

Guest editorial: Celebrating the multidisciplinary contribution of entrepreneurial research on inclusive socio-economic development

Introduction

Despite promising growth figures in many countries, wealth and income inequality have worsened in recent decades [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2017; Chancel *et al.*, 2021]. The failure of growth to “trickle down” to “the poorest” has exacerbated inequality and exclusion. It has been reported that the richest 10% of the global population currently takes 52% of global income, whereas the poorest half of the population earns 8.5% of it” (World Inequality Lab, 2021, p. 10). Regarding wealth, the richest 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth (World Inequality Lab, 2021).

These developments emphasize not only the continued importance of issues of poverty and distribution, but also the potential of promoting inclusive development from a relational perspective to address these persistent inequalities (Gupta *et al.*, 2015). Income and wealth may be redistributed through political measures. However, this seems to not solve the deeper mechanisms that cause these problems. As a result, people remain passive, and development does not become more inclusive (Anderson and Johnson, 2015). It is believed that the endeavour to find the solutions to the lack thereof has led to the merger of discussions resulting to the theory of inclusive development.

The term “inclusive development” is gradually making its way into development discourse. While some researchers define inclusive development as “a process that occurs when social and material benefits are equitably distributed across divisions of society” (Hikey, 2013, p. 3), others focus on the “voice and power of the concerns and aspirations of otherwise excluded groups” (Johnson and Anderson, 2012). Inclusive development is also “focused on achieving equity and citizenship rights” (Hikey, 2013, p. 3). This definition broadly represents the meaning of the concept of inclusive development, knowing that its benefits necessarily include not only economic and material gains, but also widely felt increased well-being.

Because businesses run by people from diverse backgrounds can provide innovative perspectives and solutions to the social and economic challenges of communities, entrepreneurship can foster job creation, economic growth, innovation and inclusion. Scholars argue that by linking both entrepreneurship and inclusive behaviour and therefore, promoting inclusive entrepreneurship, academia and policymakers can strengthen social cohesion (Joseph *et al.*, 2023), stimulate local development (Qian and Acs, 2023) and create more equitable (Fernandez-Bastidas, 2023) and sustainable societies (Bouncken *et al.*, 2023).

Interestingly, when reviewing the literature on the impact of entrepreneurship on other academic fields, the lack of an entrepreneurial discourse in macroeconomic theories such as economic growth and development was questioned (Thurik *et al.*, 2024). Thurik *et al.* (2024) contended that “Entrepreneurship may be a proximate cause of long-run economic



The editors of this special issue, would like to thank all the submissions for this special issue. Their special thanks go to the many reviewers who helped with the selection of contributions and thus the final outcome of this special issue.

development, but it is not a proximate cause of adaptation and change” (p. 739). In other words, despite the possible direct contributions of entrepreneurship to development, many studies appear to not highlight them.

This special issue aimed to remedy this situation by celebrating. More precisely, the aim of this special issue was to highlight recent advances in entrepreneurship research and their impact on inclusive socio-economic development in different economies.

The Call for Papers has succeeded in bringing together an excellent number of articles that look at the topic from different angles, including different theoretical, methodological and contextual perspectives and backgrounds.

Setiawan *et al.* in their paper “The strategic role of digital transformation, dynamic and agile capabilities for the performance of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)” show how digital capabilities enhance the digital transformation and dynamic capabilities of MSMEs, enabling faster responses to change and timely strategic decisions in these organizations. In their study, which included MSMEs from Indonesia, the authors were also able to indicate how this, in turn, improves the performance of these firms.

Sylvia Hein and Jaime demonstrate in their paper “Between Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Political Participation: The Experience of Representatives of the Brazilian New Black Diaspora” not only the connection between exclusion from the formal labour market and necessity-based entrepreneurship, but also how the entrepreneurs concerned use their businesses to combat racism and xenophobia in the public sphere. The authors offer a promising new perspective on ethnic entrepreneurship, emphasizing in particular competition over collaboration within the ethnic network.

By focusing on senior entrepreneurship, Poblete and colleagues ask in their paper – “Shielded by business ownership? The role of senior entrepreneurship as a defense mechanism against ageism” if senior entrepreneurship could be a strategy to combat age discrimination. The results from Chile are promising. They show that older adults who engage in entrepreneurial activity are significantly less likely to perceive age discrimination. However, the protective effect of entrepreneurship seems to depend on whether there is a hierarchical dynamic in team leadership, which could reintroduce age as a salient and stigmatized identity.

In another contribution from South America, Guerrero Chaparro and her colleagues in “Women Entrepreneurs in Mexico: Insights from Formal and Informal Sectors”, extend the theoretical understanding of women’s entrepreneurship by identifying the key determinants that influence engagement in formal and informal entrepreneurial activities in emerging economies. The findings contribute to the refinement of existing frameworks and offer new insights into the gendered dynamics of entrepreneurial pathways. The authors provide concrete recommendations to promote greater economic inclusion in emerging economies such as Mexico.

The paper “Cultural diffusion and entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Culture-based development revisited” by Ondoua Beyene *et al.* helps the reader to understand how the supply of cultural goods and services and trade in cultural activities influence entrepreneurial activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Focusing on the same region, Ondoua Beyene and colleagues in another article entitled “Energy poverty and entrepreneurship: evidence from sub-Saharan Africa” underscore the importance of access to electricity on entrepreneurial activity, in this case the creation of new businesses.

In the paper “Leveraging frugal and sustainable entrepreneurship for inclusive development: an abductive case study of social entrepreneurs”, Chaudhary examines the role of frugal and sustainable entrepreneurship in promoting inclusive development. Based on a case study involving an Indian social enterprise, she demonstrates how frugal and sustainable practices must be adapted to solve local problems.

Conclusion

The Bottom Line

In times like these, different types of entrepreneurship are needed, but they should have one thing in common, namely that they are inclusive and responsible. We hope that this special issue makes a small but valuable contribution in this direction.

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129

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Further reading

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