

# ***Entrepreneurship and Social Change in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Eastern Europe: Decolonization, Identities, and Empowerment***

## ***International Academic Workshop***

When: 10-13 October 2024

Where: Astana, Kazakhstan

Funding: German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Deadline for Submission of Abstracts: 31 May 2024

### ***Call for Papers***

Decolonization is a complex and multi-layered process of turning away from colonial systems of power and control. At its core, it is about regaining agency, identity, and power in post-colonial societies. Entrepreneurship can be a relevant instrument of decolonization, as it offers locally embedded communities the opportunity to redefine control over their own economic existence. In the context of entrepreneurship, decolonization can contribute to the creation of business models that are socially and environmentally sustainable, rooted in local contexts and cultures, with shared concerns for the common good becoming part of the entrepreneurial set of objectives. This involves the formation of businesses based on traditional knowledge and practices in fields such as farming or crafts, which in turn can help to revive or preserve the cultural heritage, promote local self-determination, and create a new livelihood for marginalized communities. In this respect, entrepreneurship can help to consolidate post-colonial cultural identity and thus challenge colonial views of development. Accordingly, entrepreneurship may become a decolonising social force that contributes to the creation of new economic and social systems that break with colonial power structures.

However, the potential of entrepreneurship as a decolonial force is also associated with critical aspects, which relate most pressingly to the problem of systemic economic and social inequalities. Entrepreneurs working to reclaim traditional pre-colonial practices, processes and products may face a lack of resources, such as access to capital, markets, and infrastructure. Also, they may face legal uncertainty and administrative obstacles, paralleled by obstructive social and cultural practices of traditionalist segments in their own communities. Moreover, entrepreneurial activity that is solely profit-oriented can lead to the commercial decomposition of the cultural heritage in question. In this way, established oligarchic business groups may exploit the newly created market opportunities for themselves and block entrepreneurial market access. Crucially, the connection between entrepreneurship and decolonisation is hardly taught in international entrepreneurship education: curricula remain largely confined to colonial contexts. Therefore, decolonisation here refers to an approach that questions seemingly self-evident colonial or postcolonial assumptions and practices and confronts them with alternative approaches from local contexts.

This complex relationship between entrepreneurship, decolonisation, identities, and empowerment is particularly conspicuous in the formerly Czarist and Soviet colonised countries in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. In this respect, the societies of the post-Soviet region are regarded as social laboratories for the formation of private entrepreneurship under historically specific institutional and cultural conditions. They are emerging economies that share the Soviet legacy of forced industrialisation in a centrally planned economy accompanied by the legal, social, and most often also physical elimination of local entrepreneurship. After independence, nation-building in these countries was generally associated with difficulties in establishing market systems. Business activities were all too often relegated to informality, while economic life became subject to oligarchic rent-seeking and

institutional instability. More recently, however, new local entrepreneurial ecosystems have been emerging in a wide array of industries and markets ranging from tourism via arts and crafts all the way to digital technologies, which combine empowerment with the drive for social change.

Resounding with these topics and issues, the international academic workshop “Entrepreneurship and Social Change in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Eastern Europe: Decolonization, Identities, and Empowerment” is set to pursue the following key questions with regard to the economies under consideration:

- Which entrepreneurial motives, strategies and practices can be observed, and how do they relate to empowerment and identity formation?
- Which industries and markets stand out as fields of entrepreneurial activity, and which specificities do they offer for empowerment and social change?
- Which governmental efforts in promoting entrepreneurial empowerment can be detected, and in how are they countered by legal and cultural obstructions?
- What is the impact of entrepreneurship on postcolonial social changes and development perspectives?

The workshop is fully funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which covers costs of air travel (economy), ground travel, accommodation, and catering during the workshop. It is open for submissions from researchers of all academic levels, involving doctorate candidates, postdoc researchers, professional researchers, lecturers, and 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, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan). Citizens from these countries affiliated with academic institutions in other countries might also apply.

We invite the submission of abstracts for papers. Proposed papers need to address the questions discussed above regarding the formerly Soviet colonized economies of Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Eastern Europe respectively. Diverse disciplinary angles in entrepreneurship research are welcome, including business studies and economics, sociology, anthropology and geography, history, political science and public policy as well as legal studies. Papers with a focus in qualitative or quantitative empirical research are welcome, yet also theoretical papers are encouraged. Papers, presentations, and discussions will proceed in English language. Workshop contributions are set to be published in an edited special issue of a peer-reviewed international academic journal.

Abstracts of 500 words including paper title, contact details of author(s), research problem and research question, sketch of theoretical framework and/or empirical case, and preliminary conclusions should be sent until 31 May 2024 to [submission.abs@gmail.com](mailto:submission.abs@gmail.com).

Key dates for submissions to the workshop:

- *31 May 2024*: Submission of abstracts: [submission.abs@gmail.com](mailto:submission.abs@gmail.com)
- *7 June 2024*: Notification on acceptance and invitations.
- *30 September 2023*: Submission of first drafts of papers.
- *10-13 October 2024*: Workshop at Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Further information is available from:

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