

Lela Grießbach

How Culture Influences Women's Entrepreneurship in Underdeveloped Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: The Case of Georgia

Introduction

As a component of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, culture plays a pivotal role in women's entrepreneurship (Spigel 2017; Ogundana 2020b; Bullough et al. 2021; Yousafzai et al. 2022). When talking about culture in terms of entrepreneurship, scholars mostly refer to cultural norms and the general attitudes that shape an environment in which (women's) entrepreneurial activity is either socially desired and supported or avoided (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Ojediran and Anderson 2020; Sheikh et al. 2021). Accordingly, this defines the status of entrepreneurs in society, as well as the type of entrepreneurial success stories which are told, how these stories are communicated, how failures and risks are perceived, and the extent to which an entrepreneurial mindset is encouraged (Bzhalava et al. 2017; Bullough et al. 2021; Elam et al. 2022).

How culture influences women's entrepreneurship in underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystems (EE) has not yet been sufficiently researched (Hechavarría et al. 2017; Bastian et al. 2023). In the context of women's entrepreneurship, this chapter conceptualises the term *underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystem* as a (business) environment that lacks the necessary support structures, resources, and conditions that are particularly relevant for women's entrepreneurial activity (Ogundana 2020a; Grießbach 2025).

Many transition economies – states that underwent a shift from socialist to capitalist systems following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s (Nodia 2016; Rutland 2023), hereafter referred to as post-Soviet countries – can be characterised as underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystems (Grießbach 2025). In these contexts, entrepreneurship research in general and women's entrepreneurship in particular are similarly underdeveloped (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Rybnikova et al. 2020). Accordingly, in the context of post-Soviet countries, only a few studies consider the topics either in the field of women's entrepreneurship or gendered institutions (Iakovleva et al. 2013; Gradskova and Morell 2018; Rugina 2019; Vershinina et al. 2020). Research has shown that though formal institutions such as

government entities, laws and regulations, and financial and educational institutions have changed little since the 1990s, some post-Soviet countries, such as Georgia, have managed to set an example in terms of entrepreneurship. However, informal institutions like social and gender norms remain deeply rooted and continue to have a significant influence on women's entrepreneurial development (Waterston 2018; Gurchiani 2021; Tabatadze and Gorgadze 2023; UN Women and the ILO 2023; Griessbach and Ettl 2024). Existing studies conclude that, in Georgia, early marriages, low perspectives in terms of personal and professional development (especially in rural areas), and culturally glorified mothering roles hinder women in their professional development and undertaking of economic activity, including entrepreneurship (FAO 2018; UN Women and SDC 2018; Körner 2019; Gelovani et al. 2022). Furthermore, a lack of social support from family members and relatives (who, especially after marriage and childbirth, force women to stop studying and working in order to better focus on household duties) discourages women from becoming economically active (Lezhava et al. 2014; Margvelashvili 2017; Margvelashvili et al. 2021). Consequently, it is important to provide more research which deeply analyses the cultural and gendered dimensions that influence the entrepreneurial activity of women in a post-Soviet country context such as Georgia. This chapter therefore aims to examine how culture, as an important EE component, influences women's entrepreneurship in Georgia by specifically considering local, gendered norms (Waterston 2018; Marlow 2020; Bluhm et al. 2021), as women's motivations for engaging in entrepreneurial activity are often shaped by prevailing gender norms, expectations, and structural inequalities (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Manolova et al. 2017a; Brush et al. 2019). This chapter aims to draw attention to the fact that culture is not peripheral but central to understanding entrepreneurial ecosystems — particularly with regard to gender dynamics (Bullough et al. 2021). It shows that, as is the case with formal institutions such as laws and policies, informal institutions (culture, norms, religion) can either support or suppress women's entrepreneurial endeavours (Rugina 2019; Vershinina et al. 2020; Karim et al. 2023).

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: First, the theoretical background is outlined, followed by a discussion of important aspects of Georgia as the research context. The next section summarises the methodology, which is followed by the results of interviews with women entrepreneurs in Georgia. The subsequent section discusses these results and highlights key findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main insights.

Theoretical Background

The entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) concept has gained increased attention from both academics and policymakers due to its contextual approach to studying entrepreneurship (World Economic Forum 2013; Stam and Spigel 2017; Stam and van de Ven 2021; Wurth et al. 2022; Muldoon et al. 2024).

Several approaches can be found in the literature that describe EE, such as Stam and Spigel's (2017) definition of entrepreneurial ecosystems as "a set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory" (Stam and Spigel 2017, p. 1). Audretsch and Belitski (2017) conceptualise EE as the institutional, organisational and systemic factors that interact and influence the identification and commercialisation of entrepreneurial opportunities (Audretsch and Belitski 2017, p. 1032).

Culture is an essential component of entrepreneurial ecosystems (Isenberg 2011; Spigel, 2017). Spigel (2017) defines entrepreneurial ecosystems as "combinations of social, political, economic, and cultural elements within a region that support the development and growth of innovative startups [...]" (Spigel 2017, p. 50). In his EE model, Spigel (2017) presents cultural, social and material attributes as important components of entrepreneurial ecosystems. Cultural attributes imply supportive culture and histories of entrepreneurship (Pahnke and Welter 2019; Donaldson 2021; Stam and van de Ven 2021), while social attributes refer to worker talent, investment capital, networks, mentors and role models (Snellman and Sola 2022; Karim et al. 2023).

When it comes to women's entrepreneurship, cultural and social attributes have a specific meaning. Scholars emphasise that both formal and informal institutions impact men and women asymmetrically in terms of entrepreneurship, mostly by placing women at disadvantage (Brush et al. 2019; Sheikh et al. 2021). Spigel (2017) describes culture in terms of entrepreneurial ecosystems as beliefs and outlooks about entrepreneurship that play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial norms and practices. Accordingly, cultural beliefs normalise entrepreneurial outlooks and support the institutionalisation of entrepreneurship (Spigel 2017). Further studies have demonstrated that cultural outlooks are crucial in showing how certain social interactions (for example, entrepreneurship, as it is characterized by relationships, networks, and ongoing engagement with others) and occupations of choice (for example, commercial entrepreneurship) are performed in certain communities and regions (Mikkelsen 2018; Vershinina et al. 2020; Voß et al. 2022; Muhammad et al. 2023; Angulo-Guerrero et al. 2024). While commercial entrepreneurship is focused on profit and market success,

other forms of entrepreneurship, such as social, cultural, or community entrepreneurship, might focus on social impact, cultural expression, or personal fulfilment, all of which reflect the values embedded in specific cultural contexts (World Bank 2020; Naldi et al. 2021; Yousafzai et al. 2022; Muhammad et al. 2023; OECD/EBRD 2023).

In the field of women's entrepreneurship, various studies have highlighted the importance of cultural attitudes that support and normalize women's entrepreneurial activities, risk-taking, and an innovation-friendly culture (Bullough et al. 2021; Gimenez Jimenez et al. 2022; Muhammad et al. 2023). This is especially important in the context of women's entrepreneurship, as it is closely linked to positive female role models, gender equality, and the societal acceptance of female leadership. If these elements are lacking in cultural attitudes, entrepreneurial behaviour is therefore not supported among women. This means that women tend to be less willing to take risks and are more likely to perceive their environment as hostile to innovation (for instance, through fear of social sanctions, exclusion from networks, or a lack of support) (Ogundana 2020b; Ojediran and Anderson 2020; Shohel et al. 2023).

Research on the cultural characteristics of entrepreneurial ecosystems shows that an entrepreneur's family and being part of a startup community have a particularly strong influence on women, regardless of a country's level of development (Mikkelsen 2018; Bastian et al. 2023; Karim et al. 2023). This support can be both emotional and practical, such as the provision of resources within family or community contexts (Iakovleva 2017; Ogundana 2020a; Naldi et al. 2021).

At the same time, studies from developing countries and especially from patriarchal societies outline an explicit, gendered cultural influence on women's entrepreneurship (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Iakovleva et al. 2013; Ojediran and Anderson 2020; Muhammad et al. 2023; Angulo-Guerrero et al. 2024). Women encounter significant challenges which stem from normative environments, such as early socialization, cultural norms, religious expectations, and prevailing societal beliefs (Rugina 2019; Sheikh et al. 2021; Shohel et al. 2023). These factors shape how both society and family members perceive women-led businesses and influence the level of support women entrepreneurs receive in their decision-making processes (Ogundana 2020a; Yousafzai et al. 2022; Karim et al. 2023).

In many societies, entrepreneurship is normatively associated with a traditionally male domain (Ogundana 2020a; Bullough et al. 2021) that is characterized by presumed masculine traits such as dominance, autonomy, economic control, and decision-making. These often explicitly exclude women, meaning that entrepreneurship is not assumed to be an appropriate

path for them (Madison et al. 2022; Muhammad et al. 2023; Rugina and Ahl 2024). As a result, women's entrepreneurship is rarely accepted as a viable career path in such societies (Ojediran and Anderson 2020; Karim et al. 2023). As cultural beliefs and religion in many non-Western patriarchal societies strengthen the violation of women's rights (Das Gupta 2015; MICS Georgia 2018; Shohel et al. 2023; WEF 2023), women's legitimacy and their status as entrepreneurs are challenging in these contexts (Ojediran and Anderson 2020; Vershinina et al. 2020). Further studies highlight how gender and culture dynamically interact and affect women's entrepreneurship at multiple levels, therefore call for more research which draws attention to these aspects in women's entrepreneurship research (Brush et al. 2019; Ogundana 2020b; Bullough et al. 2021; Yousafzai et al. 2022).

The next section presents Georgia as a research context, providing insights into how women's entrepreneurship in the country is constructed from a cultural perspective.

Georgia as a Research Context

According to studies in which formal institutions influence the broader framework for entrepreneurship in post-Soviet countries, where the legacy of socialism continues to affect societal attitudes, informal institutions play a significant role in shaping women's entrepreneurial activities (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Iakovleva et al. 2013; Sätre 2016; Griessbach and Ettl 2024). Although legal frameworks and regulations may formally support women in starting businesses, prevailing social norms can still act as barriers, discouraging women from pursuing entrepreneurship (Wu and Li 2020; Sheikh et al. 2021; Floro 2022; Muhammad et al. 2023). In this regard, studies suggest that the Soviet legacy has left behind a set of values and norms that are often unsupportive of entrepreneurial behaviour (Sätre, 2016; Rugina 2019). In the context of women's entrepreneurship in Georgia, it is therefore important to consider the Soviet legacy (Sätre 2016; Shahnazaryan et al. 2016; Morell and Gradszkova, 2018). In this respect, it is important to shed light on gender stereotypes in Georgia and how they influence women's entrepreneurship, as gender also played an important role in the Soviet Union (Shatirishvili and Manning 2011; Shahnazaryan et al. 2016; Rugina 2019; Tskipurishvili 2020; Bluhm et al. 2021). This is highlighted in the next section.

In addition, Georgia's location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, its rich traditional, cultural and historical heritage (including its centuries-old language and alphabet, as well as its Christian Orthodox religion) has

created distinctive characteristics in its formal and informal institutional environments, which have in turn influenced the development of women's entrepreneurship (Margvelashvili 2017; FAO 2018; UN Women and SDC 2018; Diakonidze 2019; UN Women and the ILO 2023; Griessbach and Ettl 2024). This distinctiveness has been further influenced by Western-style liberal market dynamics, particularly after the so-called Rose Revolution, occurred in November 2003, which saw the government begin implementing reforms under the Eastern Partnership program and with the aim of achieving EU candidate status.¹ (World Bank 2020; Pechlaner et al. 2021; OECD/EBRD 2023). These specific characteristics of Georgia provides valuable insights into entrepreneurial ecosystems and women's entrepreneurship from a cultural perspective in a post-Soviet context.

Gender Stereotypes and Local Norms

Gender stereotypes remain deep-rooted in Georgia, though attitudes towards gender equality are slowly changing (Rakshit et al. 2020; Floro 2022; Kekenadze et al. 2023). Several studies and reports have shown that the persistence of traditional gender roles remains an ongoing issue in Georgia, especially in terms of women's participation in public and economic life and women's leadership (Margvelashvili 2017; Chachava 2020; Imerlishvili and Qaikhosroshvili 2020; Modebadze 2021; Jokhadze 2022). Due to traditional gender norms that assign domestic responsibilities and childcare primarily to women (Rakshit et al. 2020), Georgian women take on a disproportionate share of household duties. This imbalance limits their ability to participate fully in public and economic life and reduces the time available for rest and personal well-being (UN Women and SDC 2018; Floro 2022).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in which gender equality was (at least formally) supported, Georgia and other post-Soviet countries started "re-traditionalising" gender roles as part of the nation-building process (Gradskova and Morell 2018; Rutland 2023). The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) played a significant role in this process (Metreveli 2016; Minesashvili 2017). Georgians' high level of trust in the GOC have led to it becoming an institution that can dictate moral standards and customs (Lebanidze and Kakabadze 2023), including traditional gender roles (Körner 2019; Gurchiani 2021). However, the narratives of the GOC, which are

1 In December 2023, Georgia was granted EU candidate status, marking the formal beginning of the accession process. However, this process has been *de facto* suspended, as Georgia's current national-conservative ruling party has taken a course of action that is viewed critically by the EU (European Commission 2024).

largely rooted in traditional and stereotypical views of gender relations and broadly supported by the population, specifically promoted the revival of two narratives from the pre-Soviet time, deeply ingrained in Georgian culture: the woman in the family, in which a woman's career is a keeper of the household, and the defender of the homeland, which defines a woman's primary function as a mother who gives birth and raises sons, onto whom she should pass their cultural and religious heritage (Körner 2019; Tskipurishvili 2020).

The narratives outlined above reinforce a clear division of labour and responsibilities along gender lines, thereby perpetuating gender inequality (UN Women Georgia 2017; Rakshit et al. 2020; Iluridze et al. 2021; Floro 2022). Both the Georgian government and the Georgian Orthodox Church have faced frequent criticism for promoting or tolerating such narratives, which are seen as obstacles to democratic development, secular state-building, and the country's European integration efforts (Metreveli 2016; Minesashvili 2017; Aydingün et al. 2021; Khakhutaishvili 2024). However, an increased awareness among women of their rights has been observed in recent years (Javakhishvili et al. 2020; GeoStat 2022).

Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs and their Businesses

Due to the lack of gender-segregated statistical data and scientific work, it remains challenging to provide comprehensive information about the characteristics of women entrepreneurs and their businesses in Georgia (UN Women and the ILO 2023). As with general employment rates, the share of women in entrepreneurial activities is very low (GeoStat 2022, 2023a, 2023b). According to the Georgian Statistical Office, about 33 % of large, medium and small-sized enterprises are owned by women (GeoStat 2022). The low participation of women in entrepreneurship in Georgia can be explained by a lack of formal institutional factors, such as the absence of financial assistance by banks or investors tailored to women, entrepreneurship programs specifically for women, or women in rural areas facing acute infrastructural issues (Margvelashvili 2017; UN Women and the ILO 2023; Griessbach and Ettl 2024).

At the same time, statistically, Georgia outperforms its neighbour Turkey and EU countries such as Germany slightly when it comes to firms with female managers (Enterprise Surveys 2024). Notably, according to the most recent World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index (World Bank 2020), which assesses the formal conditions for starting businesses in 190 countries, Georgia is 7th, ahead of Latvia (19), Germany (22), the Russian Federation (28), Turkey (33) and Belarus (49). However, the World Bank report primari-

ly focuses on general access to infrastructure rather than to gender specific limitations (World Bank 2020). Also, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) conducted in 2014 in Georgia shows positive but gender-neutral statistics, for example regarding social values towards entrepreneurship in the country (Lezhava et al. 2014). These are higher in Georgia than in many EU countries. Social values towards entrepreneurship can explain how society values entrepreneurship and the societal status that entrepreneurs enjoy (Lezhava et al. 2014). Finally, the most recent national survey of women entrepreneurs conducted by the Georgian Statistical Office provides a clear picture of women's motivations for starting a business in Georgia, with the three most cited indicators being "I need more flexibility," "I want to be my own boss" and "I want to increase my potential for having a higher income" (GeoStat 2022). Accordingly, it can be assumed that the conditions of the current labour market and the societal importance placed on housework do not offer women opportunities to advance their personal or professional development as employees (UN Women and the ILO 2023). Therefore, women might see entrepreneurship as an appropriate way of overcoming this dilemma and achieving better work-life balance and economic independence (Margvelashvili 2017).

This assumption is supported by further studies showing that, given the traditional gender perceptions which attribute housework and childcare solely to women (Rakshit et al. 2020; CSSR Georgia 2021), Georgian women take on a disproportionate amount of work in the home, leaving little room for engagement in public and economic life or time for adequate rest and leisure (UN Women and SDC 2018; Floro 2022).

Based on the findings of the above-mentioned studies, it can be concluded that, in Georgia, women might perceive entrepreneurship as an alternative career choice which enables them to manage their professional lives while doing housework and taking care of children and the elderly. This is partially confirmed by the fact that around 27 % of women entrepreneurs run their businesses from home (GeoStat 2022; UN Women and the ILO 2023). While such developments can be considered positive from an economic perspective, the unequal share of housework still presents a double burden for women in Georgia (Rakshit et al. 2020; Floro 2022).

Despite the initial findings, further comprehensive research is still needed in order to deepen our understanding of how cultural and gendered norms influence women's entrepreneurship in Georgia. Therefore, this chapter aims to fill in this gap and answer the following research question: How do local, gendered cultural norms influence women's motivations and participation in entrepreneurship in Georgia? A qualitative research method

has been applied in order to study women entrepreneurs' perspectives in this regard.

Method

For the present study, face-to-face interviews with local women entrepreneurs in Georgia have been applied as a data collection method (Alshenqeti 2014; Coleman 2019; Bihu 2020). Altogether, 42 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with women entrepreneurs were conducted.

The first interviews with women entrepreneurs in Georgia were conducted in May 2022, then transcribed and coded. Building on the initial coding results, further additional interviews were conducted in September 2022. As soon as no additional information was generated from the interviews, no new interviewees were contacted. The interviews typically lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All the conversations were recorded and subsequently transcribed according to Dresing and Pehl (2015) and analysed using a thematic text analysis concept by Kuckartz (2016) and the computer-based program MAXQDA.

The age of the women interviewed ranged from 24 to 68. Most of them had completed vocational training or held a university degree. At the time of their interviews, 32 of the women had at least one child, 17 of whom had children under 18. According to the interviews, women's businesses are mainly in the fields of trade, agriculture, and hospitality. Only a few were active in the education, consulting, or healthcare sectors. At the time of the interviews 8 women were self-employed. Most businesses run by women have 1 to 10 employees, while less than a third of the women entrepreneurs interviewed employed family members or seasonal workers. The age of the businesses also varied greatly, though most were 3, 5, 8 or 10 years old.

Results

In the following, aspects of culture are presented which the women entrepreneurs interviewed identified as having an impact on women's entrepreneurship in Georgia. These include societal expectations, gender stereotypes, female role models and strategies to overcome socio-cultural barriers and gender stereotypes.

In the interviews, women entrepreneurs considered the current *societal expectations* and *gender stereotypes* to be an issue. Accordingly, this type of

informal institution points to expectations of supposedly prestigious jobs for women, perceptions of leadership, the societal role of wife and mother and the Soviet cultural heritage. Women entrepreneurs indicated that some professions are considered more prestigious for or better suited to women and are therefore more appreciated in society.² For example, one student who decided to start a business by setting up an online shop selling hand-sewn bags and accessories was mocked by her family and relatives, who said she was nothing more than a glorified street vendor³. The distinction between what are considered prestigious and non-prestigious jobs appears to be more pronounced in rural areas. Additionally, the type of work commonly performed in these regions is often viewed as degrading, particularly when undertaken by women with university degrees. For example, one woman entrepreneur who formerly worked as a teacher said that no one in her village could understand why she chose to become a dairy farmer.⁴

Societal expectations were also discussed in the context of leadership.⁵ According to the interviewees, there is a widespread assumption that a boss should be a man, and typically older. Several women entrepreneurs reported that, during negotiations and discussions, they were frequently asked to contact their boss directly or to pass messages on to him.⁶

In addition, women articulated how they are not taken seriously as businesspeople because of their sex:

“It was unacceptable in my environment to go shopping for materials as a young woman carrying heavy bags, buying from male shoemakers and so on. Yes, of course, it often had happened to me, and I kept protesting; so what if I am a woman?” (WE2:169–172)

Another issue in terms of public attitudes towards women’s entrepreneurship is the role of being married and a mother. It seems that society assumes a woman is only successful if she is married and a mother, and that a woman can never reach “the level of a man.” Therefore, women are led to believe that they would fail without male assistance. This in turn leads to the ascription that if a woman is successful in business (without a male’s

2 For example, WE1:358–361; WE3:253–256; WE13:104–108; WE23:225–239; WE37:321–333; WE42:115–120.

3 WE3:254–259.

4 WE16:97–102.

5 For example, WE2:188–192; WE3:217–222; WE7:69–72; WE9:416–421; WE26:108–113; WE29:274–276.

6 For example, WE11:137–161; WE14:159–163; WE17:196–201; WE18:67–71; WE42:115–120.

assistance), she has failed in her other “more important roles.” Such societal expectations reproduce *gender stereotypes* in women's entrepreneurship.⁷

“I have been told many times that you are a woman, and you cannot do this job... Mostly by men. And I always thought, wait, I will show you. Also, my boss told me that without them [the company] I would be nothing. But it was a great motivation for me to become a successful entrepreneur that he sees... and I have realized that now they sometimes buy things from me.” (WE8:92–95)

Most women entrepreneurs link stereotypical gender attitudes in society to the *Soviet legacy*. Many interviewees noted that although women had access to quality education during the Soviet era, critical thinking and freedom of expression were largely discouraged, especially among female students. Consequently, Soviet women rarely challenged prevailing gender norms, as they were expected to be model Soviet citizens. As a result, many women sacrificed their personal freedom and happiness, devoting themselves entirely to their families, children and jobs.

“Soviet women did not know themselves well; they didn't know what female happiness was, they didn't know what female freedom was, and all these things brought them to this situation.” (WE22:435–436)

Women entrepreneurs stated that women in (post-)Soviet societies have been socialized to believe in their own limitations. They were taught that they couldn't accomplish certain things, especially physically or mentally challenging tasks or leadership roles, because they lacked the necessary “strength” or ability. This internalized belief has led many women in such societies to develop low self-confidence and self-esteem. According to the interviewees, this socialization of women explains the deep-rooted cultural and historical influence on women's self-image in the post-Soviet space and explains why many women hesitate to take on entrepreneurial or public roles.

“I didn't believe in myself, I was also a typical representative of that generation, which we – I still say – should overcome this issue, especially in rural areas. Our citizens suffer from low self-esteem because we did not see any support for 30 years after the Communist regime and we are still struggling with ourselves...” (WE27:84–87)

One interviewee stated that a lot of women stop working as soon as they have children, neglecting their professional development.⁸ Similar personal experiences were articulated by other women entrepreneurs:

7 For example, WE11; WE14; WE25; WE35.

8 WE1:11–12.

“In Georgia, with respect to tradition, women are still in the ‘back row’. This hinders us in many ways. Nowadays, women and the role of women in society have improved a little, but there are some barriers we women are unable to break. We depend strongly on the family, my husband for example is very traditional, he really doesn’t like to see a woman ‘in the front row’, and thus there are many restrictions for me.” (WE17:196–201)

Against this backdrop, women entrepreneurs emphasized the significance of *female role models* and their positive impact on women’s entrepreneurship. Nearly all the interviewees spoke about other women in a positive and sincere manner. The majority described women in Georgia as ambitious, smart and creative. One interviewee said:

“In my opinion, women entrepreneurs in Georgia are very creative. I have met women entrepreneurs from different fields, and I am completely amazed sometimes, especially at sale exhibitions where you can assess products. I am not only impressed by their personal traits but also how they create so many interesting and different types of products.” (WE42:239–243)

Many interviewees expressed great respect for women entrepreneurs in Georgia, highlighting that women operating in patriarchal societies must possess exceptional courage to overcome economic challenges, cultural norms, and stereotypes. They noted that this resilience distinguishes Georgian women entrepreneurs from their counterparts in Western countries when it comes to achieving success. A key insight from the interviews was that women’s entrepreneurial success is largely shaped by the environmental conditions and local context in which they have been socialized and currently operate. One interviewee said:

“Everyone defines success differently. I think it depends on the costs and efforts a woman has paid for her success. For example, when one woman from a village starts a Georgian sweets business and delivers it to a supermarket, of course she should be considered successful.” (WE23:303–309)

Consequently, women entrepreneurs mentioned that they are particularly inspired by other women entrepreneurs who achieved their goals by *overcoming socio-cultural barriers and gender stereotypes*.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the findings and the relevance of these findings for the development of women’s entrepreneurship in a post-Soviet, transition economy context such as Georgia.

Discussion

The findings of the interviews confirm important aspects from existing studies and provide additional insights regarding women's entrepreneurship in a transition economy context. Relevant topics that have been discussed in the literature are societal expectations and gender stereotypes and how they have a strong influence on women's entrepreneurship in transition economies (Welter and Smallbone 2010; Iakovleva et al. 2013; Rugina 2019; Griessbach and Ettl 2020; Rugina and Ahl 2024). Furthermore, in accordance with previous research (Gradskova and Morell 2018; Floro 2022; UN Women and the ILO 2023), this work has shown that women in Georgia are primarily associated with domestic work and a mother's role, less as economically active citizens. Such attitudes are firmly cemented and rarely questioned, sometimes not even by women (Rakshit et al. 2020). In addition, it seems that women are criticized for taking up "non-typical" female professions. This is particularly common in rural areas, where societal and gender norms are deeply rooted (FAO 2018; Abesadze and Paresashvili 2018; Iluridze et al. 2021).

An emerging insight is the perceived shame associated with certain types of work (such as tailoring or cleaning), even if these are important and economically necessary jobs. In this respect, it is assumed that educated women would devalue themselves by engaging in such professions. This adds a new layer to discussions surrounding how class and education intersect with gender norms, something rarely discussed in previous studies in transition economy contexts (Rybnikova et al. 2020; Rugina and Ahl 2024).

In terms of self-perception and the psychological heritage of the Soviet upbringing of women, this study reinforces earlier findings (Shahnazaryan et al. 2016; Morell and Gradskova 2018; Waterston 2018; Bluhm et al. 2021) and shows that women in post-Soviet countries such as Georgia still struggle with confidence, self-initiative and autonomy. The entrepreneurial perspectives of the women interviewed have extended this knowledge from an emotional and generational lens. This means that women recognized the generation-specific patterns or "generational trauma" of not understanding or valuing personal autonomy as a woman. This style of upbringing was passed on from mothers to daughters. Once again, this finding confirms how powerful the Soviet legacy is and how it still shapes gender roles in former Soviet societies (Sätre 2016; Gradskova 2018; Rugina 2019).

This study also shows that awareness of the ease of doing business in Georgia is acknowledged within the country and abroad, a fact which is repeatedly confirmed by international rankings and reports in this area (World Bank 2020). The present study has also found that informal instituti-

ons, such as religion and societal expectations towards women, contain huge challenges in terms of entrepreneurship. This has rarely been discussed in previous studies in the Georgian context (Bzhalava et al. 2017; BDO 2018; ISET Policy Institute 2021).

In the present study, all the women entrepreneurs interviewed outlined how important it is to have “societal approval” as a successful woman entrepreneur. More specifically, the legitimacy of being a woman entrepreneur is often linked with public expectations of also being a wife and mother. This means that being a wife and mother is not only a woman’s personal identity but also an additional form of social capital, confirming the success of a woman’s entrepreneurial efforts. This observation contributes to a deeper understanding of how informal institutions interact with gender specific entrepreneurship (Brush et al. 2019; Wu and Li 2020; Schaper 2024).

Finally, this study has provided new insights into how women define success and how role models influence their entrepreneurial career choices in a transition economy context. Though previous studies have also concentrated on challenges and barriers in terms of women’s entrepreneurship in underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystems (Ogundana 2020b; Sheikh et al. 2021; Karim et al. 2023; Schaper 2024; Shohel et al. 2024), this study sheds light on sources of motivation and the pride of women. The women entrepreneurs interviewed in this study talked about how they have managed to overcome stereotypes, what it means to be role models for their children and other women and how they have contributed to breaking down (gender) stereotypes. These women define entrepreneurial success not only from a financial perspective but also from symbolic victories, including gaining respect, achieving autonomy and supporting others, pointing to shifts in norms and traditions. More specifically, it can be concluded that, in the context of transition economies, entrepreneurship has been redefined and is considered by women to be not just an economic activity but also a form of resistance and self-definition.

Conclusion

Culture is widely recognized as a foundational component of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Spigel, 2017; Hechavarría et al. 2017; Donaldson 2021). It shapes the norms, values, and beliefs that govern entrepreneurial behaviour and influence how entrepreneurship is perceived, supported, and practiced in a specific context (Bullough 2021; Ogundana 2020b; Shohel 2023).

The experiences shared by women entrepreneurs in Georgia show that culture, as an important attribute of EE, might constrain and affect entrepreneurial activity for women. Even if, in certain post-Soviet countries, formal institutions have become supportive of gender equality and the economic activities of women (Iakovleva 2017; UN Women and the ILO 2023), deep rooted societal expectations and gender stereotypes still have a significant impact on women's entrepreneurial decision-making, perspectives and legitimacy perception (Rugina 2019; Agasalim 2021; Floro 2022).

Accordingly, in the present study, the following key cultural challenges have been outlined: First, stereotypical attitudes to gender roles constrain the perceived appropriateness of entrepreneurship for women. Prestigious hierarchies in professions also remain prevalent. This is much more obvious in rural regions, where specific forms of self-employment (such as agriculture or trade) are perceived as demeaning, especially for educated women. Furthermore, societal and family attitudes towards women in leadership manifest in a disbelief that women can be bosses or lead negotiations. Finally, cultural heritage from the Soviet era still influences women's self-esteem and agency, underlining the fact that cultural changes take much more time than more formal institutional transformations in a post-Soviet country context.

These insights confirm that culture is not a passive backdrop but an active force in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem which plays an important role in women's entrepreneurship. At the same time, the present study also shows indices of a cultural shift, as women are supporting each other, highlighting female role models, and pushing back against outdated norms. Future studies should therefore focus more intensively on the potential of cultural change within the ecosystem and examine how these changes support women entrepreneurs in becoming catalysts for new norms and expectations, as well as how these changes can be accelerated.

References

- Abesadze, Nino; Paresashvili, Nino (2018): Gender aspects of youth employment in Georgia. In: *Ecoforum* 7 (1).
- Agasalim, Aygun Alasgarova (2021): Importance and role of women within the business community of Azerbaijan. In *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education* (1–2), pp. 84–107. DOI: 10.28934/jwee21.12.
- Alshenqeeti, Hamza (2014): Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. In *English Linguistics Research* 3 (1), pp. 39–45. DOI: 10.5430/elr.v3n1p39.

- Angulo-Guerrero, María J.; Bárcena-Martín, Elena; Medina-Claros, Samuel; Pérez-Moreno, Salvador (2024): Labor market regulation and gendered entrepreneurship: A cross-national perspective. In *Small Business Economics* 62 (2), pp. 687–706. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-023-00776-0.
- Audretsch, David B.; Belitski, Maksim (2017): Entrepreneurial ecosystems in cities: Establishing the framework conditions. In *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 42 (5), pp. 1030–1051. DOI: 10.1007/s10961-016-9473-8.
- Aydingün, Ayşegül; Keskin, Serhat; Gürsoy, Hazar Ege (2021): Georgian path to secularism: A case of “cultural defense.” In *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 22 (3–4), pp. 392–414. DOI: 10.1080/21567689.2021.1997745.
- Bastian, Bettina Lynda; Bronwyn, P. Wood; Ng, Poh Yen (2023): The role of strong ties in empowering women entrepreneurs in collectivist contexts. In *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 15 (1), pp. 122–146. DOI: 10.1108/IJGE-10-2021-017.
- BDO (2018): Enterprise Georgia Report. Evaluation of the results of the industry, technical support and access to finance components of the “Produce in Georgia” program. [programis “awarmoe saqarTveloSi” industriuli nawilis, teqnikiuri mxardaWeris da finansebze xelmisawvdomobis komponentebis Sedegebis Sefaseba]. Available online at <https://www.enterprisegeorgia.gov.ge/uploads/files/publications/5c6bebc46258e-BDO GEO.pdf>, checked on 10/2023.
- Bihu, Reuben (2020): Using unstructured interviews in educational and social science research: The process, opportunity and difficulty. In *Global Scientific Journals* 8 (10).
- Bluhm, Katharina; Pickhan, Gertrud; Stypińska, Justyna; Wiercholska, Agnieszka (2021): Introduction. In Katharina Bluhm, Gertrud Pickhan, Justyna Stypinska, Agnieszka Wiercholska (Eds.): *Gender and power in Eastern Europe. Changing concepts of femininity and masculinity in power relations*. Cham: Springer (Springer eBook Collection), pp. 1–11.
- Bogishvili, Diana; Osepashvili, Irina; Gavashelishvili, Elene; Gugushvili, Nino (2016): *Georgian National Identity: Conflict and Integration*. Tbilisi: Center for Social Sciences.
- Brush, Candida; Edelman, Linda F.; Manolova, Tatiana; Welter, Friederike (2019): A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. In *Small Business Economics* 23 (9–10), pp. 768–782. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-018-9992-9.
- Bullough, Amanda; Guelich, Ulrike; Manolova, Tatiana S.; Schjoedt, Leon (2021): Women’s entrepreneurship and culture: Gender role expectations and identities, societal culture, and the entrepreneurial environment. In *Small Business Economics*. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-020-00429-6.
- Bzhalava, Levan; Jvarsheishvili, Giorgi; Brekashvili, Paata; Lezhava, Boris (2017): Entrepreneurial intentions and initiatives in Georgia. In Arnis Sauka, Alexander Chepurenko (Eds.): *Entrepreneurship in transition economies. Diversity, trends, and perspectives*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 261–279.
- Chachava, Mary (2020): Paid and unpaid work by migrant women returned to Georgia. [SaqarTveloSi dabrunebuli emigranti qalebis anazRaurebadi da aunazRaurebeli Sroma]. In Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/9wbTN>, checked on 03/2023.

- Coleman, Phil (2019): In-depth interviewing as a research method in healthcare practice and education: Value, limitations and considerations. In *International Journal of Caring Sciences* 12 (3), pp. 1879–1885.
- Dagoudo, Bienvenu Akowedaho; Vershinina, Natalia; Murithi, William (2023): Women, polygamy and family entrepreneurship in Southwest Benin: The role of endogenous knowledge. In *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*. DOI: 10.1108/IJEBR-04-2021-02.
- Das Gupta, Monica (2015): “Missing Girls” in the South Caucasus Countries. Trends, possible causes, and policy options. In *Policy Research Working Paper* (7236). DOI: 10.1596/1813-9450-7236.
- Diakonidze, Ana (2019): Parliamentary inquiry into women's participation in government economic programs. [saparlamento mokvleva saxelmwifo ekonomikur programebSi qalTa monawileobis Sesaxeb]. In National Democratic Institute and UK Aid, 2019. Available online at https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/223862_, checked on 11/2023.
- Donaldson, Colin (2021): Culture in the entrepreneurial ecosystem: A conceptual framing. In *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 17 (1), pp. 289–319. DOI: 10.1007/s11365-020-00692-9.
- Dresing, Thorsten; Pehl, Thorsten (2015): Praxisbuch Transkription: Regelsysteme, Software und praktische Anleitungen für qualitative ForscherInnen. 6. Aufl. Marburg: Dr. Dresing und Pehl GmbH.
- Elam, Amanda B.; Baumer, Benjamin S.; Schott, Thomas; Samsami, Mahsa; Dwivedi, Amit Kumar; Baldeger, Rico J. et al. (2022): Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2021/22 Women's Entrepreneurship Report. From Crisis to Opportunity. London: GEM.
- Enterprise Surveys (n.d.): Female ownership and firms with a female manager. In Worldbank, (n.d.). Available online at <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/enterprisesurveys>, checked on 05/2024.
- European Commission (2024): 2024 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. In: Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 30/10/2024. Available online at https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2024-communication-eu-enlargement-policy_en, checked on 07/2025.
- FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2018): Gender, agriculture and rural development in Georgia – Country gender assessment series. In Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018. Available online at <https://rb.gy/k50854>, checked on 05/2022.
- Floro, Maria S. (2022): Time to care: Unpaid work and gender inequality in Georgia. In UN Women Georgia Country Office, 12/2022. Available online at <https://georgia.un.org/en/download/149321/254737>, checked on 11/2023.
- Gelovani, Nati; Robakidze, Tamar; Kharatishvili, Gvantsa (2022): Harmful Practice of Early / Childhood Marriage in Georgia – Existing Challenges and Solutions [Adreuli BavSvobis AsakSi Qorwinebis Saziano Praqtika SaqarIveloSi – Arsebuli Gaomwvebi da GadaWris Gzebi]. Special Report. Edited by Center for Democracy and Governance. Tbilisi: Center for Democracy and Governance.

- GeoStat – National Statistics Office of Georgia (2022): Survey of women entrepreneurs in Georgia. Tbilisi: UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- GeoStat – National Statistics Office of Georgia (2022): Survey of Women Entrepreneurs in Georgia. UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia.
- GeoStat – National Statistics Office of Georgia (2023a): Labour Force Indicators by sex, 2010–2023. In: National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2023. Available online at <https://www.geostat.ge/en>, checked on 02/2024.
- GeoStat – National Statistics Office of Georgia (2023b): Women and Men in Georgia. Statistical Publication. Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia.
- Gimenez-Jimenez, Daniela; Edelman, Linda F.; Dawson, Alexandra; Calabrò, Andrea (2022): Women entrepreneurs' progress in the venturing process: The impact of risk aversion and culture. In *Small Business Economics* 58 (2), pp. 1091–1111. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-020-00435-8.
- Gradskova, Yulia (2018): Home is the “place of women’s strength”: Gendering housing on Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. In Yulia Gradskova, Ildikó Asztalos Morell (Eds.): *Gendering Postsocialism. Old legacies and new hierarchies*. Milton: Routledge, pp. 157–171.
- Gradskova, Yulia; Morell, Ildikó Asztalos (Eds.) (2018): *Gendering Postsocialism. Old legacies and new hierarchies*. Milton: Routledge.
- Griessbach, Lela; Ettl, Kerstin (2020): The entrepreneurial ecosystem and its impact on female managers in transition economies: The case of Georgia. In Irma Rybnikova, Anna Soulsby, Susanne Blazejewski (Eds.): *Women in management in Central and Eastern European countries. Journal of East European Management Studies (JEEMS) – Special Issue*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 150–171.
- Griessbach, Lela; Ettl, Kerstin (2024): The effects of formal and informal institutions on women’s entrepreneurship in Georgia. In Kirsten Mikkelsen, Annika Wolf (Eds.): *Minds, brains, and doxa for inclusive entrepreneurship*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 33–57.
- Griessbach, Lela (2025): *Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies: An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Perspective*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač (Dissertation).
- Gurchiani, Ketevan (2021): Women and the Georgian Orthodox Church. In Ina Merdjanova (Ed.): *Women and religiosity in Orthodox Christianity*. New York: Fordham University Press (Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought Ser), pp. 101–128.
- Hechavarría, Diana M.; Terjesen, Siri A.; Ingram, Amy E.; Renko, Maija; Justo, Rachida; Elam, Amanda (2017): Taking care of business: The impact of culture and gender on entrepreneurs’ blended value creation goals. In *Small Business Economics* 48 (1), pp. 225–257. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-016-9747-4.
- Iakovleva, Tatiana; Solesvik, Marina; Trifilova, Anna (2013): Financial availability and government support for women entrepreneurs in transitional economies. In *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 20 (2), pp. 314–340. DOI: 10.1108/14626001311326752.
- Iakovleva, Tatiana; Solesvik, Maryna; Trifilova, Anna (2017): Motivation of women business owners: Case of Russia, Ukraine and Norway. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2017 1. DOI: 10.5465/AMBPP.2017.16600.

- Iluridze, Ana; Pavliashvili, Irma; Jalaghania, Lika; Kakhidze, Shorena (2021): Gender equality in Georgia: Barriers and recommendations updated edition. In Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia, 2021. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/4IxAk>, checked on 10/2023.
- Imerlishvili, Esmā; Qaikhosroshvili, Elene (2020): A study of menstruation stigma and related rights violations in Georgian public schools. [menstruaciis stigmisa da mašTan dakavSirebuli uflabadarRvevebis kvleva sajaro skolebSi]. Youth for Public Health / Women's Fund in Georgia. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/Rxvhi>, checked on 10/2023.
- Isenberg, Daniel (2011): The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Strategy as a New Paradigm for Economic Policy: Principles for Cultivating Entrepreneurship. The Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project. Wellesley: Babson College.
- ISET Policy Institute (2021): Research on Youth Entrepreneurship Stimulation in Georgia: Understanding the barriers and recommending reform interventions. Final Report, Tbilisi: ISET Policy Institute.
- Javakhishvili, Nino; Tskhadadze, Tamar; Barkaia, Maia; Jalaghania, Lika; Bendeliani, Nani (2020): Country gender equality profile of Georgia. Tbilisi: UN Women Georgia.
- Jokhadze, Natia (2022): Overview of Human Sexuality Education in Georgia. According to the UNESCO Tool for Review and Evaluation of Human Sexuality Education (SERAT) [Adamianis Seqsualobis Sesaxeb GanaTlebis Mimoxilva SaqarTveloSi]. Edited by The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Tbilisi: UNFPA.
- Karim, Shamsul; Kwong, Caleb; Shrivastava, Mili; Tamvada, Jagannadha Pawan (2023): My mother-in-law does not like it: Resources, social norms, and entrepreneurial intentions of women in an emerging economy. In *Small Business Economics* 60 (2), pp. 409–413. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-021-00594-2.
- Kekenadze, Natia; Gogoladze, Tina; Giunashvili, Salome, MDF (2023): Sexist language and gendered disinformation. In Media Development Foundation (MDF), 2023. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/QPwoi>, checked on 07/2024.
- Khakhutaishvili, Mariam (2024): The dynamics of the involvement of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the process of European integration: Perspectives, transformations, and challenges. In *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 44 (3), pp. 32–57. DOI: 10.55221/2693-2229.2515.
- Körner, Annabell (2019): Child in every family! – Family planning, infertility, and assisted reproduction in Tbilisi, Georgia. Halle Wittenberg: Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg (Dissertation).
- Kuckartz, Udo (2016): Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Lebanidze, Bidzina; Kakabadze, Shota (2023): Spoiler or facilitator? Radicalization of the Georgian Orthodox Church and its impact on societal resilience in Georgia. In *Religions* 14 (272). DOI: 10.3390/rel14020272.
- Lezhava, Boris; Brekashvili, Paata; Melua, Irena (2014): Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Special Topic – Women Entrepreneurship in Georgia. Tbilisi: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor / National Statistics Office of Georgia.

- Madison, Kristen; Moore, Curt B.; Daspit, Joshua J.; Nabisaalu, Joyce Komakech (2022): The influence of women on SME innovation in emerging markets. In *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 16 (2), pp. 281–313. DOI: 10.1002/sej.14.
- Manning, Paul (2014): Once upon a time, there was sex in Georgia. In *Slavic Review* 73 (2), pp. 265–286. DOI: 10.5612/slavicreview.73.2.265.
- Manolova, Tatiana S.; Brush, Candida G.; Edelman, Linda F.; Robb, Alicia; Welter, Friederike (2017a): Introduction. In Tatiana S. Manolova, Candida G. Brush, Linda F. Edelman, Alicia M. Robb, Friederike Welter (Eds.): *Entrepreneurial ecosystems and growth of women's entrepreneurship. A comparative analysis*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, pp. 3–14.
- Manolova, Tatiana S.; Brush, Candida G.; Edelman, Linda F.; Robb, Alicia M.; Welter, Friederike (2017b): *Entrepreneurial ecosystems and growth of women's entrepreneurship. A comparative analysis*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Margvelashvili, Kristina; Meshveliani, Maka; Khorbaladze, Tamar; Guruli, Irina (2021): *Women in Business: Opportunities and Impact of the Pandemic*. Tbilisi: Economic Policy Research Center.
- Margvelashvili, Kristine (2017): *Women's Economic Empowerment in Georgia. Analysis of Existing Policies and Initiatives*. Tbilisi: Union “Sapari”.
- Marlow, Susan (2020): Gender and entrepreneurship: Past achievements and future possibilities. In *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 12 (1), pp. 39–52. DOI: 10.1108/IJGE-05-2019-009
- Metreveli, Tornike (2016): An undisclosed story of roses: Church, state, and nation in contemporary Georgia. In *Nationalities Papers* 44 (5), pp. 694–712. DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2016.1200021.
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Georgia (2018): *Child marriage: Levels and key indicators*. (bavSvobis asakSi qorwineba doneebi da ZiriTadi maCveneblebi). In MICS, 11/2019. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/cgL3A>, checked on 09/2023.
- Mikkelsen, Kirsten (2018): Towards emancipatory aspects of women's entrepreneurship: An alternative model of women's entrepreneurial self-efficacy in patriarchal societies. In Stephanie Birkner, Kerstin Ettl, Friederike Welter, Ilona Ebbes (Eds.): *Women's entrepreneurship in Europe. Multidimensional research and case study insights*. Cham: Springer International Publishing (FGF Studies in Small Business and Entrepreneurship), pp. 83–103.
- Minesashvili, Salome (2017): The Orthodox Church in the Democratisation Process in Georgia: Hindrance or Support? In *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, 97. DOI: 10.3929/ethz-b-000181632.
- Modebadze, Eva (2021): Dual vulnerability and security. A case study of Azerbaijani and Armenian ethnic minority women in Georgia. In *WeResearch Georgia*, 12/2021. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/hwIK0>, checked on 09/2023.
- Morell, Ildikó Asztalos; Gradszkova, Yulia (2018): The gendered subject of postsocialism: State-socialist legacies, global challenges and (re)building of tradition. In Yulia Gradszkova, Ildikó Asztalos Morell (Eds.): *Gendering Postsocialism. Old legacies and new hierarchies*. Milton: Routledge, pp. 1–17.

- Muhammad, Noor; Ullah, Farid; Smith, Rob (2023): The influence of cultural constraints on entrepreneurial motivations: Exploring the experiences of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. In *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, pp. 1–15. DOI: 10.1177/14657503231221691.
- Muldoon, Jeffrey; Lee, Younggeun; Liguori, Eric W.; Sahoo, Saumyanarjan; Kumar, Satish (2024): Mapping the entrepreneurship ecosystem scholarship: Current state and future directions. In *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, pp. 1–46. DOI: 10.1007/s11365-024-00975-5.
- Naldi, Lucia; Baù, Massimo; Ahl, Helene; Markowska, Magdalena (2021): Gender (in)equality within the household and business start-up among mothers. In *Small Business Economics* 56, pp. 903–918. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-019-00275-1.
- Nodia, Ghia; Atilgan, Canan (2016): Summarizing a Quarter of a Century of Development. In Ghia Nodia (Ed.): *25 Years of Independent Georgia: Achievements and Unfinished Projects*. Tbilisi: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung & Ilia State University Press, pp. 5–10.
- OECD; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2023): SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries 2024 — Building Resilience in Challenging Times. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ogundana, Oyedele (2020a): Factors influencing the business growth of women-owned sewing businesses (WOSBs) in Lagos-State, Nigeria: A gender-aware growth framework. Nottingham: Nottingham Business School (Doctoral thesis).
- Ogundana, Oyedele (2020b): Obstacles facing women-owned enterprises: A case for Sub Sahara African women. In *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development* 18 (5–6), pp. 529–544. DOI: 10.1504/WREMSD.2022.10049635.
- Ojediran, Funmi; Anderson, Alistair (2020): Women's entrepreneurship in the Global South: Empowering and emancipating? In *Administrative Sciences* 10 (87). DOI: 10.3390/admsci10040087.
- Pahnke, André; Welter, Friederike (2019): The German Mittelstand: Antithesis to Silicon Valley entrepreneurship? In *Small Business Economics* 52, pp. 345–358. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-018-0095-4.
- Pechlaner, H.; Thees, H.; Manske-Wang, W.; Scuttari, A. (2021): Local service industry and tourism development through the global trade and infrastructure project of the New Silk Road – The example of Georgia. In *The Service Industries Journal* 41 (7–8), pp. 553–579. DOI: 10.1080/02642069.2019.1623204.
- Rakshit, Deboleena; Levto, Ruti; Katchkachishvili, Iago (2020): Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes. In UNDP & UNFPA Georgia, 2020. Available online at https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ge/UNDP_GE_DG_gender-survey_report_2020_eng.pdf, checked on 11/2023.
- Rugina, Sanita (2019): Female entrepreneurship in the Baltics: Formal and informal context. In *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 11 (1), pp. 58–74. DOI: 10.1108/IJGE-05-2018-0055.
- Rugina, Sanita; Ahl, Helene (2024): Patriarchy repackaged: How a neoliberal economy and conservative gender norms shape entrepreneurial identities in Eastern Europe. In *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 36 (3–4), pp. 266–293. DOI: 10.1080/08985626.2023.2288637.

- Rutland, Peter (2023): Thirty years of nation-building in the post-Soviet states. In *Nationalities Papers* 51 (1), pp. 14–32. DOI: 10.1017/nps.2021.94.
- Rybnikova, Irma; Soulsby, Anna; Blazejewski, Susanne (Eds.) (2020): Women in management in Central and Eastern European countries. In *Journal of East European Management Studies* (JEEMS) – Special Issue. DOI: 10.5771/9783748907190.
- Sätre, Ann-Mari (2016): Women’s entrepreneurship in Russia: Impacts from the Soviet system. In *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy* 10 (1), pp. 53–69. DOI: 10.1108/JEC-08–2015–0045.
- Schaper, Anna-Katharina Viktoria Marie (2024): Contexts Matter: Contextualizing Women’s Entrepreneurship in China. Würzburg: Universität Würzburg (Dissertation).
- Shahnazaryan, Nona; Movlud, Gunel; Badasyan, Edita (2016): From the Cinderella of Soviet modernization to the post-Soviet return to national traditions: Women’s rights in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In *Journal of Conflict Transformation Caucasus Edition*. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/4aLKp>, checked on 09/2022.
- Shatirishvili, Zaza; Manning, Paul (2011): Why are the dolls laughing? Tbilisi between intelligentsia culture and socialist labor. In Tsyppylma Darieva, Wolfgang Kaschuba, Melanie Krebs (Eds.): *Urban spaces after Socialism. Ethnographies of public places in Eurasian cities*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag (Eigene und Fremde Welten, 22), pp. 207–225.
- Sheikh, Shandana; Yousafzai, Shumaila; Omran, Wojdan (2021): A Gender-Aware Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs. New York: SSRN Electronic Journal.
- Shohel, Tunvir Ahamed; Niner, Sara; Gunawardana, Samantha J. (2023): “Even though I get a loan, my husband controls it”: Rhetoric versus reality of empowering Bangladeshi women through microfinance programs. In *The European Journal of Development Research* 35 (4), pp. 794–819. DOI: 10.1057/s41287–022–00539–9.
- Snellman, Kaisa; Sola, Isabelle (2022): Does investor gender matter for the success of female entrepreneurs? Gender homophily and the stigma of incompetence in entrepreneurial finance. In *Organization Science*, pp. 1–20. DOI: 10.1287/orsc.2022.1594.
- Spigel, Ben (2017): The relational organization of entrepreneurial ecosystems. In *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 41 (1), pp. 49–72. DOI: 10.1111/etap.12167.
- Stam, Erik; Spigel, Ben (2017): Entrepreneurial ecosystems. Utrecht: School of Economics Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute.
- Stam, Erik; van de Ven, Andrew (2021): Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements. In *Small Business Economics* 56, pp. 809–832. DOI: 10.1007/s11187–019–00270–6.
- Tabatadze, Shalva; Gorgadze, Natia (2023): Analysis of language textbooks in Georgia: Approaches to gender equality of males and females while teaching languages. In *International Journal of Educational Reform* 32 (2), pp. 169–188. DOI: 10.1177/10567879221147011.
- Tskipurishvili, Nino (2020): Housewives on the Home Front: Depicting Women’s Roles in Georgian Personal Correspondence during World War II. In: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2020. Available online at <https://shorturl.at/GR7PT>, checked on 07/2024.
- UN Women; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2018): Women’s Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Georgia. Causes and Consequences. Tbilisi: UN Women und SDC.

- UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2023): National Assessment of Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Georgia. Tbilisi: UN Women and International Labour Organization (ILO).
- Vershina, Natalia; Rodgers, Peter; Tarba, Shlomo; Khan, Zaheer; Stokes, Peter (2020): Gaining legitimacy through proactive stakeholder management: The experiences of high-tech women entrepreneurs in Russia. In *Journal of Business Research* 119, pp. 111–121. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.12.063.
- Voß, Julia; Meyer zu Altschiltesche, Clara; Ettl, Kerstin (2022): Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst – Weibliche (Un-)Sichtbarkeit in Innovationskontexten. In *Journal Netzwerk Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung NRW* (51/2022), pp. 58–66. DOI: 10.17185/dupublico/77274.
- Waterston, Alisse (2018): Contextualizing Gender in Georgia: Nation, culture, power, and politics. Introduction. In Maia Barkaia, Alisse Waterston (Eds.): *Gender in Georgia. Feminist perspectives on culture, nation, and history in the South Caucasus*. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 1–18.
- World Economic Forum (2013): *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Around the Globe and Company Growth Dynamics*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
- Welter, Friederike (2020): *Contexts and Gender: Looking Back and Thinking Forward*. Working Paper, No. 01/20. Bonn: Institut für Mittelstandsforschung (IfM).
- Welter, Friederike; Smallbone, David (2010): The embeddedness of women's entrepreneurship in a transition context. In Candida G. Brush, Anne de Bruin, Elizabeth J. Gatewood, Colette Henry (Eds.): *Women entrepreneurs and the global environment for growth*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Pub. Ltd.
- World Bank (2020): *Doing Business 2020. Comparing business regulation in 190 economies*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Wu, Juan; Li, Yaokuang (2020): An exploratory cross-country analysis of female entrepreneurial activity: The roles of gendered institutions. In *Entrepreneurship Research Journal* 10 (3), pp. 1–20. DOI: 10.1515/erj-2018–0019.
- Wurth, Bernd; Stam, Erik; Spiegel, Ben (2022): Toward an entrepreneurial ecosystem research program. In *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 46 (3), pp. 729–778. DOI: 10.1177/1042258721998948.
- Yousafzai, Shumaila; Henry, Colette; Boddington, Monique; Sheikh, Shandana; Fayolle, Alain (2022): Introduction to the research handbook of women's entrepreneurship and value creation. In Shumaila Yousafzai, Colette Henry, Monique Boddington, Shandana Sheikh, Alain Fayolle (Eds.): *Research handbook of women's entrepreneurship and value creation*. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing (Research handbooks in business and management series), pp. 1–22.

