

Call for Papers

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Advancing Sustainable Entrepreneurship Through Substantive Research

The recognition of entrepreneurship as a solution to, rather than a cause of, environmental degradation and social inequality has moved the field towards the identification of a new type of entrepreneurial activity- namely, sustainable entrepreneurship. Sustainable entrepreneurship focuses on the preservation of nature, life support, and community in the pursuit of perceived opportunities to bring into existence future products and processes with economic as well as non-economic gains to individuals, the economy, and society (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011).

It has been argued that entrepreneurs engaged in such ventures bring into being a new business approach that resolves the dualistic divide between business venturing and altruistic endeavours. In the process of pursuing venture opportunities, they can act in favour of a new entrepreneurial approach based on the creation of present and future value for the economy, society and the environment (Parrish 2010).

Although our understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship has evolved through two separate streams, i.e. social as well as environmental entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship can be considered as a unique perspective that combines economic, social and environmental value creation, with an overall concern for the well-being of future generations (Hockerts and Wüstenhagen, 2010). Sustainable entrepreneurship is indeed a new field of research and as such “need (s) to explore the role of entrepreneurial action as a mechanism for sustaining nature and ecosystems while providing economic and non-economic gains for investors, entrepreneurs and societies” (Shepherd and Patzelt 2011:138). Definitions, field boundaries, overlaps, links and tensions between sustainable entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, CSR and sustainable development merit further investigation and theorising, particularly in terms of the moral/ethical basis, the different capitals involved in the entrepreneurial process, as well as the multiple bottom lines addressed by the entrepreneurial development activity (Nicolopoulou, 2014).

The need to understand determinants, processes and consequences of sustainable entrepreneurial action has spiked in recent years (Muñoz and Dimov, 2014), mostly because the underlying logic of pursuing opportunities in the name of sustainable development challenges traditional held assumptions of entrepreneurial action. Over the past 10 years, entrepreneurship scholars have published in mainstream entrepreneurship and management journals over 70 original research articles in the area of sustainable entrepreneurship. The vast majority of the published papers are theoretical, conceptual or qualitative and most of them are based on a small selection of cases. In addition, the relationship between sustainability and entrepreneurship has been more prescriptive than descriptive and, often, *overly optimistic* (Hall et al. 2010). Our faith in sustainable entrepreneurship as an engine for societal transformation has directed us to observe the phenomenon through a ‘do-good’ lens, which may blind us when it comes to analyse causes and consequences, or in attempting to identify the nature and the stages of the sustainable entrepreneurship *process*.

Despite the conceptual abundance, our capability of actually explaining why and how things occur when someone pursues sustainability venture opportunities is limited. In advancing sustainable entrepreneurship research, we not only have to address issues related to boundary definition, but also further substantive work is required; one that draws on extant

research and beyond, and provides a strong basis upon which we can build valid and reliable foundations for the field.

This special issue seeks to contribute to this emergent field by collecting rigorous, relevant, and novel empirical studies, and by addressing gaps in literature at the individual, organizational and contextual levels. We welcome a variety of empirical, and cross-disciplinary approaches. Both variance and process research are welcome, and multi-method research is particularly encouraged, based on analysis at different levels (macro, meso, micro) and their intersectional interplay.

Authors could explore the dynamics and processes of sustainable entrepreneurship, in terms of how distinctive opportunities are in comparison to traditional entrepreneurial venturing. In a similar vein, authors could explore sustainable venture creation, development and growth. Both inductive and deductive research is needed to elucidate the sustainable venturing puzzle. Cognition in sustainable entrepreneurship is also a promising stream of research. Scholars have recently begun to suggest that the way sustainable entrepreneurs perceive, think about and give meaning to their experience as they develop their ventures may present fundamental dissimilarities in comparison to traditional entrepreneurship. Studies may revisit the role of long-established triggering factors in entrepreneurship such as motivation, intention, orientation, behavioural control and self-efficacy in the context of sustainable enterprising.

In a different vein, the role of institutions in stimulating or constraining action has been identified as critical in sustainable venturing. Socially and environmentally friendly cultural values, new industry standards, emerging sustainability-oriented educational programs, new legislation for sustainable ventures (e.g. L3C, CIC or Benefit corporation) are some institutional factors that seem to be reshaping the field on which entrepreneurs operate, and a need exists to clarify the impact of such forces on sustainable entrepreneurs and their ventures. The actual role of sustainable entrepreneurs as institutional entrepreneurs, needs to be further explored, with regards to their real sustainable value and promise to act as change agents for a sustainable future; similarly, the moral/ethical basis of sustainable entrepreneurs and engagement of different capitals and the impact on multiple bottom lines could be further topics to consider, particularly for their power to help define the field and address underlying links, overlaps and tensions.

Another potentially interesting topic to be addressed concerns investors and their criteria for allocating resources towards building new ventures or escalating extant ventures that not only create economic but also social and environmental returns. This means looking into why and how do impact investors make allocation decisions or what the determinants of impact investment are. More broadly, we are also interested in the specific ways and forms of financing sustainable entrepreneurship. Would crowdfunding, for instance, be more appropriate than other sources of financing? Finally, governance issues in sustainable entrepreneurship are of interest for this special issue. How does the triple bottom line affect the relationships between the stakeholders? Do the stakeholders who are present in the governing bodies affect the equilibrium between the elements of the triple bottom line or, conversely, does the co-existence of different aims influence the governance structures and processes? Remaining interesting issues include entrepreneur/founder centrality: is it more important in this type of venture? Does the close association between the entrepreneur and the social/environmental aim make the founder even more central?

All of the above are still unanswered questions needing further examination. Regardless of the approach, submissions should seek to contribute to the collective understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship through the development of new, generalizable knowledge. Research seeking to conduct empirical tests of theory may rely on either qualitative or quantitative methods and data, and should aim to contribute to theory.

References:

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- Nicolopoulou, K (2014) Social entrepreneurship between cross- currents: toward a framework for theoretical restructuring of the field, *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol 52, issue 4, pp 678-702
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Submission guidelines:

Submissions should follow the formal submission guidelines of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* (available in <http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/ijebr.htm>). The contributors should submit electronically the paper through <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijebr>

The deadline for submissions is **01 December 2015**. First review decision is expected by March 1, 2016. Papers should be submitted via the journal’s online submission system available through the journal homepage: <http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/ijebr.htm> or directly via: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijebr> choosing “**Advancing Sustainable Entrepreneurship Through Substantive Research**” as the article type from the drop down menu. All papers must follow the guidelines outlined by the journal for submission. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in immediate rejection. http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=ijebr.

The journal:

The *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* (IJEER) has a unique focus on publishing original research related to the human and social dynamics of entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial management in small and growing organizations.

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