

According to the concept of social embeddedness the decisions and actions of entrepreneurs depend on the social context in which they function, in particular on the network of social relationships between a given entrepreneur and other market players. In other words, an entrepreneur's choices are influenced by who she or he maintains social relationships with and how deep these relations are (the so-called strong and weak ties). Thus, not only relations with suppliers, customers, cooperators, competitors, but also with family, acquaintances, friends, etc. are at stake. At the same time, it is claimed that business and social relations are interrelated and that there are feedbacks between them. For example, a long-term supplier with whom the entrepreneur initially maintained a strictly business relationship, may become a friend over time, which may affect the business activities of both entities. Therefore, it is emphasized that analyzing economic decisions in isolation from the social context in which the entrepreneur operates makes the economic analysis incomplete or even inappropriate. This is confirmed by the results of research conducted in many sectors of the economy.

While in recent years research has been carried out on the role of entrepreneurs' social embeddedness in running their enterprises, including e.g. in establishing business cooperation, there is no research that would allow to compare the role of social embeddedness in building, development and termination of various types of inter-organizational relations, i.e. apart from cooperation, also competition or coopetition (simultaneous cooperation with competitors). Moreover, despite the fact that research on social embeddedness in the tourism sector has been conducted in last years (although it concerned only cooperation and not other types of relationships), it mainly related to entities operating in small mountain villages, and not in large cities. In the case of large cities, it is interesting to determine whether, due to the greater anonymity, geographic space, or frequent affiliation of enterprises to larger international networks, tourism entrepreneurs are socially embedded, and if so, what is the significance of this embeddedness for establishing relations: cooperation, competition and coopetition. It will be important, among others, to compare the importance of this embeddedness for 3 types of inter-organizational relations, which has not been the subject of research in any of the sectors of the economy so far. Social Network Analysis will be used for these comparisons.

Thus, there was formulated the following **research problem**: what is the role social embeddedness of tourism entrepreneurs, operating in large cities, for their business relations, i.e.: cooperation, competition and coopetition and does and how this role differ depending on the type of inter-organizational relationship (cooperation vs. competition vs. coopetition)?

**The research aim** is to identify, explain and compare the role of tourism entrepreneurs' social embeddedness for the inter-organizational relations of the enterprises they represent, i.e. cooperation, competition and coopetition, in large cities.

There was also formulated the **methodological aim** which is the exemplification of research of 4 types of relationships (1) social and inter-organizational, i.e. (2) cooperation, (3) competition and (4) coopetition – as well as links between them – using a mix-method design. An original research tool in the form of semi-structured questionnaire will be used, followed by data analysis with the use of a network approach, allowing to evaluate the researched relationships and links between them on two levels: (1) from the perspective of a single actor and the network as a whole, and also (2) quantitatively and qualitatively.

**The application aim** is to indicate how to build and develop social relationships (SR) (resulting from the social embeddedness (SE) of an entrepreneur) so that their role for each of the three types of inter-organizational relations, i.e. cooperation, competition and coopetition, is as beneficial as possible for business activity.

Referring to the **research methodology**, the research will be carried out in two stages. In the first stage, Individual In-depth Interviews (IDIs) will be conducted with the use of a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Interviews with 80-100 interlocutors are planned in four different Polish large cities (20-25 entities in each, of selected – according to strictly defined criteria – 4 out of 10 largest cities in Poland, i.e. Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań and Gdańsk). A group of 20-25 entities in each city will constitute a separate network further analyzed by using Social Network Analysis (SNA). The interviewees will represent the accommodation industry (hotels, guesthouses, apartments, B&Bs). Interlocutors in each network will be asked if they maintain social relations with each of the other 19-24 entities from the network and if the companies they represent maintain relations: cooperation, competition and coopetition with each of the other entity in the network. On this basis, an analysis will be made with the use of specific SNA parameters. In the second stage of the research, a group interview (Focus Group Interview – FGI) will be conducted with selected interlocutors from the first research stage in order to deepen the conclusions obtained at that phase.