Beyond “shades of green”
- opportunities for a renewed conceptualisation of entrepreneurial sustainability in SMEs: a literature review.

ICSB 2011
Back to the future:
Changes in Perspectives of Global Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Track theme: Soc[iet]al entrepreneurship
Sub-topic: CSR

Duncan S. Levinsohn¹
Ethel Brundin²

Department of Entrepreneurship, Strategy, Organisation & Leadership (ESOL)
Jönköping International Business School

¹ Doctoral candidate: ledu@jibs.hj.se
Department of Entrepreneurship, Strategy, Organisation & Leadership (ESOL)

² Professor of Business Administration: bret@jibs.hj.se
Department of Entrepreneurship, Strategy, Organisation & Leadership (ESOL); Centre for Family Enterprise & Ownership
Introduction

“The social responsibility movement is the killing of the SMV!” (Taarup, 2011) The title of a contribution to a Danish blog suggests that it is increasingly difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to engage with demanding governmental and civil society initiatives in the area of corporate responsibility. Despite this trend, some authors believe that not only are many smaller firms active with regards to social responsibility, but they are frequently more innovative than larger companies (Hockerts et al., 2008; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Consequently, attention is increasingly directed at the role SMEs play in creating new solutions to the social and environmental challenges of the world. Often this attention is centred on combinations of the two terms “sustainability” and “entrepreneurship”, a focus that invites researchers to include insights from both arenas in forming their contributions.

This paper conducts a critical analysis of the emerging field of sustainability entrepreneurship, abbreviated as “SuE” in this paper. As authors we are “critical” in that our ambition is to view the field from the perspectives of both SMEs and developing economies (for example: sub-Saharan Africa). Our goal in adopting this perspective is to assess the extent to which conceptualisations of “sustainable development” (SD) and “sustainability entrepreneurship” take into account the particular values, needs and contributions of these two groups. In order to pursue this goal, we have structured our paper so that readers are first of all introduced to the SD concept, and especially to its multi-faceted and contested nature. We then conduct a literature review of the emerging field of sustainability entrepreneurship, noting common themes and questioning whether any forms of “sustainable” entrepreneurship exist that are moving the field beyond “shades of green”³. In doing so we contribute to the SuE literature by exposing the current disembedded nature of the field, and the opportunities this creates for research that emphasises the role of “place” in sustainable development.

³ “Shades of green” is a term frequently used to discuss business activities in relation to the environment, with the most cited example being that of Gunningham et al’s book “Shades of green: business, regulation, and environment” (Gunningham, Kagan, & Thornton, 2003).
In our paper we make special note of how sustainability entrepreneurship relates to SMEs. These we define as enterprises that either employ less than 250 workers or have an annual turnover of €50 million or less (European Commission: Enterprise and Industry, 2010). We believe that SMEs have a key role to play in sustainability entrepreneurship, firstly: because they represent the majority of businesses in both developed and developing/emerging economies (SMEs constitute 95 % of all businesses and 60-70 % of employment in the OECD) – and secondly, because SMEs are linked to above-average levels of diversity, flexibility, entrepreneurial activity and innovation (OECD, 2011; Storey & Greene, 2010, pp. 7-10).

**Sustainability and sustainable development**

The literature linking the concepts of sustainability and entrepreneurship refers in the majority of cases to at least one, if not two publications. The first one: “Our Common Future” was published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) of the United Nations (Brundtland & Khalid, 1987). The second: “Our Common Journey” was published by the Policy Division of the National Research Council (NRC) in 1999. The influential Brundtland report emphasises the importance of growth (albeit sustainable growth) for development. The NRC publication on the other hand, is less “global” in its authorship and chooses to analyse the two words separately, by means of the two questions: “what is to be sustained?” and “what is to be developed?” (Board on Sustainable Development, 1999, p. 24). If someone were to read the majority of articles presently published in the SuE field, they might conclude that the above two publications are the primary authoritative sources of SD thinking. However, although the Brundtland report is the most cited document in the SD field, this is only true in terms of popular acceptance (Quental 2010 cited in Quental, Lourenço, & da Silva, 2011, p. 266). The Brundtland report has been criticised for underestimating the limits to growth – and the NRC report has not had as powerful an impact as the WCED publication (Björk & Wiklund, 2010).

---

4 Also known as “the Brundtland Report”.

5 The Commission is also referred to as the UNCED in some publications.
1993; Daly, 1990). It is more important to recognise however, that the concept of “sustainable development” is a contested one, even if it is not our purpose to survey the rich material on this subject (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995; Quental, et al., 2011 are examples of useful summaries). Instead we emphasise the idea that credible alternatives exist to the traditional definitions of sustainability that many entrepreneurship scholars rely on⁶. In particular, these alternatives emphasise the idea that the concept of sustainable development is first of all embedded and normative (reflecting the values and priorities of the author), and secondly, dynamic (or processural in nature). As the NRC report points out: “which goals should be pursued is a normative question, not a scientific one” (Board on Sustainable Development, 1999, p. 2). In the following paragraphs some key alternative perceptions of SD are described.

One critique of “global” SD definitions is that they are often based on concepts of “development” that privilege Western thought (Banerjee, 2003). Furthermore, a “negotiated” definition of SD seldom reflects the values of those communities whose views differ most from the ideas of the majority. For this reason, the Indian economist Amartya Sen emphasises that development has to do with social choice (expanded capabilities and functionings)(Sen, 1999). This emphasis is shared by Viederman (1994, pp. 5, 12) and Robinson (2004, p. 380), who stress the importance of participation in the SD process and of “commitment to place”.

In addition to an emphasis on the embedded and emancipatory nature of sustainability, alternative theories of sustainability underline the idea that many of the goals of SD can be seen to be dynamic and changeable, so that SD is necessarily also about process (Quental, et al., 2011, p. 273). Thus, an integration of all of the above perspectives implies that if we are to take into account the values and perspectives of the developing world, sustainable development must be understood as a dynamic process that focuses on achieving human development in an inclusive,

⁶ Note that Parrish (2008) is a notable exception to this observation.
connected, equitable, prudent and secure manner. With these traits in mind, we now move on to discuss and critique current interpretations of our core topic, sustainability entrepreneurship.

**Sustainability Entrepreneurship**

The literature included in this study was identified by online searches using the Publish or Perish® (PoP) tool, followed by the ISI Web of knowledge. The terms used in the PoP search centred on the term "sustainable entrepreneurship" and variations on it (including for example: “sustainability entrepreneur” and “sustainopreneurship”). Our search in the ISI Web of knowledge added a further six publications to the PoP list. Journal articles, working papers, conference papers and book chapters were included in the survey – totalling 65 publications in all, with a further 21 placed on a secondary “background” list. Of these 65, 42 are journal articles.

The literature is analysed in a manner that pays particular attention to the type of sustainability envisioned in the papers surveyed, and to common themes. We have attempted to take note not only of what authors explicitly write, but also what they implicitly infer by means of their examples. Additionally, a note is made of the nationality of the institution at which the author(s) were based at the time of writing, understandings of entrepreneurship, emphases, and theories used or recommended. Where authors define the SuE concept, a note is made of this.
**Publications on SuE: development over time and nationality**

When our analysis of the publications included in the survey was restricted to the 42 journal articles, a clear increase in academic writing on the subject of sustainable entrepreneurship during the past decade became apparent (see figure 1). This growth is apparently still continuing, and an analysis of the journals in which articles have been published suggests that influential entrepreneurship journals have shown a particular interest in the field in recent years (for example: *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Entrepreneurship, Theory & Practice*). However, what is perhaps more interesting to note, is the fact that entrepreneurship journals are at present a minority, with regards to the study of sustainable entrepreneurship.

When the authorship of all of the publications surveyed was analysed, a somewhat (but not entirely) familiar picture emerged. In common with much academic publication in the English language, Europe and North America are overrepresented in terms of the number of authors published, with authors based in the UK and USA leading the field and publishing similar numbers of articles\(^7\). However, several countries are exceptionally active with regards to SuE authorship (taking into account their academic populations), most notably the Netherlands. It is nevertheless important to note that several highly-cited articles make extensive use of sources that are not available in English (in particular articles in German), which suggests that the table below may underestimate the contribution of nations such as Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

\(^7\) The total of 99 authors included in the table is based on author nationality, so that several authors have been counted more than once.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>sum</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2: Publication Numbers by Author Nationality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Business Venturing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Cleaner Production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Management International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Strategy &amp; Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship, Theory &amp; Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Business Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Ethics: A European Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Economics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship &amp; Regional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Innovation Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of International Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Research News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT Sloan Management Review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress in Industrial Ecology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple Bottom Line</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management &amp; Sustainable Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Article Numbers by Journal/Year**
Terminology and definitions

As will become apparent, the definition of sustainability entrepreneurship is contested, and different scholars prefer different terms. By far the most popular term is “sustainable entrepreneurship”, although several researchers argue that this term could refer to any type of sustainability – or simply to the capacity of a firm or individual to continue innovating. For this reason we follow the suggestion of the 2007 World Symposium on Sustainable Entrepreneurship and use the term “sustainability entrepreneurship” (Parrish, 2008, p. 28). Other terms include: “sustainopreneurship” (Abrahamsson, 2007; Schaltegger, 2000) and with regards to enterprise, innovation and the entrepreneur: “values-oriented entrepreneurs” (Choi & Gray, 2008), “sustainability-motivated entrepreneurs” (Cohen, Smith, & Mitchell, 2008), “sustainability-driven enterprise” (Schlange, 2009) and “integrated enterprise” (Schieffer & Lessem, 2009). Closely related concepts are also: “corporate social opportunity” (Jenkins, 2009), “corporate social entrepreneurship” (Austin & Reficco, 2009; Hemingway, 2010) and “responsible” or “ethical” entrepreneurship (Azmat & Samaratunge, 2009; Fuller & Tian, 2006; C. Moore & de Bruin, 2003).

Sustainability entrepreneurship has been defined in three main ways in the literature. First of all, several writers suggest that “green” entrepreneurship may be termed “sustainable”. Consequently, the key traits put forward by Schaper in his book subtitled “developing sustainability entrepreneurship” can be seen to represent the two emphases of the “green” definition, namely: i) the importance of creating and operating “a project whose net environmental impact is positive”, and : ii) intentionality (by which it is possible to “separate green entrepreneurs from "accidental ecopreneurs"”) (Schaper, 2005, p. 8).

A second approach suggests that SuE is a general concept (under which sub-themes such as “ecopreneurship” and “business social entrepreneurship” may exist). Schaltegger and Wagner (2011) represent this theme with their definition of SuE as: "an innovative, market-oriented and
personality driven form of creating economic and societal value by means of break-through environmentally or socially beneficial market or institutional innovations" (my italics). Important to note in this definition is that it opens up for entrepreneurship that focuses on the “double-bottom line”, and does not require firms to pursue sustainability in all three of the traditional “points” of the sustainability triangle.

A third way in which SuE has been defined is represented by authors such as Gibbs, Parrish, Tilley, Young, and Schlange (Gibbs, 2009; Schlange, 2009; Tilley & Parrish, 2006; Tilley & Young, 2009). Schlange (2009, p. 18) suggests that "a venture qualifies as sustainability-driven if it combines opportunities and intentions to simultaneously create value from an economic, social and ecological perspective" (my italics). This definition emphasises the idea that entrepreneurial behaviour needs to address all three “points” of the sustainability triangle if it is to qualify as sustainable. In other words: ““Only those entrepreneurs that balance their efforts in contributing to the three areas of wealth generation can truly be called sustainability entrepreneurs” (Tilley & Young, 2009, p. 87).

A definition of sustainability entrepreneurship that emphasises the SuE contribution to sustainable development, is that of Spence, Gherib & Biwolé (2010, p. 335). They suggest that SuE consists of “the ability to demonstrate responsible creativity while achieving viable, liveable, and equitable development through the integration and management of natural and human resources in business”.

Themes in the discourse on Sustainability Entrepreneurship

It is possible to identify several themes in the current SuE literature, with some themes and traits clearly more prevalent than others. The complete thematic list is summarised in figure 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>SuE as business opportunity</th>
<th>&quot;Green&quot; emphasis</th>
<th>Impact of individual SuE as an expansion of entrepreneurship</th>
<th>SuE as embedded</th>
<th>SuE as innovation</th>
<th>SuE in SMEs</th>
<th>Extended discussion of SD concept</th>
<th>SuE as double-bottom line</th>
<th>SuE as triple-bottom line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>emphas</strong></td>
<td>SuE is primarily about market opportunities and how sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship discove...</td>
<td>&quot;Green&quot; emphasis Impact of individual SuE as an expansion of entrepreneurship</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
<td>SuE is affected by both individuals and their context. SuE behaviour can be explained using theories of innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes case study**Individuals, firms, opportunities, value capabilities ***Quantitative analysis

Figure 4: Literature overview: sustainable entrepreneurship

10
**Sustainability entrepreneurship as characterised by a “green” emphasis**

A key source of SuE thinking is publications in the areas of environmental, or “green” entrepreneurship. Authors such as Isaak, Gladwin, Schaper and Schaltegger have all had a considerable impact on the field and in drawing on their “green” competence have contributed to the tendency of sustainability entrepreneurship to lean towards an environmentalist interpretation (Gladwin, Krause, & Kennelly, 1995; Isaak, 1999; Schaltegger, 2002; Schaper, 2002). Frequently the terms “ecopreneurship”, “sustainability entrepreneurship” and “sustainable development” are used either interchangeably or inconsistently. Gibbs for example writes of “sustainable entrepreneurs or ‘ecopreneurs’”, while Hall et al and Schaper note that at times the terms “sustainable development” and “environmental responsibility” are used interchangeably (Hall, Daneke, & Lenox, 2010, p. 442; Schaper, 2005, p. 8). Even where authors consciously attempt to broaden the use of the term to include social issues, it is clear from the examples provided that the concept they associate with sustainability entrepreneurship is a green one (for example: the firms that illustrate the section "When do sustainable entrepreneurs emerge and who are they?" in Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Similarly, in Kuckertz and Wagner’s operationalisation of “sustainability orientation”, four of six indicators refer to environmental concerns (Kuckertz & Wagner, 2009, p. 531). The emphases outlined above are also apparent in some of the CSR literature, with Blowfield and Murray defining “sustainability” as “the ability of a company to continue indefinitely by making a zero impact on environmental resources” (Blowfield & Murray, 2011, p. 59, my italics).

Despite its somewhat unbalanced contribution, the work that has been done within environmental entrepreneurship is useful to the SuE field. This is also the case with regards to the field of social entrepreneurship, and has to do with the similarities of the fields in terms of processes of business development and the important influence of the individual entrepreneur, among other things. Some authors suggest that “green” entrepreneurship is in fact a sub-field

---

8 This is primarily true of the terms "ecopreneurship" (and related terms) and "sustainable entrepreneurship".
within sustainability entrepreneurship, and for this reason some of its key characteristics are noted here (Dean & McMullen, 2007, pp. 51, 73; Gibbs, 2009, p. 65).

Within environmental entrepreneurship authors have suggested several typologies of both firm and entrepreneur. Both Isaak and Volery write of “green businesses” and “green-green businesses”, and distinguish between existing businesses that develop a “green streak” due to opportunity discovery, or legislation – and those more purposive businesses that are founded with the goal of promoting ecological sustainability (Isaak, 2005, p. 14; Volery, 2002, p. 551). Isaak suggests that the latter type be termed “ecopreneurs”. Walley and Taylor reflect this distinction (between economic and sustainability motivation) in their typology, but suggest that entrepreneurs can be further distinguished by taking into account the ambition and structural influences that influence the business (i.e.: either soft or hard structural influences). Consequently, they identify four types of “green” entrepreneur, namely: the ad hoc enviropreneur (accidental entrepreneur motivated by money), the innovative opportunist (the canny entrepreneur who recognises a profitable opportunity), the ethical maverick (the networking, sustainability-driven entrepreneur in the alternative sector) – and the visionary champion (the sustainability-driven entrepreneur who is determined to change the world) (Walley & Taylor, 2005, pp. 38-39).

Schaltegger suggests a similar framework to the above, but emphasises the idea of a concern for growth on the part of the ecopreneur – so that he categorises “green” firms on the basis of their market aspirations and position (“alternative actors” are positioned in the alternative scene, “bioneers” in an eco-niche, and “ecopreneurs” in the mass market) (Schaltegger, 2002, p. 49). Schaltegger suggests that bioneers are more inventive and pioneering, while ecopreneurs are more adept at adapting their innovations and moulding them into products that achieve significant levels of market penetration. In a later paper Schaltegger and Wagner build on this idea by linking these concepts to firm size, suggesting that SMEs and larger firms complement
one another in promoting sustainability. They argue that larger firms tend to be good at incremental innovation and achieving mass-market penetration, while smaller firms excel at radical innovation in niche markets (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Hockerts and Wüstenhagen develop this idea, and suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the interactions of large and small firms over time, given that large firms are often seen to be skilled at process innovation and smaller firms at product innovation (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

Before concluding my discussion of the “green” side of sustainability entrepreneurship, it is important to mention the influence of ecological modernisation theory on some authors’ discussions of the SuE concept (Gibbs, 2009; Tilley & Young, 2009). This theory (critiqued by Tilley and Young) suggests that existing political, economic and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment, that environmental problems can act as a driving force for industrial activity and economic development, and that there is no inherent conflict between environmental protection and economic growth (Hajer 1995; and Murphy 2000; cited in Tilley & Young, 2009, p. 82). These emphases are representative of what Parrish terms the “humans and ecosystems” approach to sustainable development, which suggests that SD can be achieved either within the framework of the present market economy, or with relatively minor intervention (Parrish, 2008, p. 19). In contrast, the “humans in ecosystems” approach argues that a qualitative change needs to take place in society and in our understandings of growth, if SD is to take place.

The individual as the primary source of entrepreneurial values and identity
Although the most influential source of inspiration for current SuE research is undoubtedly the various forms of “green” entrepreneurship, many authors also suggest that SuE is about “values” and “causes” that are closely linked to the motivation, identity and cognition of the individual. Within ecopreneurship, Schaper (2005, p. 8) and Linnanen (2005) point out the importance of “intentionality” and “internal drivers” in the entrepreneurial process, but it is also possible to
discern a similar idea in the broader SuE discourse (Krueger, 2005). Schlange for example (2006, p. 8; 2009, p. 25), emphasises not only the importance of entrepreneurs’ motivation in the venturing process, but also of their philosophy (or world view) – an emphasis that is echoed by O’Neill, Hershauer and Golden (2009) in their study of sustainability entrepreneurship among the Navajo. The general emphasis however is not on cultural embeddedness, but rather on individuals’ values and their sense of participating in an important endeavour. Choi and Gray for example: use the terms “mission-oriented” and "values-oriented” to describe the activities of the 21 entrepreneurs they studied, and who they describe as “sustainable” (Choi & Gray, 2008, pp. 558, 567). Hockerts and Wüstenhagen also emphasise the role of “mission”, but note that the “pronounced value-based approach” which often characterises SuE firms at start up, may be compromised as the businesses grows (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

The importance of individual values in the field of sustainability entrepreneurship is a trait that leads Shepherd and Patzelt to suggest that a key approach to studying sustainability entrepreneurship is the “psychological perspective”, which they describe as involving motivation, passion and cognition (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011, pp. 151-153). The above discussion suggests that the first two factors are already apparent in the literature, even if some authors stress the importance of being aware of different types of motivation. Parrish for example: distinguishes between firms that are driven by “duty” and those driven by “purpose” (Parrish, 2008, p. 32). Abrahamsson echoes this idea and emphasises the difference between “sustainable” entrepreneurship (which only addresses the common challenge all businesses encounter with regards to ongoing innovation) and “sustainability” entrepreneurship (which focuses on implementing solutions to sustainability-related problems)(Abrahamsson, 2007, p. 10). Abrahamsson describes this approach as “business with a cause” and suggests that the UN’s Agenda 21 (1992) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) are those causes that should primarily be viewed as “sustainability problems”. He terms this type of entrepreneurship
“sustainopreneurship” after Schaltegger (although from the discussion in this paper it should be clear that Abrahamsson and Schaltegger emphasise very different aspects of sustainability in their writing) (Schaltegger, 2000).

Having noted the importance of individual traits in sustainability entrepreneurship, several authors have begun to investigate these issues in more detail, paying attention for example, to issues of process and skill. Hence, Cohen, Smith and Mitchell note that sustainability entrepreneurs are not only “sustainability-motivated”, but also skilled at taking first-order optimisation decisions (decisions that require the combination of all three “triple bottom line” criteria, if sub-optimisation is not to occur) (Cohen, et al., 2008, p. 116). Kuckertz and Wagner note that sustainability entrepreneurs initially possess a strong “sustainability orientation”, but that this tends to be blunted over time as individuals gain business experience (Kuckertz & Wagner, 2009). Choi and Gray (2008), Gray and Balmer (2003), and Rodgers (2010) are further examples of authors who have begun to study sustainability entrepreneurship with a particular emphasis on the traits and development of the individual.

**Sustainability entrepreneurship as “opportunity-oriented”**

The above paragraphs suggest that in keeping with traditional studies of entrepreneurship, sustainability entrepreneurship has begun its journey by emphasising the role of the individual. In much the same way, SuE researchers have also begun to discuss the concept of opportunity at an early stage. At the present time, only two papers provide typologies of the SuE concept of opportunity (Cohen & Winn, 2005; and Dean & McMullen, 2007), but many others discuss the concept at length – with five articles operationalizing the concept and relating it to case studies.

Conceptually, several publications portray sustainability entrepreneurship from the perspective of classical entrepreneurship theory and suggest that opportunities appear as a result of market imperfections. Cohen and Winn identify four types of opportunity that arise from these imperfections, which sustainability entrepreneurs can take advantage of (inefficient firms, the
existence of externalities, flawed pricing mechanisms and imperfectly distributed information) (Cohen & Winn, 2007). Dean and McMullen (2007) also discuss market imperfections and suggest that five distinct types of sustainability entrepreneurship may be employed to take advantage of these opportunities (coasian, institutional, market appropriating, political and informational). Several of the ideas suggested by these authors are similar to one another (for example: their ideas on the role of information), but on the whole Cohen & Winn restrict their discussion of opportunity to the traditional, commercial realm of business to a greater extent than do authors such as Dean and McMullen, and Klein Woolthuis (who argue for an expansion of the concept of entrepreneurship) (Klein Woolthuis, 2010, p. 516). In this sense, they have more in common with Hart and Christensen’s strategic move towards the “base of the pyramid” (BoP), in that they focus primarily on “business opportunity” as opposed to “sustainability” (Hart & Christensen, 2002). Keskin, Brezet and Diehl (2009) can also be seen to belong to this category, as they portray sustainability entrepreneurship (through the product-service systems lens) as a means of commercialising sustainable innovations.

Despite the emphasis of the “business case” for sustainability entrepreneurship reflected in the above paragraph, several authors suggest that one of the roles that SuE might adopt, could be that of providing a new perspective on opportunity. Patzelt and Shepherd (2010) argue for such an expansion of the opportunity concept and suggest that individuals’ knowledge regarding the potential for natural, communal and sustainable development is a key factor. In keeping with Krueger they identify the importance of analysing the reasons why some individuals act on opportunities, while others do not (first-person vs. third-person opportunity) (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011, pp. 152-155). Thus, together with authors such as Hofstra, they align themselves with some of Dean and McMullen’s ideas and argue for the need for entrepreneurial action in areas that are not traditionally included in the business fold, but which have an impact on business and society (most obviously the institutional framework) (Hofstra, 2007).
Linked to the “opportunities” theme are articles that discuss the skills and traits that are associated with opportunity recognition in the sustainability field. Here, Krueger discusses the importance of intentionality with reference to cognition and the need for opportunities to be perceived as both desirable and feasible (Krueger, 2005). Moore and Mannring (2009, pp. 277-278) discuss sustainability opportunities from a SME perspective and suggest that smaller companies possess business models and are exposed to competitive forces in a manner that often gives them the edge over larger companies. In keeping with the “individual” SuE theme, several authors also either derive their concepts from empirical studies, or begin to test their theories by means of case-studies. De Palma and Dobes for example, portray sustainability entrepreneurship as the transition to a sustainable enterprise in eastern Europe (SuE as the opportunity for eco-efficiency) (De Palma & Dobes, 2010). A similar emphasis is displayed by Jenkins, who looks at SuE from the CSR perspective and introduces the concept of Corporate Social Opportunity (CSO) as a source of competitive advantage for SMEs (Jenkins, 2009). The latter examples of corporate entrepreneurship illustrate the breadth of the SuE field, which can at times be seen to emphasise the entrepreneurial behaviour of the individual, over the firm. Consequently, it is useful to note that the SuE concept of opportunity is apparent both in the more traditional Dutch case-studies of Keskin, Brezet and Diehl (2009) – and in the Katsikis and Kyrgidou (2007) case-study of community entrepreneurship for sustainability, in Greece.

**Sustainability entrepreneurship as Innovation**

Within SuE publications it is possible to distinguish a stream of literature on innovation that is primarily of Dutch/German origin. Abrahamsson (Sweden), and Hart and Christensen (USA) are exceptions (Abrahamsson, 2007; Hart & Christensen, 2002).

Writing on sustainability innovation is frequently focused on entrepreneurial behaviour at the firm level, and could justifiably be termed “corporate sustainability entrepreneurship”. Most writers discuss primarily the degree of innovation that takes places (incremental vs. radical) and the
focus of innovation (social, process or product), although Abrahamsson adds the idea of innovation also being of a tangible or intangible nature (Abrahamsson, 2007, p. 20). Gerlach suggests that sustainability entrepreneurs can be understood as “promoters of innovation processes for sustainable development”, and notes the usefulness of Witte’s ideas on barriers to innovation (willingness and capacity), as well as types of innovation promoter (power and expert) (Witte 1973; cited in Gerlach, 2003). Writing in the same academic context Schaltegger and Wagner note the different innovation roles that firms adopt, according to size (as discussed earlier) (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Echoing the radical vs. incremental idea, Klein Woolthuis portrays sustainability entrepreneurs in the Dutch construction industry as either “system following” or “system building”, and complements Cohen and Winn’s ideas of market failure with a theory of “system failures” that emphasises the interplay of the entrepreneur with networks and institutions (Klein Woolthuis, 2010, p. 508). This emphasis is reflected in the writing of Vollenbroek, who portrays innovation as a key ingredient in a larger “transition” towards sustainable development (and the academic field of “sustainability transitions”) (Gibbs, 2009; Vollenbroek, 2002). Finally, the case-study based work of Crals and Vereeck (2004), and Bos-Brouwers’ recent doctoral research is particularly useful with regards to SMEs; with Bos-Brouwers (2010, p. 191) identifying seven key factors that affect innovation in these contexts (duty, skilled personnel, suppliers, trade associations, degree of formalization, customers and national governmental institutions). The factor “skilled personnel” relates to Kleef and Roome’s study of the capabilities that are associated with sustainable business management (SBM), in which they note that SBM requires higher capabilities with regards to dealing with a broader spectrum of actors, than is the case in businesses operating primarily on the basis of competitiveness (Van Kleef & Roome, 2007, p. 49).

Sustainability entrepreneurship as an expansion of “entrepreneurship”

The section on “SuE as opportunity” suggests that one implication of the multi-disciplinary nature of sustainability, is that “entrepreneurship” can be conceptualised in more than just the
traditional “business-oriented” sense. This point is made by (among others) Dean and McMullen (2007, p. 70), who having outlined several ways in which entrepreneurs can contribute to sustainability (for example: by “coasian” or “political” entrepreneurship), argue that “the domain of the field may extend substantially beyond current perspectives”. Shepherd and Patzelt consolidate this idea by suggesting that future research include perspectives from the fields of economic development, psychology and institutional theory (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). But in which ways might the field be expanded, specifically?

One such area is that of the business-society interface. Traditionally, scholars have often studied entrepreneurship as a business phenomenon that takes place in a societal context. Several SuE scholars suggest however, that sustainability entrepreneurship often involves entrepreneurial behaviour at the interface between business and society, with sustainability entrepreneurs having the opportunity to reshape “broader socioeconomic institutions” (Gibbs, 2009, p. 65). Many scholars suggest that SuE involves institutional change, with Pacheco, Dean and Payne (2010, p. 471) in particular identifying three key areas that may benefit from entrepreneurial attention (industry norms, property rights and government legislation). Schaltegger and Wagner (2011) agree and point out that SuE may involve “market or institutional innovations”. Schieffer and Lessem (2009, p. 724) suggest that the “integrated” enterprise may include not only economic (“private”) entrepreneurship, but also “public/political”, “civic/cultural” and “animate/ecological” entrepreneurship.

Another area that researchers suggest sustainability entrepreneurs may be active in, is that of the organisation. Abrahamsson (2007, p. 10) writes of SuE as (among other things) “creative organising” (citing Johannisson 2005), a theme also taken up by Parrish (2010), and Seelos and Mair (2005). Parrish (2010, p. 517) suggests (based on a multiple case-study) that sustainability entrepreneurship often involves “redesigning” organisations, and that five generative rules can be seen to govern this process (relating to organisational purpose, efficiency, trade-offs, criteria and
inducements) (Parrish, 2010, p. 517). Katsikis and Kyrgidou (2007) also describe organisational change as one of the key sustainability-related activities they observed in the renewal of the *mastiha* industry on the Greek island of Chios.

A final “transformational” theme in the SuE literature is that of the concept of “value” (or “rent” in economic terms). Following their analysis of the entrepreneurship literature, Cohen, Smith and Mitchell (2008, p. 110) conclude that the dependent variables presently used by most researchers reflect primarily only *one* of a possible seven concepts of value. In view of the capacity they suggest entrepreneurs’ have for focusing on “first order objectives”9 they argue that other variables need to be included in research, if studies are to accurately portray the impact of entrepreneurship on sustainability. This idea is echoed by other scholars such as Hofstra (2007), and Johnstone and Lionais (2004, p. 218) who see in sustainability entrepreneurs the potential authors of paradigmatic change (for example: from profit to value, from competition to cooperation, and from space to place).

**Conclusions**

**The double- or triple bottom-line?**

As noted in the section on “definitions” authors disagree on whether or not SuE necessarily includes all 3 “points” of the traditional CSR/sustainability triangle. This disagreement centres first of all on the question of whether certain forms of entrepreneurship (such as ecopreneurship) are sub-categories of sustainability entrepreneurship (as Schaltegger suggests), or whether they should be positioned outside of the SuE fold (as Parrish would argue). This disparity relates to the discussion on the difference between “efficiency” and “effectiveness”. Briefly, some authors suggest that a key SuE question is *not* whether or not a firm is using resources more efficiently than previously, or in comparison to other firms (i.e.: eco-efficiency). Instead a more important question is whether or not the firm is having a *net* positive, neutral or

---

9 I.e.: “high level socio-enviro-economic objectives” (Cohen, et al., 2008, p. 116)
negative impact on the environment/on society (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 137). However, it has also been suggested that this improved approach may still lead to compartmentalisation and ignore the impact of a product or service in another “pole” (Tilley & Parrish, 2006, p. 290). For example: an artillery shell might be produced in an eco-efficient manner, but used in a way that has a negative impact on the “social” pole of the sustainability triangle. For this reason, Tilley and Parrish (2006, p. 287) suggest that a pyramid model of SuE is preferable (which, with some modifications, adds a further six criteria to the Dyllick and Hockerts model).

The above paragraph indicates that within the SuE field it is possible to identify both “strong” and “weak” approaches (to borrow the terminology of the sustainability and green entrepreneurship fields). “Strong” approaches (exemplified by authors such as Tilley, Parrish and Young), demand that all three “points” of the sustainability triangle interrelate synergistically to produce value. “Weak” approaches (whose authors include Schaltegger, Dean and McMullen) tend to note the theoretical importance of the triple-bottom line, but clearly imply that in practice firms need only emphasise two of the “points” in producing value, in order to be categorised as “sustainable”\(^{10}\). In a sense this divergence to a certain extent mirrors a difference between an approach that is more normative and idealistic, and one which is closer to the present reality of business, not least that of SMEs (Schlange, 2009, p. 9). In other words, there is a clear tension between: "what is and what could be" (Tilley & Parrish, 2006, p. 292).

**Disembedded understandings of “sustainable development”**

A key argument in our paper is that SuE authors tend to display a strange ambivalence to the concepts of “embeddedness” and “sustainable development”. On the one hand, our survey suggests that authors are highly aware of the embedded nature of entrepreneurship (see figure 4). A large number of authors describe the interplay of individual and context, and the impact of societal factors on sustainability entrepreneurship – not least in relation to opportunity (Cohen &

---

\(^{10}\) An example of this is Hockerts & Wüstenhagen’s discussion of SuE (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010, pp. 484-485).
At the same time, very few authors acknowledge the fact that the SD concept is also embedded, highly contested and not at all “globally accepted” (Hofstra, 2007, p. 505). Kuckertz and Wagner (2009, p. 527) suggest that the SuE literature so far tends to display a partial, superficial understanding of entrepreneurship concepts – but the same can often be said for entrepreneurship scholars’ understanding of the SD field. In other words: the tendency of SuE scholars’ to rely uncritically on the Brundtland report of 1987 for an understanding of sustainable development, does not justice to the complexity of the concept. Nor does it acknowledge the perspectives of communities in developing countries, whose priorities in terms of sustainability may not reflect the more popular “global” meaning of UN publications (Springett, 2003).

In view of the above trend, we argue that SuE researchers urgently need to acknowledge the embeddedness of the SD concept, recognising its normative character and taking into account the importance of “place”. In doing so, it may be necessary to add a further “P” (i.e.: place) to the sustainability triad (people, planet, profit)(O’Neill, et al., 2009; Robinson, 2004). This implies that concepts such as “community entrepreneurship” (CE), may have an important role to play in future SuE study. Many CE authors are already grappling with sustainability issues that are of both a local and global nature, and that take into account the long-term value people attribute to community (Ekins & Newby, 1998; Johnstone & Lionais, 2004; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Smallbone, North, & Kalantaridis, 1999). Above all, many CE authors are clearly aware of the issue of embeddedness, noting for example that a key question in SD is whether “society has developed practices and institutions that are responsive to, and sustainable in, their local environment” (Norton, 2005, p. 94). There are also clear links between the types of small firm identified by Schaltegger and the communities in which they thrive (Holt, 2011, p. 247). Observations such as these strongly imply that SMEs play a key, but under-researched role in contributing to the sustainability of local communities.
Suggestions for future research

In this paper we have chosen to focus primarily on the ways in which SuE authors include the concept of sustainable development in their writing. However, in our survey we have also noted several other trends/gaps that could be usefully addressed in future research.

One of these gaps has to do with the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in promoting sustainability. Some SuE authors mention CSR, but are generally dismissive of its potential – despite the fact that it is often linked to the idea of “corporate sustainability” (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011, p. 143). Similarly, some authors suggest that the SuE field reflects that of the CSR field in focusing primarily on large companies (Uhlaner, Berent, Jeurissen, & de Wit, 2010, p. 4). We submit however, that SuE is including smaller firms in its analysis at this stage (see for example, the work of Choi & Gray, 2008; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). We also suggest that it would be fruitful to investigate the contribution of the “new” CSR approaches to SuE/SD; including the ideas of CSR 2.0, Corporate Social Entrepreneurship (CSE) and Corporate Social Opportunity (CSO)(Austin & Reficco, 2009; Grayson & Hodges, 2004; Hemingway, 2005; Jenkins, 2009; Visser, 2010).

SuE researchers can in all probability gain useful insights not only from the CSR field, but also from the fields of social-, “green-” and developmental entrepreneurship, where a common interest in the contribution of institutional theory is apparent (McMullen, 2011; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011, p. 147). Many researchers are aware of the limitations of a “single pole” approach to business and are including ideas from other fields. Isaak for example (2005, p. 21), writes of the importance of the “social” perspective in his studies of “green” entrepreneurship – and social entrepreneurs clearly do not confine their activities to the “social” field. Researchers could therefore contribute to the SuE field by testing the appropriateness of “importing” concepts from other fields. For example: Zahra et al’s (2009) typology of the social entrepreneur as "bricoleur", "constructionist" and "engineer".
A further promising path for SuE study has to do with the role of family business (FB). At the moment only a few SuE authors discuss sustainability in the context of FB, despite clear links to several of the factors linked to the concept (such as business longevity and values) (Craig & Dibrell, 2006; Lordkipanidze, Brezer, & Backman, 2005; Meek, et al., 2010; Uhlner, et al., 2010; Woodfield, 2010). FB is also a dominant form of business in many societies that prioritise sustainable development (for example: the Middle East; Spence, et al., 2010, p. 348). Family firms also provide a clear example of the importance of embeddedness to sustainability and entrepreneurial behaviour. In doing so, they underline the core argument of our paper, namely the importance of acknowledging the embeddedness of both “sustainable development” and “entrepreneurship” in future conversations about sustainability entrepreneurship in SMEs.

References


Insights from a UK-based multi-national corporation

Paper presented at the 23rd European Business Ethics Network Annual Conference: ‘Which Values for Which Organizations?’


