Entrepreneurs' Perception of Green Spaces: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Connections between Business and Urban Sustainability

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Abstract

Green spaces play an essential role in promoting sustainability and quality of life, and entrepreneurs' perception of them can significantly influence economic development strategies. The study investigates this relationship through a bibliometric analysis, highlighting how the entrepreneurial environment reacts to the presence and integration of green spaces in the urban context. The research uses data from the Web of Science, covering the period 2008–April 2025, to identify the main academic trends, dominant concepts and relevant collaborations between authors. The results show that green spaces are not only perceived as aesthetic or ecological elements, but also as opportunities for innovation and social responsibility. The analysis of term and author networks reveals a multidisciplinary approach, highlighting the increasing importance given to the environment in business strategies. Thus, the study offers an updated perspective on how entrepreneurs relate to green infrastructure, highlighting its role in supporting sustainable development.

Keywords

Entrepreneurship, green spaces, bibliometric analysis, urban sustainability.

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Introduction

In the context of accelerated urbanization, the climate crisis and the increasingly urgent need for sustainable development, contemporary cities are forced to rethink their infrastructure and economic priorities. Green spaces – parks, urban gardens, tree lines, peri-urban forests – are becoming essential components not only of the quality of urban life, but also of local entrepreneurial dynamics. In parallel, interest in green entrepreneurship is growing, an emerging form of economic initiative that integrates principles of ecological responsibility and sustainable development. Despite this development, the relationship between the presence of green spaces and entrepreneurs' perception of these urban resources remains insufficiently explored. Although numerous studies highlight the benefits of green spaces for population health, pollution reduction and social cohesion, less attention has been paid to how entrepreneurs relate to these spaces: do they perceive them as opportunities or constraints? do they integrate them into business strategies or ignore them? contribute to their development and preservation or consider them exclusively the domain of public administration?

1. Review of the scientific literature

The literature on entrepreneurship and urban sustainability has diversified considerably in recent decades, with the amplification of global concerns for climate change, sustainable development and urban regeneration. Particular attention is paid to how entrepreneurs perceive and value green spaces as an integral part of their economic, social and environmental strategies (Vlasov, 2022; Koo and Kwon, 2025). This approach reflects a shift from traditional paradigms of economic growth to responsible and regenerative business models that include green infrastructure in the logic of entrepreneurial development (Yu and Gibbs, 2020; Liu, Alias and Hamid, 2025). The urban environment offers not only spaces for economic development, but also opportunities for innovation in sustainability. Studies highlight that urban entrepreneurs, especially those involved in creative industries or circular economies, increasingly rely on the valorization of green spaces to create added value (Palau-Salvador et al., 2019). Green spaces are thus becoming a strategic component in urban branding, attracting customers and stimulating social innovation. This integration of the ecological dimension into urban entrepreneurial architecture gives cities a competitive advantage in the process of attracting investments and strengthening social resilience. This relationship is particularly accentuated in post-industrial cities or areas undergoing urban regeneration, where community gardens and parks become tools for social cohesion and incubators for social entrepreneurship (Davis et al., 2025; Long and Block, 2021). Thus, green spaces are no longer perceived exclusively as recreational infrastructure, but as multifunctional urban resources that contribute to economic revitalization and social inclusion. The literature identifies several forms of entrepreneurship that integrate the green dimension: eco-entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurship with ecological valences (Shabbir and Batool, 2025; Mhlongo, Ntshangase and Ezeuduji, 2025). All of these forms focus on reducing environmental impact, promoting eco-innovation, and contributing to sustainable development goals. Conceptually, these types of entrepreneurship are based on a holistic view of economic value, including positive externalities generated for the community and the environment.

Hu and Tresirichod (2025) propose the Green Entrepreneurial Orientation model, suggesting that companies that integrate ecological values into their organizational culture perform better from a sustainable point of view. Thus, entrepreneurs' perception of green spaces is not unitary, but depends on several factors: the sector of activity, the level of ecological education, local culture and urban policies (Chen et al., 2022; Raimi and Bamiro, 2025). Some entrepreneurs perceive green spaces as strategic resources for differentiation and customer loyalty, others as administrative obstacles or additional costs. Qualitative studies also reveal that green spaces are often correlated with employee well-being, creativity and productivity (Carfì and Donato, 2022), suggesting a direct link between the quality of the urban environment and the economic performance of companies. The literature shows that community gardens, urban parks and other forms of green infrastructure can become platforms for alternative economic activities: urban farms, green cooperatives, ecological education workshops or sustainable festivals (Beeri et al., 2020). These activities contribute to the economic revitalization of marginalized neighborhoods, provide jobs and reduce social vulnerabilities, especially in informal areas (Adewunmi et al., 2023; Saleh and Drouillon, 2025). An emerging direction in the literature is research on the role of women entrepreneurs in promoting ecological and social values (Amjad and Khan, 2025; Sodhi and Dwivedi, 2025). Tükel et al. (2025) show that women's involvement in recreational activities is associated with a greater entrepreneurial orientation towards sustainability. These results are relevant in the context of inclusive cities, where gender entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable transformations.

Institutional support and public policies play a crucial role in stimulating green entrepreneurial initiatives. Examples from China (Huang et al., 2025), where low-carbon city policies are correlated with the growth of sustainable entrepreneurship, confirm that urban governance can function as an accelerator for green innovation. European urban regeneration projects (Davis et al., 2025; Xu, Yang and Zheng, 2025) also provide examples of good practices regarding the integration of green spaces into local development strategies, community involvement and the promotion of public-private partnerships. Contemporary literature shows that entrepreneurship education with sustainable values is a fundamental pillar for the training of a new generation of business leaders (Bibu et al., 2024; Yin, Jiang and Tong, 2025). University programs that include modules on sustainability, urban environment and green innovation favor the emergence of forms of entrepreneurship oriented towards the common good (Liu et al., 2025). A relevant example is that of educational initiatives integrated with technologies such as VR and AI (Li et al., 2022), which allow the simulation of business scenarios in green urban environments and foster experiential learning. Case studies from South Africa (Lekgau, Daniels and Tichaawa, 2025), Pakistan (Amjad and Khan, 2025), China (Zhu, 2025) or South America confirm the diversity of forms of green entrepreneurship. Each region proposes solutions adapted to the cultural, economic and institutional context. This diversity highlights the importance of international collaboration and the transfer of good practices, as well as the

need for a comparative framework that allows for the transnational analysis of the impact of green places on entrepreneurship. The literature on entrepreneurs' perceptions of green spaces highlights an emerging field at the intersection of economics, ecology, and urbanism. This research direction has major transformative potential, both theoretically and practically, contributing to the development of resilient, inclusive, and well-being-centered cities. To fully realize its potential, an effort is needed to integrate global, regional, and local perspectives within collaborative and applied research, with a focus on spatial justice, social innovation, and ecological resilience.

2. Research methodology

This research investigates how the scientific literature reflects the connections between entrepreneurship and green spaces, through a bibliometric analysis applied to the Web of Science Core Collection database, for the period 2018–April 2025. This interval is marked by the increase in international interest in urban sustainability, the emergence of new ecological business models and the consolidation of public policies favorable to the green economy. The paper aims to identify the main research directions, relevant actors and emerging themes related to how urban green spaces are perceived, valued and integrated by entrepreneurs in their development strategies (Table no. 1).

Table no 1. Data collection in WOS Core Collection between April 2018 and 2025

Year of publication	Number of items (all document types)
2018	71
2019	84
2020	103
2021	135
2022	172
2023	178
2024	219
April 2025	73
Total	**1255**

Table no. 1 highlights the evolution of the number of articles published in this field during the selected period. A constant increase in academic interest is noted, from 71 articles in 2018 to 219 in 2024, with a total of 1255 papers by April 2025. This dynamic confirms the consolidation of the research field located at the intersection of green spaces and entrepreneurship, in the context in which cities are becoming increasingly attentive to the ecological impact of economic development. The moderate increase in the period 2018–2020 (from 71 to 103 articles) reflects the incipient interest in the potential of green spaces to support local entrepreneurial initiatives – especially in areas such as sustainable tourism, community gardening or creative industries. Starting with 2021, the number of publications increases more sharply, reaching 135 articles in 2021, then 172 in 2022 and 178 in 2023, indicating the diversification of practical applications and the expansion of interdisciplinary approaches. During this period, researchers are increasingly exploring the role of entrepreneurs in the regeneration of green spaces and in mobilizing urban communities to protect the environment. The year 2024 marks a peak, with 219 papers, signaling a maturation of the field and a consolidation of research on the concepts of green entrepreneurship and nature-based business models. This intensification of scientific interest is most likely determined by the synergy between environmental policies, the increased demand for green spaces in post-pandemic cities and the new economic opportunities generated by the ecological transition. In the first months of 2025, 73 articles have already been identified, which suggests that a high publication trend is maintained. This fact supports the idea that topics related to entrepreneurship and green spaces continue to attract the interest of researchers, practitioners and policymakers, being perceived as key elements in the transition of cities towards sustainability. The evolution reflected in the table validates the choice of the analyzed period and confirms the existence of a solid scientific corpus, which allows the mapping of major research directions and collaboration networks around these two fundamental concepts. Using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.15), bibliometric maps were generated that highlight scientific collaboration networks and the impact of publications on understanding the connections between entrepreneurship and green spaces.

3. Results and discussion

Figure no. 1, created with the VOSviewer software (version 1.6.15), allowed the identification of a total of 393 relevant terms, grouped into 7 clearly delimited thematic clusters and connected by 12,973 links, with a total connection strength of 27,592. The high semantic density of the network highlights a mature, well-structured and strongly interdisciplinary research field, in which the concepts of entrepreneurship and green spaces are found at the center of various thematic interactions, relevant for sustainable urban development. Cluster 1 (green, center-left) dominated by the term "entrepreneurship" is centrally positioned and represents the conceptual core of the network. This cluster is connected with terms such as technology, efficiency, investment, growth, policy, research and development and green technology. Its central position suggests that entrepreneurship functions as a point of intersection between the economic and ecological dimensions of the city. The interconnection with terms such as environmental protection and clean technology indicates an *emerging integration of green spaces into sustainable entrepreneurial strategies (Chen et al., 2022). Cluster 2 (red, southwest) is positioned in the lower left of the map and revolves around the terms green economy, governance, climate change, urbanization and energy transition. It brings into discussion the systemic dimension and ecological policies, within which green spaces are seen as essential infrastructure for resilient cities and attractive for entrepreneurial initiative. The connection with entrepreneurship is made indirectly, through the themes related to green growth and environment, which emphasize the value of green spaces as a competitive advantage for urban businesses (Yu and Gibbs, 2020). Cluster 3 (yellow, northeast) located in the upper right, is centered on terms such as green innovation, firm performance, competitive advantage, capabilities, business performance and green entrepreneurial orientation. This cluster directly supports the link between investments in green spaces and entrepreneurial performance, providing an analytical perspective on how the valorization of natural resources contributes to obtaining economic advantages (Palmié et al., 2024). Cluster 4 (blue, southeast), located in the lower right part of the map, includes terms such as education, entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, students, university and attitudes. The relevance of this cluster for the research topic lies in the fact that it highlights the formation of an ecological entrepreneurial culture from the educational environment, with an emphasis on the integration of green values in the mentality of young entrepreneurs. Also, the emphasis on green entrepreneurship and sustainability orientation indicates an inclination towards business in harmony with nature, among the new generation of entrepreneurs. Cluster 5 (purple, northwest), narrower and located in the upper part of the image, includes terms such as signaling theory, empirical evidence and green product innovation, reflecting the methodological and conceptual dimension of research in the field. Although more technical, this cluster supports the empirical validation of the relationships between green spaces and innovative entrepreneurial strategies. Cluster 6 (orange, east) occupies the right-center position and is composed of terms such as models, orientation, behavior, creativity, decision-making and corporate responsibility, suggesting the psychological and decision-making aspects involved in the adoption of green entrepreneurial practices. The connection of this cluster with "entrepreneurship" is visible in the concern for how the perception of green spaces influences entrepreneurial behavior and business sustainability. Cluster 7 (pink, center-south), where we find social entrepreneurship, challenges, framework, development and community, is positioned immediately below "entrepreneurship" and connects the economic and social dimensions. This cluster reflects the involvement of social entrepreneurs in green regeneration projects, urban agriculture and circular economy, supporting the idea that positive perceptions of green places can fuel social innovation (Beeri et al., 2020).

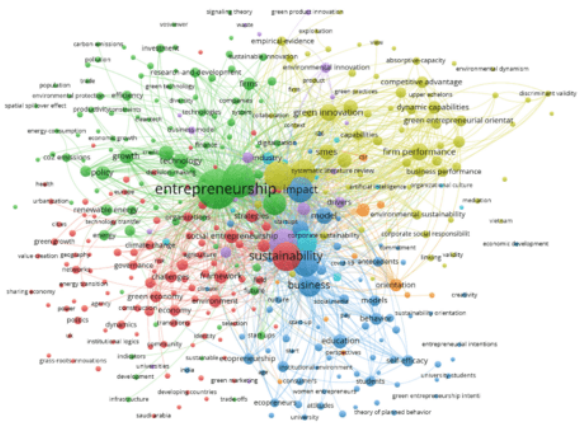

Figure no. 1. Term co-occurrence map based on text data (2018 – April 2025) - Network visualization

Overall, the structure of the semantic network and the positioning of the clusters confirm that "entrepreneurship" is a pivotal concept around which themes such as sustainability, green innovation, education, ecological policies and social cohesion gravitate. The presence and positioning of these clusters show that green spaces are not just urban backdrops, but relevant economic actors in modern entrepreneurial strategies, and entrepreneurs' perception of them becomes an essential indicator for the sustainable cities of the future. Figure no. 2 provides an overlay visualization made with the VOSviewer software (version 1.6.15), which allows analyzing the temporal evolution of the concepts associated with the theme "entrepreneurship and green spaces", in the interval 2018 – April 2025. Although the semantic structure of the network preserves the conceptual configuration presented previously, the colors assigned to the terms provide valuable information regarding the dynamics of scientific interest over time, according to the color scale illustrated in the lower part of the image.

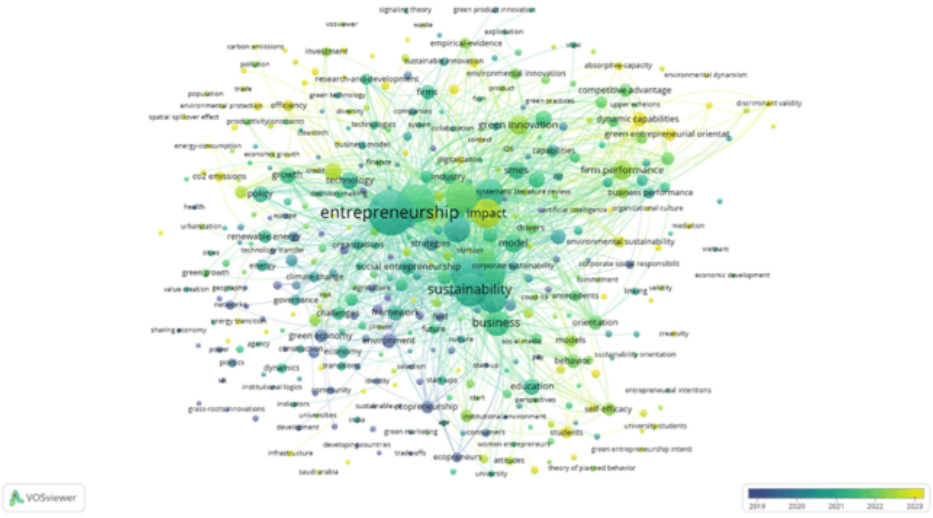

Figure no. 2. Overlay Viewing in VOSviewer

The terms marked with cool shades (blue, purple) indicate the topics predominantly addressed in the period 2018–2020. In this area, terms such as green economy, governance, grass-roots innovations, sharing economy or value creation are found, which suggests that the initial concerns focused on the conceptual and political framework of sustainability and the role of entrepreneurship in the green transition. These terms, although not central to the network, have formed the theoretical basis of some themes that will gain visibility in the following years. In contrast, the terms highlighted in warm shades (green, light yellow) are those that were intensively explored in the period 2021–2025. These include green entrepreneurial orientation, environmental sustainability, firm performance, self-efficacy, green innovation and students. The appearance of these terms in recent colors highlights the emergence of a research direction oriented towards the integration of sustainability into entrepreneurial strategies, with an emphasis on economic results and the formation of a new generation of environmentally conscious entrepreneurs.

Figure 3 presents a density visualization generated with the VOSviewer software, illustrating the frequency of occurrence of terms in the scientific literature related to entrepreneurship and green spaces. Each point on the map corresponds to a keyword, and the intensity of the color expresses the level of concentration: yellow and orange for high-density areas, green and blue for low-density. This representation allows the identification of dominant thematic cores, as well as emerging areas in an early stage of development (Figure no. 3).

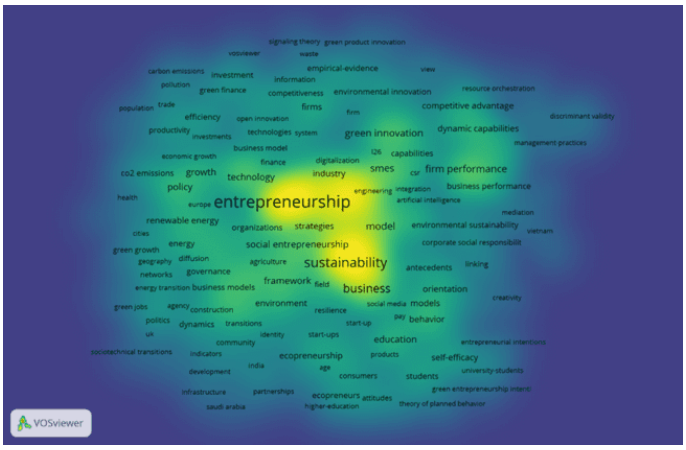

Figure no. 3. Viewing element density in VOSviewer

The center of the map is occupied by high-density terms, such as "entrepreneurship", "sustainability", "business", "technology", "policy" and "firm performance", colored in intense yellow. This indicates that these constitute the central and recurring themes in the analyzed literature, confirming the status of entrepreneurship as a thematic pivot in research related to sustainability and economic performance. At the same time, the dense presence of the terms strategies, model, growth and innovation underlines the emphasis placed on the development of green business models, oriented towards efficiency and ecological responsibility. In the peripheral areas, highlighted by shades of green-blue, we find terms such as eco-entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship intent, green marketing, community, urban agriculture and infrastructure. These concepts, although less frequent, indicate emerging research directions that explore the role of entrepreneurs in urban regeneration and the valorization of green spaces as elements of social and economic innovation. The lower frequency of these terms reflects the fact that entrepreneurs' perception of green spaces is a topic under consolidation, with significant interdisciplinary development potential. Terms such as social entrepreneurship, governance, renewable energy and green economy, present in medium-density areas, indicate the intersection of entrepreneurship and ecological concerns at a systemic level, confirming that green spaces are increasingly perceived as economic and social assets in the sustainable development of cities (Yu and Gibbs, 2020; Vlasov, 2022).

Conclusions

Based on the detailed bibliometric analysis conducted in this research, focused on the relationship between entrepreneurship and green spaces in the context of urban sustainability, a number of significant conclusions can be formulated regarding current and future directions of research. The study used a robust set of bibliometric tools – in particular the VOSviewer software – to analyze the evolution of concepts, scientific collaboration networks, semantic density and geographical distribution of academic interest, providing a coherent and comprehensive picture of the field during the period 2018–April 2025. Data extracted from the Web of Science highlights a constant and accelerated growth in the volume of publications on sustainable entrepreneurship and the integration of green infrastructure into business strategies. The number of articles tripled over the analyzed period, from 71 papers in 2018 to over 200 in 2024, confirming that scientific interest in the connection between economy and urban ecology has become a priority topic. The predominance of research articles is complemented by a diversity of academic documents, from systematic reviews to case studies and theoretical contributions, reflecting a field in full maturation and with a solid interdisciplinary architecture. The constructed semantic maps demonstrated that central terms such as "entrepreneurship", "sustainability", "green innovation" and "firm performance" are positioned in the conceptual core of the literature, signaling a pronounced focus on the economic dimension of sustainability. Notably, the frequent appearance of terms such as eco-entrepreneurship, urban green infrastructure, green marketing or social entrepreneurship suggests a growing interest in the practical application of green spaces in business strategies and highlights the complexity of the relationships between the built environment, nature and economic innovation. Visualizing the temporal evolution of relevant terms shows a clear transition of academic interest: in the early years, research was focused on general concepts such as "green economy" or "renewable energy", while in the recent period (2021–2025) the emphasis has shifted towards behavioral and strategic terms such as green entrepreneurial orientation, self-efficacy, students, attitudes and performance. This shift indicates a deepening of the analysis of how

entrepreneurs perceive, value and integrate green spaces into organizational culture and business decisions. The thematic density analysis confirmed that the field is dominated by economic and strategic concepts, while terms from the social or urban area – such as community, urban regeneration, ecosystem services or governance – remain relatively underrepresented. This observation suggests that, although research has evolved significantly, the integration of the urban and social dimension of green spaces in the analysis of entrepreneurship requires further in-depth study, through qualitative methods, field studies and intersectoral research. Geographically, the analysis of international collaborations confirms the central role of China in producing knowledge on green spaces and entrepreneurship, with close links to countries in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The United States remains relevant through the quality and impact of publications, while countries such as India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Romania are emerging players in applied research, demonstrating a growing interest in adapting sustainability concepts to local urban contexts. Germany, France and the United Kingdom continue to be dominant European hubs, with scientific activity oriented towards public policies and urban innovation. The map of collaborations also reflects a gradual globalization of research, with the increasing participation of countries from the Global South and transnational academic networks. Based on these results, several strategic directions for future research can be formulated. First, it is necessary to investigate in depth entrepreneurs' perceptions of the role of green spaces in generating economic, social and symbolic value. Qualitative research, based on local case studies and interviews with entrepreneurs, can complement quantitative approaches.

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