

THE ROLE OF THE ENTREPRENEUR IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is currently an important factor in promoting sustainable development, particularly with regard to the European Union's double transition towards a green and digital economy. The entrepreneurial role is currently extending into new fields, including those concerning environmental protection, social affairs, and resource management, moving on from the mere economic value-creating role. This paper adopts a conceptual and analytical approach to identify how entrepreneurs impact on sustainable development, exploring these aspects on three interconnected fronts: eco-transition through innovations, responsible business model transfer, and building regional resilience via inclusive economic growth. From a conceptual and analytical perspective, inclusive within this paper and best articulated in recent literature on this topic, this work shows how entrepreneurial activity influences positively the transfer to clean technologies, to a more widespread use of sustainable economy processes, and to social outcomes within regions with structural disadvantages, which can actually trigger positive change on both fronts. Finally, this paper outlines a range of factors which can facilitate entrepreneurship on sustainability grounds: institutional arrangements, access to green finance, and digitalization. The main outcomes show how entrepreneurs can actually work as change-agents within these processes, responding to both personal goals and to long-term strategic outcomes. This paper shows how sustainable entrepreneurship is positively reinforcing competitiveness while contributing at the same time to reaching the targets on the two SDGs.

Keywords: Sustainable entrepreneurship, Green innovation, Circular economy, Regional resilience, Responsible business models

Classification JEL: L26, O31, O44

1. Introduction

In the context of economic, social and technological transformations in recent years, sustainable development has become one of the central themes of the international academic and institutional agenda. The pressures generated by climate change, environmental degradation, social imbalances and the need for economic competitiveness require the reconfiguration of traditional growth models and their orientation towards more resilient, inclusive and resource-efficient solutions. Within the European Union, this transformation is increasingly expressed through the logic of the double transition, green and digital, considered complementary processes that must be managed in an integrated manner to support sustainability, innovation and competitiveness in the long term.

In this equation, entrepreneurship occupies an increasingly important place, as it allows the transposition of general sustainability objectives into concrete economic solutions, adapted to market needs and territorial realities. If in classical approaches the entrepreneur was defined primarily by his ability to identify market opportunities and generate profit, recent literature shows a significant

expansion of this role, in the sense of including responsibilities related to environmental protection, green innovation, efficient use of resources and generation of social value. In this sense, the entrepreneur no longer appears only as an economic actor, but as an agent of change capable of influencing the trajectories of sustainable development at the firm, sector and regional level.

The importance of this theme is amplified by the fact that the European double transition cannot be achieved exclusively through public policies or through investments on a macroeconomic scale, but requires the active participation of private actors, in particular innovative enterprises and entrepreneurial initiatives. European strategic documents emphasize that digitalization can support energy efficiency, traceability along value chains, monitoring emissions, developing more sustainable products and processes and strengthening circular business models. At the same time, these transformations generate new opportunities for entrepreneurs, who can leverage digital and green technologies to build competitive advantages and respond to increasing demands for sustainability.

However, the literature remains fragmented in terms of how the role of the entrepreneur in sustainable development is conceptualized and explained. A significant part of the studies analyze separately sustainable entrepreneurship, green innovation, circular economy, entrepreneurial ecosystems or regional resilience, without sufficiently integrating the relationships between these dimensions. Moreover, recent syntheses show that there are still ambiguities regarding the influence of the institutional context and entrepreneurial ecosystems on sustainability, as well as regarding the factors that facilitate or limit entrepreneurship oriented towards environmental and social objectives. This lack of conceptual integration justifies the need for a theoretical approach that more clearly reconstructs the mechanisms through which entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development.

The novelty of this paper lies in proposing an integrated conceptual perspective on the role of the entrepreneur in sustainable development, built around three interdependent directions. The first one aims at eco-transition through innovation, namely the capacity of entrepreneurs to accelerate the adoption of clean technologies and sustainable solutions. The second one refers to the transformation of business models towards responsible and circular forms, capable of combining economic performance with reduced environmental impact and the generation of social value. The third direction concerns the contribution of entrepreneurship to strengthening regional resilience and promoting inclusive growth, especially in territories affected by structural vulnerabilities or development gaps.

The topic is relevant from both a theoretical and practical perspective. From a theoretical point of view, the analysis allows to expand the discussion on entrepreneurship beyond the traditional paradigm of profit maximization and supports an interpretation of the entrepreneur as a strategic actor in the processes of economic and social transformation. From a practical point of view, understanding these mechanisms is useful for formulating public policies and support instruments that stimulate green innovation, access to sustainable finance, digitalization and the consolidation of regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. In a European framework marked by pressures related to competitiveness, economic security and territorial cohesion, these aspects take on strategic importance.

Based on these considerations, the objective of the article is to analyze, based on the specialized literature, how entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development and to propose a conceptual framework that explains this contribution in an integrated manner. The paper has a theoretical nature and uses a qualitative approach, based on the critical analysis of relevant literature in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship, green innovation, circular economy and regional resilience. The structure of the article is organized into four parts: introduction, analysis of the specialized literature, presentation of the proposed conceptual framework and conclusions.

2. Literature review

The specialized literature increasingly converges around the idea that sustainable entrepreneurship represents a distinct subfield within entrepreneurship research, emerging from the recognition that entrepreneurial activity can be part of the solution, rather than merely a source, of environmental degradation and social inequality (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). A substantial number of conceptual studies and literature reviews argue that sustainable entrepreneurship involves entrepreneurial action simultaneously oriented toward economic, social, and ecological objectives, in line with the triple bottom line logic, thus moving beyond the traditional separation between profit generation, social responsibility, and environmental protection (Rosário et al., 2022).

Recent systematic reviews have mapped the field and identified its main definitions, themes, and lines of development (Ali, 2021). These studies show that the literature has evolved from general discussions on ecopreneurship or green entrepreneurship toward more sophisticated process-based approaches explaining how entrepreneurs recognize sustainability-related opportunities, mobilize resources, and respond to institutional and market constraints (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). At the same time, the field has gradually shifted from predominantly normative interpretations toward more rigorous conceptual and empirical investigations, including case studies, systematic reviews, and mechanism-oriented frameworks (Di Vaio et al., 2022).

This conceptual evolution is especially important because it reflects a broader transformation in the understanding of entrepreneurship itself. Rather than being perceived solely as an engine of economic expansion, entrepreneurship is now increasingly examined through its capacity to generate long-term value across multiple dimensions of sustainability (Rosário et al., 2022). In this sense, sustainable entrepreneurship has become a bridge concept that links innovation, competitiveness, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion within the same analytical framework (Muñoz et al., 2018).

Studies explicitly addressing the relationship between entrepreneurship and sustainable development emphasize that entrepreneurs can function as catalysts of transformation by connecting what must be sustained, such as natural capital, social cohesion, and intergenerational equity, with what must be developed, such as innovation, productive capacity, and market creation (Muñoz et al., 2018). In this perspective, entrepreneurial action is understood as a mechanism through which broad sustainability goals are translated into business models, market solutions, and organizational practices that have concrete territorial and social effects (Rosário et al., 2022).

More specifically, the literature suggests that sustainable entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development through at least three major channels. First, they foster the introduction and diffusion of green innovations and clean technologies that reduce environmental pressure while opening new competitive opportunities (Gast et al., 2017). Second, they redesign business models in ways that incorporate environmental and social value into the core logic of value creation and capture (Rosário et al., 2022). Third, they can strengthen local and regional resilience by mobilizing underused resources, supporting inclusive growth, and addressing structural vulnerabilities through market-based solutions (Veleva, 2020).

The connection with the Sustainable Development Goals has also become increasingly visible in recent scholarship. Comprehensive reviews indicate that sustainable entrepreneurship is strongly associated with goals related to clean energy, responsible consumption and production, innovation, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities (Shabbir, 2023). Therefore, entrepreneurs are not simply market participants reacting to external incentives; they may also shape markets, influence institutional change, and contribute to the emergence of new development pathways more consistent with long-term sustainability objectives (Rosário et al., 2022).

A related and highly relevant insight is that entrepreneurial action often occurs under conditions of uncertainty and institutional incompleteness. This means that sustainable entrepreneurs must not only identify viable economic opportunities, but also create legitimacy, align stakeholder interests, and sometimes challenge dominant production and consumption patterns in order to make sustainability-oriented ventures feasible (Muñoz et al., 2018). This broader understanding

strengthens the argument that the entrepreneur should be viewed as a change agent within the architecture of sustainable development rather than as a narrow profit-seeking actor.

An important stream of the literature focuses on the relationship between sustainable entrepreneurship and green innovation. Systematic reviews on ecological sustainability entrepreneurship show that a significant share of research examines technological and organizational innovations designed to reduce environmental harm, improve resource efficiency, and reshape value chains in more sustainable ways (Gast et al., 2017). Within this framework, entrepreneurs are considered both creators of new technologies and intermediaries who translate regulatory pressures, environmental concerns, and stakeholder expectations into viable market strategies.

The circular economy has also become an increasingly relevant analytical context for sustainable entrepreneurship. Studies exploring entrepreneurial value creation in circular settings argue that sustainability-oriented ventures do not merely aim at recycling or waste reduction, but rather seek to redesign resource flows, extend product life cycles, and create regenerative business systems (Rosário et al., 2022). In this respect, circular entrepreneurship relies heavily on experimentation, ecosystem coordination, and innovative resource combinations, all of which reinforce the central role of the entrepreneur in sustainability transitions (Adekunle, 2024).

The literature on sustainable business model innovation further highlights that the transition toward sustainability is not limited to cleaner products or greener production processes. It also requires deeper changes in how firms define value, deliver it to stakeholders, and capture returns while minimizing negative externalities (Rosário et al., 2022). This includes business architectures based on product-service systems, collaborative platforms, repair and reuse models, and digitally enabled circular solutions, many of which are particularly suited to entrepreneurial experimentation and niche creation (Gast et al., 2017).

These developments are especially relevant for the present study because they suggest that green innovation, circular economy principles, and responsible business models should not be treated as isolated themes. On the contrary, the literature indicates that they are deeply interconnected dimensions of the same broader sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial process (Shabbir, 2023). This interconnection provides a strong basis for the conceptual framework proposed later in the article.

Another body of literature relevant to this article addresses the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems in facilitating or constraining sustainable entrepreneurship. A recent synthesis of research on entrepreneurial ecosystems and sustainability shows that interactions among entrepreneurs, governments, universities, investors, suppliers, and customers can generate ecosystems that support environmentally and socially oriented ventures (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Such ecosystems matter because they influence access to knowledge, legitimacy, funding, networks, and institutional support, all of which affect the emergence and scaling of sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives (Chaudhary et al., 2023).

The regional dimension is equally important. Studies on the contribution of entrepreneurship to sustainable development suggest that entrepreneurial activity can enhance the three pillars of sustainability, especially when embedded in local contexts characterized by social needs, environmental pressures, or structural disparities (World Development, 2018). In vulnerable or disadvantaged regions, sustainable entrepreneurship may strengthen resilience by diversifying economic opportunities, encouraging social innovation, and mobilizing local capabilities that might otherwise remain underutilized (Veleva, 2020).

Recent literature also pays increasing attention to enabling factors that can support sustainable entrepreneurship. Among the most frequently identified are institutional quality, access to sustainability-oriented finance, and digitalization (Rosário et al., 2022). Institutional arrangements shape the opportunity structure through environmental regulation, innovation policy, education systems, and support instruments for start-ups and small firms, whereas access to green and impact finance can determine whether sustainability-oriented ventures remain marginal or reach meaningful scale (Futre, 2025). At the same time, digitalization is seen as a strategic enabler because it improves

traceability, coordination, data-driven decision-making, and the operationalization of circular and low-carbon models (Di Vaio et al., 2022).

This line of argument is particularly compatible with the broader European policy agenda. The European Commission has explicitly framed the green and digital transformations as interdependent processes, emphasizing that the twin transition must be managed in an integrated manner to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, and fairness. As a result, the literature increasingly supports the view that sustainable entrepreneurship should be examined not only at the level of the individual entrepreneur or firm, but also within the wider institutional and territorial structures that shape entrepreneurial possibilities.

Despite the rapid expansion of the field, the literature still displays significant conceptual and methodological fragmentation. Some studies focus on firm-level innovation, others on business models, ecosystems, finance, or institutional conditions, while the economic, social, and environmental dimensions are often examined separately rather than jointly (Muñoz et al., 2018; Rosário et al., 2022). In addition, green innovation, circular economy, responsible business models, and regional resilience are frequently discussed in parallel streams of research, without being fully integrated into a unified conceptual explanation centered on the entrepreneur.

This fragmentation creates space for a theoretical contribution that brings these strands together. The present article responds to this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that links three interdependent fronts through which entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development: eco-transition through innovation, the transformation of responsible business models, and the strengthening of regional resilience through inclusive growth (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Such a framework is useful not only for conceptual clarification, but also for building a more coherent foundation for future empirical research.

3. Conceptual framework

Building on the literature reviewed above, this article proposes a conceptual framework in which the entrepreneur is positioned as a central driver of sustainable development through the interaction of innovation, business model transformation, and territorial resilience (Muñoz et al., 2018). Rather than treating sustainability as an external constraint on entrepreneurial activity, the framework interprets it as a strategic domain in which entrepreneurs identify opportunities, reconfigure resources, and create value across economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Shabbir, 2023).

The framework departs from linear interpretations of entrepreneurship and instead adopts a systemic perspective. In this view, entrepreneurial action is embedded in institutional, financial, and digital environments that both shape and are shaped by entrepreneurial initiatives (Chaudhary et al., 2023). This is consistent with recent work on digital entrepreneurship ecosystems, which shows that digitally mediated entrepreneurial contexts are increasingly important for opportunity recognition, coordination, market access, and innovation diffusion (Mitrache et al., 2024).

Accordingly, the proposed model is structured around three interdependent pillars: eco-transition through innovation, the transformation of responsible business models, and the strengthening of regional resilience through inclusive growth (Veleva, 2020). These pillars are supported by three enabling conditions that cut across the entire framework, namely institutional arrangements, access to finance, and digitalization (Rosário et al., 2022). The entrepreneur is placed at the center because entrepreneurial agency links these elements into a coherent process of sustainability-oriented change.

The first pillar of the conceptual framework concerns eco-transition through innovation. The literature on sustainable entrepreneurship and green innovation suggests that entrepreneurs play a decisive role in identifying market imperfections and converting environmental pressures into opportunities for technological and organizational innovation (Gast et al., 2017). Through this mechanism, entrepreneurship supports the diffusion of clean technologies, low-carbon solutions, and

resource-efficient production models that are essential for sustainability transitions (Adekunle, 2024).

In the proposed framework, eco-transition is not limited to the adoption of greener products or processes. It also includes the entrepreneurial capacity to mobilize knowledge, form partnerships, experiment with alternative technologies, and accelerate the commercialization of environmentally beneficial innovations (Rosário et al., 2022). This interpretation is especially relevant in the European context, where the green and digital transitions are treated as mutually reinforcing strategic priorities.

The role of digital tools becomes particularly significant here. Research on AI and digital transformation in financial and service contexts suggests that advanced technologies improve analytical capacity, personalization, information processing, and strategic responsiveness, thereby increasing firms' ability to innovate and adapt (Popescu et al., 2024). Although that study focuses on marketing strategies in financial services, its broader implication is that AI-enabled systems can support entrepreneurial innovation by improving decision quality, customer alignment, and the scalability of sustainability-oriented solutions (Popescu et al., 2024). Within the present conceptual model, this means that digital and AI-based capabilities should be understood as accelerators of eco-innovation rather than merely operational tools.

From this perspective, the first conceptual proposition can be formulated as follows:

- P1: *Entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development by accelerating eco-transition through the creation, adoption, and diffusion of green and digitally enabled innovations* (Gast et al., 2017; Popescu et al., 2024).

The second pillar of the framework concerns the transformation of business models toward more responsible and sustainable forms. The literature increasingly argues that sustainable development cannot be achieved only through isolated technological improvements; it requires deeper changes in how firms create, deliver, and capture value (Rosário et al., 2022). Sustainable entrepreneurship is therefore closely linked to business model innovation, especially in contexts where circularity, stakeholder engagement, and long-term societal value become strategic priorities (Shabbir, 2023).

Within this framework, responsible business models are defined as configurations that align profitability with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. They may include circular resource use, product-service systems, responsible sourcing, collaborative value creation, and transparency-enabled governance structures (Gast et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs are central to this transformation because they are often the actors who challenge conventional value logics and experiment with new combinations of resources, capabilities, and stakeholder relationships (Muñoz et al., 2018).

This dimension can be strengthened by integrating the insights developed by Spulbar et al. (2023) in their conceptual work on corporate finance and sustainable business practices. Their argument that corporate finance plays a strategic role in embedding sustainability into business practices is highly relevant for the present framework because it suggests that sustainability-oriented transformation depends not only on entrepreneurial vision, but also on the financial architecture that supports long-term strategic choices. In other words, responsible business models require financial logic compatible with sustainability goals, including patient capital, strategic allocation of resources, and governance mechanisms capable of balancing short-term performance with long-term resilience (Spulbar et al., 2023).

This allows the framework to move beyond a narrow interpretation of entrepreneurship as opportunity exploitation alone. Instead, it emphasizes that entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development when they redesign the internal logic of the firm so that economic competitiveness reinforces, rather than undermines, environmental and social objectives (Rosário et al., 2022).

The second proposition can therefore be expressed as follows:

- P2: *Entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development by transforming conventional business models into responsible configurations that integrate economic viability,*

environmental performance, and social value creation (Rosário et al., 2022; Spulbar et al., 2023).

The third pillar of the conceptual framework relates to regional resilience and inclusive growth. A growing body of literature suggests that sustainable entrepreneurship should be examined not only at the level of the firm, but also through its territorial implications, particularly in regions facing structural disadvantages, economic volatility, or developmental asymmetries. In such contexts, entrepreneurial initiatives can generate localized solutions, strengthen adaptive capacity, and stimulate social and economic inclusion (Veleva, 2020).

The present framework assumes that entrepreneurs contribute to regional resilience when they mobilize local resources, connect marginalized groups to new economic opportunities, and create ventures capable of responding to local environmental and social needs. This is especially relevant in regions where traditional growth models have become less effective or where external shocks require adaptive and innovative responses (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Sustainable entrepreneurship, in this sense, becomes a mechanism through which local development is made more robust, diversified, and socially embedded.

The digital dimension is again important. The literature on digital entrepreneurship ecosystems argues that entrepreneurial performance increasingly depends on access to digital infrastructures, networked platforms, knowledge flows, and ecosystem-level coordination (Mitrache et al., 2024). This insight can be extended conceptually to regional resilience, because digitally connected entrepreneurial ecosystems can reduce peripherality, improve access to markets, facilitate collaboration, and support inclusive participation in innovation processes. Thus, digital ecosystems are not only a technological backdrop, but part of the territorial conditions that influence whether entrepreneurship can deliver sustainable regional outcomes.

The third proposition is therefore the following:

- P3: *Entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development by strengthening regional resilience and inclusive growth through locally embedded, digitally connected, and socially responsive entrepreneurial initiatives* (Veleva, 2020; Mitrache et al., 2024).

The three pillars described above do not operate in isolation. Their impact depends on a set of enabling conditions that influence the scope, speed, and durability of entrepreneurial contributions to sustainable development (Rosário et al., 2022). In the proposed conceptual model, three enabling conditions are especially important: institutional arrangements, access to finance, and digitalization.

First, institutional arrangements provide the regulatory and normative environment in which sustainable entrepreneurship unfolds. Public policies, environmental regulations, innovation systems, and educational structures can either stimulate or inhibit sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial action (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Supportive institutional settings lower uncertainty, create legitimacy, and make sustainability-oriented opportunities more accessible and investable.

Second, access to finance is essential because sustainability-oriented ventures frequently require longer time horizons, higher initial uncertainty, and more complex stakeholder coordination than conventional entrepreneurial projects (Futre, 2025). The conceptual contribution of Spulbar and Mitrache is particularly useful here, as it emphasizes the strategic role of finance in aligning firm-level decisions with sustainable business practices (Spulbar et al., 2023). In the present model, green finance, impact investment, and sustainability-compatible capital structures are therefore treated not as peripheral support tools, but as constitutive elements of sustainable entrepreneurial transformation.

Third, digitalization acts as a transversal enabling factor. European policy documents explicitly underline that the green and digital transitions are intertwined and should be managed together. In conceptual terms, digitalization enhances information flows, resource coordination, transparency, data-based decision-making, and access to geographically dispersed markets. In addition, AI-related insights from Popescu et al. (2024) suggest that intelligent digital systems can

support more adaptive and targeted strategic action, which is highly relevant for sustainable entrepreneurship in dynamic environments.

These arguments support an additional proposition:

- P4: *The contribution of entrepreneurs to sustainable development is strengthened when institutional support, sustainability-oriented finance, and digital capabilities interact in a complementary manner* (Futre, 2025; Popescu et al., 2024).

The conceptual framework proposed in this article is integrative because it connects entrepreneurial agency with both firm-level transformation and broader territorial outcomes. Eco-innovation improves the environmental performance of economic activity, responsible business models embed sustainability into organizational logic, and regional resilience extends entrepreneurial impact beyond the boundaries of the firm (Rosário et al., 2022). These three dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential.

More specifically, eco-innovation often creates the technological basis for responsible business models, while responsible business models improve the capacity of ventures to generate lasting territorial value. In turn, resilient regional ecosystems provide feedback effects by enhancing knowledge spillovers, legitimacy, and the availability of supportive partnerships (Chaudhary et al., 2023). This circular causality is particularly important because it explains why sustainable entrepreneurship should not be analyzed through single-variable frameworks.

The model also highlights that the entrepreneur is not an isolated heroic actor, but a relational and strategic agent embedded in finance, institutions, and digital ecosystems. This interpretation aligns with recent work on digital entrepreneurship ecosystems and sustainability-oriented business transformation, which underline the importance of networked environments and strategic resource orchestration in contemporary entrepreneurial processes. In that sense, the entrepreneur becomes the node through which innovation, responsibility, and resilience are articulated into a coherent development logic.

A final integrative proposition may therefore be stated as follows:

- P5: *Sustainable development is most effectively advanced when entrepreneurs act as system-level change agents who connect eco-innovation, responsible business model transformation, and regional resilience within supportive institutional, financial, and digital ecosystems* (Chaudhary et al., 2023)

4. Conclusions

This article set out to examine the role of the entrepreneur in sustainable development within the broader context of the green and digital transitions. Based on a theoretical and qualitative approach, the analysis has shown that entrepreneurship should no longer be interpreted exclusively through the lens of profit generation, but rather as a multidimensional process capable of producing economic, social, and environmental value. From our perspective, the entrepreneur emerges as a strategic actor who can translate sustainability objectives into concrete organizational practices, innovative solutions, and development-oriented business choices.

The paper has argued that the contribution of entrepreneurs to sustainable development can be understood through three major and interconnected dimensions. The first refers to eco-transition through innovation, where entrepreneurial initiative supports the development and diffusion of cleaner technologies, more efficient processes, and adaptive responses to environmental pressures. The second concerns the transformation of business models toward more responsible forms of value creation, in which competitiveness is increasingly linked to sustainability-oriented practices. The third dimension relates to regional resilience and inclusive growth, highlighting that entrepreneurship can also contribute to territorial cohesion and the strengthening of local adaptive capacity.

From our viewpoint, the main contribution of this paper lies in the integration of these dimensions into a unified conceptual framework. Instead of treating green innovation, responsible business models, and regional resilience as separate themes, the article has shown that they are

mutually reinforcing components of the same sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial logic. This perspective makes it possible to better explain why entrepreneurship should be regarded not only as an economic mechanism, but also as a transformative force within contemporary development processes.

At the same time, the paper suggests that the effectiveness of sustainable entrepreneurship depends on a favorable environment. Institutional support, access to adequate financing, and digital capabilities appear to be decisive conditions that influence the scale and durability of entrepreneurial contributions to sustainable development. In our assessment, sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship is most effective when entrepreneurial initiative is embedded in supportive ecosystems that encourage innovation, long-term strategic thinking, and socially responsible value creation.

As a theoretical contribution, the study provides a clearer interpretative basis for understanding the entrepreneur as a change agent in the transition toward a more sustainable economy. As a practical implication, the framework proposed in this paper may help policymakers, support institutions, and business actors better understand which mechanisms can stimulate entrepreneurial engagement with sustainability goals. The article therefore contributes to a broader rethinking of the entrepreneur's role in a period marked by ecological pressure, digital transformation, and growing regional disparities.

The study also has several limitations that arise from its conceptual nature. Since the analysis is based on the interpretation and synthesis of the existing literature, the proposed framework has not been empirically tested. For this reason, the relationships identified between innovation, responsible business models, regional resilience, and enabling factors should be seen as analytically grounded propositions that require further empirical validation. In addition, the general character of the framework means that it does not capture the full diversity of sectoral, institutional, and territorial contexts in which sustainable entrepreneurship may develop.

These limitations open several promising directions for future research. First, future studies could empirically test the proposed conceptual relationships through surveys, case studies, comparative regional analyses, or mixed-method designs. Second, further research could examine whether the three dimensions identified in this paper operate differently across industries, such as energy, manufacturing, financial services, agriculture, or digital platforms. Third, comparative studies could explore how institutional quality, financial access, and digital infrastructure shape sustainable entrepreneurship across developed and emerging economies.

Another important direction would be to investigate the role of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, in supporting sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial strategies. Future research could also focus more closely on the relationship between sustainable entrepreneurship and regional resilience, especially in structurally disadvantaged areas, peripheral economies, or regions exposed to environmental and economic shocks. Finally, longitudinal studies could provide a better understanding of how sustainable entrepreneurial ventures evolve over time and how their social, economic, and environmental impacts become visible in the medium and long term.

Overall, we consider that sustainable development increasingly requires entrepreneurs who are able to combine innovation, responsibility, and adaptability within a coherent strategic vision. In this sense, entrepreneurship is not only compatible with sustainable development, but may become one of its most dynamic and operational drivers.

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