

Expert Workshop: Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa - A Research Agenda

January 22nd-24th

Participants

In this expert workshop, we aim to bring together a small group of leaders and extraordinary individuals from academia, policy, and industry. This includes editors from recognized journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, and *Journal of Business Venturing*, as well as leaders from organizations such as the African Academy of Management, the OECD, and the African Development Bank.

Objectives and goals of the event

Research on innovation and entrepreneurship is dominated by Western perspectives, while voices, such as those from African countries, are largely absent from the international research community. This means that important perspectives, worldviews, and experiences are missing from current debates and that important research topics and questions are not being considered. This situation can seriously limit the potential positive impact of innovation and entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is important to promote a more inclusive research environment and agenda. For this reason, we want to organize a high-level scientific event on “Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa - A Research Agenda.”



More specifically the workshop has five objectives:

- 1) Identify barriers to relevant and rigorous research approaches in the African context.
- 2) Develop support measures to foster an inclusive research environment for local and international scholars in Africa.
- 3) Develop a research agenda in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship, based on the needs of the African population.
- 4) Identify international good practices for promoting high-quality research and policy recommendations.
- 5) Bring early-stage researchers together with influential and inspiring individuals



Proposed schedule

The three-day event will take the form of a physical workshop in Bern, Switzerland. Participants will actively discuss both predefined and emerging topics related to research on innovation and entrepreneurship in the context of sustainable development in Africa.

Day 1 – Identifying research opportunities and challenges: The event will begin with a brief introduction by the organizers on the state of research on innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Participants will then present their own perspectives on the topic in a “point of view session” (30 min each) to create an initial shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for research in and with Africa. Subsequently, the group will refine and cluster the opportunities for research and the respective challenges. These results will form the basis for the discussions on day 2 and 3.

Day 2 – Deep dive into opportunities for research: The second day will focus on research opportunities in innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Participants will be divided into two groups, one on innovation and one on entrepreneurship. Each group will engage in an in-depth discussion on research opportunities based on needs of the African community and with the goal to contribute to solve Grand Challenges, e.g., related to SDGs. To account for the great heterogeneity of the African society, the discussion will be enriched by additional pre-recorded statements from members of different African countries and societal groups (e.g., policy, industry, research), outlining their view on pressing societal needs. In the afternoon, the two groups will present the results of their discussion in the form of an initial research agenda to the other group to receive feedback and identify common themes across the topics of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Day 3 – Overcoming challenges and finalizing a joint declaration: The third day will also be held in an interactive discussion format. The expert group will take the challenges identified on day 1 and, with an additional input from a group of PhD students from Africa and Switzerland, start to develop measures that can help overcome these challenges.

The day will conclude with the formulation of a joint declaration to promote inclusive research on innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa and the definition of a communication plan.

The proposed workshop will run in parallel with a **PhD Winter School on “Innovation & Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development”** with 15 PhD students from Africa and 15 from Switzerland, funded by Leading House Africa, Swiss TPH. The grant for the Winter School has already been approved. There will be several interactions between the formats to maximize synergies. In particular, the experts from the workshop here will present and discuss with the PhD students the research agenda developed on day 2. The latter will provide inputs for the discussion on challenges related to research in Africa (day 3). A joint aper  and dinner will provide networking opportunities and room for further discussion.

Logistics

The expert workshop is a three-day event from January 22nd-24th. You are welcome to arrive on January 21st and stay longer to enjoy Switzerland and the city of Bern. Our team will organize your stay in Bern incl. accommodation and meals for the duration of the Winter School. These costs are covered by the university.

If you need help with your travel arrangements getting to Bern, we will be glad to assist you. We are in the process of applying for a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation that covers travel costs for six to eight participants. If we have more participants, funding will primarily be used to finance expenses of those participants that could not join otherwise.

Join us in Bern to have an important conversation on
Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa!

