

Peripheral migrant entrepreneurial identities within urban transformation

Summary

The project focuses on the interrelation between transnational migration flows, entrepreneurial agency, and urban placemaking in Tallinn by studying the (in)formal entrepreneurial practices of underrepresented migrant groups, whose presence in urban space is simultaneously marked by visibility and invisibility. By integrating theoretical frameworks from entrepreneurship and urban studies, the project explores how the spatial and temporal dynamics of urban transformation generate both opportunities and constraints for these practices, and, respectively, how urban (in)formal economies are shaped by the marginalised agencies. This is expected to advance the conceptualisation of contemporary entrepreneurial identities as they emerge from peripheral migrant experiences shaped by neoliberal urban dynamics. While primarily intended to employ a qualitative methodology, the project can be enhanced through a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and/or spatial data). In Tallinn, a second-tier capital city geographically situated on the margins of the European Union, a small but growing community of “new” migrants from geographically and/or culturally more distant areas is emerging. Given the uncertainties of the time, the increase of these groups and their implications for society and the economy are to be expected. While the theorisation of related processes is largely developed on such migrant entrepreneurs in cities and metropolises of the “old” Europe, the academic research often overlooks the perspective of Eastern European cities, which have only relatively recently begun receiving more of those migrant groups. This project, with a specific focus on (in)formal entrepreneurial activities, aims to generate deeper insights into the socio-cultural and economic implications of these new and underrepresented migrant groups on urban life and economies in cities like Tallinn. The research is expected to offer relevant input for urban governance to better respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse urban population and to support their integration by enhancing both their socio-cultural wellbeing and economic contribution to the Estonian society. Drawing on a relational concept of space (e.g. Löw 2018; Amin and Thrift 2002; building on Lefebvre 1974) and migrant entrepreneurship studies (Kloosterman et al 1999; Kloosterman and Rath 2001; Ram and Jones 2008), the project would also support a more complex consideration of the unique and dynamic ways in which these groups contribute to the social creation of urban space.

Research field:	Business
Supervisors:	Aki Harima Liis Ojamäe
Availability:	This position is available.
Offered by:	School of Business and Governance Department of Business Administration
Application deadline:	Applications are accepted between June 01, 2025 00:00 and June 30, 2025 23:59 (Europe/Zurich)

Description

Main Supervisor: Associate Professor Liis Ojamäe, PhD

Co-Supervisor: Tenured Associate Professor Aki Harima, PhD

Responsibilities and (foreseen) tasks:

- During the PhD studies, the student is expected to develop and implement a more detailed research plan within the proposed topic, resulting in at least three peer-reviewed articles published in international journals, meeting the standards required for a PhD thesis.
- The candidate is also expected to engage in small-scale teaching and supervision related to a PhD candidate's field of expertise and active participation in the department's activities.

The candidate is expected to have

- a master's degree in social sciences or in other areas with additional proof of social science research skills
- a clear interest in the topic of the position

- excellent command of English (additional language skills are beneficial)
- strong and demonstrable writing and analytical skills
- capacity to work both as an independent researcher and as part of an international team

The following experience is beneficial:

- urban studies related knowledge, skills and experience
- working knowledge in software and tools relevant for social and urban research, e.g. qualitative analysis software, quantitative analysis software, GIS
- previous research experience or publications

The candidate should submit an initial research plan that further develops the project's focus and aim, as well as its theoretical and methodological framework as outlined above, and includes initial research questions, a data collection strategy, methods of analysis, and a proposed timeline.

We offer

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- 4-year PhD position (employed as an Early-Stage Researcher at the Department of Business Administration) in a strong team of researchers.
- Opportunities for conference visits, research stays and networking with leading universities and research centres in the fields of urban and entrepreneurship studies
- All PhD positions are guaranteed a gross income of at least 2300 EUR and Estonian national health insurance.

About the department

Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech) is an international scientific community with approximately 9,000 students and 2,000 employees; it is one of the largest universities in Estonia, the leading EU country in digitalisation. The university's strengths are broad multidisciplinary study/research interests, a modern research environment, and strong collaboration with international educational and research institutions. TalTech is aiming to be an organisation leading the way to a sustainable digital future.

The research carried out at the **Department of Business Administration** in the School of Business and Governance in TalTech deals with various aspects of business – entrepreneurship, sustainability, knowledge and technology transfer, operations and strategic management, digitalisation, marketing, supply chain management, accounting and performance management. The School has over 200 employees.

Additional information

For further information, please contact Associate Professor Liis Ojamäe at liis.ojamae@taltech.ee and visit <https://taltech.ee/en/department-business-administration> and <https://taltech.ee/en/phd-admission>

TalTech has a green and one of Europe's most compact university campuses, including the Tehnopol Tallinn Science Park. Low hierarchy, academic freedom and a balanced work and family life are valued at TalTech. The university provides individual development and training opportunities, material and non-material tokens of acknowledgement, sporting opportunities at TalTech Sports Club and all-staff activities.

TalTech, as an employer, brings together representatives from a wide range of disciplines - engineers and social scientists, business and biotechnology, and data scientists - with a shared mission to develop Estonian higher education and research. Keywords that characterise TalTech today are rapid development, interdisciplinarity, and internationalisation. The university has an international working environment; the functional languages are English and Estonian.



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