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## The Territories of Political Ecology: Theories, Spaces, Conflict

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# The entrepreneurial orientation of women entrepreneurs in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area as a path to sustainability

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## ABSTRACT

This work shows the results obtained on a study done to women entrepreneurs of SME located in the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (ZMG), Mexico, with respect to the systematization of business practices oriented to Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO). The theoretical basis was the Business Women, focused at Latin America, the SME behavior in Mexico, and in this way to understand, through these, if they are aimed at business sustainability. The methodology used was a quantitative analysis through to apply a survey of own development to the business women owning of the one SME in the ZMG. The sample was of 48 questionnaires, which included the profile of the businesswoman, and where 33 sustainable development practices. The results obtained through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The findings were found that the sustainable development practices developed are not adequate, and that the EO practices that they should have, are below what is desired, showing there are some disadvantages in these practices so that the sustainability of these companies are at risk.

*Keywords:* entrepreneurial orientation; women entrepreneurs; sustainability; SME; Latin America.

*Parole chiave:* orientamento imprenditoriale; imprenditoria femminile; sostenibilità; PMI; America latina.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the topic of business sustainability is a recurring topic and mentioned more frequently in business analysis (Labelle *et al.* 2012). Part of the top management is aimed and focused towards achieving it, looking for different ways and implementing internal policies to develop it. Its objective is to be able to establish it as a dynamic and administrative practice, which is nourished day by day, with a long-term focus.

Knowing that business sustainability today is very complex, and in turn consists of different variables. Since for example we see companies, many of them large and some with international presence, which were once the strongest and most robust, today they have been reduced to very small values or have already disappeared, mainly because they have not known how to face it in its different nuances (Noer and Kauflin 2017). If we analyze this impact on large companies, therefore small and medium-sized companies that, due to their conditions, the majority are more vulnerable, sustainability seems somewhat utopian.

Business sustainability (Labelle *et al.* 2012), covers three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Each of these has different variables and indicators that measure your progress, and indicate the necessary ways to achieve it. And it is fed back in a dialectical way with the purpose of becoming dynamic, internal analysis and generating proposals in the future, under a progressive process (Spence 2000, 47).

Within the economic dimension, a fundamental variable is presented (Ayuso *et al.* 2011), called Entrepreneurship Orientation (EO), which covers several activities and uses different metrics, whose meaning is vital to achieve sustainability in this dimension.

This work emerges from a macro research focused on analyzing business sustainability at an international level, and in our particular case in Mexico. As part of it, previous work has been developed, from analyzing sustainable development practices of Mexican entrepreneurs, to analyzing activities for each dimension. Through comparisons with other regions of the world (mainly with Canada, Spain and France). In this document, we will analyze this same situation, but now focusing on the feminine perspective. That is, the business sustainability of women-run SMEs will be analyzed.

Based on this context and its arguments presented, this research work aims to analyze the entrepreneurial orientation of women entrepreneurs of SMEs in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (ZMG) as a determining factor of business sustainability.

This general objective follows the following research questions: (1) How present is the entrepreneurial orientation in women entrepreneurs of SMEs of the ZMG as a determining factor for its sustainability? (2) What is the entrepreneurial orientation of women entrepreneurs in MSMEs of the ZMG? (3) Are the practices aimed at sustainable development linked to the entrepreneurial orientation carried out by women entrepreneurs of SMEs in the ZMG?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. *Business women*

There are several reasons why women set up a venture. Fernandez, Scotto and Fischer (2014), point out that there are 4 reasons for it: desire for autonomy, financial reasons, family needs and personal motivations. According to the report on statistics on women entrepreneurs in Mexico (IPADE 2019), in the country of every five small and medium enterprises that open three are led by women, contributing 37% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). So women entrepreneurs are taking a leading role in the economy of the nation, already playing a leading role in Mexican business.

According to the Global Women Entrepreneur Leaders Scorecard (GWELS 2015a; 2015b), Mexico, after Chile, is the country where women have the best opportunities to start a business. They represent 19% of the country's total enterprise. Half of women entrepreneurs are between 19 and 34 years old, and 41% are between 35 and 54 years old. 53% are single. 65% have a university degree. 62% of businesses are focused mainly on the commerce sector, 18% on services and 20% on the industrial sector.

As for their earnings, according to the Mexican Association of Women Lead Enterprise (2016), women allocate more than 70% of them to their community and their family, while men only allocate between 30 and 40% of their resources from this way.

On the other hand, Saavedra and Camarena (2015, 84), point out that the main obstacles for a woman entrepreneur to continue her business are risk aversion, which prevents them from accessing external financing to grow and therefore limits its growth. They also point out

the search for a balance between family and work, in addition to the fact that women spend less time serving their company, which is interpreted as a prioritization of quality of life over profitability. That explains that his approach is not 100% in the company, as usually develops in the male role.

So the road to success and to establish business sustainability has not been easy for women in Latin America, and in particular in Mexico. On the other hand, the four main causes of failure among Mexican businesswomen are indicated: responsibilities in the home and childcare; the impact of relocation on entrepreneurs with limited networks; the inability to handle the credit given to their clients, and the finances and their strategic planning.

Considering also the main characteristics of women entrepreneurs in Mexico and Latin America is that they use less labor, registering low levels of human capital, hardly break the growth barriers, with difficulty in performing complex maneuvers and little access to networks and markets (World Bank 2010). Therefore, it is an enterprising woman who starts, organizes and directs a company, where they try to innovate, imitate or adopt business attitudes (Rizvi and Noor 2017, 31).

## *2.2. SMEs in Mexico and in the ZMG*

According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI 2015), in Mexico there are 4 million 15 thousand economic units, commonly called companies, of which 99.8% are small and medium (SMEs), which in turn generate 52% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 72% of jobs. In the State of Jalisco, 313,013 companies are registered, representing 7.8% of all companies in the country. Generating 1,561,965 jobs. Also in Mexico there is a subdivision of small enterprise called micro enterprises (Secretaría de Economía 2019). And they are those that have less than 10 employees, both in the commerce, services and industry sectors, and represent 92% of the total companies in the country (INEGI 2015).

The Micro companies are characterized by being firms with few economic and material resources, little strategic planning and employees with low training. 80% have a life cycle of no more than 2 years, which also makes them unstable and with high uncertainty (INEGI 2013). Chauca and Ortiz (2014), indicate that micro companies have four qualitative elements that distinguish them: (a) the management of the



company is independent and directed by the owners, (b) the property and its capital are supplied by an individual or by a small group, (c) the areas of operation and their employees are local, and (d) and their size is small compared to the largest unit in the sector.

In particular, the context in which this work is carried out is in the so-called Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (ZMG), which includes 7 troubled municipalities: Guadalajara, Zapopan, San Pedro Tlaquepaque, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos, El Salto and Tonalá. The ZMG, is the most populated region in western Mexico, which covers an area of 2,734 km<sup>2</sup>. Having a population of 4.8 million inhabitants and a population density of 1,622 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (INEGI 2015). In total there are 186,553 companies installed, representing 60% of all state companies. Thus generating one million 141,254 jobs, a little more than 73% of the total. It also makes it the strongest economic zone of the State and the region (IIEG 2016).

Another aspect to consider in Mexico is that there are 56% of informal enterprises operating. Generating 23% of the GDP. That is, an informal enterprise is one that does not declare taxes to the government and its workers do not have work benefits, becoming vulnerable jobs. According to *The IPADE Journal* (2019), 6 out of 10 employees work in informal enterprises. Mainly in micro enterprises. And more than half of these are led by women.

### *2.3 Business sustainability*

In general terms, business sustainability consists in the ability to demonstrate responsible creativity while achieving viable, habitable and equitable development through the integration and management of natural resources and human resources in business. That in turn is linked to a desire to change the world and improve the quality of the environment and the life of its surroundings, and its desire to make money and grow as a commercial enterprise (Rodgers 2010, 126). Therefore, business sustainability is a company that has a commitment to the community and the environment where it is located, with the intention of making it profitable in the long term.

Among the multiple characteristics that business sustainability has, this study will focus on analyzing the so-called Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), which indicates the organization's willingness to accept business processes, practices and decision making (Merlo and Auh 2009),

and that in turn show the degree to which the identification and use of market opportunities influence the growth of a company (Baker and Sinkula 2009). Considering what Faizul, Hirobumi and Tanaka (2010) argue that entrepreneurial orientation is a capacity that the company develops to carry out innovation activities, take risks and be pioneers in its actions. Therefore, it is considered a decision-making process and risks, innovation and proactivity (Patel and D'Souza 2009).

Therefore, and based on the arguments described above, we formulate the following hypotheses:

- H1: The entrepreneurial orientation in women entrepreneurs of SMEs of the ZMG is aimed at its sustainability.
- H2: Practices aimed at Entrepreneurship in women entrepreneurs of SMEs in the ZMG influence their sustainable development.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

To evaluate our hypotheses, we rely on a set of SME data located and surveyed in the ZMG. The research is part of an international project aimed at developing baseline knowledge on the commitment of SMEs to sustainable development practices, and to identify the most effective means to support them (International Observatory of Sustainable Development at PME 2015). We use the questionnaire developed and validated by Courrent, Spence and Labelle (2013), which in total consists of 28 blocks with a total of 104 questions that refer to both general company data and sustainable development practices, commitment which supports the adoption of these practices and how they perceive state and federal public policies to stimulate them.

For this work, block B of the questionnaire corresponding to the analysis of practices on OE was taken, which consists of nine questions (see Appendix), in addition to incorporating seven demographic questions to understand the context in which it was developed. 408 questionnaires were specifically addressed to the leaders or owners of SMEs located in the ZMG. From this database, it was filtered for those women-run SMEs, giving us a sample of 48 companies. Whose characteristics is that these companies had a participation and a property of women in more than 51%, which means that the decision-making was done by the businesswoman, in addition to the company consulted had more than a year of having started operations.

Independent variables to measure the company's business orientation (EO), we use a scale widely used and validated in previous research that evaluated the company's emphasis on innovation, proactivity and risk taking (Miller and Friesen 1983; Covin and Slevin 1988), using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "completely disagree" (1) to "completely agree" (5). To calculate the final value of EO, we use the average of these nine elements. Considering having obtained a Cronbach's Alpha = 0.9215.

To measure the adoption of sustainable development practices, considered as dependent variables, we use the same scale developed by Courrent *et al.* (2013), which asks about the involvement in actions or procedures related to Sustainable Development and distinguishes three dimensions: environmental practices (with 13 items), human resources management practices (with 12 items) and local and community development practices (with 8 items). The responses were recorded in the same way on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, "never" to 5, "systematically". To calculate the final values of the three variables, we use the average of the respective elements: environmental practices (with a Cronbach's Alpha = 0.8755), HR practices (with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.9465) and practices towards the community (with Alpha of Cronbach = 0.8931).

As control variables we use those that are also common in these types of empirical studies on SMEs, such as the size of the company and the age of the company. The size of the company was measured using the scale proposed by the Ministry of Economy of Mexico (Secretaría de Economía 2019). The age of the company was calculated as the time since the creation of the business; in our case those companies that had a year of operations. To control the effects of the company's business, we use dummy variables. We contemplate four categories: primary sector, including agricultural, forestry and mining activities; production of goods, including all manufacturing, energy and water supply, and construction activities; trade, including wholesale and retail trade; and services that include activities in support of other businesses (experience and consulting, engineering, training, for example) or of homes (cleaning and repairs, health, lodging and food services).

To test the hypothesis, we will use inferential statistics through the Correlation Analysis, which shows the degree of association of two or more variables (Santesmases 2009, 365).

#### 4. FINDINGS

Below are the averages and their respective standard deviation of each response from the three areas of sustainable development evaluated, as well as the Entrepreneurial Orientation (see *Tab. 1*), whereas the effective values for each of these practices are 4 or more.

Which show that all the answers are below the minimum values of 4 (moderately agree), which implies the systematic realization of these practices in their operation. The highest rating is the practices that the company does on its area of human resources (3.97), the lowest corresponds to practices carried out towards the community (3.005). As for the practices on emphasis on Entrepreneurship, the result is below 3 (2.94), which is interpreted below being a “Little Agreement” (PA).

*Table 1. – Average answers.*

VARIABLE	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Environmental	3.333	1.611
RRHH	3.970	1.666
Community	3.005	1.688
OE	2.940	1.486

Regarding the results obtained on the nine practices on OE (see *Fig. 1*), and in which we are analyzing our independent variable, the detail of each of the responses obtained is shown with the intention of seeing the specific behavior (see *Fig. 1* – Graphs EO1-EO9).

- Graph EO1: My company puts a lot of effort into research and development (R&D), in the improvement of technology and innovation.
- Graph EO2: My company has introduced new lines of products and services in the last five years (or since its creation).

This response highlights that the entrepreneur directs to a minimum degree her efforts towards R&D and innovation. On the other hand, the introduction of new products or services or your desire is present, but it has not been a constant in these companies recently.

- Graph EO3: My company has implemented important modifications to its products and services in the last five years (or since its creation).
- Graph EO4: My company is generally in charge of making the first movements to which our competition answers them.

So it is corroborated in this graph of not making important modifications to the products and services it offers. This graph shows us that

the initiative to implement significant changes in the company is not very strong. Apparently it reacts to what the competition develops.

- Graph EO5: My company is often the first to make innovations (new products and services, introduce new techniques and technologies, production methods, etc.).
- Graph EO6: My company in general adopts a very competitive position in order to weaken competition.

Similarly, these results corroborate that the innovation process, whether through the introduction of new products or services, processes, technologies or production methods, is not essential for the company, but rather that it is carried out as a reaction to competition. The competitive position focused on weakening competition is not part of their policies, since practically the businesswomen interviewed disagree with this guideline.

- Graph EO7: My Company is decidedly in favor of high-risk projects that are supposed to bring great benefits.
- Graph EO8: Faced with a very uncertain situation, my company adopts an aggressive attitude in order to maximize its likelihood of seizing potential opportunities.

As for developing projects that involve high risks, with their possible great benefit, it is not part of their policies, since they do not agree with this dynamic; on the contrary they prefer to be more moderate in their actions. In the same way as the previous question, they do not agree to take aggressive attitudes during uncertainty, although there are possible beneficial opportunities, it is preferred to wait to see better the landscape that surrounds them.

- Graph EO9: Due to the environment in which it operates, my company continues to take bold and risky opportunities in order to achieve its objectives.

Finally, this graph shows us, as a consequence of the two previous questions, that you do not agree to make decisions for your company in a risky and bold manner, they also prefer to be moderated to the environment in which you are operating.

In addition, a Correlation Analysis run was developed, with the intention of finding some association in linear relationship and proportionality between the variables under study. *Table 2* shows the correlations obtained between the variables, both independent (EO), and the independent ones analyzed (DS). We can observe that there is a positive correlation, but in most cases it showed a low value ( $< 0.70$ ), with respect to the desired.

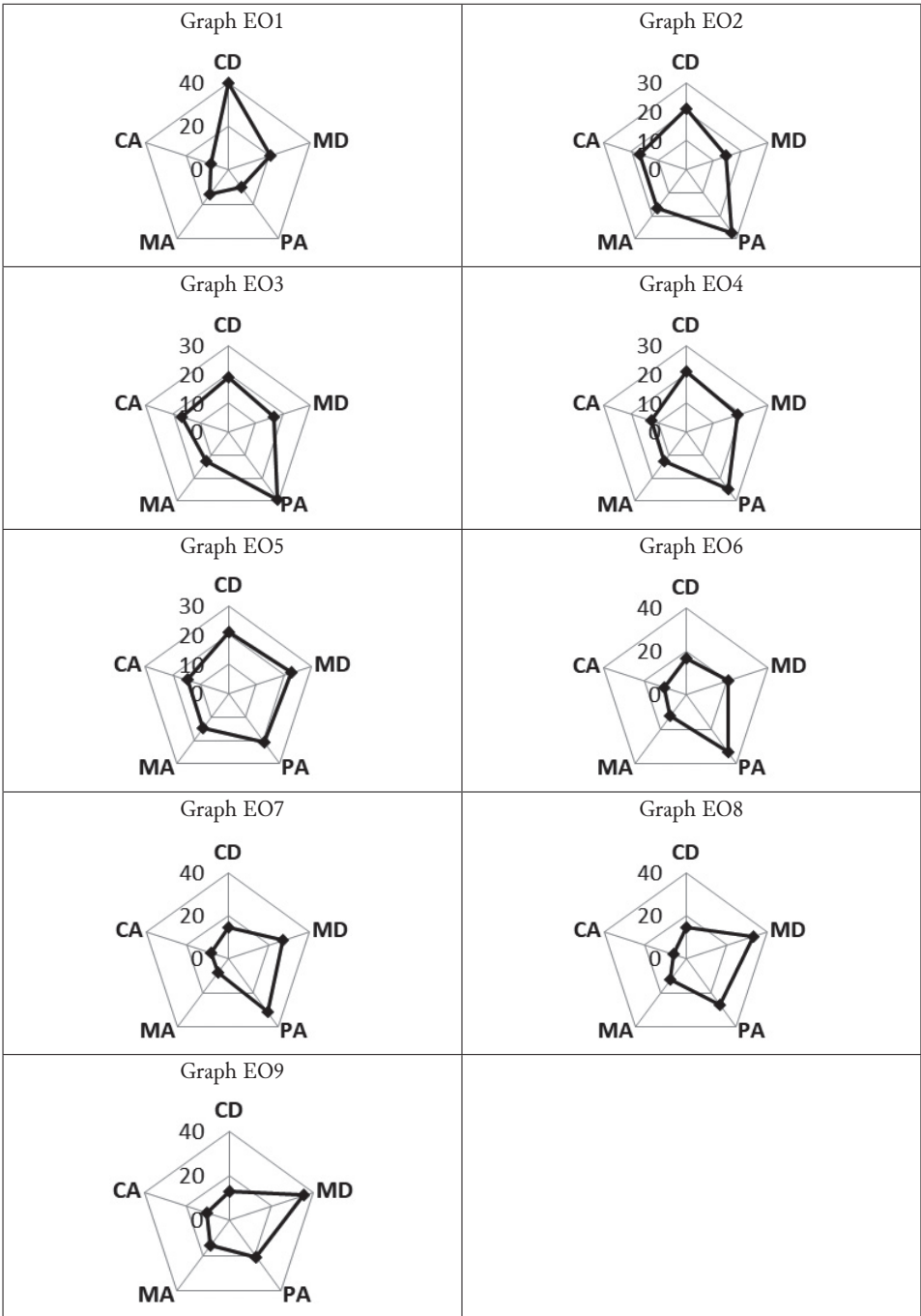


Figure 1. – Results obtained on the nine practices on OE, detail of each of the responses obtained analyzing our independent variable, shown with the intention of seeing the specific behavior (CA: completely disagree; MA: moderately disagree; PA: little agreement; MD: moderately agree; CD: completely agree).

The highest correlation results in environmental practices linked to those of human resources (0.6953) and that of environmental practices with those of the community (0.6529), which means that practices done in the environmental environment have some influence on other variables under study. But not so towards the EO practice variable. There is little association with environmental practices, human resources and community. It also highlights the lowest results of this analysis of human resources and community practices.

*Table 2. – Correlation analysis in sustainable business practices.*

	AMB	RRHH	COMU	EO
AMB	1			
RRHH	0.6853+	1		
COMU	0.6529	0.0038	1	
OE	0.3197	0.1016	0.4460	1

*Note:* + = Higher correlation.

To corroborate our first hypothesis that the EO in women entrepreneurs of SMEs in the ZMG is aimed at its sustainability, it indicates that, based on the results found in sustainability practices (description of practices) and the Correlation analysis performed (influence between variables), this cannot be proven as such. Since all the practices developed (graphs EO1-EO9) are below the desired response ( $< 4.0$ ), in addition that the results of the correlation made also indicate the same, since they are below the desired ( $< 0.45$ ).

For the second hypothesis raised with respect to the fact that the practices aimed at EO in women entrepreneurs of SMEs in the ZMG influence their sustainable development. In the same way as the previous approach, this hypothesis cannot be tested either since these practices also developed (analysis of means obtained in *Tab. 1*) are below the minimum desired ( $< 4.0$ ).

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the influence of business EO in women entrepreneurs of the ZMG as a route to achieve sustainability, through par-

ticipation in DS activities, specifically in practical processes in human resources, environment and community participation. The results found indicate that the EO in women entrepreneurs has a positive, but minimal, association with the commitment to the DS, especially those that are aimed at participation with the community (0.4460), but contrary to our expectations, they are not adequately aimed at achieve sustainability.

As for their activities aimed at EO, these do not allow to become their own and systematic practices of sustainable development, showing mainly a certain risk aversion, and a weak process of decision-making and future risks. The results show a fragile attitude towards taking bold opportunities or taking on projects that involve high risks.

On the other hand, it also reflects the little innovation implemented both in processes, products, services and market, although it is contemplated to introduce new products or services, being carried out with a deficient responsible creativity. Putting the continuity of the company at risk.

The results found should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. The answers have their own limitations since the measurement of the commitment to the Sustainable Development is based on the perception of the owner or manager of the company, which throws certain subjectivity, however, as it is not easy to find more objective indicators on development practices sustainable business, mainly in SMEs in Mexico, that generally do not provide or are not known in detail about their strategies and their performance, In addition, the companies led by women entrepreneurs in México are scarce.

This study also does not provide enough light to know what the main reasons are, so they started and run a company. This being a deto-nating motive for a next study and to know better the causes.

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## APPENDIX – PART 4: THE COMPANY

Innovation, Proactivity and Risk Taking to what extent do the following sentences reflect the reality of your company?

1. strongly disagree
2. moderately disagree
3. somewhat agree
4. moderately agree
5. completely agree
6. don't know (DK)

	RANK 1 – 5 (DK)
My company puts a lot of effort into research and development (R&D), in the improvement of technology and innovation	—
My company has introduced new lines of products and services in the last five years (or since its creation)	—
My company has implemented important modifications in its products and services in the last five years (or since its creation)	—
My company is generally in charge of making the first movements to the channels, our competition answers	—
My company is often the first to make innovations (new products and services, introduce new techniques and technologies, production methods, etc.)	—
My company in general adopts a very competitive position in order to overpower the competition	—
My company is decidedly in favor of high-risk projectors that are supposed to bring great benefits	—