

Entrepreneurship as Driver of Economic and Social Change: Insights from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia

International Workshop

When: *13-16 September 2023*

Where: *Tbilisi, Georgia*

Funding: *German Academic Exchange Service*

Deadline for Submission of Abstracts: *15 May 2023*

Call for Papers

Research on entrepreneurship has been thriving recently with numerous new approaches across the social sciences. A commonly shared viewpoint defines entrepreneurship as the founding and managing of new firms, which introduce new goods into the established economic setting, and in doing so driving economic and social change. Entrepreneurs cover a diversity of types from small business owners to managers of large corporations. Also, entrepreneurship covers various motives and modes of behaviour, ranging from profit-centred market competition to non-profit concerns with social improvements. In this way, diverse kinds of entrepreneurship can be differentiated that drive change by implementing new solutions to previously unresolved – or even unrecognized – sets of problems. Context matters for such an exercise of entrepreneurship that is subject to learning and adaptation in the complexity of uncertain environments. Next to economic conditions of resource endowments and scarcity as well as social conditions of stratification, inequality, and selective access to entrepreneurial resources, also institutions and culture come into play. Institutional rules and norms define the manoeuvring space for entrepreneurship as they enable and constrain entrepreneurial action. Cultural patterns of cognition and behaviour shape the articulation of entrepreneurial habits and practices.

The countries under consideration in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia stand out as actual laboratories in the formation of entrepreneurship-driven market economies under very specific institutional and cultural conditions. At the outset, they are emerging economies that share the historical legacy of Russian colonialism and Soviet socialism with its distorted industrialization and the factual elimination of local private sector entrepreneurship. After independence, nation-building in these countries involved defective attempts at building market economies. Entrepreneurial dynamics were all too often relegated to informality while the substance of economic life was dominated by government-related oligarchs in rent-seeking business groups. Currently, entrepreneurial activities in these emerging economies evolve in the shadow of oligarchic capitalism, rooted in malpractices of post-communist privatization with ingredients of corruption, rent-seeking, state interventionism, and institutional instability. Diverse forms of entrepreneurial activity co-exist in these economies. From small business owners in traditional sectors who combine competitive efforts with informal practices via knowledge-based start-ups in digital industries who spread out transnationally all the way to milieus of social entrepreneurship which combine non-profit-logics with social concerns. The governmental impact on these patterns of entrepreneurship adds to their path dependence. Indeed, all these manifestations of entrepreneurship drive economic and social change in the making of market economies in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia.

In view of these issues, the international workshop “*Entrepreneurship as Driver of Economic and Social Change: Insights from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia*” is set to generate interdisciplinary exchange and communication on the forms of entrepreneurship in the mentioned emerging economies.

Key questions to be pursued are:

- What kind of motives, strategies and practices can be observed for the various types of entrepreneurship and what is the role of informality and social networks?
- Which industries stand out as fields of entrepreneurial activity, and how do they relate to the role of government in promoting as well as obstructing entrepreneurial dynamics?
- What is the impact of entrepreneurship on the socio-economic fabric of the emerging market economies and their developmental perspectives?

In view of these questions and the workshop theme, we invite the submission of abstracts for papers. Proposed papers need to address the topics under consideration with a focus on cases from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus as well as Central Asia respectively. Diverse disciplinary angles are welcome, including business studies and economics, sociology, area studies and geography, history, political science and public policy as well as legal studies. Abstracts of 500 words including title, contact details of authors, research problem and question, sketch of the empirical case, and preliminary conclusions should be sent to: a.ebner@soz.uni-frankfurt.de. Deadline is 15 May 2023.

The workshop is fully funded by the German Academic Exchange Service, which includes costs of travel, accommodation, and catering during the workshop. It is open for applications from researchers of all academic levels, involving doctorate candidates, postdoc researchers, professional researchers, lecturers as well as professors. Crucially, applicants must be affiliated with a German academic institution or an academic institution in the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldova), or Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan). Citizens from these countries affiliated at academic institutions in other countries might also apply. Also, we welcome submissions from practitioners in the policy field of entrepreneurship from the countries mentioned above. All papers, presentations and discussions will proceed in English language. Workshop proceedings are going to be published either in a special issue with an international academic journal or in an edited volume with an international publisher.

Key dates for participating in the workshop:

- *15 May 2023*: Submission of abstracts,
- *22 May 2023*: Notification on invitations.
- *1 September 2023*: Submission of first drafts of papers.
- *13-16 September 2023*: Workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Abstracts should be sent as email attachment directly to:
Prof. Dr. Alexander Ebner – a.ebner@soz.uni-frankfurt.de

Further information on organizational issues is available from:
Stéphane Kouassi – kouassi@soz.uni-frankfurt.de