

## SPECIAL ISSUE IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY REVIEW

### “Ecosystems for Social Innovations”

Guest editors

Nikolay A. Dentchev

Vrije Universiteit Brussels (Belgium)

Abel Diaz Gonzalez

Vrije Universiteit Brussels (Belgium)

Xaver Neumeyer

University of North Carolina Wilmington (US)

Social Innovations (SI) are defined as the development of creative and practical solutions to complex social problems (Tracey & Stott, 2017). The development of SI requires multilevel and multisystem collaborations across sectors (Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen, Lüdeke-Freund, Henriques, & Seitanidi, 2016) or across different institutions in society (Dentchev et al. 2016). Joint efforts of various organisations in order to exchange resources, knowledge and expertise for finding solutions to the most pressing issues in our societies (Bapuji et al., 2020; Smith & Woodworth, 2012).

Ecosystem theorising constitutes a fertile perspective on social innovations. Ecosystems are composed of interconnected networks of stakeholders, sharing common objectives and resources (Adner, 2017; Alvedale & Boschma, 2017; Neumeyer, Santos, & Morris, 2019). In this sense, an ecosystem for social innovation can be described as a community of entrepreneurs, social innovators, practitioners, universities, government organisations, NGOs that work together to develop solutions to the most pressing social and environmental issues of our societies (Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2015; Siqueira, Mariano, & Moraes, 2014; Tracey & Stott, 2017)

Social entrepreneurs are recognized for introducing major SI to tackle sustainability issues (Autio & Thomas, 2013; Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). Despite their admirable ambitious, social entrepreneurs often lack human-, social- and financial capital (Goyal, Sergi, & Jaiswal, 2016; Kanchana, Divya, & Beegom, 2013; Smith & Woodworth, 2012). Despite these challenges, many social entrepreneurs around the world are recognized for developing pioneering SI that are driving the change in remote areas, disadvantage communities, or address challenging social and environmental issues. A great example of these entrepreneurs are the Ashoka Fellows, whose work and SIs span around poverty, education, IT, microfinance and human rights, among many other challenging issues.

However, our knowledge of how ecosystems support social innovations remains fairly underdeveloped. Our understanding of the role of ecosystems for SI is relevant for multiple scholarly communities in the Business & Society field, including those interested in topics related to Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, CSR, stakeholder management and business ethics. We welcome papers from multiple disciplines and from different methodological backgrounds, including literature reviews, theoretical-, conceptual-, and empirical papers. These papers can address one or more of the following topics, which is not an exhaustive list:

- What are the relationships that can be described between social innovation, social entrepreneurship and ecosystem thinking?
- What are the main theories that can be employed to study the ecosystems for SI?
- Which are the most relevant actors and their contributions to ecosystems for SI?
- Are there new / emerging frameworks to describe the elements and mechanisms of ecosystems for SI?
- What are the governance mechanisms that could be identified in an ecosystem for SI?
- What are the critical resources and capabilities that organizations and institutions offer to ecosystem for SI?
- What type of support is offered by the ecosystem for SI to social innovators?

### **Timeline:**

Submission deadline 15 December 2021

### **Special Issue workshops and conferences:**

To attract papers for the special issue, we will advertise with the organization of a variety of dedicated workshops at the following conferences: 32<sup>nd</sup> IABS Conference at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) in June 2021 (Chair Nikolay Dentchev); 6<sup>th</sup> New Business Models a conference at Halmstad University (Sweden) in July 2021 (Chair Maya Hoveskog) and during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Social Entrepreneurship Summit at ESPOL in Guayaquil (Ecuador) in Sept 2021 (Chair Abel Diaz). Attendance to these workshops and/or conferences is recommended, but not a prerequisite for submission to the special issue.

### **About the guest editors:**

Name: Nikolay A. Dentchev

Bio: Nikolay A. Dentchev is Associate Professor of CSR and Entrepreneurship at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. He holds the Solvay Business School Chair of Social Entrepreneurship at VUB, with founding partners Close the Gap, BNP Paribas Fortis, and Euroclear. Nikolay is involved in initiatives supporting student entrepreneurship for more than ten years and coaching about ten students a year to develop their business. He has (co)authored more than 40 scientific publications, published in various indexed journals such as Business & Society, Journal of Business Ethics, Business Ethics: A European Review. Nikolay serves occasionally as guest editor to special issues in journals such as Business & Society and Journal of Cleaner Production. He also serves at the executive board of two international associations, i.e. IABS and NBM. Nikolay is the co-founder of Equalisi bvba, a social enterprise that commercializes products of vulnerable entrepreneurs, a spin-off activity of the VUB Chair of Social Entrepreneurship.

Name: Abel Diaz Gonzalez

Bio: Abel is a Ph.D. candidate at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB), Belgium. His research focuses

on the supportive function of social entrepreneurial ecosystems. For his doctoral dissertation, Abel has conducted field research in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Belgium. His research has been presented in different international conferences (among which the Academy of Management, IABS, EMES and New Business Models). Abel has acted as reviewer to various conferences and journals, and as co-organizer of numerous events (e.g. the VUB Social Entrepreneurship Fair that has ca. 550 participants and the Social Entrepreneurship Summit with ca. 150 participants). Abel is the co-founder of Equalisi BVBA, a social enterprise incorporated in 2019 in Belgium, aimed at supporting vulnerable entrepreneurs from Latin America to commercialize their creations in alternative markets. In August 2020, Abel joins Vesalius College in Brussels as Adjunct Professor in Social Entrepreneurship.

Name: Xaver Neumeyer

Bio: Xaver Neumeyer is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Cameron School of Business. He teaches entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship analytics as well as technology management and innovation. He has received his PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Northwestern University and was a participant of University of Florida's postdoctoral bridge program. His research has appeared in management, sustainability and engineering journals, including Journal of Small Business Management, IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Small Business Economics, Journal of Technology Transfer, and Journal of Cleaner Production. Dr. Neumeyer's research focuses on inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, examining barriers for historically underserved populations to build and grow entrepreneurial ventures. He is also the founding member of the Global Partnership for Poverty and Entrepreneurship, a platform to share resources related to venture creation by the poor.

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