

Africa Journal of Management

Special issue: Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa

Call for papers

Guest editors

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Description

Africa is at a crossroads. On one hand, it faces numerous intractable sustainable development challenges, including widespread and persistent poverty, increased competition for resources accompanying rapid population growth, and the intensifying effects of global climate change. On the other hand, many African economies are growing rapidly, whilst over the last decade significant progress has been made in governance and human development across the continent. Indeed, in recent times, external perceptions of Africa are changing to see the continent as an 'opportunity' rather than a 'threat'. Many African cities have become centres of (social) innovation and entrepreneurship, with Africans shaping their own destinies and developing local solutions to the sustainable development challenges they face. This special issue of the Africa Journal of Management aims to reflect and speak to these transformations. We invite paper submissions that provide new empirical and theoretical insights on social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

Social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa have been the subject of growing academic attention (see George et al. 2012; Bitzer et al, 2015; Rivera-Santos et al, 2015; Holt & Littlewood, 2017; Littlewood & Holt, 2018; Mirvis & Googins, 2018; Ciambotti & Pedrini, 2019; Steinfield & Holt, 2019). Nevertheless, research has struggled to keep pace with rapid developments on the ground and in practice. Scholarship on social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa remains fragmented, with many research questions unanswered. For this reason, we have convened this special issue of the Africa Journal of Management. We therefore invite contributions to the special issue on the following (non-exhaustive) topics:

- African social innovators and social entrepreneurs. Papers may examine their unique attributes or ways of working, what motivates them, what constrains their actions, and how they can better be supported. Work deploying psychological and sociocultural perspectives, methodologies and theories are encouraged. Contributions might also focus on particular demographic groups e.g. women or youth social innovators and entrepreneurs in Africa, and/or shed light on intersectional constraints that can magnify disadvantages for certain groups (per intersectionality theory).
- Organising for social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa occurs across varied organisational settings, from social enterprises and cooperatives, to fair trade and more traditional business ventures, including corporates. Public and third sector actors also socially innovate, and may enter into partnerships with each other and the private sector to deliver services and/or address intractable sustainable development challenges. We welcome papers examining

organisations and their role in social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Work may shed light on the various strategies of socially innovating and enterprising organisations in Africa, as well as topics like their approaches to marketing, internationalisation, operations management, stakeholder relations, leadership, their business models etc. Research comparing social innovation and entrepreneurship across different organisational forms is encouraged.

- Hybridity is often a central feature of the previously mentioned organisations and partnerships. They may be pursuing dual or even triple economic, social and environmental objectives. This pursuit of such multiple objectives can cause tensions, but can also create opportunities and spur innovation. We therefore welcome work addressing issues of hybridity, and the ways actors navigate these dynamics.
- There remains much scope to better understand and theorise processes and forms of social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. This may include utilising and adapting existing but un/under applied innovation and entrepreneurship theories and perspectives, as well as those from wider management scholarship and further afield. It may involve expanding related processes and concepts like frugal innovation, sustainable entrepreneurship, inclusive innovation, shared value etc. It may also entail theoretical elaboration and new theory building. To this end, submissions are welcomed that compare and/or combine wider theoretical lens with social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa, or that provide new theoretical insights.
- Africa is heterogeneous and dynamic. There are 54 countries in Africa. These countries are home to individuals from diverse ethnic groups and peoples, who speak many different languages, and with multiple religions and sociocultural practices - including traditional ones – across the continent. The histories and political systems of African countries also vary enormously, as do their economies. We expect submissions to recognise and respect these differences, and welcome papers, which explore how processes of social innovation and entrepreneurship, and individual social innovators, entrepreneurs and their ventures, are shaped by contextual factors and forces. Institutional, political economy, and geographical perspectives may be usefully deployed in such efforts. We welcome African cross country studies, but also studies exploring relationships between social innovation and entrepreneurship actors in Africa and those elsewhere – both in developed, and emerging and developing economies. We further welcome studies that compare within country differences and more regional, local and traditional institutions and their influence on social innovation and entrepreneurship phenomena in Africa.
- Social innovation and entrepreneurship do not occur in isolation. Social innovators, entrepreneurs and their ventures are enmeshed in relationships, and they often draw upon their networks to access resources, gain and maintain legitimacy, and to achieve their wider strategic objectives. We welcome papers that adopt network and systems perspectives and theories e.g. social network theories, actor network theory, entrepreneurial ecosystems, innovation systems etc. to examine social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. We further welcome work examining the role of wider actors e.g. universities, hubs, international organisations [for instance Ashoka, Schwab Foundation], government agencies and wider intermediaries, in such innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Finally, social innovation and entrepreneurship are not politically neutral. Their meaning, practice, antecedents and consequences are debated and contested. This is the case in Africa as elsewhere, albeit there may be particular tensions, and points and spaces of contestation around them in African contexts e.g. in relation to issues of

colonialism/decolonising, aid and philanthropy, and power relations. We therefore welcome critical papers that challenge taken for granted perspectives and understandings about social innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

The deadline for paper submissions is **20th November 2020**.

Submitted papers should follow the guidelines for the Africa Journal of Management:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=r ajm20>

Submissions should be written in English. Submitted papers will go through a double blind peer-review process as per the guidelines of the Journal. Submissions to the special issue should be sent first to the special issues guest editors. Please email submissions to: david.littlewood@sheffield.ac.uk

The special issue editors will also be running a special stream on “Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa”, at the 12th International Social Innovation Research Conference, Sheffield University Management School, 1st -3rd September 2020. Submitters to the special issue are encouraged to submit to this stream for initial feedback, although this is not compulsory: <https://isirconference2020.com/>

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About the Special Issue editors

David Littlewood (BSc, MSc, PhD) is a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) at Sheffield University Management School, the University of Sheffield, UK. He conducts research in the areas of social enterprise and innovation, corporate social responsibility, and the informal economy. By geography, Dr Littlewood's work focusses on Sub-Saharan Africa. His research has been published in varied academic outlets including the *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *Business & Society*, the *California Management Review*, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, and the *Journal of Business Ethics* amongst others. He is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow and sits on the editorial review boards of the journal *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, and the *Social Enterprise Journal*.

Diane Holt (BSc, MSc, PhD) is a Professor in Entrepreneurship at Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds. She is also Director of the Centre for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Studies. Professor Holt previously held posts at Essex Business School (2013-2019), Queen's University Belfast (2007-2013) and Middlesex University Business School (1996-2007). Her work has a strong focus on sub-Saharan Africa. She was the principal investigator on the ESRC funded Trickle Out Africa Project which considers the role of social and environmental enterprises in poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Africa. She has published over 100 peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers.

Giacomo Ciambotti (BSc, MSc) is a final year PhD candidate at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italy) and research fellow at ALTIS - Graduate School of Business & Society. Giacomo spent time as a consultant supporting social entrepreneurs in East Africa to develop and implement their business plans; he has also worked for KPMG Advisory in Milan. Giacomo is a member at the E4Impact Foundation, which delivers programmes for impact entrepreneurs in more than 10 African countries. He is also visiting lecturer of Financial Planning in multiple African countries including in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda. His research particularly focuses on management and growth of hybrid organizations and social enterprises. He is a regular contributor to international academic conferences, and his research has been published in books and academic journals, including the *Journal of Business Ethics*.

Laurel Steinfield (BComm, MSc, DPhil) is an assistant professor of marketing at Bentley University (USA). Her work focuses on subsistence marketplaces and explores (social) interventions/innovations that can improve livelihoods. Her prior research has examined entrepreneurship in Eastern/Southern Africa, and corporate-led women economic empowerment initiatives. As a transformative consumer research scholar, she views social innovations/intervention as a key mechanism with which to address intersectional injustices and to achieve the SDGs. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, amongst others, and has featured in numerous books and encyclopaedia entries.