

CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of Business Ethics

Special Issue:

Save our cities? Exploring the intersection of ethics, diversity and inclusion, and social innovation in revitalizing urban environments

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The percentage of humanity living in cities is growing, as is the gap between the rich and poor. As a result, urban areas have become the center of grand societal challenges around poverty, education, health and nutrition, race and ethnicity, homelessness, physical security, access to opportunity, and more. Though our cities have diverse socio-demographics, many residents face barriers to inclusion that keep them from fully contributing to the life of cities or from reaping the rewards. Consequently, opportunities and resources are not equally distributed, but instead accrue to those who belong to social groups with more structural power and status (DiTomaso, Post, Parks-Yancy, 2007). Social challenges then fall disproportionately upon poorer, marginalized, and oftentimes minority or immigrant members of our urban communities, presenting a moral dilemma that both demands and defies quick resolution.

How should we seek to save our cities? At the core of this call for papers is the belief that revitalizing cities requires the active and intentional engagement of business. Through the intrapreneurial ventures of existing corporations and the entrepreneurial creation of new ventures, innovative new business models have been created, implemented, and scaled in ways that have profitably addressed a variety of social problems (Barnett, 2020; George, Baker, Tracey & Joshi, 2019). For example, drawing in and drawing upon the untapped talents among the excluded, poor, and marginalized members of our communities have resulted in sustainable and inclusive urban policies and business model innovations that may point academics and policymakers toward new territory for research and practice (Robinson et al., 2019).

Though businesses have the potential to resolve these problems, often they are also their cause. Businesses create jobs of varying skill and pay levels that can include or exclude large swaths of a city's diverse residents. The externalities that businesses generate affect the commons of the communities where they are located, often contributing to social problems on many levels. This presents an intertwined set of ethical and practical complexities to be addressed if business is to achieve its potential to revitalize rather than harm urban environments. Yet too little is known about the ethical implications of revitalizing urban environments, and what roles diversity and inclusion, and social innovation play in this process.

This Special Issue

We seek papers that provide theoretically grounded insights regarding how prosocial intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs (Baker & Powell, 2020) leverage the diversity of the cities where they operate to address social challenges in ways that generate ethical paths to revitalization and development that are both sustainable and inclusive. We are open and welcoming to all theoretical perspectives, empirical methodologies, and geographical and empirical settings. It is our hope that this special issue will illustrate ways of filling the gap we too often see between strong theoretical insights and useful lessons for practice.

Examples of relevant issues at the intersection of ethics, diversity and inclusion, social innovation, and urban revitalization are listed below. These are simply illustrative; they are not exhaustive, and they do not indicate specific topics that we will favor.

Local needs. There are many ways that intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial actors can benefit their communities, ranging from core business activities such as acting as a good local employer, to ancillary activities such as making donations to support local arts, culture, and recreation. What philosophies (e.g. ethical reasoning; stakeholder theory) or practices (e.g. diversity and inclusion; hiring) guide how these actors understand local needs, their own responsibilities, and how they choose to respond?

Competing employment models. What ethical considerations do founders and businesses in competitive markets face in determining their employment practices, while maintaining strong performance? We know that high tech firms compete using highly varied models of how they select and manage employees, thereby choosing different paths to potential success (Baron, Burton & Hannan, 1996). But these practices have also limited the diversity of these organizations. We also know that most new ventures choose homophily, despite its apparent limitations (Ruef, Aldrich & Carter, 2003). We are interested in papers that explain in what ways the everyday ventures (Welter, et al., 2017) that dominate the urban entrepreneurship landscape build competitive success through diverse and inclusive employment practices.

Ownership. How does ownership shape ethical behavior toward engagement with the cities that businesses call home? Do closely held private firms (and family businesses) engage more ethically with the cities in which they operate? What are the differences in ethical behavior between domestically controlled and foreign controlled companies? Social ventures and traditional enterprises? Do governance compensation practices shape local engagement in meaningful ways?

International standards. What ethical/unethical beliefs drive multi-region businesses to develop strategies that lead them to be “good citizens” that, for example, embrace diversity and inclusion in some places but “bad actors” in others? Are these easily predictable in terms of legal structures and enforcement? In terms of varied market demand? Or are some corporations “good citizens” regardless of legal or market pressures? Why and how do they accomplish this and with what short and long-term consequences? What role does diversity play in these decisions?

Leadership. Research suggests that female leaders are more attentive to a broader range of stakeholders and prioritize corporate social responsibility (Byron & Post, 2016; Wowak, Ball,

Post, & Ketchen, forth). To what extent are prosocial activities and commitments in urban areas contingent on the individuals who lead organizations? What ethical frameworks are used by those who engage in prosocial activities and comments, how might they differ across gender, and how and to what extent do these practices become part of organizational routines and capabilities that transcend particular leadership groups?

Collaboration. Effective solutions to social problems often require collaboration across business, government, and nongovernmental organizations (Barnett, Henriques & Husted, 2018; Palomares-Aguirre, Barnett, Layrisse & Husted, 2018). What ethical considerations are incorporated into these arrangements? In what way do they differ depending on objectives? How do diversity and inclusion enhance or hinder interorganizational cooperation for social innovation (Powell et al., 2018)?

Inclusive measures of success. A city's revitalization is often accompanied by rising rents and gentrification, which drives out economically vulnerable residents. What ethical practices or social innovation designs limit negative externalities and ensure that local neighborhoods become more diverse and vibrant, rather than effectively (economically) gated communities? What measurements indicate ethical success for cities and their citizens, and not just success for firms (Barnett, Henriques & Husted, 2020; Welter & Baker, 2021)?

Relational and social capital. "Cities are full of intricate and often surprising social networks—networks that help bind people together and provide important resources in times of stress" (Latham and Layton, 2019: 1). Yet, cities also vary greatly in the ways that they facilitate opportunities for making connections, meeting strangers, or sharing neighborhoods. What is the value of such social networks in generating social ventures and social entrepreneurs? How do ventures built around city social networks ethically create value for a city's varied constituents, particularly compared to those that are not built around city networks?

Work-family and work-life balance. A city's infrastructure shapes its citizens' ability to effectively manage competing employment and family demands (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005). Unreliable Internet access, electricity and water supplies adversely affect quality of life (McLean, Naumann & Koslowski, 2017). The structure of public transportation networks may disproportionately affect commuting time, which can impact domestic and childcare responsibilities with spillovers on work-life balance and work-family conflict (He, Tao, Ng, & Tieben, 2020; Jain, Line, & Lyons, 2011). What ethical designs or practices help businesses to minimize these effects on their workforce and local population? How do social innovations alleviate the negative effects of city infrastructure on work-life balance and improve or expand the infrastructure so that businesses' goals for diversity and inclusion can be attained?

Entrepreneurial ecosystem. Cities have different industrial structures that shape economic activity. These structures can influence the types of entrepreneurs who emerge. In what way does regional industry structure influence the diversity and inclusiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem? What are the ethical dilemmas that emerge from historical and contemporary industry structure in regions? What policies have been implemented to promote inclusive growth in cities and what is their effectiveness? How can the concept of an entrepreneurial ecosystem be used as a framework for comparative research on social innovation in urban areas?

Submission Instructions

Submissions are welcomed from a variety of theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary perspectives, as long as they are closely in line with the topic of the Special Issue. Authors are strongly encouraged to refer to the JBE's [submission guidelines](#) for detailed instructions on submitting a paper to this Special Issue. Please note that a paper submitted to this Special Issue is considered a submission to the JBE and therefore cannot be resubmitted to a regular issue of the journal. All submissions must be made via JBE's online [submission system](#) by January 17, 2022. Please be sure to indicate that the paper is for this Special Issue during the submission process. The online submission system will start accepting submissions 60 days prior to the call for papers submission deadline. All manuscripts will go through a double-blind peer-reviewed process according to JBE's guidelines. Any questions with regard to this Special Issue, please address to Mike Barnett at mbarnett@business.rutgers.edu.

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