

# **From breaking-ice to breaking-out: Integration as an opportunity creation process**

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## **Abstract**

This paper conducts an inductive case study to understand how the opportunity creation process leads to integration. It examines four cases of immigrant entrepreneurs of Cameroonian, Lebanese, Mexican and Assyrian origins who founded their businesses in Sweden. The study relies on process-oriented theory building and develops an inductive model of integration as an opportunity creation process. The model identifies entrepreneurial 'breaking' actions occurring in the integration process. This entails that immigrants act when they are socially excluded and discriminated in the labour market by developing business ideas and becoming entrepreneurs. By practicing the new language and accommodating native customers' preferences, immigrants then reorient their entrepreneurial ideas. Finally, the immigrants tailor their ideas to suit their new customers by strengthening their sense of belonging to the local community. The suggested model shows immigrants' acculturation into the host society via three successive phases: breaking-ice, breaking-in and breaking-out. In the breaking-ice phase, immigrants trigger entrepreneurial ideas to overcome the disadvantages that they face as immigrants in the host country. In the breaking-in phase, immigrants articulate their entrepreneurial ideas by bonding with the ethnic community. In the breaking-out phase, the immigrants reorient their entrepreneurial ideas by desegregating them locally. The paper concludes by elaborating theoretical and practical implications of the research.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial opportunity, opportunity creation process, acculturation theory, integration process, Sweden, immigrants, breaking-in, breaking-out, breaking-ice.

# 1. Introduction

The economic and social integration of immigrants in the new host country is important because of the increased global migration, the challenges of maintaining social cohesion between immigrants' home and host countries (Van Oudenhoven and Ward, 2013) and the rise of increasing gaps in opinions about people with different backgrounds (e.g., Statham, 2016a). Thus, immigrants experience disadvantages in the new host country because of inequalities and social segregation which results in their discrimination in the labour market and isolation from the local community (e.g., Slavnic, 2012; Griffin-EL and Olabisi, 2018).

To examine immigrants' economic integration, literature on immigrant entrepreneurship introduced 'breaking' as marketing strategies and actions that explain how immigrants identify opportunities and start ventures when inequalities and social fragmentation co-exist (Ram and Jones, 1998; Basu, 2011; Slavnic, 2012; Lassalle and Scott, 2017). Immigrant entrepreneurs employ breaking strategies to develop ventures that are focused on ethnic markets, or products for middleman markets and/or conform products to public preferences (Ram and Jones, 1998; Lassalle and Scott, 2017). Adopting a structuration perspective, breaking strategies are also used for studying how immigrants achieve social integration by identifying business opportunities and rapidly moving to launching new ventures (Griffin-EL and Olabisi, 2018).

While breaking strategies are linked to immigrants' economic or social integration, research does not examine the process of opportunity creation for developing entrepreneurial ideas. This is important to better understand how immigrants' entrepreneurial actions unfold when they experience segregation (e.g., Portes, Guarnizo and Haller, 2002; Jones, Ram, Edwards, Kiselichev and Muchenje, 2014; Ram, Jones and Villares-Varela, 2017). Immigrants may be self-employed because of the social and economic exclusion they face in the host country (e.g., Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Vershinina, Barret and Meyer, 2011; Wang, 2013). Thus, the creation perspective of opportunity is relevant in this regard since it highlights the influence of context on the process of building an opportunity (Dimov 2007, Alvarez and Barney, 2007, 2013). According to this perspective, entrepreneurs influence and are influenced by their context in developing entrepreneurial opportunities as the process evolves (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Fletcher, 2006). Investigating the opportunity creation process by immigrants can thereby help us understand how economic and social integration takes place as immigrant entrepreneurs advance their business ideas.

An additional perspective that could develop our understanding of immigrants' process of economic and social integration is the acculturation perspective. Acculturation refers to a process "when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both group" (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936: 149). Integration is thus a result of the process of acculturation when both cultural maintenance and involvement are valued and practiced (Berry, 1997; 2001). An acculturation perspective to immigrants' integration can help examine a number of relevant aspects such as immigrants' language abilities (e.g., Raijman and Tienda, 2003), knowledge about the culture in the host country (Light, 1979; Volery, 2007) and relationships with the ethnic community and their native peers (Light, 1972; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

This paper thereby aims to further understand how immigrants' opportunity creation process leads to their economic and social integration. It relies on the acculturation

perspective (Berry, 1997), the breaking strategies (Griffin-EL and Olabisi, 2018), and the creation perspective of entrepreneurial opportunities (Alvarez and Barney, 2007) as the theoretical background. The research employs an inductive case study approach for studying four cases of immigrant entrepreneurs of Cameroonian, Lebanese, Mexican and Assyrian origins who have founded their businesses in Sweden.

This paper proposes an inductive model of integration as an opportunity creation process. It shows how the opportunity creation leads to immigrants' economic and social integration into the local society. The model contributes to immigrant entrepreneurship literature by linking acculturation, breaking strategies and entrepreneurial opportunities in several ways. First, it underlines how entrepreneurial actions such as triggering entrepreneurial ideas, relying on the ethnic community and connecting with native customers serve the purpose of integrating immigrants with the local community. Second, the model demonstrates immigrants' acculturation into the host society through three ongoing and iterative phases: breaking-ice, breaking-in and breaking-out. The model advances existing literature on breaking-in and breaking-out strategies and actions (Engelen 2001; Slavnic, 2012; Lasalle and Scott 2017) by framing breaking as processes and relating them to different entrepreneurial actions. Breaking-ice captures the initiation of an economic and social integration process and also the beginning of an immigrant entrepreneur's opportunity creation process. By focusing on the initiation of the opportunity creation process, breaking-ice supplements prior literature that focuses on breaking-in and breaking-out with an acculturation lens.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical background of the study including immigrants' integration, breaking strategies and the entrepreneurial opportunity process. Section 3 discusses the study's research methodology. Section 4 introduces the results and section 5 presents the inductive model for entrepreneurial opportunity creation as an integration process. Section 6 discusses the contributions and limitations of the study.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Immigrants' integration

Integration is a central concept in literature on acculturation psychology and is commonly examined as an acculturation process. Integration is seen as the combination of two cultural systems for immigrants who interact with their home and host countries (Boski, 2008). The acculturation process implies participation in both the entering and receiving cultures at both collective and individual levels (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault and Senecal, 1997; Berry, 2001, 2013; Oudenhoven and Ward, 2013; Barker, 2015). In the acculturation process, immigrants adapt their habits, behaviours, communication styles and language as per the norms of the host country (Berry, 1997; Portes, 1997). Such a process is called "the psychological adjustment of multicultural individuals" (Chen, Benet-Martinez and Bond, 2008: 803).

Berry's acculturation approach (1997, 2001, 2003) is a reference point in sociology and psychology literature for examining an individual's integration into the host society. Berry introduces four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration. The assimilation strategy implies that individuals do not want to maintain their home country's culture and aim to be absorbed by the host country (e.g., Lu, Samaratunge and Härtel, 2012). Separation means that individuals avoid interactions in the host country

and focus on maintain their home country's culture. Marginalization comprises that individuals lose ties to their home country while they are still unable to establish relationships in the host country. Marginalization and separation strategies are important for understanding individual situations where cultural participation in the host country is at a low level. In these strategies, individuals favour the maintenance of the home country's culture because of the discrimination that they experience in the host country. An individual usually moves from marginalization to integration, which occurs when both cultural maintenance and cultural involvement are valued and practiced (Berry, 2009).

Although Berry's acculturation approach (1997) is not without its critics (Rudmin, 2003), it is suitable for understanding how the process of immigrants' economic and social integration takes place. The integration of immigrants is a pervasive and predominant challenge in society (Statham, 2016b). Berry's approach considers that societies support multiculturalism and immigrants have the liberty to select how they want to participate in their relations with the residents (Lu et al., 2012). Aspects of acculturation such as knowledge, networks and language in the host country have an impact on immigrants' entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., Aliaga-Isla and Rialp, 2012; Bolívar-Cruz, Batista-Canino and Hormiga, 2014) and thus can influence immigrants' economic and social integration. Discrimination, cultural barriers and length of time in the host country (Slavnic, 2013; Wang, 2013) may also affect immigrants' economic and social integration. To explore immigrants' economic and social integration, the next section introduces immigrants' breaking strategies to examine their acculturation through economic activities.

## 2.2 Immigrants' breaking strategies

Immigrants use breaking strategies as a tool for economic integration by developing ventures that offer products focused on ethnic markets, products transformed for middleman markets and products that conform with public preferences (Ram and Jones, 1998; Lassalle and Scott, 2017). Literature frames such strategies as breaking-in, breaking-out and breaking-through. Breaking-in corresponds to the strategies that immigrant entrepreneurs adopt to enter an ethnic niche or enclave market (Engelen 2001; Slavnic, 2012; Lasalle and Scott 2017) or introduce new operations in the market in a specific geographic area (Slavnic, 2012). Breaking-out refers to strategies that immigrant entrepreneurs develop to break out from their exclusive reliance on ethnic markets to middleman or mainstream markets (Ram and Hillin, 1994; Ram and Jones, 1998; Engelen, 2001; Basu 2011). It also includes their diversification strategies to remain within the ethnic enclave while broadening their product and service offerings to the existing ethnic community (Lasalle and Scott, 2017). With a breaking-out strategy, immigrant entrepreneurs access more profitable ethnic niche markets (Rusinovic, 2008) or ethnic enclaves (Waldinger, 1993; Zhou, 1994) to guarantee their businesses' survival (Smallbone, Kitching and Athayde, 2010). Breaking-through refers to strategies targeting national and global ethnic markets that provide a more extensive geographical reach and more profit margins (Basu, 2011).

Breaking strategies are investigated from different perspectives, including ethnic minority businesses (Ram and Hillin, 1994; Ram and Jones, 1998), ethnic strategies (Waldinger, Ward, Aldrich and Stanfield, 1990), market strategies (Basu, 2011), business work strategies (Slavnic, 2012), mixed embeddedness (Lassalle and Scott, 2017) and structuration theory (Griffin-EL and Olabisi, 2018). Griffin-EL and Olabisi (2018) introduce breaking boundaries as processes when entrepreneurs' actions break from socially constructed boundaries. These processes comprise of opportunity identification, business exploration and business

execution. While this literature is important for understanding the entrepreneurial agency in shaping opportunities and businesses, this stream of literature does not investigate the entrepreneurial opportunity development process. Shifting focus from the creation of a business to the development of the opportunity is necessary for identifying entrepreneurial actions that occur for formulating an entrepreneurial idea as individuals create social inclusion and enter the labour market.

This paper specifically relies on literature on breaking-in and breaking-out (Ram and Hillin, 1994; Ram and Jones, 1998; Engelen, 2001; Basu, 2011; Slavnic, 2012; Lassalle and Scott, 2017; Griffin-EL and Olabisi, 2018) to advance our understanding of immigrants' economic and social integration processes. Next, we introduce the creation perspective of an entrepreneurial opportunity since literature signals its potential in uncovering immigrants' integration processes.

### 2.3 Immigrants' opportunity creation process

Literature on migrants' entrepreneurial opportunities has different views including opportunity structure (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990), opportunity discovery and opportunity creation (for comprehensive reviews, see Alvarez and Barney, 2007, 2013). This paper adopts the creation view of opportunity, which suggests that the process of developing an opportunity takes place through the actions of an entrepreneur and through interactions with the context (Alvarez and Barney, 2007, 2013; Dimov, 2007; Short, Ketchen, Shook and Ireland, 2010). In a similar vein, opportunities available to immigrant entrepreneurs are formed by contextual circumstances (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Evansluong, 2016). Thus, opportunities are not objective and independent, but are instead constructed with the entrepreneurs' actions in interacting with the context (Fletcher, 2006; Short et al., 2010; Wood and McKinley, 2010). The opportunity creation process starts by triggering an entrepreneurial idea (Davidsson, 2015; Vogel, 2016) which is blurred and incomplete (Dimov, 2007; Wood and McKinley, 2010). As the process unfolds, the idea is shaped and refined and eventually the opportunity is objectified into a product, service or venture (e.g., Korsgaard and Anderson, 2011; Vogel, 2016).

The opportunity creation process occurs in a non-linear and iterative manner (Alvarez and Barney, 2007; Dimov, 2007, 2011); it continues evolving throughout the lifecycle of a venture (Evansluong and Ramirez Pasillas, 2019). This opens the possibility of investigating specific ways in which economic and social integration occurs when employing breaking-in and breaking-out in the opportunity creation process in an attempt to generate the necessary knowledge and support to formulate entrepreneurial ideas.

## 3. Research methodology

In order to understand immigrants' integration, we chose an inductive case study of four immigrant entrepreneurs based in Sweden and carried out 60 interviews (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The inductive case study method is useful for this purpose since it considers the influencing actors and their context according to the phenomenon being investigated (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). Following Pratt (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1984), an inductive case study method helps in identifying key themes by employing a content analysis strategy for theory-building purposes. The case study also followed a process-oriented approach (Coviello and Jones, 2004; Langley, 1999) to reconstruct the integration and opportunity creation processes. The unit of analysis was the

opportunity creation process which evolves through interactions between immigrant entrepreneurs and different actors in the host country in line with Dimov (2007, 2011).

### 3.1 Data collection

The case study design used a purposeful sampling strategy (Pratt, 2009; Gartner and Birley, 2002) and Eisenhardt's case selection criteria (1989). It included four cases of immigrant entrepreneurs of Middle Eastern, African and Latin American origins who established businesses in Jönköping, Sweden (see table 1). Guided by Pettigrew (1990) cases of extreme situations, these four countries of origin were selected to study the integration process because these are the most separated and marginalized groups in Sweden (Nekby, 2012). African and Latin American immigrants represent the lowest share, whereas Middle Eastern immigrants account for the highest share of foreign-born entrepreneurs in Sweden (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2013). This combination helped to study how immigrants moved from being separated to integration through entrepreneurship.

Sweden is a relevant context to study integration since it is one of the countries that has received the largest number of immigrants relative to the size of its population (see Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/>). In Sweden, the government pays immigrants to learn the Swedish language, which stimulates and facilitates acquiring a new language (<http://www.folkuniversitetet.se>). In addition, Jönköping is a county in Sweden where small businesses have the greatest growth ambitions (see Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, <https://tillvaxtverket.se>). Jönköping is also among the counties that hosts the largest proportion of immigrant entrepreneurs (see Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, <https://tillvaxtverket.se>).

To achieve a high level of data richness, and reduce the risk of missing critical information, the case study focused on the integration process and was carried out over three years (Van de Ven, 1992). The primary data consisted of 60 interviews with entrepreneurs and their immediate networks such as family members and friends. This was important to triangulate data from multiple sources of evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Each interview lasted 40 to 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim between 2014 and 2017. The interviews were conducted in both English except for the interviews with two entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs 1a and 1b felt more comfortable communicating in Swedish than in English, so they were interviewed in Swedish to capture the richness of information (Stake, 1995). These interviews were transcribed in Swedish and translated into English. The main author of the paper who conducted all the interviews speaks both English and Swedish fluently. The secondary data consists of observations at the businesses, their websites and Facebook pages, phone calls, brochures and local newspapers.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted in three phases. The first phase focused gathering background information of the entrepreneurs and their businesses. The entrepreneurs shared the stories of their lives and their entrepreneurial journeys to generate a narrative description of the cases (cf., Miles and Huberman, 1994)). Information on the opportunity creation process was obtained in the second phase, especially the entrepreneurs' actions in developing entrepreneurial ideas through interactions between them and their home and host countries. The researchers identified aspects connected to integration (e.g., language, cultural norms and interaction with the local population). The third phase emphasized on asking specific questions regarding the influence of different aspects of integration (for example, languages) on the opportunity creation process (e.g., What language do you use in

everyday business?, and what changed when you started using the Swedish language in everyday business? )

### 3.2 Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted with a content analysis strategy by performing detailed readings of the raw data to derive concepts and themes made from the raw data. These concepts and themes were used for developing a data structure to show how they progressed from first-order to second-order codes and to aggregate dimensions and a model of interpretations made from the raw data as suggested by Gioia et al., (2013) (see Figure 1). Following Gioia et al., (2013), the analysis followed four steps:

*Step 1.* The researchers constructed the case narrative to understand relevant events and issues following a chronological order which helped them identify emerging themes in each case (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For example, the entrepreneurs talked about their lives in their home countries and in Sweden, which provided a general overview of the acculturation process. Details about their entrepreneurial journeys provided relevant aspects of the economic and social integration during the opportunity creation process.

*Step 2.* The researchers identified entrepreneurial actions and events that contributed to developing entrepreneurial ideas and their connections to the integration process by reading the interview transcripts several times. After discussing the themes that were repeated, the researchers agreed to the primary codes (first-order codes) with wording that was close to the language used in the interview transcripts, for instance acting upon being socially excluded or acted upon being discriminated (see Figure 1, first-order codes).

*Step 3.* The researchers interpreted the first-order codes by going back and forth between the codes and literature on entrepreneurial opportunity creation, immigrant entrepreneurship, breaking processes and acculturation (also suggested by Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Primary codes that appeared frequently were selected and grouped into themes. The themes were then organized at a more abstract level (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This process resulted in second-order codes (see Figure 1, second-order codes).

*Step 4.* The researchers related the second-order codes to relevant literature and further specified aggregate dimensions to show the links between integration and opportunity creation. As suggested by Oswick, Fleming and Hanlon (2011), the researchers relied on the ‘Orthodox Domestic Theory’ approach (p. 324) that comprises conceptual borrowing and blending to produce a revised theory through an incremental process of reinforcing previous knowledge (i.e., breaking-in, breaking-out) and extending such knowledge (i.e., breaking-ice). This resulted in a data structure with overarching theoretical aggregate dimensions (also suggested by Marshall and Rossman, 1995) that show the intertwining of acculturation and opportunity creation (see Figure 1, aggregate dimensions). The analysis led to developing an inductive model of integration as an opportunity creation process organized in three phases: breaking-ice, breaking-in and breaking-out. The model shows how the how the integration unfolds as the opportunity creation evolves when immigrant entrepreneurs formulate entrepreneurial ideas as a response to economic and social segregation.

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INSERT TABLE 1, FIGURE 1 AND FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE  
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## 4. Results

The model that emerged is shown in figure 2. We found evidence that immigrant entrepreneurs accomplish economic and social integration in the local community when they engage in three phases -- breaking-ice, breaking-in and breaking-out. These phases contain entrepreneurial actions that are nurtured by the immigrant entrepreneurs in the four cases. Table 2 present the case evidence for each element in the data structure.

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INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE  
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### 4.1 Breaking-ice

Breaking-ice involves triggering an entrepreneurial idea to overcome immigrant disadvantages. This is a result of two entrepreneurial actions -- creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way to be socially included and creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way to enter the labour market in the host country.

***Creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way to be socially included*** is a result of social exclusion in the host country. Immigrants reflected that their experiences of being isolated moved them to act and create entrepreneurial ideas. The immigrant entrepreneur in Case 2 stated, -- “*I want to feel Swedish, [...] but nothing works [...] I had to start my own business [...] I thought about selling (African) accessories.*” Because immigrants do not have connections or fit in the culture of the host country, they decide to become entrepreneurs and create entrepreneurial ideas.

***Creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way of entering the labour market*** is a result of acting on labour market discrimination in the host country. Negative experiences in the job market led immigrants to start new ventures. For instance, the entrepreneur in Case 2 stated, “*My husband thought that was racism. It’s not easy when a person has dark skin and enters the job market [...] I had the idea to do hair extensions, which is not so popular here (in Sweden).*” Immigrants created entrepreneurial ideas as a solution to the difficulties that they faced in finding employment in the host country. At the start of the opportunity creation process, immigrants built entrepreneurial ideas as a way of establishing connections with the host country.

### 4.2 Breaking-in

This study’s findings suggest that once immigrant entrepreneurs have gone through the breaking-ice phase, they move to the breaking-in phase. In this phase, immigrant entrepreneurs articulate their entrepreneurial ideas by bonding with the ethnic community. This is a result of shaping an entrepreneurial idea by socializing with the ethnic community. Through socializing, immigrant entrepreneurs rely on their ethnic peers to advance their entrepreneurial idea and relate it to their ethnic cultural background.

***Shaping entrepreneurial ideas by socializing with the ethnic community*** involves formulating an entrepreneurial idea by relying on their ethnic peers. Such reliance includes drawing inspiration from ethnic peers’ businesses, addressing their countrymen’s needs and

communicating with them in their immediate co-ethnic networks. For instance, the entrepreneur in Case 2 said, “*I told my (African) friend Rita and my cousin Mark that I could combine hair, skin care and food [...] for the African community.*” Entrepreneurs re-purposed their existing social relationships with their ethnic peers from being merely acquaintances or friends to obtaining business support to articulate their ideas in the host country. Socializing constituted a variant of immigrants’ entrepreneurial actions advancing the opportunity creation process.

### 4.3 Breaking-out

This research suggests that breaking-out corresponds with reorienting entrepreneurial ideas by desegregating locally. It involves two variants of entrepreneurial actions: refining an entrepreneurial idea by connecting with native customers and tailoring an entrepreneurial idea for the local community.

***Refining an entrepreneurial idea by connecting with native customers*** implies that immigrant entrepreneurs practice the local language to gain insights into native customers’ perspectives and earning local acceptance by accommodating customer preferences.

*Practicing the local language to gain insights into native customers’ preferences* refers to immigrant entrepreneurs’ efforts and ability to use the local language in everyday life. Immigrant entrepreneurs’ use of the host country’s language influences their access to local information and adapting their ideas to native consumer preferences. A cousin of an entrepreneur in Case 2 recalled, “*The business helped develop her Swedish language and [...] her language helped her business too [...] She was able to understand what the customers needed. The (Swedish) ladies would ask her about products for the hair in Swedish.*” Thus, immigrant entrepreneurs interacted with local customers daily. They spoke the local language to create a welcoming atmosphere for their customers and interacted with them using their entrepreneurial ideas as a point of departure. In this process, their entrepreneurial ideas were refined.

*Earning local acceptance by accommodating native customers’ preferences* refers to immigrants’ efforts to adapt to the host country’s lifestyle and customs by participating in the life of the host country through, for instance, getting involved in activities and events, eliminating foreign characters from the venture and product names, and adopting local standards. The entrepreneur in Case 3 stated, “*Our office is in Science Park where we learn from other Swedish start-up companies [...] We tried to do everything, from designing our leaflets to handling customer support in Swedish ways [...] For example, here in Sweden, you need to book a time for everything. Another example, we call customers after a few days to ask how everything is, if they need something else.*” By learning from their peers and meeting local people through social activities, immigrant entrepreneurs understood the mindsets of the local people, which helped them fine-tune their entrepreneurial ideas.

***Tailoring entrepreneurial ideas for the local community*** involves increasing a sense of belonging in the host country by adapting entrepreneurial ideas to fit the needs of the local community.

*Increasing sense of belongingness to the local community by adapting the entrepreneurial ideas* refers to immigrant entrepreneurs’ efforts to confirm their feelings of belonging to the local community. The entrepreneur in Case 3 recalled, “*With my acquisition of the Swedish*

*citizenship, [...] I feel like I wear the same T-shirt as my other Swedish mates [...] We gradually tailored our computer reparation service for the local people.*” This sense of belonging influenced how entrepreneurial ideas evolved from focusing mainly on serving the ethnic community to serving different customers in the host country. For example, the entrepreneur in Case 1 mentioned, *“We don’t have many Lebanese customers. We live in Sweden; we have to focus on addressing the needs of the Swedes.”* When immigrant entrepreneurs developed a sense of belonging to the local community, they created their own space in local life. They felt more accepted and felt a part of the host society.

## 5. Overview of the model

Research on integration studies often discuss the economic and social dimension of immigrants integration to their societies separately, this study proposes an inductive model of economic and social integration as an opportunity creation process with three ongoing and iterative phases (see Figure 2): (1) the breaking-ice phase, where immigrants trigger an entrepreneurial idea to overcome migrant disadvantages, (2) the breaking-in phase, where immigrants articulate an entrepreneurial idea by bonding with the ethnic community, and (3) the breaking-out phase, where immigrants reorient the entrepreneurial idea by desegregating locally. These phases show that the resulting economic and social integration to the local community occurs as a result of an acculturation agency. By incorporating social situational antecedents of immigrant entrepreneurs, the model offers an account of individual agency toward integration. The model captures ‘how’ individual agency generates energy and support to move from a segregated position towards an integrated position in the local society. As follows, we elaborate on these phases by relating them to literature on acculturation, breaking and opportunity creation.

*Breaking-ice phase.* Immigrants in this study felt segregated in the host country due to ethnic discrimination, unemployment, low education, unfitted qualifications, language difficulties and not fitting into the host country’s culture. This explain why some immigrants cannot establish both economic and social connections to the host community while at the same time, lose ties to their home country. This situation results in the marginalization of immigrants (e.g., marginalization strategy, Berry, 1997). Being marginalized triggers immigrants’ entrepreneurial actions: they decide to become entrepreneurs and create entrepreneurial ideas to break (the) ice and to establish connections with the host country (e.g., Portes and Zhou, 1992; Portes et al., 2002; Blackburn and Ram, 2007; Van Oudenhoven and Ward, 2013). The breaking-ice phase shows that besides market pull or resource push (cf., Vogel, 2016) specific social situational antecedents related to segregation and discrimination also stimulate the conception of an entrepreneurial idea.

*Breaking-in phase.* Literature on immigrant entrepreneurship suggests that by ‘breaking-in’, immigrants connect their businesses to their ethnicity, background, bond with their ethnic peers and rely on ethnic market (e.g., Engelen, 2001; Slavnic, 2012; Lasalle and Scott, 2017). This study takes a step further to show that immigrant entrepreneurs formulate entrepreneurial ideas by relying on their ethnic peers. As a result, immigrants prioritise connections with the ethnic community over the interactions with the host community to articulate the entrepreneurial idea. In other words, entrepreneurial actions lead to immigrant’s separation to the host community (e.g., separation strategy, Berry, 1997, 2003). This means that immigrant entrepreneurs prioritize interactions and relations with their ethnic peers and avoid building connections with local natives. This also implies that immigrant entrepreneurs use their energy and available time to assure that the product is suitable for the ethnic

community. At the same time, when immigrant entrepreneurs socialize with the ethnic community, they create an opening for building understandings on the new host society through the lens of their ethnic peers.

*Breaking-out phase.* To move forward with the entrepreneurial journey, immigrant entrepreneurs refine the entrepreneurial idea to offer goods and services to the wider community and rely on inter-ethnic networks and markets (e.g., Waldninger et al., 1990; Ram and Jones, 1998). To do this, immigrant entrepreneurs prioritise interactions with the inter-over the intra-ethnic community. The breaking-out phase includes entrepreneurial actions that lead to immigrants' integration into the host society through improving the immigrants' command of the host country language, building connections with the local community and increasing a sense of belonging (c.f., Berry, 1997; Engelen, 2001). First, during the breaking-out phase, immigrant entrepreneurs integrate into the host society by practicing the local language, which helps them better understand local customers' preferences (c.f., Fang et al., 2013; Kariv, Menzies, Brenner and Fillion, 2009). Since immigrant entrepreneurs strive to gain knowledge on customers preferences (and accommodate them in their product offerings), they realize that communication in the local language provide more detailed and nuanced information. Second, during the breaking-out phase immigrant entrepreneurs create local networks to connect with local natives (e.g., Jack and Anderson, 2002; McKeever, Jack and Anderson, 2015). Immigrant entrepreneurs rely on local contacts to attract local native customers. They also use their contacts for refining their entrepreneurial ideas with features favoured by local natives. Third, the degree of sense of belonging to the local community influences how immigrant entrepreneurs create entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., Jack and Anderson, 2003; McKeever et al., 2015). The breaking-out phase also shows that besides market pull or resource push (cf., Vogel, 2016), the sense of belongingness influences how immigrant entrepreneurs (re)orient their entrepreneurial ideas. Entrepreneurs emphasize the importance of being part of the local community or feeling at home while adapting their entrepreneurial ideas to broader local customers.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing debate about immigrants' economic and social integration into their local society through immigrant entrepreneurship. This paper showed that the integration or acculturation process of immigrant entrepreneurs took place as they triggered, articulated and reoriented their entrepreneurial ideas in the breaking-ice, breaking-in and breaking-out phases. The suggested model and its phases contribute to the emerging work on acculturation and breaking strategies in the context of opportunity creation.

Specific actions in the breaking-ice process constitute acting on being socially excluded and discriminated against in the host country's labour market. The resulting entrepreneurial actions influence individuals to become acculturated entrepreneurs. Triggering an entrepreneurial idea corresponds to the immigrants' 'aha' moment or the self-realization that the only way to improve one's situation is by doing something about it. In the 'aha' moment, the immigrant sparks entrepreneurial ideas suitable for the local community and decide to become an entrepreneur. Acculturation thus stems from the entrepreneurial actions that immigrants take for facing their socio-economic situation and producing sociocultural adaptation (Berry, 2009).

This paper showed that articulating entrepreneurial ideas among the ethnic community functioned as a breaking-in process in which an entrepreneur expressed and formed entrepreneurial ideas. Articulation is also a tool for exploring and validating the entrepreneurial idea's components (e.g., Dimov, 2007; Wood and McKinley, 2010; Vogel, 2016). However, the specific context of this articulation is given by the immigrants' segregation. Immigrant entrepreneurs build personal networks with their ethnic peers that provide friendship and, eventually, professional support. Thus, interaction with the ethnic community is relevant for sustaining entrepreneurs' original culture by providing social safe space for articulating their entrepreneurial ideas.

Finally, this paper bridges the gap in literature on breaking-out strategies in immigrant entrepreneurship (e.g., Basu, 2011; Lassalle and Scott, 2017) and entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., Dimov, 2007; Vogel, 2016) by illustrating how the breaking-out process intertwines with reorienting entrepreneurial ideas. The breaking-out process acts as a mechanism for immigrant entrepreneurs to actively engage with the local natives.

Our findings have several implications for practitioners and policy makers. If immigrants aspire to start a business, it is important to consider the intertwining of the acculturation and opportunity creation processes. Although entrepreneurial immigrants rely on their ethnic peers to start the acculturation process, it is important to perform the economic activities with a good blend of natives and foreigners. Formulating an entrepreneurial idea provides immigrant entrepreneurs with a real-life context to practice the new language, make new acquaintances and build knowledge of the new host society. Thus, mentorship programmes which support immigrant entrepreneurs in expanding their local networks in the host country will be beneficial in facilitating the integration process while providing them business support. This will also help immigrant entrepreneurs refine their entrepreneurial ideas through interacting with the local community. When immigrant entrepreneurs participate in social and business activities in the local community, they will have access to additional arenas to learn and use the local language and feel a part of the host country. Such arenas will help them developing their businesses further.

Despite its contribution to immigrants' integration process, this paper has several limitations. *First*, the cases selected for the study include four opportunity creation processes of different lengths of time (ranging from 6 to 14 years). Prior research proposes that time matters for entrepreneurship and the temporal context in which entrepreneurs operate (Lippmann and Aldrich, 2015). Integration manifest in various forms, "including alternation between cultural ways, and/or a merging of them" (Berry, 2009: 366). Future research could explore cases with similar temporal contexts and examine specific positive and negative effects of breaking actions occurring in the opportunity creation. This can help understand the contextual circumstances according to the time-framework of the integration process.

*Second*, this study selected immigrant entrepreneurs with four countries of origin (i.e., Cameroonian, Lebanese, Mexican and Assyrian) developing entrepreneurial ideas in Sweden. Future research can investigate integration as an opportunity creation process from a single country of origin to a single country of residence. Such a research design will allow a closer look at developing language abilities and cultural understandings in relation to the home cultural background. Such design will permit following the development of a new cultural understanding and how the culture (i.e., specific values, beliefs and customs) of the home country influence the integration process.

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**Table 1. Informants**

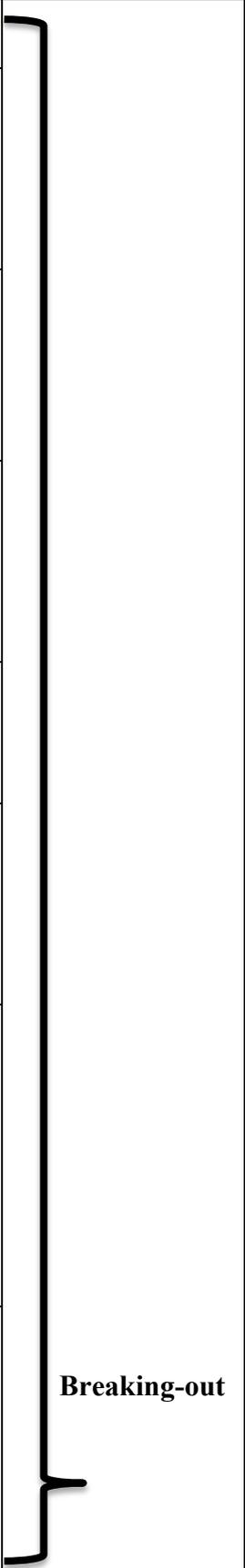
<b>Case</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year of establishment</b>	<b>Type of Business</b>	<b>Founders</b>	<b>Informants</b>	<b>No. Interviews</b>	<b>Secondary data</b>
<b>1</b>	Jönköping	2004	Lebanese Restaurant	Entrepreneur 1a of Lebanese origin Entrepreneur 1b of Syrian origin	Entrepreneur 1a Entrepreneur 1b Entrepreneur 1b's daughter Entrepreneur 1a and 1b's co-worker	3 5 2 2	Observations Websites Facebook Brochures Phone calls
<b>2</b>	Jönköping	2009	Beauty salon and African food store	Entrepreneur 2 of Cameroonian origin	Entrepreneur 2 Entrepreneur 2's friend Entrepreneur 2's sister Entrepreneur 2's cousin Entrepreneur 2's mentor	12 1 2 8 1	Observations Websites Facebook Local Newspapers Phone calls Family events
<b>3</b>	Jönköping	2011	IT programming	Entrepreneur 3a of Mexican origin Entrepreneur 3b of Mexican origin	Entrepreneur 3a Entrepreneur 3b Entrepreneur 3a's friend 1 Entrepreneur 3a's friend 2 Intern 1	8 6 1 1 2	Observations Websites Facebook Local Newspapers Phone calls
<b>4</b>	Jönköping	2012	IT programming	Entrepreneur 4a of Mexican origin Entrepreneur 4b of Mexican origin	Entrepreneur 4a Entrepreneur 4b	3 3	Websites Facebook
						<b>Total 60</b>	

**Table 2. Representative Quotes Underlying Second Order Themes**

First Order Codes	Second Order Codes and interview quotes	Aggregate Dimension
<p><i>Acting upon being socially isolated</i></p>	<p><b>Creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way to be socially included</b></p>	<p><b>Breaking-ice</b></p>
	<p><b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1b.</b> ‘Swedish people as they are very kind but...a little bit distant. When you come closer, they will be suspicious [...] that is why I opened my first business [...] I had an idea long time ago to open a Lebanese restaurant’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘I want to feel like I’m Swedish, but I do not see myself fit in society because no matter how hard I try, nothing works [...] And I knew I had to start a business [...] I thought what I need myself, I need product for (African) hair’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 3. Entrepreneur 3a.</b> ‘When Swedes see you as a tourist, they can be friendly; however, when they see that you live here, they are not that open [...] this is small town, you cannot really just go, knock on the door, and say we do business [...] then I established myself as a sole trader in 2007 [...] and the idea was to continue to do IT programming with Mexico’.</p>	
<p><b>Case 4. Entrepreneur 4a.</b> ‘I would say hello to everybody I met, but not many people would say hello to me so when I first arrived I realized that people were colder here [...] during my first year when I was waiting for my social security number I was thinking about some business ideas that I could do in Sweden [...], for example, I looked into bringing silver jewelry from Mexico to Sweden’.</p>		
	<p><b>Creating an entrepreneurial idea as a way to enter the labour market</b></p>	
<p><i>Acting upon being discriminated in the labor market</i></p>	<p><b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1a.</b> ‘It is very difficult to explain how I feel discriminated against. It is not direct but indirect. You can feel it from the way the person looks at you [...] I sent out at least 100 CVs without any answer. It was very difficult. I tried, but I was not offered any jobs [...] Jönköping had no Lebanese restaurant so we thought we would try it’. Then, I thought I would create my own job’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘It is hard for me to come to the job market with my (foreign) name. I had good qualifications, but my name makes it really difficult for the employer to accept me. I was angry [...] and I started my own business [...] I thought about a shipping company between Sweden and Africa (Cameroon)’.</p> <p>‘Many people would rather employ Swedes because it is easy for them to accept each other and communicate, and there is less of a cultural clash [...] I told myself that I had to create my own job [...] I had idea to sell African clothes that have strong colors’.</p>	

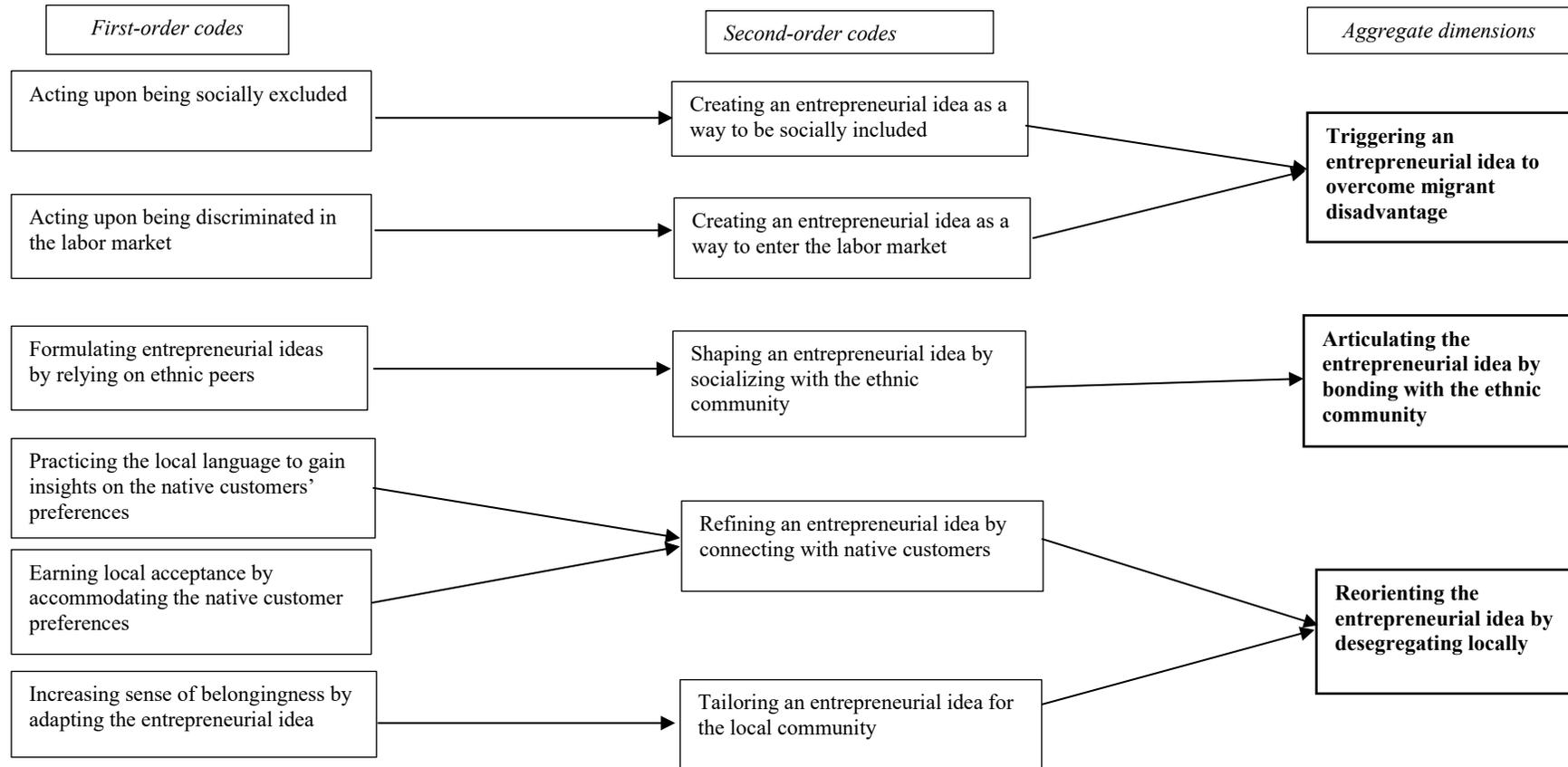
Cont.

First Order Codes	Second Order Theme	Aggregate Dimension
<i>Formulating an entrepreneurial idea by relying on ethnic peers</i>	<b>Shaping the entrepreneurial idea by socializing with the ethnic community</b>	 <p><b>Breaking-in</b></p>
	<b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1b.</b> ‘We had close friends from Lebanon who had Lebanese restaurants in Stockholm. We often went there to meet them [...] We learned how we could prepare Lebanese menu from there [...] and through Lebanese restaurants on the internet’.	
	<b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘We, Cameroonians, meet regularly [...] for example, at parties, birthday parties, wedding parties [...] We discussed the market share, the types of customers, and how the customers would need our products [...] I sent African friends in town text messages on what products they would like to have for their hair and skin’.	
	<b>Case 3. Entrepreneur 3a.</b> ‘In 2005, when Carlos, Hugo and I were studying in the master’s program, we spent time in the labs together [...] We talked about the idea of running a business related to IT, and how to go further with the idea [...] I suggested to offer IT programming to Mexican companies...through my parents’ company in Mexico’.	
<b>Case 4. Entrepreneur 4a.</b> ‘I told my husband that if I could develop a website, someone else could do it in Mexico or we could do it together. We could open a company and my husband said, ‘Why not talk to our Mexican friend here in Jönköping?’ [...] we meet often with our close Mexican friends [...] we discussed many things [...] about Sweden and Mexico [...] We met a friend from Mexico and asked him to join us for the company [...] We discussed developing our uniqueness in the business concept. We think the business concept should be the combination of price, quality and efficiency’.		

First Order Codes	Second Order Theme	Aggregate Dimension
<i>Practicing the local language to gain insights on the native customers' needs</i>	<b>Refining the entrepreneurial ideas by connecting with native customers</b>	 <b>Breaking-out</b>
	<b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1a.</b> ‘Because of the language, I learned a lot of terms and better Swedish. We had to explain to customers everything in Swedish regarding the dishes in the menu. Sometimes they have allergies, I had to explain the ingredients in each dish. We took away nuts from the dishes because a lot of people were allergic’.	
	<b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘When I insist on talking in English, customers speak little [...] When I speak Swedish, customers feel more comfortable talking ...I understand more what their needs are [...] so I offered hair extension services to them’.	
	<b>Case 3. Entrepreneur 3a.</b> ‘I contact clients using only Swedish [...] I saw that speaking Swedish was a necessity...to understand the local market. We started offering IT support for private people in their home, they did not need to leave their place; they just called us, and we would go there to fix the problem for them’.	
<i>Earning local acceptance by accommodating the native customer preferences</i>	<b>Case 4. Entrepreneur 4a.</b> ‘When I arrived here in Sweden [...] I decided to start studying Swedish. This helped me communicate with my business partners and prospective clients’.	
	<b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1a.</b> ‘I came to Sweden when I was almost 14 years old, and I have been here for 35 years. [...] We changed a lot [...] for example, we had to take away lamb meatballs and frogs. They were very special, but I figured out that the Swedish people didn't like them, so we removed them from the menu’.	
	<b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘When the business started rolling, [...] I realized that not only Africans needed these products but also Swedish people and South Americans [...] I needed to make it more professional (in a Swedish way) because most of the Swedes wanted to feel relaxed in a nice setting like they experienced in other Swedish salons [...] I made changes to my hair extension service: brought in large mirrors, comfortable chairs [...] I took pictures of the Swedish customers. I made it as the main service’.	
<b>Case 3. Entrepreneur 3b.</b> ‘A friend of mine told me that I need to play golf [...] it was not about sports [...] there I could meet people [...] he explained [...] I started playing (squash). People in the club are really open. They like talking about problems in the office [...] based on that we added new services [...] for example, we changed the booking system for local customers or offered service of fixing computers at home’.		

	<p><b>Case 4. Entrepreneur 4a.</b> ‘We eliminated the word ‘Mexican’ from our company’s name [...] When we mentioned the word Mexican as part of the name of the company, our prospective Swedish clients had some doubts about what we did. They were not familiar with software made in Mexico... We instead explained to the clients the background of our engineers that they have PhDs and Master’s degrees from different places (in Western countries) and they changed their minds ... then we created the web tooling service to the local companies’.</p>	<p><b>Breaking-out</b></p>
	<p><b>Tailoring the entrepreneurial idea for the local community</b></p>	
<p><i>Increasing sense of belongingness by adapting the entrepreneurial idea</i></p>	<p><b>Case 1. Entrepreneur 1a.</b> ‘I have lived here for 37 years [...] I’m thankful to have come here (to Sweden) [...] The construction of Mulsjö area will start soon and we have started considering refining or creating a new menu for the restaurant’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 2. Entrepreneur 2.</b> ‘I feel I’m part of Sweden... I am happy because I have my husband and I have my children. I have my friends around me who are supporting me... (Recently) I bought professional equipment for the hair salon to make it comfortable, so I could wash hair’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 3. Entrepreneur 3a.</b> ‘This is my home. [...] Here in Sweden, I follow the rules of the Swedish family [...] I think we can contribute to the development of Jönköping... We started out with computer reparation, offering it to international students; then, we turned into locals, and we realized that, among all the locals, the 50+ sector is our market’.</p>	
	<p><b>Case 4. Entrepreneur 4a.</b> ‘In the beginning, I had feelings of homesickness. Now, I can feel that this is my home. We have been here for 5 years... Now we focused on local customers in Jönköping and Sweden... We were developing additional service: augmented reality’.</p>	

**Figure 1. Data structure**



**Figure 2. Integration as an opportunity creation process**

