

Call for papers for the special issue
« Social Economy and Sustainability Transition »

Guest Editors:

Benjamin Huybrechts (HEC Management School, Université de Liège)

Marek Hudon (SBS-EM, Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Associate Editors:

Fabienne Fecher (Université de Liège)

Jean-Pascal van Ypersele (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Background

The social economy gathers organizations that put the pursuit of social aims at the heart of their economic activity (Defourny & Develtere 1999; Defourny & Laville 2007). The transition towards sustainability seeks to bring the economic system and the society as a whole towards a new equilibrium that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable (Khan 1995; Loorbach 2010; World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Social economy and sustainable development are distinct concepts dealing with different levels of analysis and different historical emphases: socio-economic for the former and environmental for the latter. Nevertheless, the principles and values embedded in these two notions partly overlap, pointing to the need to consider and improve the economic, social and environmental sustainability of business activities (Cretieneau 2010; Seelos & Mair 2004) – in other words, both notions emphasize the need for the economic system to engage in a transition oriented towards human well-being and sustainability.

Such synergy enables fruitful cross-pollination. On the one hand, the transition towards sustainable development can enrich the scope of societal aims of social enterprises and integrate the latter's action in a long-term societal transition project (Cretieneau 2010; Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012). On the other hand, the way in which social enterprises manage the combination of economic, social and –increasingly– environmental dimensions can enrich sustainable development through concrete organizational solutions that significantly differ from those that have led to different types of crises (economic, social, environmental, ethical,...) both currently and in the past (Lévesque 2002; Seelos & Mair 2004).

An increasing amount of research has documented the connections between the social economy (or related notions such as social entrepreneurship and social innovation) and the transition towards sustainable development, both conceptually (Cretieneau 2010; Kury 2012; Santos 2012; Seelos & Mair 2004) and empirically. Several studies explore the way in which

social enterprises conceive, experiment and diffuse practices and organizational models that embody a sustainable development dynamics. Some of these studies focus on specific organizational forms such as cooperatives (Gijssels *et al.* 2007; Spear 2000) or cover specific fields such as recycling (Curtis 2005), short food supply chains (Chiffolleau & Prévost 2012; Lockie 2009), renewable energy (Huybrechts & Mertens 2014; van der Horst 2008), social and micro-finance (Allet & Hudon in press; Périlleux *et al.* 2012), fair trade (Bisaillon *et al.* 2005; Huybrechts 2013), etc.

Targetted issues

Despite the proliferation of this research, several questions remain unanswered. This special issue aims to gather contributions that question and feed in a new way the convergence between the social economy and the transition towards sustainable development, through a number of issues including (but not restricted to):

- Contribution of the social economy to environmental and social sustainability transitions in given fields of activity or territories, in collaboration with public authorities and/or businesses
- Design, experimentation and diffusion of innovative practices by social enterprises to deal with societal challenges in a sustainable way
- Sustainable management practices in social enterprises
- Opportunities of sustainable transition projects for the creation of new social enterprises or the transformation and networking of established ones

Practical information

The articles must be written in English. The authors wishing to submit an article are strongly encouraged to participate in one of the following conferences, in which a thematic line will deal with the connection between social economy and sustainable development:

- The 2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on Sustainable Development, 21 and 22 May 2015, Louvain-la-Neuve – <http://congrestransitiondurable.org/?lang=en>
- The 5th EMES International Research Conference on Social Enterprise, 30 June to 3 July 2015, Helsinki – www.emes.net
- The 5th CIRIEC International Conference on the Social Economy, 15 to 18 July 2015, Lisbon – www.ciriec2015.com

The full papers should be sent before **31 August 2015** and be prepared following the journal's submission guidelines ([http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1467-8292/homepage/ForAuthors.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-8292/homepage/ForAuthors.html)).

For any question related to this special issue, please contact Benjamin Huybrechts (b.huybrechts@ulg.ac.be) and Marek Hudon (mhudon@ulb.ac.be).

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