



## Call for Papers

*“Inclusive or Exclusive? Diversity and Inclusion in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Research”*

### Special Issue Editors

Riccardo Fini, Bologna University, Italy ([riccardo.fini@unibo.it](mailto:riccardo.fini@unibo.it))

Susan Marlow, University of Nottingham, UK ([susan.marlow1@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:susan.marlow1@nottingham.ac.uk))

Argyro (Iro) Nikiforou, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark ([argnik@dtu.dk](mailto:argnik@dtu.dk))

Einar Rasmussen, Nord University, Norway ([einar.rasmussen@nord.no](mailto:einar.rasmussen@nord.no))

Maija Renko, DePaul University, USA ([majja.renko@depaul.edu](mailto:majja.renko@depaul.edu))

Johan Wiklund, Syracuse University, USA ([jwiklund@syr.edu](mailto:jwiklund@syr.edu))

### Special Issue Rationale and Background

Evaluating the extant body of research exploring entrepreneurial ecosystems (EEs), it is evident that, just like ecosystems in the natural world, there are significant variations across the globe regarding the nature and impact of EEs (Isenberg, 2016). Despite the recognition of such diversity, there is a notable bias in the literature towards how EEs support technology entrepreneurship, high-growth start-ups, and scaled-up ventures within advanced economies with stable institutional contexts (Spigel, 2017; for a review, see Wurth et al., 2022).

As such, the prevailing debate largely ignores issues of diversity, inclusion, and exclusion; thus, there needs to be far greater recognition afforded to who benefit from the cultural, social, and material resources that ecosystems provide and the context-dependent networks upon which they are built. There is a complex body of research that critically evaluates the impact of a diverse range of inclusionary and exclusionary ascriptions and characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity, class, and ability upon entrepreneurial agency and activity (Ahl & Marlow, 2021; Wiklund et al., 2018). Yet, how such issues affect the reach and efficacy of EEs by helping or hindering entrepreneurs is rarely considered.

Related to this point, we need to add complexity to the debate by exploring whether current EEs are open systems accessible to a diverse range of entrepreneurs, even if some are discouraged and prevented from taking advantage of such systems by the nature of their ascribed characteristics. Or conversely, whether it is the case that some EEs have inbuilt biases that exclude those with specific characteristics from their benefits. Focusing upon the importance of inclusivity and diversity to develop meaningful definitions of EEs and study their effectiveness will also reach into debates on wellbeing, health, and resilience (Stephan et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2022), social innovations and social goals (Abootorabi et al., 2023), as well as societal impacts and contributions to sustainability (Volkman et al., 2021). The aim of this special issue, therefore, is to critically analyze the scope and efficacy of EEs in relation to diversity, inclusion, and exclusion.

## Scope and Illustrative Topics

We invite both conceptual and empirical papers using diverse methodological approaches. A non-exhaustive list of potential questions and issues relevant to the SI include:

### *General Questions*

- Defining and critically evaluating the meaning of an inclusive EE.
- Illustrations and analyses of non-traditional EEs.
- How do characteristics such as gender, class, ethnicity, age, and race influence how entrepreneurs engage with and benefit from prevailing EEs?

### *Structure*

- How do individual characteristics and system attributes interact to arrive at inclusive and exclusive EE practices?
- How can the components and relationships of an ecosystem become more inclusive?
- Exploring the relationship between formal and informal elements of EEs and their impact on diversity and inclusion.
- Investigating and illustrating the role of stakeholders in promoting or constraining the diversity and inclusivity of EEs.
- How can entrepreneurs and other actors nurture an inclusive EE, and how does this affect entrepreneurial outputs and outcomes?
- Investigating the role of technology in making EEs more (or less) inclusive.
- What role do incubators, accelerators, and other related support organizations have in promoting or constraining inclusive EEs?
- How does the design of the physical infrastructure and ‘space’ of an EE enhance or constrain inclusivity?

### *Context – Comparisons*

- Comparing and contrasting diverse forms of EE in differing contexts reaching beyond advanced economies.
- How do prevailing institutional regulations and rules across differing regions and economies affect the operation of EEs in terms of inclusivity and diversity?
- Exploring and critically evaluating the relationship between policy initiatives and inclusive EEs.

### *Evolution*

- How do systemic shocks change the trajectories of EEs in terms of inclusivity and diversity?

### *Impact*

- Evaluating how the impacts of EEs are measured and the implications of this for inclusivity and diversity.
- How do EEs conducive to inclusivity differ from normative ecosystems focusing on economic performance: are the economic and non-economic impacts complementary or contradictory?

## Paper development workshops

The Editors will host several workshops on the topic of the special issue prior to the submission deadline. Attending or presenting at such workshops is not a requirement for submissions to be considered for the special issue. After the first round of reviews, the editorial team will organize a “special issue paper development workshop” for authors with a revise and resubmit decision. Attendance will not indicate future progression in the review process or paper acceptance.

## Submission details

The **deadline** for submission of papers is **April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**.

The journal submission site will be open for submission starting **April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**.

The special issue will likely be published towards the end of 2026.

Questions and informal queries can be addressed to the editorial team.

## References

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- Ahmed, A. E., Ucbasaran, D., Cacciotti, G., & Williams, T. A. (2022). Integrating psychological resilience, stress, and coping in entrepreneurship: A critical review and research agenda. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(3), 497-538.
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- Stephan, U., Rauch, A., & Hatak, I. (2023). Happy entrepreneurs? Everywhere? A meta-analysis of entrepreneurship and wellbeing. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 47(2), 553-593.
- Volkman, C., Fichter, K., Klofsten, M., & Audretsch, D. B. (2021). Sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems: An emerging field of research. *Small Business Economics*, 56(3), 1047-1055.
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