

# Determinants of professional commitment to environmental sustainability

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# Valorisation Addendum

## Introduction

The valorisation addendum to the present research project will explore the added value and relevance of the studies included in this project for additional research as well as use by building and construction practitioners, policy-makers and the general public. While potential application of knowledge generated in this research has been referenced within the thesis chapters, further aspects of research valorization have been identified in this addendum. The importance of this research is discussed with a specific focus on (1) relevance, (2) target groups, (3) activities and/or products, (4) innovation and (5) implementation.

## Relevance

Aside from the scientific relevance which has been extensively discussed in the dissertation chapters, the results derived from the research activities are highly relevant to the wider understanding of environmental sustainability as a function of human behavior in the workplace. While intentions, behaviors and their antecedents have been studied in household contexts, professional behaviors have been less subject to scrutiny. As everyone knows, people quite frequently behave differently in their workplace than at home due to increased pressures to perform, to fit in with the crowd and/or retain their jobs. This list includes just a few reasons why workplace behavior may deviate from leisure time behaviors and intentions. While the differences in private and professional attitudes and behaviors may seem to be less problematic in the realm of exercise or food behavior (for instance, an individual may not be a keen runner on their own time but join their colleagues' lunchtime jog to be part of the in-crowd), in the field of environmental sustainability, seemingly privately held attitudes may translate in behaviors that will have an immense impact on society, especially in the context of urban development, planning and construction. To facilitate change for sustainable development at the source, i.e. in the minds of industry professionals, the present research sheds light on commonly held beliefs with regards to designing and constructing sustainable buildings as well as implementing environmental management

systems in other organizations contributing to economic activity. Using the examples of green building certification in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom as well as Environmental Management Systems (EMS) in Germany and the Netherlands, behavioral factors are investigated that can be used for the design of behavior change programs and communication strategies to improve environmental sustainability in business decisions.

## **Target Groups**

The studies included in this research are targeted at a wide range of audiences, including (1) academics studying pro-environmental behavior, (2) educators in higher and vocational education institutions training professionals to include environmental criteria in their decision-making processes, (3) organizational decision-makers to understand and recognize environmental barriers and drivers in their own work context, (4) policy-makers that aim to develop programs and policies to improve professional decision capacity for environmental sustainability, (5) environmental standards issuing organizations and (6) the wider public interested in understanding drivers and barriers for environmentally relevant initiatives in private and public sector organizations. While all of the above mentioned professional groups stand to benefit from the knowledge generated in this research, organizational and policy-decision makers will be most likely to utilize the results.

## **Activities and Products**

While the results are unlikely to be translated directly into products, they could be integrated by behavior change consultancies and other firms in commercially available tools for organizational change management. Behavioral factors identified in the research projects can be operationalized by the target groups (1)-(5) and translated in communication, education, intervention and behavior change programs to encourage and facilitate the voluntary uptake of environmentally relevant programs and policies. For example, a local policy-maker may be interested in encouraging the building and construction sector in their city to be more proactive with regards to the development of sustainable office buildings and to include building certification schemes in their projects. As normative influences have been found to play a major role in this regard, effective communication of policy-makers' real expectations could lead to change in the environmental building practices within that local city context. In a similar fashion, organizations that have developed standards for environmental sustainability in the private and public sector may better understand the success or failure of their standards as well as advantages and disadvantages of their programs in the eyes of their intended target audiences.

## **Innovation**

The results generated in this research can be considered innovative as theoretical and methodological aspects from a wide range of disciplines including economics, management, social psychology, sociology and communication studies were combined to bring an interdisciplinary focus on the issue of environmental decision-making in organizational contexts. As a consequence, the results are relevant for a wide range of target audiences, as listed above. While there has been some research with an interdisciplinary focus, the comparative nature of this research with five countries being studied extensively has yielded knowledge that can be applied in a range of regional contexts. In this sense, the behavioral factors identified can be included in behavior change programs, interventions and policy development in multi-country initiatives.

## **Implementation and Schedule**

While the results derived from the research studies presented in this thesis can and should be used by target audiences on their own time and adapted to their own purposes, the author has also plans for further studies and the development of an evidence-based behavior change and communication toolkit aimed at professional decision-makers. This toolkit will include strategies that will target mainly construction and building industry professionals (in the wider sense) to promote environmentally sustainable professional practices. These activities are to be carried out in the course of the next year and trialed in a medium-size city context. Several urban communities have been identified and contact with relevant local decision-makers as well as construction and building professionals has been established. While the study context in the dissertation was the European and North American context, this trial initiative is likely to be focused on the Asia-Pacific regional area to (1) validate the results and (2) include other geographic dimensions to the toolkit.