

Editorial

The Embeddedness of Social Sciences and Economics in Research on *Resources*

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Abstract: Sustainability, local development, and ecology are keywords that cover a wide range of research fields in both experimental and social sciences. The transversal nature of this knowledge area creates synergies but also divergences, making a continuous review of the existing literature necessary in order to facilitate research. There has been an increasing number of articles that have analyzed trends in the literature and the state-of-the-art in many subjects. In this Special Issue of *Resources*, the most prestigious researchers analyzed the past and future of Social Sciences in *Resources* from an economic, social, and environmental perspective.

Keywords: economy; environment; local development; business; ecology; sustainability; retailing; social science; bibliometrics; state-of-the-art

The aim of this Editorial is to provide general context for this Special Issue as well as introduce the main contributions of the articles published.

In a broad sense, we can define the social sciences as those that describe the social behavior of homo sapiens and their organizations using scientific methods [1]. Some social scientists have pointed out that the main objective of social science is the study of social interactions [2], which shape the functioning and structure of human societies from the individual to collective level.

Research in social sciences is not lacking in barriers. Sometimes, the social sciences have difficulties in conducting controlled, closed system experiments. Although the use of computers allows for large amounts of data to be processed [3], the study of human behavior is dependent on the social environment, which emphasizes the importance of context in social science research.

No science is self-sufficient; as previously mentioned, they are interconnected and interdependent [4]. The field of economics has a tremendously broad problem because it includes, among others, social, psychological, labor, technological, legal, and moral issues. For example, social and economic problems are indivisible, being impossible to suggest purely economic solutions to real social problems. This has led researchers to seek the broadest view of the different aspects and dimensions of these problems.

It is practically impossible to make an exhaustive classification of all the sciences related to economics (the main topic of this Special Issue), and it is for that reason that we will limit ourselves to addressing those that we consider to be the most significant. Among these sciences, we can include the following. (1) *Sociology*: Defined by Auguste Comte in 1838 as the science of observing social phenomena, it is therefore strongly linked to economics, whose scientific method starts with the observation of social reality and from it, develops hypotheses that permit us, after a logical process, to formulate theories that after being contrasted with actual events can either be accepted or rejected [5]. (2) *Mathematics*: Used to describe the concepts and assumptions that establish the theory of the functioning of the economy. In a sense, it is a more precise language than others, obtaining

implications from the assumptions that are considered and establishes the relationships between economic variables. (3) *Statistics*: These are of invaluable help for the adequate treatment of observed facts and the development of economic theories and models since it groups social facts and compares them in order to deduce the results that arise from them and bring about laws they can obey. (4) *Logic and Psychology*: These are sciences that present the laws, modes, and forms of reasoning to the extent that they form the basis of all sciences including economics. (5) *Law*: The regulation of social relations derived from the law has an indisputable and considerable effect on economic order. Every economic act, as soon as it produces legal effects, is an act regulated by law. Thus, economic activity causes the appearance of a series of norms that try to correct anomalies and deficiencies, structure new channels and even new institutions, and provide a legal framework for new needs. There are numerous subjects common to both law and economics such as the right to property, employment contracts, public administration, and commerce. Indeed, we could even say that there is no branch of the law that does not maintain a close link with the economy. (6) *Politics*: Is the science that studies the set of interhuman institutions and actions ordered for the organization of community life, with relation to political power or government, whose purpose is to determine the life of the community in accordance with a deliberate plan. Economic policy is understood to be the actions carried out by governments in order to direct the national economy toward the achievement of certain objectives and/or cancel the imbalances that occur within said economy. Thus, we can appreciate the basic importance of a strategic plan and the rules of political power within an economic system, although different governments will use different paths to resolve the same economic problems. (7) *Demography*: Is the science of studying the population, not only of its numerical strength, but also in terms of its composition, structure, and growth dynamics. If we consider economics as the science that, from scarce resources, seeks to meet the needs of the goods and services of individuals and society, it seems clear that these needs are dependent on the number of individuals dwelling in a particular location. Likewise, the age structure of a population is an indicator of the individuals who are available to work and therefore able to produce goods and services. Finally, (8) *Education*: The economic progress of a country is directly related to the education of its population. Education is the first problem that needs to be addressed in developing countries in order to lift them out of poverty and is logically a vital issue in developed countries if they want to lay the foundation for not only a continued improvement in their well-being, but also to prevent any deterioration of what has already been achieved (at least in comparative terms with the other countries).

In summary, it can be said that all social sciences are interrelated. Social and economic problems are indivisible, and it is impossible to suggest purely economic solutions to real social problems. Thus, we must always try to attain the broadest view of the different aspects and dimensions of these problems [6].

The first paper published in the Special Issue “Worldwide Research on Social Science in *Resources*” focuses on the Business, Family, and Environment Model [7]. The authors proposed a model based on existing theories of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) businesses that represents the system of Mexican family businesses, which, at the same time, are also SMEs. The proposed model was based on the research by Tagiuri and Davis [8], which integrates three subsystems: business, family, and ownership. The paper proves that the existing systemic models of the family business do not encompass the entire reality of Mexican SMEs. The results suggest that there is a low relationship between the environment and ownership variables or subsystems.

González-Sala et al. [9] compared the evolution of psychology journals included in the Journal Citation Report (JCR) databases from 1998 to 2017 to find the main differences between those published in Ibero-American countries and those published in the Netherlands. The results showed a clear discrepancy between the psychology journals published in these locations, wherein, despite Ibero-American psychology journals increasing their presence in the JCR database, there has not been an improvement in terms of quartiles and position. These results may be conditioned by biases related to the current scientific scenario.

Cuenca et al. [10] developed a new classification of countries according to their degree of poverty by applying the Rasch model [11] to the data used to elaborate the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) established by the United Nations. The authors outline which factors have the greatest effect on poverty in each country with regard to health, education, and standard of living. This additional information could explain why countries are in their current ranking and how they could improve their situation by adopting policies that could signify real progress in these fields. The clear contribution of this paper lies in offering an alternative method of measuring poverty and a classification system of countries, which does not completely coincide with the MPI.

Ruiz-Real et al. [12] used a bibliometric methodology in order to analyze the state of Ibero-American research on local development and found a significant increase in the volume of publications in the 21st century, with the involvement of different areas of knowledge such as Social Sciences, Environment, Business, Economics, and Agriculture, evidence of the transversal character of local development. The results also identified new trends and found links between local development and tourism, education, geotourism, climate change, local sustainable development, social innovation, and creativity, all of which provide new lines of research.

“The Development of Legislation on the Social Economy in Continental Western Europe” by Professors Macias and Pires [13] highlights that entrepreneurship, territorial development, and economic development, in general, require legal certainty [14], and in a globalized economic environment such as the European Union, the lack of a singular and uniform legal treatment of undifferentiated entities is not justifiable. This work aims to outline the many ways of legislating on a concept that is still being developed and within similar legal frameworks, illustrating the lack of harmony between European States.

“Corporate Social Responsibility in the Management of Human and Environmental Resources: Andalusian Perspectives” [15] identifies the particularities of the social responsibility of Andalusian companies with regard to their approach to corporate social responsibility, particularly in the area of human resources and environmental impact. The results showed that the greatest concern of these companies was the satisfaction of their employees, followed by energy saving measures, and environmental impact. They also found differences according to the productive sector studied.

Finally, the qualitative study of Lorenzo-Romero et al. [16] focused on Spanish firms in the fashion and accessories industry and identified that co-creation, as a marketing strategy, is a very useful tool for approaching consumers. In fact, the overall results of this paper highlighted the importance of social media as a key resource for management. The results lead to a new paradigm, which represents the transition to a business model that increasingly develops proposals, solutions, and individual responses.

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