

# Understanding Entrepreneurship and International Business Knowledge Transfer by Diaspora Knowledge Networks: The Case of Honduras Global



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**Abstract** To date there is limited insight on how successful members of a diaspora can contribute to their countries of origin in terms of knowledge transfer. We argue that understanding Diaspora Knowledge Networks (DKN) may provide important insights into knowledge transfer for international business and entrepreneurial practices. This chapter focuses on the case study of Honduras Global, a DKN that brings together scientists, artists, business owners and organization executives of the Honduran diaspora. Based on human and social capital theories and the knowledge based view this chapter delves into knowledge transfer dynamics engaged by Honduras Global. Findings suggest that a DKN can be understood as a vehicle for knowledge transfer through three interrelated dimensions. An inclusive membership base, relationship development, and internal coordination facilitate a comprehensive and holistic knowledge transfer. Opportunities and challenges for further research are presented.

## 1 Background

Knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business engagement plays a crucial role in the context of developing economies (Brundin et al. 2017). Understanding about knowledge transfer around these topics is important for several reasons. First, whilst knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business can be disseminated by highly skilled diasporan academics in universities or practitioners in businesses, the vehicles and processes for knowledge transfer back to

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their countries of origin is scarce (Barnett 1994; Narteh 2008). Second, earlier studies suggest that individuals and organisations overseas that can leverage academic and practical experience from Diasporans may support knowledge transfer in developing countries (Frankel 1995; Kuznetsov 2006; Scellato et al. 2015). In that regard, recent studies highlight Diaspora Knowledge Networks (DKNs) as mediators between a community of skilled expatriates around the world and institutions or groups in countries of origin (Leclerc and Meyer 2007). While the relevance of DKNs is gaining attention (Meyer 2011) their dynamics in terms of knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business remains elusive (Turner et al. 2003).

This study is motivated by the need to understand further the influence of DKNs in knowledge transfer about entrepreneurship and international business. A DKN is broadly defined as an “*association of highly skilled expatriates willing to contribute to the development of their origin countries*” (Meyer 2011: 159). The DKN represents a diaspora community that counterbalances the so-called “brain drain” issue in migration (Meyer and Wattiaux 2006; Cañibano and Woolley 2015). The study of DKNs to date has mainly revolved around human and relational resources of highly skilled diasporan academics in host countries that can help a country of origin (Meyer 2001). The study of DKNs is relatively new yet has been considered a relevant future research context by UNESCO in areas such as innovation, migration and development/cooperation (see Meyer 2011 for a detailed discussion). We still know little about how knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business can be transferred between a DKN and diverse actors in a country of origin.

International business knowledge revolves around the processes, costs, techniques and institutional details needed for firms to trade internationally (Eriksson et al. 1997). Entrepreneurship knowledge deals with the experiences of one or more individuals engaging in the pursuit of opportunities, being highly dependent of information that can be trusted (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). Both topics are important in the study of diasporas (Elo et al. 2015) as knowledge transfer may provide the basis for transnational entrepreneurship (Elo and Hieta 2016).

To bridge gaps around knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business some DKNs may focus on the academic knowledge and expertise of its members (Séguin et al. 2006). Yet, while theoretical knowledge can be procured by highly skilled academic diasporans in universities or R&D institutions, detailed knowledge of contextual aspects, internationalisation triggers and opportunities over time are linked to the long term venturing experiences of business practitioners (Ciravegna et al. 2014; Welter 2011).

Previous studies around DKNs have focused on members of the scientific community as the unit of analysis and often overlook the potentially large contribution that non-academic members may make (Tetty 2016; Amagoh and Rahman 2014). Furthermore, insights about DKNs has focused on “*emerging economies*” located in Asia and enjoying an “*incomparably better academic and industrial environment than most developing countries*” (Meyer and Wattiaux 2006: 12). Understanding the influence of DKNs in other developing contexts, such as Latin America, is relevant

as differences between countries and specific knowledge transfer have become more apparent (Fong Boh et al. 2013).

Following up on the arguments above, we aim to answer the following question: *how does a DKN transfers knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business in a developing country?*. To increase understanding about knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business by DKNs this chapter proposes a framework based on the knowledge based view (Grant 1996), human capital (OECD 1998) and social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). Moreover, this study looks into knowledge transfer by a DKN based on the Honduran diaspora, Honduras Global, which includes academics, artist, business owners/managers and highly skilled professionals. In doing so, this chapter contributes to understanding by showing how a DKN can be used to transfer knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business in a developing Latin American country.

The chapter continues as follows: First, the theoretical background and contextual dimensions of Honduras Global are described. Then the research method and findings are explained. Finally, a conclusion, limitations and opportunities for further research are presented.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 DKNs and the Knowledge Based View

Understanding DKNs highlights the relevance of a knowledge based view. A knowledge perspective has its roots on the resource based perspective, which assumes that diverse and distinctive resources (valuable and rare, difficult to imitate and substitute), may allow organizations to process information and capabilities to achieve competitive advantages (Barney et al. 2001). In that regard, knowledge, broadly defined as “information that is relevant, actionable, and based at least partially on experience” (Leonard and Sensiper 1998: 113), as well as the ability to create and transfer it, is considered a key resource associated with higher levels of performance as it is difficult to trade and imitate, appropriable, scarce and highly specialized (Nonaka 1994).

The knowledge based view calls to analyze how organizations create, acquire, apply, and transfer knowledge (Grant 1996). Knowledge is a subset of information, subjective, linked to meaningful behavior, with tacit elements linked to experience (Leonard and Sensiper 1998). Human knowledge is action oriented and is believed to be best transferred via social interaction with people, due to the human capacity to absorb signals in face-to-face communication (Sveiby 1996). Knowledge transfer is considered important from an organizational perspective as it reduces uncertainty in processes engaged (Alexy et al. 2013). The knowledge based view is relevant for this study as it can help untangle the dynamics of knowledge transfer by DKNs to countries of origin. Knowledge transfer by highly skilled Diasporans may make the entrepreneurial and internationalisation process less daunting for those who are

eager to engage in the entrepreneurial process or to offer their products/services beyond national borders (Shepherd and DeTienne 2005).

A DKN is an ideal context to understand knowledge transfer as the primary resource by its members is knowledge, and if most of this knowledge can only be exercised by the individuals who possess it—then the theoretical relevance of the knowledge based view is warranted (Grant 1996: 120). To examine knowledge transfer dynamics, scholars call to understand three dimensions in an organisation: external structures, internal structures and individual competence (Sveiby 2001). To appreciate why a knowledge-based view can be useful in our understanding of DKNs we have to consider some of the features that differentiate knowledge transfers based on such dimensions. Sveiby (2001) shows that diverse knowledge transfers exist in most organisations.

Notwithstanding, Sveiby (2001) model has not been explored in the context of DKNs. Moreover, scholars call to understand the applicability of existing knowledge transfer models in organisations where individuals may possess diverse types of knowledge, may not be located in close proximity to each other, and where coordinating knowledge transfer may become problematic (Grant 1996). Such a context can be found in DKNs where individuals may be located in different geographical settings and where individual members may have heterogeneous stocks of knowledge and expertise. To address such concerns we look into the human and social capital perspectives.

## ***2.2 DKNs and Human Capital***

Human capital theory has been used to understand the endowment of individual migrants in their countries of migration (Meyer 2007). Human capital is defined as “*the knowledge, skills and competences and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity*” (OECD 1998: 9). Human capital may include explicit knowledge, formally acquired in educational centers, and implicit (tacit) knowledge, acquired during one’s experience in a particular domain (Polanyi 2012). Economic logic within human capital premises postulate that the inventory of skills and abilities gained by an individual migrant leads to opportunities and choices when they migrate. Such choices can be the pursuit of an academic, professional or entrepreneurial career. Sources of human capital come from family, education and experience (Anderson and Miller 2003).

It is commonly believed that the higher the number of years spent on acquiring education and professional experience supposes a higher endowment in human capital. Such endowment can be leverage by migrants anywhere they decide to migrate to. Discua Cruz and Tejada Calvo (2009) suggest specialized qualifications in diasporan scientists such as doctoral degrees, enhances human capital through increased years of schooling, research and teaching. Such specialized knowledge

may focus on the study of international business strategies, globalization trends and internationalisation techniques. Members of DKNs who are scientists or belong to institutions of higher education may bring specific expertise, processes and techniques that may enhance the perspective of those interested in international business advances. It is no surprise that DKNs rely strongly on specialized scientific knowledge (Meyer 2011).

Yet there is an opportunity for DKNs to enhance knowledge by including members that bring expertise in the business, professional and artistic spheres. Diasporans that are business owners, or professionals in institutions that deal with fostering international business relations are aware of contextual dynamics, market demand and potential internationalisation barriers in their countries of origin. Furthermore, diasporans who become business owners have accumulated significant knowledge and acumen (Zahra et al. 2005) as a result of pursuing business opportunities in their country of migration. Such diasporans may have heterogeneous experiences that generate knowledge (Bingham and Davis 2012) that can be shared in their countries of origin.

Yet, researchers warn that our understanding of DKNs would be limited if a human capital overlooks the importance of social relationships (Discua Cruz and Tejada Calvo 2009; Ferguson et al. 2016). Meyer (2001) highlights that human capital, in the case of scientist and highly educated migrants, is also enhanced due to the relational dynamics associated with their professions in the country of migration. The process that leads to the achievement of skills and knowledge in the country of migration supposes the development of diverse relationships which can be beneficial in future knowledge transfer activities. To appreciate how such relationships can impact DKNs in knowledge transfer we now turn to social capital.

### ***2.3 DKNs and Social Capital***

Social capital is a relatively new concept and theoretical perspective (Adam 2008). Nevertheless, it has been widely regarded in the study of diverse disciplines including Diasporas, ethnic communities and migration (Anthias 2007; Wang and Altinay 2012). In entrepreneurship, social capital derives out of the relationships between individuals (Adler and Kwon 2002) and is conceptualized as the outcome of a process rather than a fixed artifact (Anderson and Jack 2002). Social capital differs from other kinds of capital in that it is not easily bought, sold, or traded, and contrary to residing within an individual, such as human capital, it pertains to the relationships between them (Coleman 2000). Its premises rely on the creation and nurturance of relationships in networks (Bourdieu 1985). The benefits of social capital revolve around the access to information, resources and other individuals (Portes 1998).

The nature of social capital for DKNs is relevant for this study as it embodies the leverage of relationships in diverse networks that skilled migrants become members

of (Meyer 2007). In that regard, social capital can have both bonding and bridging features. For example, bonding social capital, refers to the relationships among affinity groups which strengthens ties between members, and bridging social capital, refers to relationships outside of one's own group which stretches the relationships between individuals and networks (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). Discua Cruz and Tejada Calvo (2009) found that these two features are relevant in knowledge transfer in the scientific community of DKNs. For the former, this may be represented by strong relationships between scientists or academics. For the latter, an extended academic community could be activated to find out specific expertise in a particular subject (e.g. entrepreneurship, international business).

Yet, the benefits of social capital for diasporans can also be observed in successful business founders and leaders (Brzozowski et al. 2014). A widespread network of stakeholders can be activated by diasporan business owners as over time they have gained legitimacy and trust to sustain their business activity in their host country (Ensign and Robinson 2011). Relationships in networks including suppliers, customers, advisors, bankers and often a transnational family network in their home country can provide a heterogeneous knowledge base (Elo 2016; Elo and Hieta 2016). Bonding and bridging social capital is found in the degree of relationships in the business spheres, ranging from contractual to purely relational (Rauch 2001). A key relational feature is an enhanced degree of social awareness through the discovery of new trading networks (Qiu and Gupta 2015). Relationships in such networks may be leveraged to identify and evaluate opportunities in relation with countries of origin (Katila and Wahlbeck 2012; Anderson and Jack 2002).

To date, DKN studies have mainly focused on the human and social capital of members who belong to the scientific community (Meyer 2011). Such approach limits DKNs that could be bringing greater credibility and legitimacy in knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business based on heterogeneous knowledge derived from both academic and practitioner communities. To increase understanding, we set to explore DKNs that includes both scientists and business practitioners amongst its members.

### 3 Research Method

To understand knowledge transfer by a DKN this study is concerned with the experiences of those involved in the process. To address our research question: *how does a DKN transfers knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business in a developing country?*, detailed and in-depth insights from those involved was needed (Stake 2008). Qualitative research allows answering "how" questions, understanding the world from the perspective of those studied, and examining and articulating processes (Pratt 2009: 856). Qualitative studies provide rich contextual evidence when a phenomenon has not been explored in depth (Yin 2008). Moreover, qualitative methods help capture detailed perspectives and provide a more valid explanation of what is going on. In particular, a single-case study

approach is useful to understand the complex dynamics of organizations such as a DKN (Stake 2008). Single case studies provide an ideal approach when understanding organisations that depend on selected individuals to achieve their objectives (Tadajewski 2015). We deliberately sought out a DKN that would be representative of what we wanted to study (Denzin and Lincoln 2008).

As the case selection was purposive, privileged access was required. To address the difficulty to attain information, particularly in Latin America (Jones 2004), for this study we chose a DKN that both authors, being Honduran diasporans and representatives of academic and business spheres, are members of. A participant observation approach was employed (Anderson and Jack 2002; Leitch et al. 2010). First-hand experiences from the early development of the DKN and relationships developed within facilitated access to primary and secondary information since 2011. Evidence was gathered through available printed (Seddig and Cerrato Sabillon 2014) and digital information (e.g. website), interactions in DKN physical and online meetings and conversations with DKN's founders and members who have transferred knowledge on entrepreneurship and international business in Honduras.

Initial analysis was in Spanish; translation into English was undertaken later. Interpretive methods were used to analyse how a DKN would facilitate knowledge transfer. Early stages of analysis included categorizing findings into human and social capital dimensions. Diverse knowledge transfer features were identified. The search for meaning led us to gain in-depth understanding of local, emic meanings, and of diverse perspectives in the approach of DKNs for knowledge sharing. Analysis of the data was then reiterative in moving between data and emerging findings (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). Analysis of the data focused on how and why participants engaged knowledge transfer through the DKN. This allowed the authors to follow up on emerging themes (Patton 2002). The analysis was informed by our prior theoretical understanding but not constrained by it (Finch 2002). We refer to data in tables to help us support key themes emerging from the analysis (Pratt 2009). In doing so, we aimed to increase the transparency in our approach and address the validity of our study (Gibbert and Ruigrok 2010).

## 4 Context: Honduras

Honduras is a developing Latin American country in Central America. It has an estimated population of 8.7 million inhabitants and the second largest area in this region (112,090 km<sup>2</sup>), which a population density of 78 habitants per sq. km.<sup>1</sup> Today, 60% of all inhabitants are believed to live below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> The country's per capita GDP is one of the lowest in the Central American region, at

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<sup>1</sup>Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de Honduras <http://www.ine.gob.hn>

<sup>2</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, USA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ho.html>

USD 2365 (2015)<sup>3</sup> and based on the CIA's GINI index, which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country, Honduras' inequality score at 58 is the eight highest in the world. Of all developing country regions, DKN research in Central America is the least covered, with the bulk of research mainly focused on larger Latin American countries such as Colombia and Mexico (Meyer 2007).

Migration is a social issue in Latin America (Pellegrino 2001). Honduras is no exception. Due to the lack of employment opportunities, increasing social unrest and high personal security risks faced by the population at large, especially those with lower income and education, many Hondurans are migrating to other countries in an effort to improve personal and family living conditions. It is estimated that over a million Hondurans have relocated to other countries, especially to the USA, since the late 1990s. Furthermore, natural events have accelerated migration in the last decades. According to the 2015 Germanwatch's Global Climate Risk Index, Honduras was the most affected country in the world by extreme weather events in the 20-year period between 1994 and 2013. The last major natural event was Hurricane Mitch, which affected the country at the end of 1998, destroying almost half of the country's infrastructure.

The Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies (2008) reported that out of the total of Honduran households with international migrating relatives, 86.6% departed between 1998 and 2007, compared to 13.4% that migrated before that period.<sup>4</sup> International cash remittances sent to Honduras have definitely become an important proxy of the size of Honduran nationals living overseas. The Honduran Central Bank's balance of payments report shows that while in the year 2000, cash remittances represented only 6% of GDP, in 2015 they represented 16% of GDP. The total transfers in the year 2000 were USD0.44 billion while in 2015 they were USD3.65 billion. Such data is important to contextualize the diverse motivations and consequences of migration dynamics in Honduras and suggest that monetary resources to engage in entrepreneurial initiatives or exporting efforts are latent in the country (Mundaca 2009). Knowledge about how to engage in the entrepreneurial and internationalization process is needed. Understanding whether a DKN can engage in knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business is needed.

## 5 The Case Study: Honduras Global

Honduras Global, was officially founded in 2010, and can be defined as a DKN based on the criteria suggested by Meyer (2011). The birth of Honduras Global was the result of three converging forces. First, Sir Salvador Moncada, the most

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<sup>3</sup>Banco Central de Honduras [http://www.bch.hn/pib\\_base2000.php](http://www.bch.hn/pib_base2000.php)

<sup>4</sup>Centro de Estudios Monetarios Latinoamericanos (CEMLA) <http://www.cemla-remesas.org/informes/report-honduras.pdf>



recognised Honduran scientist worldwide and one of the most distinguished Hondurans abroad, became acquainted with the DKN experience of China and India, who worked with diasporans to further scientific development. Sir Moncada initially wanted to organize a network of Honduran scientific diasporans. Second, in 2008, members of the Honduran National Association of Industrialists (ANDI), the Honduran Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (COHCIT) and the Salvador Moncada Foundation for the Advancement of Science (FSM) met to devise a plan to organize a highly-skilled Honduran diaspora network. Finally, in 2008, Germany's main Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) decided to join the initiative and procure funding. The DKN project was then supported by governmental, private and cooperation agency actors.

In 2009, members agreed to name the DKN organisation as "Honduras Global, Red de Conocimiento para el Desarrollo" (Knowledge Network for Development). In contrast to other DKNs (Meyer 2011), the selection criteria for members aimed to include not only academics but also highly skilled Honduran professionals and practitioners around the world. To do so the focus was to approach diasporans with recognized achievements in their area of expertise, a desire to contribute to the development of Honduras, and self-identification as Hondurans. The official start of Honduras Global was envisioned for 2009 yet the uncertain political situation in the country at the time, which included the ousting of then President Manuel Zelaya (Ruhl 2010) brought the process to a "stand-by". Furthermore, COHCIT was replaced by the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (SEPLAN), as the government's representative.

Finally, on June 8th 2010, Honduras Global was launched at the Honduran presidential palace, with a newly elected President, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, as a witness of honour. In June 2011, twelve Honduras Global members, three institutional members (ANDI, SEPLAN, FSM) and a GIZ representative met in Houston, Texas, to formally constitute the Honduras Global Foundation. The initial strategy and subsequent activities ensued. Finally, in October 2011 the first Executive Director to implement the initial strategy was hired.

## 6 Findings

Analysis of the data suggests knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business occurred across various dimensions, supporting Sveiby (2001) model. Human and social capital premises explain further the dynamics of such model in the context of a DKN. Analysis of knowledge transfer activities in Honduras Global for each dimension is found in Table 1. A graphical portrayal can be found in Fig. 1.

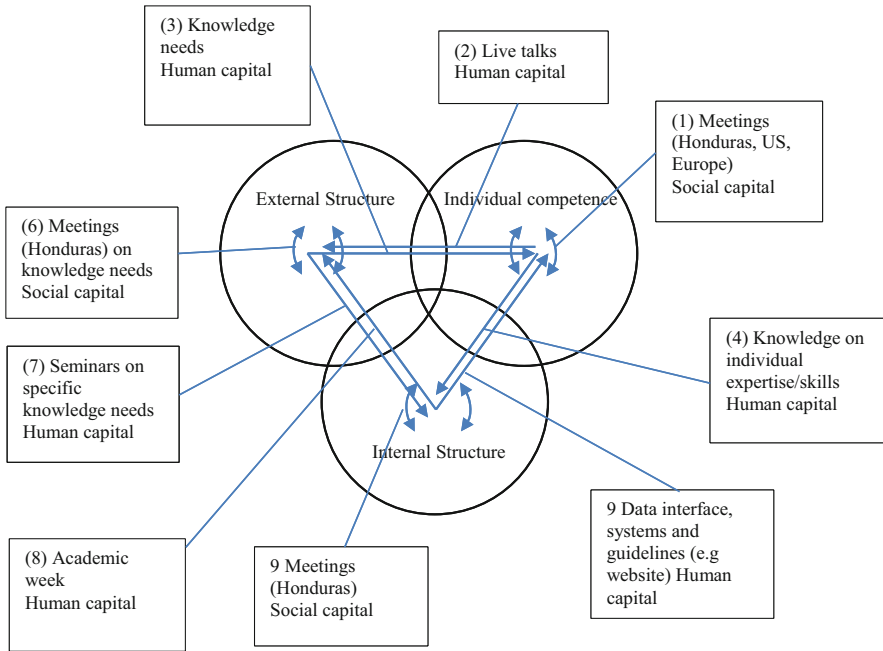
**Table 1** Knowledge transfers in Honduras Global. Adapted from Sveiby (2001)

Transfers	Answers/Activities	Honduras global knowledge transfer dynamics
1. Between individuals	Activities focused on trust building, enabling team activities, induction programs, and so forth.	Several formal and informal gatherings (e.g. dinners, reunions) induction activities of new members, separation of structure based on geography (USA, Europe)
2. From individuals to external structure	Activities focused on enabling the members to help stakeholders learn about the products/services, holding seminars, and providing education.	Live talks seminars around the expertise of members aiming to increase human capital of recipients in different topics are engaged
3. From external structure to individuals	Activities focused on creating and maintaining good personal relationships between the organisation's own people and the people outside the organisation.	This is achieved through the internal team of Honduras Global, who has periodic meetings with private and public agencies to learn about knowledge gaps and how Honduras Global members can bridge them
4. From individual competence into internal structure	Activities focused on tools, templates, process and systems so they can be shared more easily and efficiently	Honduras global maintains data repositories of competences, projects through virtual tools (e.g. Dropbox) that are shared with the whole organisation. In such repositories members have access to all the different systems created and revised by the top management team. Such systems were created and are maintained through the expertise of members
5. From internal structure to individual competence	Activities focused on improving the human-computer interface of systems, action-based learning processes, simulations and interactive e-learning environments.	The internal structure of HG provides online platforms for newly added members to interact initially with stakeholders in Honduras. Virtual tools facilitate the first interactions and also provide an alternative to knowledge transfer via traditional face to face engagement
6. Within the external structure	Activities focused on partnering and alliances, improving the image of the organisation and the brand equity of its products and services, improving the quality of the offering.	The support by NGOs, private and governmental agencies is supported by the perceived relevance of expertise brought by Honduras Global members. Members are able to interact and discuss on gaps that can be catered by Honduras Global and support the knowledge transfer activities by supporting the reputation and official status. (e.g. Ministry of Communication and Image)

(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

Transfers	Answers/Activities	Honduras global knowledge transfer dynamics
7. From external to internal structure	Activities focused on interpret customer complaints, creating alliances to generate ideas for new services.	The administrative team have a physical location in the national university of Honduras and can be contacted through different channels. Based on relationships developed since its foundation, stakeholders can contact the organisation and its structures (USA, Europe) through the administrative team. New knowledge transfer initiatives based on alliances with universities (e.g. fashion design programme by Carlos Campos, Appendix) have been developed through enhancing competence of stakeholders
8. From internal to external structure	Activities focused on making the organisation’s systems, tools and processes effective in servicing stakeholders.	The organization operating procedures are open to stakeholders. Knowledge transfer activities are disseminated to stakeholders with time in advance to program the delivery of seminars and workshops. The internal systems allow a prompt response to the needs identified by external stakeholders. Main activity: Academic week
9. Within internal structure	Activities focused on streamlining databases, building integrated IT systems, improving the office layout, etc.	The administrative team has been supported in the provision of a new office in the premises of an university, with access to internet and support. This allowed the team to devise monitoring systems for prompt communication of activities to Honduras Global members. Good relationships between administrative teams ensures that information is produced and disseminated promptly. Databases on members and their individual competence can be disseminated via online tools (email, website, Dropbox)



**Fig. 1** The nine knowledge transfers around entrepreneurship and international business in Honduras Global [adapted from: Sveidy (2001, p. 349)]

### 6.1 Individual Competence and Knowledge Transfer Features

The individual competence dimension is represented by the individual members of the organisation. Human capital highlights the individual competence of Honduras Global members. By bringing heterogeneous knowledge, expertise and skills, members could transfer a holistic and comprehensive perspective for interested parties in Honduran society about international business or entrepreneurial processes. An interesting finding in our study is that inclusion of highly skilled diasporans, both academics and practitioners, enhanced knowledge transfer features in a DKN. This can be appreciated in the diversity of members included and their field of expertise as well as the collective activities engaged. Individual competences are enhanced through the online sharing of information through virtual tools (e.g. Cloud storage, website, database).

As of August 2016, Honduras Global is composed of 75 members: twenty seven (27) members in Europe, twenty eight (28) in the US, fourteen (14) in Honduras and six (6) in other countries. At the time of writing this chapter, further memberships were being considered in Europe. The fields of expertise represented in the group are diverse and comprise a wide spectrum of professions and occupations. Scientific knowledge within Honduras Global ranges from cancer research, architecture,

family business, internationalisation and computer science. Professions represented range from medical doctors, lawyers, consultants to engineers. Further fields of expertise included fashion design, business foundation and leadership, art exhibitions, culinary arts, chocolate making, cigar manufacturing and distribution. Such heterogeneous membership provides a diverse knowledge based. As Appendix shows, knowledge transfer was strongly based on the human capital of members that catered for in topics related to entrepreneurship and international business.

Evidence suggests that a broader membership base may provide a wide variety of information emerging from social networks both in the country of origin and of residence (Brzozowski et al. 2014). For instance, information about legal requirements, exporting experiences as well as latest support policies developed around entrepreneurial support for export can be delivered by several members. In previous works this was mainly performed by academic members (Discua Cruz and Tejada Calvo 2009). In terms of social capital premises, such approach may involve the extended academic community. Yet the evidence provided by HG (Appendix) suggests that when diverse profiles are considered then a broader set of networks may be activated for information. In professions related to international trade or entrepreneurship, members can tap into the knowledge of a broader professional network and their work teams, or business members can provide relevant information procured through other businessmen and their partners in their countries of residence. Such approach influences knowledge transfer from an individual competence to an external structure (university students, business owners, policy makers).

Knowledge transfer in terms of entrepreneurship and international business relates to networking and collaboration among highly skilled Honduran diasporans. Such interaction allows the delivery of specific information that becomes a source of inspiration for beneficiaries (students, local professionals) and diminishes the void of reliable information. In the case of the business and entrepreneurship-oriented members, their activity level inside the country differs from person to person, but most engage in knowledge transfer activities by giving speeches at conferences and through their hands-on business interactions and experiences whilst in Honduras. For instance, as several business members maintain an investment interest in Honduras then links with relevant institutions provides relevant information for future activities (Gillespie et al. 1999). Relationships nurtured in various networks during business founding and development helps provide the latest trends or information in countries of residence (Turkina and Thai 2013) enhancing knowledge transferred.

Since its creation in 2010, Honduras Global members have been able to disseminate knowledge through Honduran media channels. Interviews by Newspapers, TV and Radio programmes allowed a wide diffusion of its creation and the member's expertise in entrepreneurship and international business. Such activities initiated as well the development of social capital notions of trust and norms in terms of specific knowledge on entrepreneurship and international business. In doing so, knowledge transfer between individual competences and external structures can be achieved.

Among the specific events geared for knowledge transfer based on individual competences we can find live talks (leadership, motivational). In these events, members talk about their careers, experiences and/or selected topics in

entrepreneurship and business to students and other professionals (Fig. 1). To date, members of Honduras Global have participated at about 16 events with a reach of more than 2000 participants. Among the topics covered are: “Niche Markets”, “Internationalization”, “Importance of Arts and Culture”, “Central Role of Technology and Science in Economic Development”, “The Value of Innovation”, “Family Enterprises”, “Internationalization of Education towards Intercultural aspects” and “From Failure to Failure to Reach Success”.

In the context of Honduras Global, knowledge transfer based on individual competences addresses that knowledge about entrepreneurship and international business can be enhanced when we consider human capital that is hard to replicate, resides within members but that can be transferred by the socialization that occurs in seminars and events. Individual competence dynamics in Honduras Global suggest that DKNs can engage in knowledge transfer with diasporans with a high skill base of human capital and who would like to move beyond an individual effort and collaborate with others (Riddle and Brinkerhoff 2011).

## ***6.2 Internal Structure and Knowledge Transfer Features***

An internal structure in Honduras Global is highlighted by the existence of an administrative team based in Honduras who overseas, based on their skills and expertise, the knowledge transfer activities through appropriate channels (seminars, TV, Radio) reaching a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g. universities or institutions of higher learning and business related organizations such as banks, NGOs). The internal structure knowledge transfer is influenced by the attempt to create an identity as an organization that captures and harness the human capital and relational resources of highly skilled Honduran diasporans for the benefit of Honduras. The aim of the administrative team of Honduras Global is to identify and connect highly skilled Hondurans to promote knowledge transfer, promote innovation and scientific, technological and entrepreneurial development in Honduras. To do so, its central offices in Honduras are now located in the premises of the national university of Honduras facilitating knowledge transfer within the central administrative team. In May 2011, the first version of the website: [www.hondurasglobal.org](http://www.hondurasglobal.org) was launched. The website provided details about the project and its members, aiming to reach highly skilled Hondurans overseas as well as to inform external stakeholders of the activities, goals and objectives of the organisation.

The internal structure showcases a formal operational and legal framework which impacts on the knowledge transfer to and from and external structure and individual competences. Honduras Global is comprised of three legal entities: the main one, based in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, is called “Fundación Honduras Global” (FHG), and acts as the flagship organisation for all knowledge transfer activities organised. The second entity “Honduras Global USA” was created in September 2011 by members based in Houston, Texas. It provides an organizing structure for members in the USA under the 501(c)(3) designation and serve as the main point of contact for highly skilled Honduran diasporans in the US. The third legal entity was created in

Brussels, Belgium, in June 2013, under the name “Honduras Global Europa”, as a non-profit association. This organization has become the first point of contact of the Honduran diaspora in Europe. Such internal structure allows any highly skilled Honduran residing overseas to approach a localized entity, thus influencing the knowledge transfer between internal structures and individual competences. Individual members become involved in local and regional activities, and later engage in knowledge transfer through the internal structure in topics related to entrepreneurship and international business.

By setting a diverse membership criterion an ample base of successful Honduran diasporans around the world can be brought together. Social capital premises such as shared goals and ideals to help their country of origin support the collective approach to knowledge transfer. This facilitates coordinating activities around focal areas such as international business or entrepreneurship. Furthermore, evidence suggests that by creating a formal institution, recognised officially by the Honduran government and linked to key local institutions in the scientific, economic, political and social landscape (ANDI, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Universities), it also becomes widely visible to families of diasporans, who can then spread the information about the existence of such an entity and its activities.

Knowledge transfer from internal structures to individual competences and external structures is varied. While each organization that composes Honduras Global (FHG, US and Europe) has its own board of directors and is not legally subordinated to one another, the board of directors of FHG leads the collective effort in terms of in-country strategy and activities. The US and Europe groups provide the support and guidance in terms of members diversity, interests, knowledge, and expertise that is available. FHG is the only entity with an operational team, consisting of an executive director and a projects coordinator, responsible for implementing the agreed actions and ensuring the organization becomes sustainable. It relies on a strong human capital skill based in organizing and deploying activities around knowledge. In doing so, knowledge transfer between the internal structures of US and Europe groups and the external institutional framework in Honduran society is achieved.

Knowledge transfer from an internal to an external structure, geared around entrepreneurship and international business, is evidenced when analysing two specific objectives of Honduras Global: (a) To promote business development and entrepreneurship, as well as the development of science, technology and innovation, with the support of successful Hondurans abroad and (b) To strengthen the national capabilities of human resources through the development of programs and services that promote knowledge transfer through internships, tutoring, summer courses, alliances and agreements, among others. Both objectives emphasize knowledge transfer between internal and external structures through the enhancement of human and social capital. These two objectives serve as a cornerstone of the organization’s identity and founding values as well as a guide for strategy, priorities and actions.

The main knowledge transfer activity from an internal structure to external stakeholders, which depends on individual competences is called the “Semana Academica” (Academic Week), a series of knowledge transfer talks delivered in

4–5 days by Honduras Global members to university students once a year, launched in December 2011. Every year, 40–50 university students with outstanding academic prowess are selected to participate. The co-authors of this study have had the chance to deliver talks around the topics of entrepreneurship and business founding as well as international business models (Fig. 1). Some student participants have built on the insight and engage in entrepreneurial activity based on first-hand knowledge provided by HG members. In January 2017, the sixth academic week was delivered alongside several knowledge transfer conferences for academics and practitioners.

Since 2011, Honduras Global has organized more than 38 activities (workshops, academic weeks, live talks), attended by more than 3800 participants in Honduras. In such approach, the organisation positions itself as a vehicle for knowledge transfer between a society and a network of highly skilled diasporans. In doing so, it exercises expertise and skills in delivering and nurtures relationships with diverse actors in the external structure. Coordinating knowledge transfers between a group of highly skilled diasporans and an external community supports the knowledge based view of the organisation (Grant 1996).

### ***6.3 External Structure and Knowledge Transfer Features***

An external structure is comprised by the diverse audiences that the organisation caters for, such as students, business owner/managers, universities and governmental agencies. Knowledge transfer between external authors is highlighted in terms of specific information requests and collaborations devised to bring members of Honduras Global to transfer their knowledge. Knowledge transfer activities based on the interest of external stakeholders is represented by traditional delivery modes such as seminars, workshops or conferences. In terms of entrepreneurship and international business knowledge, external actors provide knowledge based on seminar discussions where knowledge from the country of origin is contrasted with knowledge brought by Honduras Global members from the country of migration. In such exchange, human capital is enhanced and relationships between actors are strengthened.

The knowledge transfer between the external structure and individual competences is encapsulated in one of the key objectives of Honduras Global: To support the rescue of the national identity and improve the image of Honduras overseas. This is to be achieved through the promotion and dissemination of results and benefits achieved by Hondurans at international and national levels through leadership and motivational talks and forums. Since 2015, the Honduran government strengthen relationships with Honduras Global through the celebration of individuals that represent the ideals of Honduran society by awarding a “Marca Pais” label to members that have developed successful business ventures (e.g. Maya Selva, Appendix) thus promoting entrepreneurial engagement in society.

The knowledge transfer between the external structure and internal structure as well as individual competences is achieved through Conferences/Workshops/



Forums (Fig. 1). These activities revolve around seminars presented by members in their specific areas of expertise to selected audiences. To date, Honduras Global has organized 14 events of this kind, with approximately 1200 participants. Among the topics covered were: “Keys to a Good Leadership”, “Ecommerce and Opportunities in New Markets”, “Exporting Digital Products”, “Lean Management”, “Female Entrepreneurship”, “Mathematics in the Twenty-first Century”, “Social Media and its Use by SMEs”, “Activating the Linkage Between the Academia and the Private Sector”. At the time of this study, FHG was in the process of considering the delivery of online seminars and conferences in conjunction with leading universities. Thus, a wide variety of topics were particularly addressing items that would influence knowledge transfer about entrepreneurship and international business from internal to external structures.

To date, Honduras Global has built strong relationships with external structures composed of national newspapers, TV and radio stations. Therefore, most group and individual activities of members are well-covered by the different media. Such approach facilitates and increases the attendance of practitioners and academic participants alike interested in topics such as entrepreneurship and international business. The first knowledge transfer activities (conferences, academic lectures) were organized relying on highly skilled diasporans that were visiting Honduras in 2010 and who could cater for the wide interest of local audiences.

The positive relationships between the external and internal structure is evidenced in the support and resources attained throughout time. Funding to keep an the Honduras Global administrative team office in Honduras, which coordinates knowledge transfer activities with the private and public sector was initially supported by German Cooperation Agencies, donations from a few Honduran benefactors and from several paid-for-events, such as Gala Dinners, academic weeks and workshops. In 2014, Honduras Global recruited the third and current Executive Director who started working on a pro-bono basis. In June 2015, a 2-year mutual cooperation and financial agreement was signed with the Honduran Ministry of Communications and Image which promotes Honduras Global as a representative of the country around the world. Social capital premises suggest that knowledge transfer is supported by the nurturing of relationships between different actors, including the government (Evans 1996; Fukuyama 1995) and the provision of information that can guide future knowledge transfer activities.

## 7 Conclusion

The evidence presented suggests that, compared to previous studies focusing on a scientific membership based organization (Meyer 2011), a DKN with an heterogeneous membership base can leverage diverse human and social capital to provide a more comprehensive and holistic knowledge base around entrepreneurship and international business. In answering our question, this study finds that a DKN can engage in knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business

through a heterogeneous pool of human capital and the creation and leverage of relationships. This study advances understanding by providing a framework where human and social capital premises explain how knowledge transfer features can be appreciated.

This study expands previous depictions of DKNs by demonstrating that knowledge transfer around entrepreneurship and international business is more complex than originally believed. The way highly skilled diasporans will interact and transfer knowledge may depend not only on their specialized knowledge but in finding social arenas where they can interact with others who have the same goals and objectives to help their countries of origins. DKNs that can harness such human and social capital features engage in knowledge transfer through facilitating coordination and engaging in the creation of relationships for subsequent knowledge delivery. Knowledge transfer may be ineffective if information emanating from discussions between governmental, educational and policy institutions in external structures do not align with the expertise of highly skilled diasporans and the objectives of DKNs. Our current understanding of knowledge transfer, in the context of DKNs, may only provide a partial picture if such perspectives are omitted.

## 8 Limitations and Further Research

This study has a few caveats, and so, findings must be interpreted with caution. First, this study relied on a single-case study; we acknowledge the advantages and limitations of relying on a single, albeit in-depth and longitudinal, case study (Stake 2008) as well as a participant observation approach (Leitch et al. 2010). Second, the study was conducted around a DKN focusing on one country, Honduras, and therefore it may be difficult to infer similar results of DKNs in other countries. Yet our findings around the nature of knowledge transfer dynamics for development by DKNs may have wider applicability in developing countries. Policy makers in developing economies may take our findings as a message related to support DKNs with a diverse membership base to connect back to society, and especially into the executive bodies. Furthermore, this study has mainly concentrated on the positive aspects that DKNs like Honduras Global can provide, yet further insight into the contextual challenges that such organisations face to promote entrepreneurship and international business knowledge remains scarce (Welter 2011). As contextual dynamics change, future studies may concentrate on the barriers of transferring knowledge by DKNs. Obviously, if DKNs members who possess and can transfer knowledge important are either actively discouraged from participating or censor themselves, none of the benefits suggested above can be realized (Grant 1996). Multiple case studies across DKNs in developing economies may support, challenge or expand the findings in this study. Additional studies around the unique dynamics and challenges that DKNs face when transferring knowledge about specific topics will contribute to our understanding of diaspora knowledge networks.

## Appendix

Selection of Honduras Global members focusing on entrepreneurship and international business knowledge. Source: Honduras Global website

<p>Maya Selva</p>	<p>Master of Science in Operational Research. Bachelor’s Degree in Systems Engineering. She is the founder and managing director of “Flor de Selva”, a fully integrated tobacco and premium cigar manufacturer and exporter to Europe and the USA. She has received several quality awards for her cigars in European competitions. More than 20 years ago, she entered into the cigar industry as a way to stay connected with Honduras. Today her operations provide employment to several dozen people in the south-eastern part of Honduras. She has participated in HG Academic Weeks and has given conferences on “New Market Trends” and “Niche Markets”. She is an official ambassador of “Marca Pais”, the Honduran Government’s positive branding campaign.</p>
<p>Maribel Lieberman</p>	<p>Founder and General Manager of MarieBelle New York, a line of fine chocolates that are sold through her own stores in New York, USA, and through franchisees in Kyoto, Japan (<a href="http://www.mariebelle.com">www.mariebelle.com</a>) and resellers in Europe. She serves as a role model for self-improvement in Honduras and is also an ambassador of “Marca Pais”. Each time she visits Honduras, she participates in different conferences on entrepreneurship and international business and shares her business success story. Given the rise of cacao production in Honduras, she plans to buy and develop her own cacao farm in the country. She, and Maya Selva, have been considered among the most influential females in Central America.</p>
<p>Carlos Campos</p>	<p>Studied fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. He has won several fashion design awards in the USA. In 2015 he became the first ambassador for Marca Pais. Through the coordination with HG, he became involved in the development of a fashion design curricula at a private Honduran university. In 2008, the Honduran media community named him of the “10 Most Influential Hondurans Abroad”. He recently began to support FEIH, the Foundation for Education in Honduras, a charitable organization committed to providing education to children in impoverished areas of rural Honduras. Each time he travels to Honduras, he is a guest speaker of the local media and in different business and academic events. He has provided seminars for HG in terms of international fashion, fashion markets and fashion branding. He is also working in partnership with one of the largest local clothing manufacturers.</p>
<p>Edwin Hernandez</p>	<p>Ph.D. in Computer Engineering. Master in Computer Engineering. Bachelors of Science in Electronics Engineering. Fulbright Scholar. He has been granted 10 patents in the USA. Worked for Microsoft and Motorola for a few years. He is the founder and owner of Eglá Communications (<a href="http://www.eglacomm.net">www.eglacomm.net</a>), a company that has developed a cloud-based platform for media (Cable TV) distribution. He is based in Florida, USA, but he is constantly traveling to Honduras and sharing his technical knowledge with high school and university students arranged by HG. He has participated in several Academic Weeks and Conferences providing information about international science patents and computer science.</p>
<p>Arturo Enamorado</p>	<p>Master in International Commerce. Bachelor’s Degree in Industrial Business Administration. He is the Chief Operating Officer of the ISEAD Business School for North &amp; Central America and the Caribbean. He founded the Honduran Chamber of Commerce USA in Miami, USA, in 2009 (<a href="http://www.haccw.com">www.haccw.com</a>).</p>

(continued)

	<p>org). In 2012, his organization received a donation of medical equipment worth a USD 2 million that was later delivered to the two largest public hospitals in Tegucigalpa. He has presented at Academic Weeks and other events organized by HG on topics related with international commerce.</p>
Mayra Orellana-Powell	<p>Bachelor of Science, Business Administration and International Business. Marketing and Outreach Director for Royal Coffee, Inc., a green coffee importer located in California since 2013. Owner &amp; Founder of Catracha Coffee Co., a specialty coffee buyer from small producers from the rural community of Santa Elena, where Mayra is from. She is relocating back to Honduras in September 2016 to continue working with coffee producers and other community projects, such as youth conferences and development organizations. She has participated in Academic Weeks and other HG events related with coffee import/export.</p>
Stanley Marrder	<p>Entrepreneur. Founder and owner of Marrder Omnimedia, a company based in Tegucigalpa, which develops software applications for foreign customers; Xybera, a company that produces audiovisual content, and Locsatt, which develops solutions for USA petrochemical companies. His initiatives have earned him international awards, including an Addy from the American Advertising Federation. After HG conducted the first Academic Week, he invited the participants to create an "Intelligence Lab", an initiative by which the young students could make proposals and submit ideas on how to strengthen the climate of innovation in Honduras. This initiative lasted 2 years and gave the opportunity to university students to engage in research and think "out of the box". His seminars also provided information of software export development.</p>
Pedro Cerrato	<p>Master in International Business. Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. In the year 2011, he launched an internet portal called Wilinku (<a href="http://www.wilinku.com">www.wilinku.com</a>) to promote the best talents, artistic and cultural activities, and touristic places in Central America. He set up a local company in Honduras and hired four interns from a local university for 2 years. In 2012, he traveled more than 2500 km across Honduras to meet local handicrafts manufacturers to assess their readiness to export their products to Germany. Sadly most entrepreneurs he met were not ready to deliver the quality and quantity required by the European market. In mid-2015, he returned to Honduras with a 6-month consulting contract in hand to support the financial and commercial activities of Tegu Toys (<a href="http://www.tegu.com">www.tegu.com</a>), a magnetic wooden building blocks manufacturer, which produces and exports Honduran-made pieces overseas (USA and Europe). In 2016 he began to organize a group of entrepreneurs to open the first Center for Entrepreneurs in Tegucigalpa in 2017 as part of the Impact Hub network (<a href="http://www.impacthub.net">www.impacthub.net</a>). Among its goals, this center aims to promote further relevant approaches for international entrepreneurship.</p>
Allan Discua Cruz	<p>PhD in Management. Master of Manufacturing, MBA, BS in Industrial and Systems Engineering. He has conducted several researches on Honduran family companies that have shed a better light of this country's internal business dynamics and improve the country's visibility in front of academia. Due to his ongoing relationship with private universities in Honduras, he is regularly invited as a guest lecturer and visiting professor in the areas of small and medium sized enterprises, internationalization and family business. He has been invited previously by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to deliver seminars on international outlooks in European economy and business strategies for women entrepreneurs.</p>

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