

# IGU CDES Conference



IGU COMMISSION ON "THE DYNAMICS OF ECONOMIC SPACES"  
COMMISSION DE L'UGI DES DYNAMIQUES  
DES SPACES ECONOMIQUES



ZRC SAZU  
Anton Melik  
Geographical Institute



## Rethinking the Economic Geography of Smaller Urban Places: Transformation and Well-Being in Small and Medium-Sized Towns

September 13 to 15, 2023 in Bern, Switzerland



Bern, Switzerland Foto: Heike Mayer

### Call for Papers

Small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs) are undergoing major socio-economic transformations in these uncertain times (COVID-19, Russian invasion of Ukraine, technological disruptions, populism upheavals, ageing population, migration, climate change, etc.). Many regions in the world are characterized by small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs) and these smaller urban places are fundamentally changing their economic structures because of these multiple crises. While there has been a recent upsurge in scholarly attention on small and medium-sized towns particularly with regards to their economic role and function, we still know little about how ongoing crises and upheavals influence economic transformation and well-being in them. There is little knowledge about the ways in which firms, communities, local actors in smaller urban places experience socioeconomic transformation and how they position themselves against larger centres of power in times of crises. In addition, we know little whether economic success is automatically reflected in the well-being of local communities and whether economic growth translates into positive social, cultural and political development of SMSTs. Moreover, there is a dearth of theories and concepts that can be applied to the small-town context and that can help us understand these changes.

We invite conceptual and empirical papers that cover the economic geography dimensions of transformation and well-being in small and medium-sized towns.

### We welcome papers on the following topics, but not limited to:

- Conceptualization and assessment of economic transformation processes in SMSTs or small city-regions
- Displacement and discontent due to economic transformation and (negative and positive) economic development
- Resilience and adaptation to economic transformation strategies by local communities, economic actors such as firms, organizations, public sector, local leaders etc.
- Embedding and disembedding of SMSTs in the global economy through global value chains, global production networks, local anchor firms such as so-called "hidden champions"
- Transformation of economic sectors such as manufacturing, retail, personalized services, tourism, creative industries, etc. in SMSTs
- Industrial culture: how it evolves and transforms SMSTs
- New innovation models and processes in response to multiple crises (COVID-19, climate crisis, economic crisis, etc.)

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- Strategies of actors in SMSTs to go beyond small size and to capitalize on concepts such as "borrowing size" or "agglomeration shadows"
- Emerging opportunities as a result of shifting housing demands, shifting work patterns (e.g. homeoffice), changing work culture, etc.
- The role of real estate investors in small and medium-sized towns
- New forms of urbanity and the changing role of residential economies and the foundational economy
- Rethinking economic growth paradigms and sufficiency/post-growth policies in SMSTs
- Planning and policy responses to respond or to foster economic transformation such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) or others.

**Please send your abstract including 4 to 6 keywords (max. 250 words) to [simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch](mailto:simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch) by May 15, 2023**

## Key dates

- Deadline for Abstracts: May 15, 2023
- Notification about acceptance: June 1, 2023
- Registration closes: July 1, 2023
- Preliminary Program: mid July 2023
- Final Program: beginning of August 2023
- Conference starts: September 13, 2023

## Registration

Regular conference fee: 250 € (including VAT and local taxes)

Reduced conference fee: 200 € (including VAT and local taxes)

- **All participants are required to make the registration.**
- The reduced conference fee is only available for students and doctoral candidates. Please send a proof of your status to the organizers ([simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch](mailto:simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch)).
- The registration fee includes coffee breaks, lunches, welcome reception, dinner and conference materials.
- Details about payment will be published later.
- The organizers will provide invitation letters for visa applications upon request.
- The conference will be held in-person and there is no contingency plan in case we must cancel the conference due to COVID-19 or other reasons.

## Local Organizing Committee

Prof. Heike Mayer, Institute of Geography & Center for Regional Economic Development, University of Bern, Switzerland

Dr. Ottavia Cima, Institute of Geography & Center for Regional Economic Development, University of Bern, Switzerland

Dr. Arnault Morisson, Institute of Geography & Center for Regional Economic Development, University of Bern, Switzerland

Dr. David Bole, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Dr. Maruša Goluža, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Dr. Jani Kozina, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia

## Venue and Accommodation

The IGU CDES miniconference takes place **at the University of Bern in Bern, Switzerland**. The sessions on the third day of the conference and the excursion will take place in Biel/Bienne, a medium-sized and bilingual town undergoing major transformations that is located only 26 minutes by train from Bern. For more information on Biel, see also this [link](#).

Accommodation must be booked individually and is not covered by the registration fee. For more information on hotels in Bern, please see this [link](#) to a list of hotels in Bern or the [Bern Welcome Website](#).

## Getting to Bern

With its central location in the northern foothills of the Swiss Alps, Bern is easily accessible by air, road, or rail. Bern is also connected to many major destinations in Europe by train.

If your flight lands in Zürich, Geneva, or Basel, there is excellent rail service to Bern with the [Swiss rail company SBB](#). In both Zürich and Geneva, an SBB station is located inside the airport, allowing direct transfer to trains to Bern.

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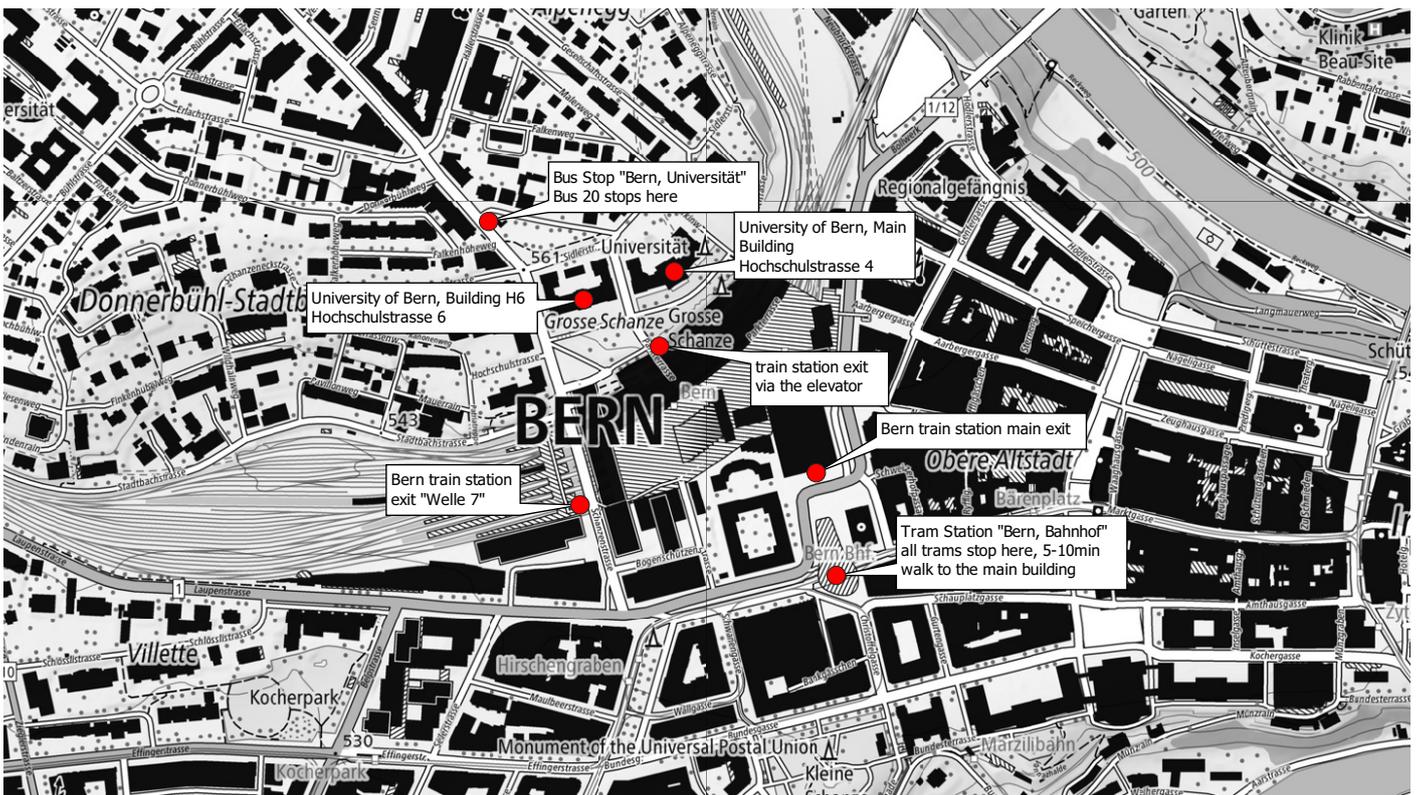
After your arrival, you will find that the main university building and the university neighborhood Länggasse are equally central and accessible.

In the train station in Bern, follow the signs for Grosse Schanze/Länggasse. They lead to the fourth floor, where you exit via the Grosse Schanze, a rooftop park offering a beautiful view of the mountains on clear days. The main university building and Länggasse are located across the park.

Travel downtown and between university buildings is easiest on foot, with a bicycle, or on public transit (e.g. bus no. 20 takes you from the train station to various stops in «Länggasse»).

Tip: If you are planning a longer stay, you should consider purchasing an [SBB Half-Fare Card](#) with your very first train ticket. Cardholders travel for half price throughout the Swiss rail system. The minimum term is one year, but if you travel frequently, the card quickly pays for itself. For example, a one-year card costing 185 CHF saves 50% on each round-trip to Zürich airport.

For more information, please also see here: <https://www.bern.com/en/getting-here-around>



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## About the IGU CDES and IGU

The IGU Commission on The Dynamics of Economic Spaces (CDES) aims to extend international research and scholarship in economic geography through the development and dissemination of critical theoretical, conceptual and methodological frameworks, the conduct of rigorous empirical and policy analyses, and the building of research capacity in economic geography in different national and institutional contexts.

IGU CDES wants to promote international collaboration in research activity and the dissemination of research findings, as well as to facilitate the transfer of knowledge about economic geography and associated policy-related issues between countries and institutions. The commission wants to play a leading international role in the development, promulgation and dissemination of new ideas in economic geography through the development of a strong analytical perspective on the processes, problems and policies associated with the dynamics of local and regional economies as they are incorporated into a globalized world economy.

With the organization of mini-conferences the IGU Commission on "The Dynamics of Economic Spaces" aims to bring together small groups of scholars for in-depth discussion on some of the latest issues in the field of economic geography.

The International Geographical Union (IGU) is an international, non-governmental, professional organization devoted to the development of the discipline of Geography. The purposes of the IGU are primarily to promote Geography through initiating and coordinating geographical research and teaching in all countries of the world. Its work is conducted through the instruments of its National Committees, Commissions and Task Forces. The IGU hosts the International Geographical Congress every four years and also promotes regional conferences and other meetings that further of the objectives of the Union. The IGU also facilitates the participation of geographers in the global community of scientists through its formal affiliation as a Member Union within the International Science Council (ISC) and the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH).

For details please visit the [IGU CDES website](#) and the [IGU website](#).

## About the Institute of Geography & Center of Regional Development, University of Bern

Founded in 1886, the Institute of Geography at the University of Bern is home to researchers and students in Human Geography, Physical Geography, and Geographies of Sustainability. The Institute offers a Bachelor and a Master program and contributes to several other study programs. With more than 700 students we are one of the largest Institutes of Geography in Switzerland. Institute staff and students engage in various research centers across the University, including the Center for Regional Economic Development, the Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (ICFG).

The Center for Regional Economic Development (CRED) is an inter-faculty center for research, teaching and consulting in regional economic development. Researchers from the research units Economics, Entrepreneurship, Geography and Tourism deal with research questions regarding the following research areas: Location dynamics and regional economic policy, tourism, land use policy and real estate.

## About the Anton Melik Geographical Institute, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana

The Anton Melik Geographical Institute has been established in 1946 by Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Since 1976 it carries the name of greatest Slovenian geographer, academic dr. Anton Melik (1890-1966). The institute comprises seven departments, a library and geographical museum. The majority of its research focuses on geography of Slovenia. The Institute publishes fundamental geographical studies of Slovenia, features as lead partner in domestic and international research projects, organizes research conferences, educates young researchers, cooperates in researchers' exchanges and in university lectures.

**For any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact [simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch](mailto:simon.kuenzi@giub.unibe.ch)**