

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue of *Small Business Economics: An Entrepreneurship Journal*

“Sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems: How do contextual factors support and constrain sustainable entrepreneurial activities in a regional ecosystem?”

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Overview

For decades, economic development and environmental protection have been viewed as a zero-sum game of social wealth (Cohen & Winn, 2007). In difference to this view, it has been realized for some time that entrepreneurship can contribute to social welfare as well as to an “ecologically sustainable economy” (Dean & McMullen, 2007, p. 69). In this sense, sustainable entrepreneurship has gained prominence as entrepreneurs increasingly place sustainability next to profitability at the core of their business models. Within the entrepreneurship literature sustainable entrepreneurship represents an emerging research stream (Binder & Belz, 2015). Sustainable entrepreneurship can be defined as “the discovery, creation and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services that sustain the natural and/or communal environment and provide development gain for others” (Patzelt and Shepherd, 2011, p. 632). These sustainable entrepreneurial activities are generally consistent with sustainable development goals (Pacheco, Dean & Payne, 2010) and are in turn relevant for tackling fundamental societal challenges such as climate change, the provision of potable water for a growing world population and the development of sustainable production and consumption patterns (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Nevertheless, the field of sustainable entrepreneurship research is still in its infancy.

Past research has stressed that support from the entrepreneurial ecosystem is essential for entrepreneurial activities overall and for sustainable entrepreneurship in particular (e.g. Bull and Willard, 1993; Cohen, 2006; Gibbs, 2006; Hanlon & Saunders, 2007; Jain & Ali, 2013). Despite the relevance of the external environment and its stakeholder support for sustainable entrepreneurship, a lack of research can be observed with regard to the contextual factors of entrepreneurship. Such contextual factors might refer to specific legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks (Acs, Autio & Szerb, 2014) as well as to historical, cultural and socio-economic factors (e.g. Welter, 2011). In light of this the question arises if there are any specific contextual factors which support or constrain sustainable entrepreneurship. Research on sustainable entrepreneurship suggests that the

recognition and implementation of sustainable development opportunities is more complex for the entrepreneur than the recognition of non-sustainable opportunities (Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011). Against this backdrop, it can be assumed that entrepreneurs creating, recognizing and taking advantage of sustainable opportunities require specific relations and support for successful innovations and entrepreneurial activities within an ecosystem (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011; Kanda, Hjelm & Bienkowska, 2014).

An entrepreneurial ecosystem can be defined as “a dynamic community of inter-dependent actors (entrepreneurs, suppliers, buyer, government, etc.) and system-level institutional, informational and socioeconomic contexts” (Audretsch & Belitski, 2016, p. 4). In this regard, different stakeholder as support actors and initiatives, such as accelerator programs, incubators, business plan competitions, start-up awards or public funding schemes, unfold synergies. Entrepreneurial ecosystems play an important role for the foundation and growth of enterprises (Isenberg, 2010) and determine the long-term prospects of regional development (Etzkowitz & Klofsten, 2005; Simatupang, Schwab & Lantu, 2015) and sustainable urban development (Wirtz & Volkmann, 2015). According to Cohen (2006, p.3) a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem is “an interconnected group of actors in a local geographic community committed to sustainable development through the support and facilitation of new sustainable ventures”. Recent research suggests for example that the success of green start-ups depends on appropriate public and private support systems (Klofsten, Bank & Bienkowska, 2015). First empirical investigations reveal that specific support systems for sustainable entrepreneurship are still scarce in practice and can, today, be considered as niche phenomena (Fichter et al., 2016). Such specific support systems and stakeholders as support actors are integral parts of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Based on the current state of the literature further research is needed to explore the multi-dimensional facets of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems. For example, little is known about how sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems have to be composed in order to create environmental, social and economic value in a community or region. Accordingly, a variety of interesting research questions can be derived: What are determinants and key success factors of regional sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems? What is the role of universities and higher education institutions in sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems? How can sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems be created and developed? How do stakeholders facilitate the formation of sustainable enterprises? How do public and private support systems have to be designed to assist green or social start-ups effectively? How does digitalization influence the development of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems? What role does financing play for the creation of sustainable ecosystems?

Research topics

Papers from all areas of entrepreneurship and innovation with a link to sustainable entrepreneurship and/or entrepreneurial ecosystems are welcome. Moreover, we appreciate submissions from inter- and transdisciplinary fields that contribute to the domain of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems. The list of topics includes (**but is not limited to**):

- Creation and development of sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Factors impacting regional sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Differences between conventional and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Regional differences in sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Sustainable Entrepreneurial ecosystems in developed and developing economies
- Sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems and regional policy

- Measurement of sustainable entrepreneurial activity/performance
- Entrepreneurship and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)
- Ecosystem roles in empowering women and minority entrepreneurs
- Sustainable innovation and ecosystems
- Business model innovation and sustainability
- Digitalization and sustainable development
- Sustainability, innovation networks and communities
- Creative and cultural sustainable entrepreneurship
- Sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation policy
- Sustainable entrepreneurship education
- Psychology and sustainable entrepreneurship
- Sociology and sustainable entrepreneurship

Paper submission procedure

There are two ways to submit papers

1. Submissions intended for the G-Forum 2017 presentation and the special issue

The G-Forum 2017, the oldest and largest entrepreneurship and innovation conference in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, is dedicated to the same theme as the Special Issue of SBEJ, which this call refers to. Full papers submitted and invited to the G-Forum 2017 – the 21th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference on Entrepreneurship and Innovation, October 5th - 6th, 2017, University of Wuppertal (Germany) (<http://www.g-forum.de>) – can also be considered for the special issue if indicated to the conference organizers when submitting to submission-gforum2017@fgf-ev.de for the G-Forum. The deadline for submission of papers for the G-Forum 2017 conference is May 24th, 2017 ([Call for Papers](#)).

2. Submissions intended only for the special issue

Submissions exclusively for the special issue should be submitted to sbej@wiwi.uni-wuppertal.de by September 30th, 2017. All submissions will be subject to the standard review process followed by *Small Business Economics: An Entrepreneurship Journal*. All manuscripts must be original, unpublished works that are not concurrently under review for publication elsewhere. All submissions should conform to the SBEJ manuscript submission guidelines available at: <http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+%28default%29/journal/11187>

The deadline for submission of papers to the special issue is September 30th, 2017.

The publication of the special issue is expected by 2019.

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