

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
RESEARCH VOLUME 8

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

EDITED BY

NIKOLAOS APOSTOLOPOULOS

University of Plymouth, UK

HAYA AL-DAJANI

University of Plymouth, UK

DIANE HOLT

University of Essex, UK

PAUL JONES

Swansea University, UK

ROBERT NEWBERY

University of Newcastle, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2018

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78756-376-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78756-375-9 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78756-377-3 (Epub)

ISSN: 2040-7246 (Series)



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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Max Abrahms</i>	Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA
<i>Haya Al-Dajani</i>	University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK
<i>Nikolaos Apostolopoulos</i>	University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK
<i>Erin I. Castellas</i>	Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Australia
<i>Luis Alfonso Dau</i>	Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA
<i>Olayinka David-West</i>	Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria
<i>Subas P. Dhakal</i>	Curtin University, Perth, Australia
<i>Josette Dijkhuizen</i>	Maastricht School of Management, Maastricht, Netherlands
<i>Bob Doherty</i>	University of York, York, UK
<i>Ioannis Giotopoulos</i>	University of Peloponnese, Tripoli, Greece
<i>Diane Holt</i>	University of Essex, Colchester, UK
<i>Paul Jones</i>	Swansea University, Swansea, UK
<i>Efthymia Korra</i>	Ministry for Economy and Development, Athens, Greece
<i>David Littlewood</i>	University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK
<i>Katrin Marchand</i>	Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands
<i>Chris J. Moon</i>	Middlesex University, London, UK
<i>Elizabeth M. Moore</i>	Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA
<i>Robert Newbery</i>	Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK
<i>Ijeoma Nwagwu</i>	Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria
<i>Jarrod Ormiston</i>	Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands

Carol Pomare

Mount Allison University, Sackville, Canada

Tamanna M. Shah

University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA

Aggelos Tsakanikas

National Technical University of Athens,
Athens, Greece

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Contemporary Issues in Entrepreneurship Research*-Emerald Book Series aims to provide a platform for leading edge research that reflects contemporary themes of interest to the entrepreneurship discipline. The volumes of this series are proposed and edited by established scholars drawn from the membership of the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) community. All contributions are double blind peer reviewed by subject experts from the discipline.

The eighth volume in the series, *Entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Development Goals* edited by Nikolaos Apostolopoulos, Haya Al-Dajani, Diane Holt, Paul Jones and Robert Newbery draws together studies considering entrepreneurial behaviour and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The requirement for responsible entrepreneurial behaviour is a global necessity given the finite planetary resources, globalisation trends and ongoing economic growth. The need for the small business community to embrace and comply with the SDGs is essential in both the developed and developing world. However, this area of research remains nascent and there is a need to capture and reflect on best practice. Thus, there is a need for ongoing evidence to inform this debate drawn from differing global contexts. This volume is an attempt to supplement and enhance this evidence base with studies drawn from several different countries. The evidence presented highlights the global nature of the growth of sustainable entrepreneurship within the small business community.

This volume is structured into three sections. The first section considers studies of social change and entrepreneurship through the lens of the United Nations SDGs. The second section examines organisational practices and innovation towards the United Nations SDGs. The final section explores entrepreneurship, gender equality and empowerment towards the UN SDGs.

To conclude this introduction some thanks to the many contributors. To the guest editors, especially the lead guest editor Dr Nikolaos Apostolopoulos for leading and managing the entire process. To the authors and reviewers for all their efforts, time and diligence in taking this volume to a successful completion. To the Emerald production team, for their efforts in taking the volume through the production processes by the required deadlines. To ISBE, in supporting the development of the volume and its promotion.

In line with the objectives of the series, this volume contributes a new peer-reviewed body of evidence which provides fresh insights and perspectives and informs, and further engages the entrepreneurship discipline.

Paul Jones
Series Editor

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Nikolaos Apostolopoulos, Haya Al-Dajani, Diane Holt,
Paul Jones and Robert Newbery

ABSTRACT

This book explores the interaction between entrepreneurship and UN sustainable development goals (SDGs). Our existing knowledge of how entrepreneurship can contribute to the SDGs and how their implementation can transform enterprises is limited. This is due to several factors including the recent launch of the SDGs and the rapidly growing and changing global economic, social and environmental challenges. Entrepreneurship, however, can be the engine for transforming our world and overcoming the diverse nature of these global challenges. Beyond the rationale of this book, the organisation and structure of the book is presented. All chapters are introduced and their key points highlighted. At the end of this chapter, the editors provide concluding remarks, future research avenues and policy implications arising from this collective volume.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; sustainable development goals (SDGs); United Nations; economy; environment; society

INTRODUCTION

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) replaced the millennium development goals in 2015 (United Nations, 2015). They include a resolution to end poverty and hunger, build peaceful societies, empower women and girls and

protect the planet. Achieving these goals necessitates a move away from direct funding within the donor community towards an approach of empowering and enabling communities to 'help themselves'. Such an agency is apparent in the language of contemporary development with, for instance, Africa being able to feed *itself* by 2030 (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015).

The SDGs define global priorities for development up to the year 2030 and are pivotal for addressing the global economic, social and environmental challenges faced by the communities. They promote a wide range of actions in public and private sectors that can foster economic growth through new and innovative ways. However, their success is uncertain, controversial and slow:

Implementation has begun, but the clock is ticking. This report shows that the rate of progress in many areas is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030. (United Nations, 2017, p. 2)

These goals are inter-dependant and perhaps indivisible (Le Blanc, 2015; Nilsson, Griggs, & Visbeck, 2016). Indeed, entrepreneurial activities usually cover more than one SDG. This brings to the fore the importance of the institutional factors influencing entrepreneurial talent and as a consequence, socio-economic growth (Urbano, Aparicio, & Audretsch, 2018). Despite institutional failures surrounding them many enterprises are attempting to implement strategies that promote sustainable development (Liargovas, Apostolopoulos, Pappas, & Kakouris, 2017). The importance of a more participative framework towards environmental change which involves actors and stakeholders beyond the local authorities is also highlighted by these SDGs (Apostolopoulos & Liargovas, 2018). Entrepreneurship can be a transformational driver, offering the scaffolding for both attaining and delivering the SDGs whilst fuelling economic growth led by the principles of sustainable development. Within the domain of sustainable development (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011), entrepreneurship is championed as a vehicle for empowerment and an enabler of economic development, poverty alleviation and other forms of social value (Kajjage, Wheeler, & Newbery, 2013).

Social enterprises can also contribute to the SDGs through their economic, social and environmental outcomes (Rahdari, Sepasi, & Moradi, 2016), despite the obstacles they face due to the ill-adapted institutional frameworks (Apostolopoulos, Newbery, & Gkartzios, 2018; Littlewood & Holt, 2018). The commitment of social entrepreneurs to social goals can lead them to exploit limited resources and act productively within institutional constraints (Desa, 2012). Even in cases of humanitarian crisis, entrepreneurship may be the only way for taking sustainable action, for example. Excluded from mainstream employment, services or social benefits, refugees in developing economies may establish thriving new ventures within the most unpromising and restrictive conditions as a way of earning their living (Al-Dajani, Carter, S., Shaw, E., & Marlow, 2015). However, the social capital of the hosting nations plays an important role in the entrepreneurial engagement of refugees (Bizri, 2017). Thus, through entrepreneurship, the impact of the SDGs, can be maximised, creating long-term gains for both society and the environment.

Our existing knowledge of how entrepreneurial activities may contribute to the SDGs remains limited. Whilst there is seemingly a wealth of knowledge on the relationship between entrepreneurial behaviour and economic performance (Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009), when the closely scrutinised existing theory may relate to the Global North and remains largely untested in the developing contexts of the Global South (Newbery, Henley, & Siwale, 2017). Indeed, beyond the relationship with business performance, the contribution of entrepreneurship to other output measures of critical importance is less certain. Performance itself is a process measure and is a proxy for ultimate goals such as security, happiness and well-being (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004). Nevertheless, within the context of sustainable development, it should be clear that entrepreneurship can, for example, lead to a reduction in poverty through an increase in financial performance, or greater access to education through efficient market competition, or cleaner access to water through a process that encapsulates the discovery and exploitation of new ideas (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Entrepreneurship however can also be an amoral tool that may lead to productive or destructive ends (Baumol, 1996). As such, it requires guidance through supportive frameworks and institutions. We need to understand what it is that needs to be sustained, what it is that needs to be developed and how entrepreneurial actions can be utilised towards this direction (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

Given the compelling requirement to understand how entrepreneurship can support sustainable development and be appropriately guided, this book explores how entrepreneurial thinking and action can support social change, and investigates alternative entrepreneurship approaches that result in outcomes not often associated with the ‘agent of neo-liberalism’. In particular, the book provides insights into the following areas:

- opportunities and challenges for enterprises contributing to the SDGs in ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ contexts;
- varied social issues and environmental problems in different contexts, through the lenses of social entrepreneurship, ecopreneurship, rural entrepreneurship and women’s entrepreneurship and
- supra-national, national, regional and local approaches to the implementation of the SDGs.

This book is built and structured across three parts: Part I: Social Change and Entrepreneurship through the Lens of the SDGs; Part II: Organisational Practices and Innovation towards the SDGs; Part III: Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality and Empowerment towards the SDGs.

In Part I, various forms of entrepreneurship that stimulate sustainable development are explored across four chapters. In the first chapter, *Pomare* explores the contribution of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) towards creating a sustainable future through social and economic dimensions. Taking a multi-level approach, the factors influencing SMEs in sustaining the environment for future generations and caring about the well-being of society at large are explored. The

challenges and opportunities are highlighted offering an explanation of the interaction between the SDGs and entrepreneurship.

Littlewood and Holt explore the contribution of social entrepreneurship to the SDGs. An insightful conceptualisation of how social enterprises can be drivers of change and champions in supporting the global effort towards a higher performance of SDGs is developed. This novel work expands our existing knowledge beyond the traditional forms of entrepreneurship discussing the commitment of social enterprises to social goals through their value chains. This is showcased by presenting examples and cases from across the world. Thereafter, a range of future research avenues are proffered based on their analysis.

Moon explores the contribution of entrepreneurial activities to social and environmental changes through an investigation of various projects on sustainability and the circular economy. Drawing upon these projects, the chapter questions the responsibility of entrepreneurship education to embed entrepreneurial mindsets and skills from a more social and ecological perspective. This then demonstrates a need to change the mindset of entrepreneurs.

Shah's study focuses on 'Tribal Sustainopreneurs' and their contribution to prosperity. The chapter analyses the bamboo-based livelihoods of the tribal artisans of Tripura, India. The findings reveal that the sustainability focus that the entrepreneurs maintain can enhance local growth and livelihoods. The ideological belief in sustainability appears as a catalyst for achieving the SDGs but this requires ongoing support from the government.

Part II presents the organisational and corporate entrepreneurial practices that are embracing the SDGs. Firstly, *Castellas and Ormiston* analyse how impact investors and investments contribute to the social and environmental challenges identified by the SDGs. This chapter considers the SDGs as a 'field-level frame' which acts as a navigator of strategy and measurement. The findings reveal that the impact investors tend to measure social outcomes with higher incidence than environmental outcomes. Moreover, impact investors can influence the SDGs and act as catalysts towards this direction.

David-West and Nwagwu analyse how the digital financial services (DFS) offered through entrepreneurial activities in developing contexts can support the achievement of the SDGs. Indeed, this analysis shows that entrepreneurial solutions in various cases through DFS can act positively against major social and economic problems in Nigeria. DFS-based businesses, along with public supporting policies, may lead to a level of financial inclusion which can provide responses to economic and social challenges. Practical policy directions for financial inclusion are presented at the end of the chapter.

Korra, Giotopoulos and Tsakanikas explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and innovation within SMEs in Greece. Analysing the data from 3,500 Greek SMEs, the chapter discusses how CSR practices are related with firm innovativeness. The findings reveal that the SDGs can be achieved in a multi-level way through the implementation of CSR practices boosting innovation and its outcomes. Moreover, CSR can sustain the innovation outputs in times of limited resources and support SMEs in periods of economic crisis.

Part III is built upon four chapters which focus on how entrepreneurship can support gender equality and social inclusion. At the same time, responses of entrepreneurship to refugee crises and challenges caused by natural disasters are included.

Firstly, *Marchand and Dijkhuizen* explore business support schemes which aim to support the development of entrepreneurial activities by refugees. It is revealed that supporting refugee entrepreneurship can reinforce social inclusion and improve livelihoods. The chapter examines the case of ENPower in the Netherlands, through primary qualitative research, offering useful insights into how the support scheme contributes towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Doherty's study explores the partnership between the Fair Trade Social Enterprise Divine Chocolate Ltd. and Kuapa Kokoo (KK) – a cocoa farmer's cooperative in Ghana. The examined case provides insights into women's roles in the cocoa value chain and how the Divine–Kuapa Kokoo partnership is managed to embrace strategies for gender equality and women's empowerment. A framework on improving gender equality and women's empowerment is suggested, offering practical implications for application in other organisations and to support them towards contributing to the SDGs.

Dau, Moore and Abrahms analyse the support of international organisations for female entrepreneurship. A wide range of data from different countries from the World Bank's Doing Business dataset and the Correlates of War Formal Alliances dataset were used to advance the discussion on how supporting the growth of entrepreneurial women in challenging environments can contribute to achieving the SDGs. The analysis is built upon an institution-based view from global strategy and civil society theory from international relations. This chapter provides useful insights at a practical level for policymakers and entrepreneurs.

Dhakal's study explores the impact of cooperative enterprises on women's employment and empowerment in Nepal. The findings reveal that cooperative enterprise social responsibility (CESR) can build a bridge between the internal and external interests of cooperatives to achieve the SDGs. The chapter offers insights into the responses to natural disasters and the urgent need for sustainable solutions. The author argues that the institutional framework must support CESR practices in order to support the achievement of the SDGs.

CONCLUSION

This book offers novel insights into the key role that entrepreneurship plays towards achieving the SDGs. It demonstrates that entrepreneurial activities can deal with many economic, social and environmental challenges at the global and local levels. As the existing relevant literature is fragmented, this book aims to expand and enrich our knowledge of entrepreneurship, social and environmental sustainability, and economic growth through a more comprehensive approach. Indeed, the chapters show how entrepreneurship can contribute to multiple SDG simultaneously.

Part I includes four studies discussing social change and how entrepreneurship can meet social needs. Especially, the commitment of social enterprises to

social goals and how this can be a vehicle for change. However, collectively the chapters in Part I stress the necessity for more extensive research in sustainability and social entrepreneurship, with an in-depth examination of how institutional frameworks influence entrepreneurial activities in the Global South and Global North. The chapters in Part II show that CSR can act as a driver for sustainability and innovation even in challenging environments. The implementation of new technologies that led to financial inclusion in developing contexts can act effectively against poverty. Embracing these aspects by impact investors and their portfolio of activities can fuel effective actions towards the SDGs. This also reveals the need for more research on CSR and the implementation of the SDGs. Moreover, investing in new practices, measures and technologies has to be researched further, building new sustainable business models which can meet contemporary economic, social and environmental challenges. Finally, the chapters in Part III explore the ongoing contribution of entrepreneurship to women's empowerment in challenging environments. Entrepreneurship can be a driver for equality and equal opportunities whilst offering the potential for better conditions in disadvantaged communities and improving livelihoods. Furthermore, supporting business schemes and mechanisms towards developing refugee entrepreneurship can offer decent living conditions and enhance social inclusion. These chapters suggest future research avenues on how entrepreneurship can contribute to alleviating the repercussions of the refugee crisis, women's empowerment and the role of supporting equal opportunities through international organisations.

In conclusion, this book offers novel insights for entrepreneurs and policy makers to facilitate the use of entrepreneurial activity in working towards the SDGs and sustainable development. The analyses presented in this book can also be embraced by governments to improve their institutional support for a wide spectrum of entrepreneurial activities.

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