

Activity Report
EAWOP SGM
“A resource perspective on sustainable careers”
Antwerp, 29-30 November 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Meeting overview

Date and Place: 29-30 November 2021, Antwerp Management School, Antwerp, Belgium

Organizers: Ans De Vos (Antwerp Management School), Beatrice Van der Heijden (Radboud University, Netherlands), Jos Akkermans (VU Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Topic : A resource perspective on sustainable careers

Keynote: *Career self-management as a resource-based action regulation process - Theoretical and empirical perspectives* Andreas Hirschi, University of Bern, Swiss

Participants
Alessandro LoPresti
Andreas Hirschi
Anneleen Forrier
Ans De Vos
Beate Van der Heijden
Eleonora Picco
Elisabeth Abraham
Himani Singh
Ilke Grosemans
Janna Ehrlich
Jos Akkermans
Karen Pak
Madeleine Haenggli
Marijke Verbruggen
Markus Latzke
Merel Feenstra-Verschueren
Nele De Cuyper
Paulien D'Huyvetter
Philip Rogier
Roosmarij Clercx
Sjanne Marie Van den Groenendaal
Sofie Cuinen
Sofie Jacobs

2. Key Highlights

This EAWOP Small Group Meeting aimed to bring forward our scholarly knowledge on *sustainable careers*. From a theoretical point of view, the SGM focused on conceptual and empirical research taking a *resources perspective*. After presentations of carefully selected papers for the SGM, we went into elaborate discussions on the phenomenon of sustainable careers in nowadays' working contexts that are characterized by rapidly changing economic environments. Obviously, the protection and further enhancement/generation of resources are important for assuring sustainable growth and continuity in one's career. By approaching sustainable careers from a resources perspective, this SGM's overarching goal was to broaden the sustainable careers research field and to explore potential synergies between the scholarly work on the preservation and generation of resources and the domain of sustainable careers across the life-span.

To realize this, a program consisting of 14 paper presentations, a keynote and two incubator sessions was composed. The presentations were followed by lively discussions which aimed to support the presenters in their research and to collectively build new insights and inspire each other on the research topic of sustainable careers. This was further put into practice during both incubator sessions.

3. Meeting Outcomes

Research on sustainable careers is still relatively young. It has been featured in a handbook (2015), a special issue (JVB, 2020), and several international conferences (e.g., EAWOP, AOM). Yet, this was the first time we organized a dedicated conference focused on career sustainability. As such, one critical outcome of this SGM was to bring together researchers interested in research on sustainable careers and create ideas about how to bring together those ideas into a research agenda.

We also want to highlight the following concrete outcomes:

- This SGM marks the beginning of a *sustainable career research community*, consisting of scholars doing research on themes around career sustainability. This community will bring together researchers from different disciplines (e.g., HRM, OB, I/O Psychology, Management) and with different topical expertise (e.g., employability, career success, work-life interactions, career shocks) to create a joint research agenda on sustainable careers.
- As a concrete outcome of the two research incubator sessions, we formulated several specific directions for future, joint, research. These ideas are both conceptual (e.g., what really *is* a sustainable career, when is it sustainable, can it be temporarily unsustainable?) and methodological (e.g., using qualitative approaches and within-person designs).
- We will organize a follow-up meeting with the sustainable career community in the first half of 2022 to make our joint research ideas even more concrete and start setting up research projects.
- The SGM organizers plan to submit a position paper to EAWOP based on the insights from the SGM.

ACTIVITY REPORT

1. Event General Information

Date and Location: 29 – 30 November 2021

Organizers: Ans De Vos, Beatrice Van der Heijden, Jos Akkermans

Participants overview (at AMS and online), institutions and countries:

Participants	AMS	Online	Institution	Country
Alessandro LoPresti	1		University of Campania	Italy
Andreas Hirschi		1	University of Bern	Switzerland
Anneleen Forrier			KULeuven	Belgium
Ans De Vos	1		AMS	Belgium
Beate Van der Heijden	1		Radboud University	Netherlands
Eleonora Picco	1		Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca	Italy
Elisabeth Abraham	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Himani Singh	1		University of Mannheim	Germany
Ilke Grosemans	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Janna Ehrlich	1		TU Hamburg	Germany
Jos Akkermans		1	VU Amsterdam	Netherlands
Karen Pak	1		Radboud University	Netherlands
Madeleine Haenggli		1	Universität Bern	Switzerland
Marijke Verbruggen	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Markus Latzke		1	WU Wien	Austria
Merel Feenstra-Verschueren		1	Tilburg University	Netherlands
Nele De Cuyper		1	KULeuven	Belgium
Paulien D'Huyvetter	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Philip Rogier	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Roosmarij Clercx	1		Antwerp University	Belgium
Sjanne Marie Van den Groenendaal		1	Tilburg University	Netherlands
Sofie Cuinen	1		KULeuven	Belgium
Sofie Jacobs	1		AMS	Belgium
TOTAL	15	7		

Total number of participants: 22

2. Program Overview and Course of the meeting

Topic : A resource perspective on sustainable careers

Keynote: *Career self-management as a resource-based action regulation process - Theoretical and empirical perspectives* Andreas Hirschi, University of Bern, Swiss

Meeting Format/organization: the meeting took place in a hybrid format, on campus at Antwerp Management School and online via Teams. It was a two-day program, during which a total of 14 papers were presented -with time for questions and discussion after each paper. On Day 1, a keynote presentation was given by Andreas Hirschi. Both days ended with an incubator session aimed at formulating research questions to move the research field on sustainable careers further.

3. Short description of the SGM topic discussion

In the first session on Day 1, the outcomes of a pilot intervention study and a systematic review focusing on interventions for a sustainable career were dealt with. In Session 2, dynamics in career self-management and job crafting were approached as valuable resources for career success, hereby adopting the sustainable career framework. After the lunch, an appealing keynote focusing on both theoretical and empirical perspectives on career self-management was scheduled. In this keynote, a resource-based action regulation process lens was taken. Session 3 dealt with the phenomenon of career inaction, referring to the failure to act sufficiently over a considerable period of time on a desired change in one's career. More specifically, the possible role of mindsets and emotion regulation, and internal barriers that might trigger career inaction formed the basis for this session.

At the end of Day 1, a Research Incubator session took place wherein people were invited to brainstorm about meaningful future research questions, that were subsequently categorized into some key topics of interest for future research endeavors. In this Research Incubator session, novel methodological approaches for sustainable careers were discussed as well as thoughtful designs to study the link between sustainable careers and its antecedents and outcomes. Among others, we went into the added value of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and of both variable- and person-centered approaches. We discussed multi-source and multi-level research designs, and we went into the need for cross-cultural and cross-national issues regarding scholarly research on sustainable careers as well.

Day 2 of the SGM started off with a focus on sustainable careers across career stages in Session 4. Paper Session 5 adopted a resources perspective on the career sustainability of entrepreneurs. Both multiple jobholders and solo self-employed people formed the basis of the papers that were discussed. A whole-life perspective on sustainable careers was the focus of Session 6, wherein both one's private life and one's working life were considered in interaction (holistic approach). The last paper session dealt with research focusing on the stability and change in sustainable careers.

At the end of Day 2, the Research Incubator session of Day 1 was followed up and more concrete research questions were formulated. The participants reacted very positively to the idea of the SGM organizers, when the wrapping up of took place, to continue scheduling gatherings around sustainable careers research and some preliminary thoughts on content, frequency and organization were discussed. By continuing their research efforts, the SGM members aim to come up with evidence-based career coaching interventions or HRM strategies designed to enhance career resources and to facilitate sustainable careers.

Contributions for a Research Agenda

From our SGM, we may conclude that there are many different ways of conceptualizing a sustainable career given its highly idiosyncratic meaning. The same applies to the conceptualization of personal and contextual career resources in view of career sustainability. There are ample opportunities to expand our insight into the possible role of a broad variety of resources in the light of an individual's health, happiness and productivity over time. Moreover, individuals differ considerably with regards to their proactivity to manage resources throughout their careers and it is of utmost importance to carefully consider the possible role of their surrounding stakeholders such as their family, supervisor, peers at work, and employer. The institutional context (official retirement age in a certain country) and labour market and environmental developments, such as technological evolutions and robotizations are also factors of importance that need more attention in scholarly work.

From the SGM, we learned that personal and contextual career resources, and their interaction, need to be studied over time, in order to more safely conclude about their effect on career (un)sustainability. In a similar vein, age-related changes in the indicators of and resources for sustainable careers and how these affect careers throughout the life-span forms an interesting avenue for future work. Another important field for more research lies in investigating career resources and career sustainability of specific groups (e.g., independent workers, graduates, migrants). Last but not least, implications of changing employer-employee relationships for sustainable careers from a resource perspective were also mentioned as a promising field for future work.

4. Meeting implications/outcomes

Scientific expected outcomes

The SGM contributed to each of the individual presented papers as we have elaborate discussions after each one. As such, we expect the SGM to improve the overall quality of the research projects participating in the meeting. Furthermore, the SGM organizers plan to submit a position paper on sustainable careers to EJWOP, based on the outcomes of the SGM. We also expect there may be future conference symposia directly (or indirectly) resulting from this SGM.

Knowledge transference - Applied expected outcomes

The topic of sustainable careers is inherently tied to practice and all of the presentations covered topics that can offer findings directly relevant for, among others, HR professionals and career counselors. We expect that these studies will offer crucial new knowledge on these topics (e.g., enhancing employability, overcoming career inaction, mobilizing career resources effectively) that can help HR professionals and career counselors offer more tailored support to workers in the contemporary career.

Networking development

Perhaps the most important outcome of this SGM was networking development. Research on sustainable careers is still nascent, though it has received significant momentum over the past few years (e.g., at conferences and in journal publications). We are grateful to EAWOP for offering us the opportunity to host this SGM as it allowed us to bring together, for the first time, a group of researchers dedicated to doing research on sustainable careers. This SGM marks the beginning of a new sustainable career community, which we hope will spur a lot of relevant and meaningful future research.

5. SGM Evaluation

5.1 Self-assessment of the SGM

There was a lot of uncertainty about whether the meeting could take place on campus (after that it had to be postponed 2 times), given the pandemic, the fourth wave and the Omicron variant that had just been discovered. This led to several participants having to cancel their trip to Antwerp and opt for online attendance on a very late notice. Despite this uncertainty and extra challenges for the meeting organization, the hybrid setting worked very well, despite the uncertainty and last-minute changes. There was a very strong involvement of both on campus and online participants – being present or attending online appeared to be no ‘faultline’ for engagement and participation.

One of the elements that made this work was the fact that also one of the meeting organizers participated online. Having a dedicated person participating online turned out to be very useful because in this way, we had a direct connection allowing us to react immediately in case there was a small technical problem. We would therefore advise future hybrid meetings to make sure that one organizer or a dedicated support staff member attends online to create maximum involvement of everyone and to be able to react promptly in case of problems.

We had 14 papers and this allowed sufficient time to give feedback to presenters (thereby stimulating the further development of their research) as well as stimulate the collective discussion and sensemaking of sustainable careers. This collective understanding was further enhanced through the incubator sessions. We are happy with the amount of contribution, the pace of the conference, the involvement of both on campus and online participants, the diversity yet relatedness of paper themes, and quality of contributions. Obviously, the networking opportunity during breaks and in the evening was not possible for online participants – the group being on campus enjoyed this opportunity for social networking after such a long time of online meetings.

The challenge is now to continue on our path and bring this group together in Spring 2022 again to make further steps towards joint research on sustainable careers.

5.2 Participants assessment of the SGM

We organized a survey containing three open questions via Qualtrics. As can be seen in Appendix 1, participants were very positive about both the content and hybrid format of the SGM and on-campus participants also appreciated the opportunities for networking.

ANNEXES

1. Final Program
2. Approach incubator sessions
3. Abstracts
4. Participants assessments of the SGM