

Decolonising Sustainable Digital Transformation for Entrepreneurs in Emerging Economies – gendered perspectives

Stream Conveners:

Dr. Charlotte Felix-Faure – IDRAC Business School
Prof. Jessica Lichy – IDRAC Business School
Dr Bridget Irene - De Montfort University, UK
Dr. Fiona Armstrong Gibbs - Liverpool John Moores University

Problem Identification

The field of management and organizational studies has long been criticized for its predominantly Western-centric and outdated perspective, particularly Anglo-American (Emery and Trist, 1960; Kingston, 2014). Research in post-colonial theory, critical development studies, and critical management studies have highlighted that management knowledge has been primarily produced in North America and the United Kingdom, often neglecting the experiences, practices, and opinions of individuals and organizations from the rest of the world (Mazzocchi, 2006 Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020). This neglect stems from a historical perspective that studied and interpreted non-Western societies from Western perspectives, despite significant cultural and value differences within and between these societies – including the degree of individualism and collectivism, with Western cultures leaning towards individualism and non-Western cultures, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, embracing collectivism (Naudé, 2022)

These imbalances are manifest in the world of scientific publishing, where the promotion of Western values have led to significant disparities in power dynamics and the distribution of resources based on gender and other social dimensions. Specifically, women and non-binary entrepreneurs in emerging economies face these disparities even more acutely, as the concept of entrepreneurship itself carries a masculine and patriarchal subtext that obscures the role and experiences of others doing entrepreneurship (Lichy, 2023(Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020) (Marlow & Martinez Dy, 2018). Gender inequalities and unequal resource distribution persist in technology entrepreneurship, with transactional networking norms often reinforcing exclusion and patriarchal male-dominance in social networks (Wheadon & Duval-Couetil, 2021).

Scope of the Stream

To address these issues and encourage engagement, this stream explores how we can decolonize sustainable digital transformation for entrepreneurs in emerging economies. It prioritises the need to use post-colonial and post structural epistemologies that explore the

gendered structures and specific experiences of women and non-binary entrepreneurs which may hinder their engagement with technology adoption in their ventures. The stream also emphasizes that this is vital for the sustainable entrepreneurial activities that contribute to economic development and recovery in emerging economies, especially those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This stream invites all contributions with a gendered, feminist, or queer lens (but not exclusively) that are related to many topical issues facing entrepreneurs in emerging economies. In doing so, it serves as a platform to address critical issues related to entrepreneurship and digital transformation, offering opportunities to share research, insights, and strategies that can empower entrepreneurs, challenge binary constructs of gender and, equally importantly, can contribute to economic growth and development in emerging economies. By encouraging research and discussion in these areas, the stream aims to facilitate meaningful progress toward gender equality, inclusivity, and sustainable entrepreneurship.

Theoretical Underpinning

The field of management and organisational studies have in recent years been criticised for their characteristically Westo-centric (particularly Anglo-American) posture (Jack et al., 2011; Murphy & Zhu, 2012; Prasad, 2003). Research in fields such as post-colonial theory, critical development studies, and critical management studies have pointed out that management knowledge has been predominantly produced in and for North America and the United Kingdom. Thus, ignoring, silencing, and undermining the lived experiences, realities, practices, and opinions of people and organisations from the rest of the world (Banerjee & Linstead, 2004; Currie et al., 2008; Dar & Cooke, 2008; Fougère & Moulettes, 2012; Prasad, 2003).

Historically, colonial powers (the West) viewed and studied non-Western (or former colonies from Western perspectives (Fougère & Moulettes, 2011). This, despite the fact that the worldviews, values, and cultures of these societies have a number of differences. One of the main differentiators is the degree of individualism and collectivism of these societies, and how that has an impact on epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Western civilisations are known to be less collectivist, while the non-Western ones, such as those of Sub-Saharan Africa, tend to be less individualistic. Therefore, Western values embrace independence, rationality, and autonomy, while non-Western societies embrace interdependence, communality, and values of harmonious co-existence (Chilisa, 2012; Metz, 2020).

Research focusing on North-South interactions, and power dynamics of a highly unbalanced nature, is particularly relevant for studying the interaction of Western concepts with Southern realities (Calas and Smircich 1999). Postcolonial perspectives decentralize subjectivity and question the equivalence of categories, or social markers, in other societies (Calas and Smircich 1999). They criticize narratives of "origins" in Western theories that might have excluded "natives", attributing to them markers such as "primitive", "traditional" or "less developed". Studying entrepreneurship in contexts where resources are scarce or inaccessible deepens our

fundamental understanding of entrepreneurship, and more broadly of management and business (Neal 2017; Felix-Faure, 2021).

Women and non-binary entrepreneurs in emerging economies, in addition to having their lived experiences undermined by the Westo-centric, patriarchal entrepreneurship discourses, are subjected to a concept of entrepreneurship that is masculine in nature. The concept of entrepreneurship itself, though it is presented as gender-neutral, consists of a gender-subtext which masks maleness and therefore perpetuates the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Bruni, Gherardi, Poggio, 2004). Undoubtedly, to study entrepreneurs in action while ignoring the gendered structure of the entrepreneurship concept is to validate the 'gender blindness' that renders masculinity invisible and anchoring it as the universal parameter of entrepreneurial action. Thus, making it the norm and standard model in which every entrepreneurial act must comply.

The apparent structure of power relations connecting different population groups (DiTomaso, Post & Parks-Yancy, 2007) and the unequal distribution of resources based on gender and other social dimensions including, norms, attitudes, and ideologies concerning the role of women and non-binary entrepreneurs in society (Acker, 1992) are made evident in the context of technology entrepreneurship. For example, transactional networking in technology entrepreneurship is normalised while its (white) masculinist underpinnings are obscured by the rhetoric of 'gender neutrality' adopted by intermediary organisations (i.e., incubators and accelerators). Social networks then become a primary mechanism of exclusion from the labour market (Christopherson, 2009; Lutter, 2015) and are reinforced by societal gender norms about who can become a technology entrepreneur and engage in innovation processes (Schott and Cheraghi, 2014). "Maintaining white male network connections appears to provide significantly greater access to job information and high-status contacts than female- and minority-dominated networks. As such, gender and race segregation in social networks help to consolidate the resources advantages of white men, while also limiting female and minority access to these resources" (McDonald, 2011: 328).

Women's entrepreneurship in emerging economies is apparently the most important economic and social phenomenon currently being explored (Karim et al., 2022). Women entrepreneurs can make a key positive contribution to business creation (Sarpong et al., 2022) and financial growth (Hechevarría et al., 2019), as suggested by recent research (Vershina et al., 2020). A good understanding of entrepreneurship in different contexts is essential in order to determine whether and to what extent entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth and development economic development (Deng et al., 2020).

Businesses that implement digital transformation can reap many benefits, such as redesigning organisational structure, improving operational efficiency, enhancing customer experience, improving competitiveness, developing innovative business models and reducing operating costs (Garzoni et al., 2020). These benefits help SMEs to successfully adopt digital transformation, improve management efficiency and deliver goods and services.

In general, the benefits of adopting digital transformation for SMEs create good business opportunities, good conditions for building a culture of innovation, improve corporate governance and make effective use of government support and partnerships. These are favourable conditions for SMEs to clearly identify the determining factors for the application of digital transformation. These conditions above, are most likely to occur within the context of developed countries, emerging country entrepreneurs face numerous hardships, and women are even more disadvantaged. Therefore, a more context sensitive digital entrepreneurship efforts may be encouraged so that the women may reap the many benefits it may bring.

To encourage engagement in these issues, this track aims to provide an overview of the need to address the challenges entrepreneurs face, especially linked to colonial and masculine epistemologies, to effectively engage in technology adoption in their business. This is essential for sustainable entrepreneurial activities for economic development and recovery of emerging economies that were severely impacted by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

We therefore encourage the submission of contributions aiming to cover a wide range of topics such as (but not limited to):

- Sustainable Digital Transformation and Gendered Entrepreneurship
- Transactional Networking and Social Networks in Technology Entrepreneurship
- Decolonising Entrepreneurship Policy: local, national, and international contexts
- Gender Inequality and Inequity and Digital Entrepreneurship
- Gendered Entrepreneurship in Digital, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts
- Digital Entrepreneurship in the informal sector
- The Role of Gender in Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies
- Resources, funding and support for Women and minorities in Technology Entrepreneurship
- Deconstructing Accepted Notions About Masculine and Feminine Notions in Digital Entrepreneurship
- Gendered Experiences of Entrepreneurs in Business incubators

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (excluding references) must be submitted to the GWO 2024 submission system hosted by FourWaves. The link is available on the [GWO conference 2024 website](#) as of November 6th, 2023. No independent abstract submissions (i.e., an abstract submitted to someone's personal email) will be considered for acceptance or presentation at the conference. Stream convenors will be conducting a blind review process and redirecting abstracts to the GWO organising committee for consideration in the open stream if and when appropriate. The abstract itself should then not have any author details to ensure this blind review process. Abstract formatting specifics are available in the submission system. Abstracts are due by December 22nd, 2023, with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream convenors by the end of January 2024. No extensions to this deadline will be possible as some participants will need time and justification documents to secure visas to attend the conference onsite.

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