

# CALL FOR PAPERS

## Sustainable Careers across the Lifespan: A Contemporary Perspective *Journal of Vocational Behavior*

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The aim of this special issue is to further develop the conceptual foundation and to empirically examine the concept of *sustainable careers*. Sustainable careers are comprised of work experiences across one's lifespan that also intersect multiple life domains--work, social, and family. Individual agency is foundational to sustainable careers as it motivates individual's behavior and provides meaning (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). Creation of this contemporary notion was spurred by a combination of socioeconomic factors, such as the increased complexity and globalization of business and labor markets, as well as the frequency of change. These factors have put a premium on employee flexibility and accelerated the evolution of careers.

What sets the sustainable career perspective apart from other existing paradigms is the explicit focus on both the *individual* and *contextual* elements of managing careers. Although a career is predominantly an individual-level phenomenon, organizations play an important role in the sustainability of individuals' careers across the lifespan through the provision of different work experiences, opportunities for development, and support for work-life balance. These employer efforts facilitate individuals' flexibility and employability throughout the lifespan. Hence, this scenario emphasizes the critical role of HRM and employer-supported career management in fostering employees' productivity, health, happiness, engagement, work ability, and employability in their careers over time (i.e., sustainable careers). To elaborate, such an active role by employers is not altruistic. An active employer role is intended to attract, develop, motivate and retain employees, which in turn should pay productivity dividends to employers in both the short and long term. In this way, the sustainable career concept delineates a *shared responsibility* between employers and employees (see e.g., Veld, Semeijn, & Van Vuuren, 2015). It thus differs from other career concepts such as protean (Hall, 2002), boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), or customized careers (Valcour, Bailyn, & Quijada, 2007), which are somewhat divorced from organizational career management. As a result, a number of important questions remain unanswered, such as what are the benefits of sustainable careers to employers, and what is the role of employee age and life stage. Answers to these questions can help guide employer policy and practices related to employee career management.

This special issue therefore aims to help illuminate the notion of 'sustainable careers' by considering studies focusing on individual and/or organizational levels. The integral approach allows for the inclusion of research exploring individual concepts, such as age and employability, but also contextual elements related to jobs, HRM, and other employer outcomes and practices.

We also call for contributions into the antecedents and outcomes of sustainable careers, paying particular attention to age group and/or life stage. For example, studies probing the role of individual career management and career crafting behaviors among different age cohorts (e.g., Akkermans & Tims, 2017, for a study among young workers), or the role of organizational practices and interventions in enhancing employee well-being across life stages (e.g., Müller, Heiden, Herbig, Poppen, & Angerer, 2015) would fit our call well. We thereby want to pay special attention to individuals' (changing) career-related needs, preferences, affinities, and capabilities across the lifespan.

Against this backdrop, we invite papers that address pertinent questions with respect to the sustainability of contemporary careers that are framed within the context of different age groups or life stages. Papers can have a theoretical, methodological or empirical focus, or may be a combination of those three. Examples include, but are certainly not limited to the following:

**Conceptual papers** on the notion of sustainable careers across the lifespan, such as:

- What might be the dimensions, antecedents and boundary conditions of sustainable careers?
- Who is responsible for managing sustainable careers and in which ways? How can individual career success be aligned to outcomes beneficial to the organization?
- What would a non-sustainable career look like? What might be the consequences of having such non-sustainable careers?
- Could there be “dark sides” of sustainable careers for individuals?

**Methodological papers** on how the sustainability of careers can be studied. For example:

- How can short-term and long-term processes be compared? Which research designs are needed to analyze short-term vs. long-term sustainability?
- What kind of time lags would be appropriate for studying sustainable careers and which types of designs would fit such time lags best?
- How can the dynamics between individual and organizational needs across the lifespan be addressed optimally? Which research designs are needed and which statistical methods can be applied?
- How can sustainable careers optimally be studied within and across organizational-level studies? Which sources are optimally used to gather the data? Should we for example think of multi-level or multi-source designs to understand the role of organizations for sustainable careers of individuals across the lifespan?

**Empirical papers** answering questions related to sustainable careers across the lifespan, for instance:

- How are different conceptualizations of age (e.g., chronological, subjective) related to the sustainability of careers?
- In which ways is employability related to building sustainable careers? What is the role of enhancing one's employability in making careers more sustainable across the lifespan?
- How is the enhancement of sustainable careers related to long-term health, engagement, and performance of workers in different life stages?
- What is the role of increasing flexibility in work and careers (e.g., short-term contracts, temporary employment, entrepreneurship) for the development of sustainable careers for individuals? Given the increasing flexibility, who is actually responsible for managing sustainable careers?
- What organizational practices are especially beneficial or helpful for the development of sustainable careers across the lifespan, considering different age groups and life stages?
- Does life stage moderate the relation between predictors/outcomes and the sustainable career? That is, are certain factors more or less relevant for sustainable careers depending on one's life stage?
- What happens to individuals across the lifespan in case of non-sustainable careers? Are non-sustainable careers detrimental for performance and health?
- Studies examining career transitions between organizations/age groups/countries, and factors that help to promote sustainable careers of individual workers in such transition stages.

In summary, articles considered for this special issue should primarily focusing upon the following issues:

- Age-related or life-stage related changes in variables related to sustainability of careers that explain changes in work attitudes, behavior and performance across time.

- Changes in the sustainability of careers across the lifespan and differences between age groups, its antecedents and its outcomes. Papers examining individual, job-related, organizational, or societal determinants of sustainable careers, that build on lifespan related theories pertaining to, for example, ageing, career growth and development, work ability, withdrawal and retirement, and related outcomes (e.g., motivation, well-being, performance, and career success).
- Studies providing more information on methodology and statistical procedures that are specifically designed to capture change trajectories across time, such as latent growth curve analysis, time series analysis, or sequential analysis are strongly invited.

The above list is meant to provide illustrations and is by no means exhaustive. Other proposals for relevant papers in the field of sustainable careers across the lifespan are encouraged by the guest editors. We expect that articles addressing the above will contribute to both academic progress in the field, and to an improvement of individual career management as well as career practices in working organizations and society as a whole. In line with the *JVB* standard, the focal level of analysis – especially with regard to outcome variables – should be the individual’s career. We welcome manuscripts dealing with workers across all possible occupational fields. We prefer longitudinal contributions for manuscripts focusing upon a developmental perspective. However, other methodological approaches will be seriously considered as regards their possible fit to the research question and special issue topic. Qualitative approaches that informs the reader about the nature of sustainable careers are also welcome. Informal enquiries about this special issue can be made to the guest editors.

#### Submitting to the Special Issue

Interested authors should submit a short proposal (1,500 words maximum, including references) that describes the paper they intend to write. Please send your proposal to Beatrice Van der Heijden (b.vanderheijden@fm.ru.nl). The deadline for submitting your proposal is **October 1st 2017**.

Proposals will be reviewed by the guest co-editors and evaluated using the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to the call
- Applicability to *JVB*’s mission and scope
- Enhancement of our understanding of sustainable careers across the lifespan
- Scientific merit (e.g., research design, sample, analyses)
- Preliminary results
- Likelihood of successful completion within timeline
- Fit with other submissions

Invitation for full papers will be sent on **December 1st 2017**. Should a proposal be invited to be submitted as a full paper, authors should submit their full paper online to the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* via [ees.elsevier.com/jvb](https://www.elsevier.com/jvb), selecting the special issue portal. All manuscripts will be fully peer-reviewed and authors need to follow the Guide for Authors carefully before submission.

Deadline for submitting the full paper is **April 1st 2018**.

Detailed information about the submission process and deadlines will soon be available via the Journal of Vocational Behavior website at <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-vocational-behavior/>

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