



COMPANIES THAT SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE?

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ABSTRACT

The earth's ecosystems are under threat. This threat ranges from climate change which has made us all aware of carbon foot printing through to those threats that are less well known at this stage but due to become more prominent in the future such as desertification, water shortages and bio diversity collapse. The blame for this reduction and dilution of the earth's environment, with the usual caveats aside, quite obviously falls at humanity's feet. In turn our pre-eminent economic framework (Anglo-American capitalism) that prioritises businesses pursuit of profit maximisation is heavily criticised, largely because profit maximisation is a result of environmental destruction maximisation. Given the finiteness of the earth, we cannot continue as if there are infinite resources. To bring us back into balance with the environment and to enable us to work with the foretold strains that there will be, numerous solutions are offered by the literature. Most of these solutions rest upon the triad that underpins the notion of sustainable development, that of society, economy and environment working in balance and with equal priority. Or they pursue the win-win of the economy and the environment. All these solutions have merit, however it is my contention that they intellectually limited. The economy is a social construction that is nested within society and society is nested within the environment, hence to give each equal priority does not acknowledge the fundamentals. Hence putting the economy first and the environment second or at least giving them equal weighting is at best a decelerator on the road to a more harmonious relationship with the planet but it is not the change required. My research aims to investigate those companies that appear to put the environment first and economy second and in so doing extract the lessons that can be learnt, or at a minimum the impediments and roadmaps for change.