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# Innovation process of new ventures driven by sustainability

Duygu Keskin   ... Nelliene Molenaar

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### Abstract

Since the Brundtland report appeared in 1987 various approaches to realising sustainable consumption and production have come into practice. While more traditional approaches like Ecodesign and Design for Sustainability often emphasize optimizing existing products, processes and businesses; more radical approaches like Product-Service Systems and System Innovation for Sustainability emphasize developing new innovative products and services with higher environmental gains. Although these studies increased our understanding of sustainability in relation to product design, they are criticized for failing to draw on existing theoretical frameworks in the organizational innovation literature ([Berchicci, 2005](#)).

This paper seeks to explore the innovation process within new ventures driven by sustainability since 1) conventional wisdom suggests that young and new firms have advantages in innovation ([Acs and Audretsch, 1990](#)) and as such they are the potential candidates of offering radical solutions to the challenges of sustainability; and 2) there

are few studies that address exploiting sustainable product ideas through new organizations. The paper reports on the results of an explorative study involving the use of generative techniques during 19 individual semi-structured interviews with eight entrepreneurs and seven innovation support organizations. The results suggest that the relative impact of internal and external factors on the innovation process change over time as the new organization forms. In addition, creating new businesses from sustainability ideals is influenced by the firms' ability in understanding and managing the differences between intended and created value and in finding an overlap between customer benefits and clearly defined (prioritized) sustainability goals.



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## Keywords

Sustainability-driven entrepreneurship; Product innovation process; New ventures; Creative techniques

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