceptualisation of place through entrepreneurial agency.

Indeed, this provides an insight into how the structural environments of action are both dynamically sustained by and also altered through human agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998) – the 'collective voice' produces temporally variable social manifestations helping to understand how entrepreneurs' varying (dis)embeddedness is informed by the past (place as it was), but also oriented toward the future (place as it could be) and toward the present (place as it is). The *transition* of being an outsider to feelings of electively belonging revealed the desire to resolve social problems while simultaneously engaging in enterprise. While the socioeconomic activities engaged in by the entrepreneurs may not be present at the outset of venturing (and in this case understood through ex post facto reflection), the culturally embedded notion of adopting place demonstrates one way actors can negotiate their paths towards the future, refusing to accept the already available and ingrained positions (Berglund et al. 2016). Actors receive their driving impetus from the town's challenging social conditions and thus invoke change to influence their degree of freedom in relation to existing structures (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). By identifying such a broader, dynamic understanding of embeddedness, we can help to account for variability in entrepreneurs' engagement with place and change in their agentic capacities for imaginative and critical intervention in the diverse contexts within which they act as they construct, shape and mould place as their own (Gieryn 2000). These findings underscore how embeddedness is much more complex than what research may assume and how, in turn, such broadened notions of the concept can enable us to see entrepreneurs no longer responding, but rather adapting, constituting and being part of their

evolving contexts (Bika and Frazer 2020; Bika and Rosa 2020), thus progressing a reconceptualisation of place.

We therefore embrace the idea of a multitude of potential social ends within place as well as the many possible means for arriving at them. We found entrepreneurs willing to go beyond their locations of birth and immediate ego-centred networks whose desire to positively develop place centred around the (dis)embeddedness of all the actors which constitute their contextual environment (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Such entrepreneurial agency contained "nuanced lines of inclusion and exclusion, acceptability and nonacceptability within crosscutting contexts of action" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 980), serving to not only variously embed the in-migrant entrepreneurs, but to also provide a new outlook in overcoming the barriers locals largely thought were insurmountable. In this viewpoint, the longer the relationship one has with a place does not necessarily equal to a greater significance of the entrepreneurial actor as a change agent or other well-known accounts of over-embeddedness (Uzzi 1997). This research insight reaffirms the belief that in-migration should be welcomed in depleted towns as these require fresh blood and ideas of how to break the mould and do things differently (Kalantaridis et al. 2019), while local and returnee residents may potentially offer only a romanticised version of what is needed in everyday entrepreneurship.

6. Conclusions

Through introducing the notion of adopting place we delve deeper into how, why and when embedded social values relate and integrate with enterprise. We reveal what it means to be spatially (dis)embedded, how this is continually evolving, and how such embeddedness can support different perspectives on place instigating change and regional development (or lack thereof). This subsequently reflects a much broader and dynamic understanding of embeddedness than the instrumentally network-focused notions we find in Granovetter's work

(and those who continue to utilise such definitions to date); one can be embedded in local networks without necessarily being embedded within place and vice versa.

It is important to note that the findings and nature of embeddedness as illustrated here may not always work in this way. Whilst this research may be limited to one case study the data derived was rich, allowing us to consider in depth the real-life situations and lived experiences of *dynamic* entrepreneurial embeddedness within place. Our findings propose a multi-dimensional view of embeddedness as "a complex and dynamic set of interactions that are treated holistically … [where] theorising is viewed as a localised explanation" (Welch et al. 2011, 754) and place is used to generate an interpretation for the motives and actions of the entrepreneurs that does not seek generalisability but rather "invites the reader to evaluate the applicability of their results in other situations" (Welch et al. 2011, 755). Thus, the emergent findings and conclusions are generalisable to the sample and to theoretical propositions yet not to populations of entrepreneurs as a whole, with the relevance of the contributions largely lying within their analytical application. Such research insights are not merely limited for micro-level analysis but can also have important implications for macro-level research. Using the 'collective voice' manages to "link the objective temporalities of long-term historical processes to the subjective temporal orientations of social actors" (Aminzade 1992, 470) helping to better understand how (dis)embedded entrepreneurs collectively conceive of the binding power of the past, the prospects of the future, or the capabilities to intervene in situations which can offer transformative leverage in relation to their environments.

Our approach can therefore be put to use in future empirical research to better understand differentiated, dynamic entrepreneurial embeddedness in more (as well as prosperous) places to broaden the conceptual understanding and how this may link contingently to the processes of social reproduction and change within place. Such research insights may be useful in considering how entrepreneurial embeddedness within place can support variable

agentic orientations and therefore reflect notions of embeddedness that may no longer be approached as an expression of an analytical universal. We suggest that how and why in-migrant entrepreneurs not only introduce but also maintain a future time perspective in a variety of places is a question that invites further empirical investigation (Lévesque and Stephan 2020). Such an inquiry will help solidify the notion of evolving places and that these are neither homogeneous nor static spaces, albeit without neglecting to remind policy makers that they also need to think about maintenance (of belonging and varying embeddedness) if they want places to be cared for by their people and to influence change. Does in-migrant entrepreneurial optimism fade with more and varied experiences within place? Part of this research and policy making endeavour is 'finding the entrepreneur in entrepreneurship' (Gartner et al. 1994), not in isolation but hand-in-hand with place, thus understanding the 'real' agent-place interactions that trigger both intended and unintended entrepreneurial outcomes (Bika and Rosa 2020) and the reasoning of how, why and when this works, or not. It is indeed an academic journey worth taking.

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Table 1. Sample stratification with the area's business sectors

Business Sector	% of total in the study area	% and Number of entrepreneurs interviewed
Construction	16%	20% (4)
Transport/Travel	14%	10% (2)
Manufacturing	11%	10% (2)
Energy	9%	10% (2)
Shipping/Marine	6%	10% (2)
Tourism/Hospitality	4%	10% (2)
Other Services	40%	30% (6)
TOTAL	100%	100% (20)

Table 2. Profiles of the interviewees

Entrepreneur – Pseudonym	Entrepreneur – Age	Entrepreneur – Occupation	Firm – Employees	Firm – Sector	Firm – Year established	Entrepreneur – Migration status	Entrepreneur – Where from originally?
Matthew	54	Engineer	16	Construction	2003	In-migrant	Tyne and Wear
Simon	52	Machinery producer	30	Construction	2006	In-migrant	Middlesex
Rick	31	Interior tradesman	5	Construction	2010	Local	N/A
Gordon	39	Waste management	11	Construction	1981	Local	N/A
Nicholas	57	Haulier	2	Transport/Travel	1999	Local	N/A
Chris	59	Coach operator	21	Transport/Travel	1910	Local	N/A
Adam	36	Manufacturer	5	Manufacturing	2014	In-migrant	Suffolk
Peter	63	Fabricator	50	Manufacturing	1997	In-migrant	Surrey
Richard	50	Offshore servicer	290	Energy	2006	In-migrant	Aberdeen
Gavin	48	Servicer to the energy industry	307	Energy	2008	Local	N/A
Benjamin	81	Shipping agent	108	Shipping/Marine	1971	In-migrant	Ayrshire
Keith	43	Ship chandler	35	Shipping/Marine	1898	In-migrant	Norfolk*
Phil	60	Holiday park and leisure owner	400	Tourism/Hospitality	1991	Out-migrant	North Norfolk**
Gary	46	Restaurateur	42	Tourism/Hospitality	1996	Local	N/A
Luke	34	Retailer	6	Other Services	2013	In-migrant	Kent
Sam	63	Business services	10	Other Services	1989	Local	N/A
Nicole	50	Recruiter	6	Other Services	2010	In-migrant	Bristol
Amir	42	Photographer	6	Other Services	2012	In-migrant	Hertfordshire
Stan	61	Quality testing	20	Other Services	1991	Local	N/A
Stuart	52	Property investor	4	Other Services	1937	Local	N/A

*Moved from Norwich to Great Yarmouth

**Moved out of Great Yarmouth to North Norfolk but still has business ties and socioeconomic processes linking to Great Yarmouth

Fig. 1 Data structure

1st Order Codes
(Categories from the case)

2nd Order Themes
(Theoretical categories)

Aggregate Theoretical
Dimension

Local entrepreneurs

Statements about being locally born and bred
References to lifelong residence, impacts on attachment and the advantages/disadvantages of being locally born and bred.

Statements regarding local financial investment
References concerning the depleted economic nature of place, questioning the financial and social worth of investment.

Statements about locally-minded decision-making
References to distancing themselves from decision-making within the town, quotes concerning the actions of the local authority/key decision-makers of the town.

Statements lacking a local sense of ownership
References to disparaging the town, distancing individuals from local social conditions and the means to influence/overcome them.

Statements lacking a duty of localised care
References shifting whose 'responsibility' it is to overcome contextual issues and the depleted nature of place, individualistic actions and looking out for one's best interests.

Statements concerning local futures
Quotes lacking positive outlooks for the future success and security of the town, local markets and entrepreneurial ventures, references to the maintenance and development of future social ties.

In-migrant entrepreneurs

Statements about those locally born and bred
References to a comparative shorter length of residence, impacts on attachment, the challenges of being locally born and bred and socioeconomic activities aimed at improving the lives of locals.

Statements illustrating local financial investment
References addressing the depleted economic nature of place, the financial and social worth of investment and how financial investment can impact and influence relationships with place.

Statements about locally-minded decision-making
References supporting the decision-making within the town aiding positive development and the actions/aspirations of entrepreneurs as change agents.

Statements demonstrating a local sense of ownership
References to supporting the town, taking control of local social conditions and aiming to influence/overcome them, quotes regarding local stakeholders and their contextual roles.

Statements expressing a duty of localised care
References to embracing 'responsibility' to overcome contextual issues and the depleted nature of place, 'compassion' for others, and the accountability of entrepreneurs as change agents.

Statements about local futures
Quotes concerning the future success and 'security' of the town, its economy and ventures. References to developing future opportunities providing a stronger and more stable environment for future generations.

Place as it is

Selective belonging

Accepting place

Place as it could be

Elective belonging

Adopting place

Varying entrepreneurial embeddedness within place

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Table 3. Heterogeneous stories within place

1st order categories	Local entrepreneurs	In-migrant entrepreneurs
Locally born and bred	"It's a shithole … the place needs cleaning… There's too many immigrants … and it's just the whole of Yarmouth as a seaside resort is a shithole, you can see that from the decline in tourists" (Nicholas). "Inertia keeps us here" (Gordon).	"Give the local kids a chance, train, develop, pull people through; we've done a lot of that locally… If you can get the right attitude then you can see things change" (Richard). "We employ apprentices … employing local people, I suppose it's giving young people opportunities as well, so [they] learn a new skill for life" (Matthew).
Local sense of ownership	"[Yarmouth] on the whole is pretty much the arse end of nowhere … yeah we're going to have an outer harbour and its going to save everything and we are all going to be wonderful … that didn't work. There are obviously exceptions, some people in the demographic here are fantastic but, on the whole, Yarmouth's a pain in the arse" (Gary). "They bought massive giant TV screens for the town which cost hundreds of thousands of pounds and then had to be taken down because they didn't work so they lost a fortune" (Gordon).	"Outsiders have the perception of Yarmouth being flashing neon lights and tourists and Yarmouth has a perception of itself as being a dump" (Richard). "It needs help … it would be nice to have some infrastructure in place to support Great Yarmouth. I don't know where that money would come from … I mean, there's been a hell of a lot of money pumped into that outer harbour but people still just love to talk it down" (Keith).
Local financial investment	"I just don't feel emotionally connected to Great Yarmouth at all … the fact that I've worked in that building for the last 20 odd years, that's not a reason to want to spend a lot of money on it and its area … I could knock it down and build houses instead" (Stuart). "There was the tourism BID … it's one of them things that's like someone holding a gun to your head, you either pay it or take you to court, so I waited until the last day that they were going to take me to court, and then I paid it" (Gary).	"Some of the things we do probably don't make business sense, do we make any money out of the open days here? No. Do we make money out of giving [products] away and supporting certain events? No" (Adam). "It is extremely hard to get people to pour money into a deprived area. It's one hell of a risk with your money … We just feel it's worth it" (Peter).
Duty of localised care	"I think there is a responsibility for the council to go in and show them [the local community] what can be done [to tackle unemployment], what is available to them… educating teachers and children about what is available, what career paths are available would be a useful thing" (Sam). "[Yarmouth] has always been dying though hasn't it? I mean with the tourist trade and now the oil" (Rick).	"What keeps us living here is the business and what keeps the family here is the business … I can't say I'm leaving … there isn't an option for failure" (Luke). "The Yarmouth people have bought in to what we're doing and we have to respect that, we can't take advantage of their generosity" (Adam).
Locally-minded decision-making	"We're quite independent, we'll row our own boat. I probably don't take half as much interest in what's going on and what the council are doing than I probably should do" (Stuart). "I don't get behind half of the stuff they do here … Economically I think it's probably suffered from a history of mismanagement" (Gordon).	"I'm very much involved in the local business community … I feel like if I'm here then I have to talk about it, to make sure that people know that I have an opinion" (Amir). "Well we were already starting to build on it and then we were told [by the local authority] 'oh look, we're now turning it into an enterprise zone, look at all of the benefits you're going to get' … we're quite happy to work with them to promote that kind of thing. There is no benefit in us slagging the area off" (Richard).
Local futures	"The more successful businesspeople in slightly bigger businesses are not from around here … you don't have to be a local to have an affinity with the community [but] being local gives you a bit of an inside knowledge" (Sam). "I forget the figures but it's embarrassing, it suffers from historically high unemployment … you get that sense that seaside towns are the end of the line" (Gordon).	"I would like to see the business expand but things are going to have to change before we can expand. I've got younger men here, they need to know they've got a future, they should be looking at a future to better themselves and I want to see them fucking better themselves" (Peter). "We don't just do this for money, if you wanted to work this hard you could make more money doing other things but we enjoy it. We enjoy the area, it's where our kids are going to grow up and we want to make it as secure as possible, so why not?" (Simon).

Table 4. The 'collective voice' of the secondary sources

	Outer harbour	Tourism decline	Empty shops on the high street	Unemployment
Place as it is	"Research commissioned by Peel Ports on Great Yarmouth's potential as a base for offshore wind operations revealed location was its biggest strength … The power of place and clustering like-minded companies, especially in offshore energy, is immense … [delivering] more projects off our shores than anywhere else" (*22/11/17 Eastern Daily Press, Bethany Whymark, Journalist*). "Daily ferries carrying up 100 cars and 100 trailers between Ijmuiden and Yarmouth's port operated by Peel Ports [were in the pipeline but] … because of the 'uncertainty' over the consequences of the Brexit vote and process the service was postponed" (*16/02/18 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Anthony Carroll, Journalist*).	"Previous giant of UK tourism - … [Great Yarmouth] has suffered a slump in visitor numbers with an average decline of 5%" (*15/01/13 Travel Weekly, Travelodge Report*). "End-of-the-line locations … is both their bane and their fortune … seaside towns have been neglected … and suffer from issues rooted in the decline of their core industries, most notably domestic tourism" (*04/04/19 The Future of Seaside Towns Report, Lord Bassam of Brighton, Committee Chairman*).	"We are obviously disappointed in losing a very successful retailer … the situation that retail is in at the moment is that with the current economic climate, people are looking to save money; so the type of shops expanding are the shops offering discounts" (*25/08/11 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Nick Spencer, Shopping Centre Manager*). "The historic market, cheap prices and family friendly feel … make Yarmouth so great according to residents and visitors but the number of empty shops and amount of litter are cited as reasons for concern" (*20/11/18 Great Yarmouth Mercury, David Hannant, Local Democracy Reporter*).	"Great Yarmouth … has become [a] dumping ground for the unemployed and benefits-dependent" (*11/08/13 The Independent, Oscar Quine, Journalist*). "Unemployment rises at sharpest rate for nearly five years … with Great Yarmouth … among the largest risers" (*21/02/18 Eastern Daily Press, Doug Faulkner, Journalist*).
Place as it could be	"Locals had a "right to be cynical" after years of talk, but it was different this time … the easily clogged road around Yarmouth would continue to be a source of frustration - particular with more large ships beginning to load at the port, but he felt "some hope" there would be change this time" (*18/09/13 Eastern Daily Press, Stephen Hammond, Transport Minister*). "During the eight years of ownership the port had been greatly expanded with the construction of the outer harbour and acquisition of the strategic land areas between the river and harbour." (*15/12/15 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Eliza O'Toole, International Port Holdings*).	"The government has tried to help address the problem … Great Yarmouth has received $1.3 million in grants so far… however, that sum is a drop in a bucket: The borough faces an $8 million funding gap … the local council publicly appealed for money-saving tips … It's not that there are no ambitions here, only that poverty crushes your feeling that you can achieve them." (*03/08/14 The World Weekly, Andrew Forrest, The Priory Centre Social Services Hub*). "The scale of the regeneration challenge for the town is clear. New industry dominates the skyline – this is the centre of eastern England's offshore wind industry – and its relationship with tourism has changed" (*17/08/19 The Guardian, Esther Addley, Journalist*).	"It was positive to see [the department store] being brought back into retail use, as a previous scheme had proposed it be turned into a school … In terms of optimism for the town centre it is quite important because it does show, in a time when towns the size of Yarmouth are being told the retail heyday has been and gone, that retailers are looking to expand … it shows there's some confidence in Great Yarmouth town centre" (*06/03/15 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Jonathan Newman, Town Centre Manager*). "A £1m funding windfall will help bring empty shops back into use and get space above them used as living accommodation … The money from a government scheme [aims] to breathe life back into our beleaguered high streets" (*16/09/19 Eastern Daily Press, Chris Bishop, Journalist*).	"Unemployment is a major challenge and there is a lot of work still to do …we need to create a stable economic environment to aid recovery and introduce a variety of incentives across the board" (*14/03/12 Great Yarmouth Mercury, Peter Aldous, Waveney MP*). "The region has the potential to benefit from 6,150 skilled full-time jobs by 2032 … [but] more support [should] be given to businesses running training programmes to ensure enough local people are taught the skills needed as the [offshore energy] industry grows" (*21/05/19 Eastern Daily Press, Daniel Bennett, Journalist*).

Fig. 2 Entrepreneurial embeddedness within place

Local entrepreneurs variously (dis)embedded within

In-migrant entrepreneurs variously embedded within

Accepting place through selective belonging

Lifelong residence

Distancing from local social conditions and decision-making within place

Shifting away responsibility for the depleted nature of place

Lacking positive outlooks for the future success of place and socio-economic worth of investment

Place as it is

Place as it could be

Adopting place through elective belonging

Shorter length of residence

Taking control of the local conditions and supporting the decision-making within place

Embracing responsibility to overcome the depleted nature of place

Developing opportunities for the future success of place and socio-economic worth of investment