

## **Please make us whole again – a researcher wellbeing PDW**

**PDW at the pre-conference day of RENT 2022  
on 16 November 2022 at 16:00–18:00  
at Congress Center Federico II, via Parthenope, Naples, Italy**

### **Organizers**

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### **PDW Background**

The Covid-19 pandemic has marked a turning point in history on multiple levels. Not only has it disrupted our lives and our society in face of existential threats, but it has also had immediate and potentially long-lasting effects on our working lives (Stephens et al., 2020). The pandemic has also opened spaces for reflections on the individual and institutions, questioning our values, priorities and daily habits (Daniel et al, 2022). This includes deeper interrogations around the underpinnings and foundations of our profession, both in terms of impact and sustainability (Budhwar, Cumming, 2020). Such debate has attracted further attention in light of the number of higher-education professionals deciding to quit their careers and move from academia to industry in the last two years (Nature, 2020). Moreover, academic careers have been long recognised both by national UK sources and international reports as arenas at high risk of stress, burnout, and exhaustion (Putwain, 2019), all of which have been further exasperated by the changes in working conditions triggered by the pandemic, e.g. increased complexity or even impossibility of undertaking research, technological challenges of online teaching, increased student expectations and difficulties of creating and sustaining academic communities, among others.

The “Please Make *Me* Whole Again” 2021-2 PDW advanced this conversation further by enabling reflective and productive spaces on the need to sustain ourselves as entrepreneurship scholars. As Sarah Dodd (2022) questioned:

*We have come to celebrate and study the smaller scale, the frugal, the locally responsive and embedded –human and humane entrepreneurship which nourishes resources instead of draining them. But what about us as entrepreneurship scholars? ... becoming sustainable entrepreneurship scholars, including ourselves within that circle of creative care.*

Building on the insights and debates developed through the previous PDW in this series “Please Make *Me* Whole Again” 2021-2, our focus in this PDW “Please make *us* whole again” on entrepreneurship researcher wellbeing. We understand well-being as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), “a state of ... being in which every individual realises his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community” (WHO 2014a). Research on wellbeing in higher education tends to be from a student perspective, while *researcher* wellbeing remains a neglected area of inquiry (Ohadomere and Ogamba, 2020), thus motivating this PDW.

The aim of this PDW is to explore entrepreneurship researchers’ well-being more pointedly by focusing on original career inspirations and how these might (de)energised over time, with a view to uncover the ways in which wellbeing can be achieved and safeguarded by individuals, institutions and communities. To do so, we adopt the World Café dialogical approach.

World Café is a participatory action research method that seeks change through dialogue (Löhr, Weinhardt, and Sieber, 2020). The approach assumes people are knowledgeable and capable of identifying problems and solutions through dialogue. It has been used in entrepreneurship research and education (Decker-Lange et al., 2021), and its emphasis on change through communication closely aligns with the work of Habermas' theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1990). Through reflection and dialogue, this PDW will enable a space for entrepreneurship researchers to recount their inspiration for entering academia and to surface practices and assumptions related to a state of wellbeing and collective flourishing (Cherkowski et al., 2021). Key takeaways from this PDW include a research agenda to further develop the scholarly debate on the topic.

### **PDW Target Groups**

This PDW on wellbeing is relevant for entrepreneurship scholars at all stages of their careers, including doctoral researchers, early career researchers, and mid-career and senior scholars.

### **PDW Outline/ Methods**

Unique to other dialogical approaches, World Café emphasises hospitality and hospital environments conducive to group communication. A hospitable environment is achieved by transforming institutional spaces into 'cafés' by dressing tables with tablecloths as well as offering blank postcards and colour pens for capturing and sharing insights. For this event, PDW organizers will bring tablecloths and writing supplies, doing our best to transform the space into a welcoming café. The PDW will include three phases: an introduction, a World Café small group dialogue at tables, and a large group meaning-making session of interpreting patterns and identifying priorities for action.

#### ***Phase One***

The PDW will begin the Chair's introductory talk connecting the current PDW to previous "Please Make *Me* Whole Again" PDWs, setting the stage for discussing wellbeing, and explaining the World Café method.

#### ***Phase Two***

In line with World Café guiding principles, tables will be arranged to accommodate small group discussions of five participants and one host. There will be two rounds of discussions addressing one question for 20 minutes; whereafter, participants rotate tables to address a different question, helping to facilitate networking and generate diversity in perspectives. The host will facilitate the rounds of inquiry with each participant sharing for 4 minutes. Hosts will collect highlights and assess overarching patterns from the three different groups.

The first round explores participants' inspiration for becoming an entrepreneurship researcher. Prior to the PDW, participants will be asked to bring an artefact reminding them of why they wanted to become an entrepreneurship researcher. During the PDW, participants will share artefacts, and if they choose, the artefacts may be placed on the table as a centrepiece. This will then lead into the second round, where participants will be asked to reflect on how this inspiration has developed over time, how to safeguard it, or if it has been lost, then how to bring it back.

#### ***Phase Three***

The last phase will involve a group discussion by all with participants sharing their highlights and insights written on postcards to their future selves. The chairs will facilitate the group dialogue and weave together meta-themes, and a research agenda and action steps will be discussed based on salient themes.

## References

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