

Searching for a responsible entrepreneurial path – the role of ethical orientation in guiding towards sustainable business development

In response to the increasing demand for a more profound ethical examination within the realm of entrepreneurship (Anderson & Smith, 2007), this project builds upon a conceptual paper of Hägg, Haataja, Kurczewska, McKelvie titled "Entrepreneurial Responsibility: A Conceptual Framework to Understand Ethical Dualism Throughout the Entrepreneurial Process" featured in the journal *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. At its core, the project relates to the complex nature of entrepreneurial responsibility throughout the entrepreneurial journey. It applies a perspective of normative ethics. This particular viewpoint conceptualizes entrepreneurial responsibility as an active and conscientious response to the ethical obligations and repercussions encountered by entrepreneurs. The methodology integrates two ethical frameworks: deontological ethics, emphasizing internal and unconditional moral obligations, and teleological ethics, which assesses the outcomes of acts. The objective of this project is twofold. Firstly, it aims to empirically validate the conceptual framework of entrepreneurial responsibility. Secondly, it seeks to provide nuanced insights into how diverse moral evaluations influence the development of sustainable businesses during the exploration and exploitation of business opportunities. The central research question steering the project is as follows: *How does ethical orientation of an individual guide sustainable business practices and societal value creation?* Additionally, the project formulates a sub-question: *How can we understand nascent entrepreneurial behavior through the ethical duality in entrepreneurial responsibility?* To address and explore these inquiries, the project employs a diverse methodological approach. This includes in-depth interviews, vignettes coupled with think-aloud protocols, and surveys centered around ethical scenarios intricately tied to the entrepreneurial process. By combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, the research endeavors to unravel the complexity and dynamism of entrepreneurial responsibility—a dualistic concept shaped by the moral evaluations of entrepreneurs at different phases and in relation to various dimensions of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental). Thus, in essence, this project deepens understanding of how entrepreneurs can navigate the ethical terrain while constructing ventures that are sustainable.