

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.

THE ROLE OF ECOPRENEURS IN DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with investigating the role of *ecopreneurs* - entrepreneurs developing businesses that are founded from the outset on an environmentally friendly basis and which seek to transform their particular business sectors, both socially and ethically. Ecopreneurs are seen as social activists who aspire to restructure the corporate culture in their sectors and develop proactive, ecologically oriented business strategies. In this view, entrepreneurship may be beneficial to environmentalism rather than opposed to it. Work on ecopreneurship focuses upon the key role of individuals in any shift towards more sustainable business practices. In attempts to explain the motivation and impacts of ecopreneurs, researchers have developed various typologies that explore the interplay between personal motivations and the influence of the economic and social structures within which they operate. While some researchers have argued that there needs to be congruence between personal ideals and this context for ecopreneurs to develop, others suggest that the tensions between these two may be a source of creative tension. However, a major shortcoming in current debates is that they are based on very little empirical evidence. We know little about the usefulness of existing typologies, nor how (or if) individuals or businesses shift between categories. Moreover, the emphasis on frequently charismatic and pioneering individuals neglects the multiple factors at work and the role of supporting infrastructures at the local and national scales. In this paper I develop a research agenda for future work on ecopreneurship. We need to know why, where and when individuals are able to exploit opportunities and the role of different external socio-economic contexts in encouraging or deterring ecopreneurship. We also need to examine whether ecopreneurial activity *does* represent a shift towards a new business paradigm of ecological modernisation or simply the exploitation of small-scale niche markets.

MAKING SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CULTURALLY COMPATIBLE

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ABSTRACT

Socio-cultural research teaches us that the most difficult change goes against the culture of a firm, community or people. Thus, the scope of success of Sustainable Entrepreneurship might depend on its adaptability to a variety of cultures. This paper presents a case study in which the authors worked with Navajo FlexCrete, a new venture of the Navajo Nation, the largest American Indian tribe. They facilitated the Navajo team through the process of creating an entrepreneurial business plan. During the process the authors and the Navajo team co-created a model of Sustainable Entrepreneurship that includes the ancient principles of sustainability embedded in the Navajo culture. In a graduate Sustainability Strategies course the authors then facilitated a student refinement of the plan through the addition of a Balanced Scorecard and Strategy Map. In an undergraduate Sustainable Entrepreneurship course the authors then facilitated undergraduate teams in a further refinement of the plan and in creating a second plan for The Four Directions, an educational version of Sustainable Entrepreneurship that is directed to the American Indian culture. This case study analyzes the above process, presents a general model for adapting Sustainable Entrepreneurship to a specific culture and provides suggestions for research and pedagogical development.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability is often related to environmental or ecological issues. This is true, but also incomplete. Waste, emissions and various kinds of pollutions may be physical or environmental, but they are the result of individual and collective human behavior. In issues of sustainability we would like to focus on new and better ways of organization human behavior. The topic of sustainability introduces notions of equilibrium, dynamics and offloading into discussions on organizations and entrepreneurship. It enhances the knowledge of sustainability in new contexts.

An entrepreneur is as every human being an information processing system. Whether entrepreneurs have special skills is a topic of debate. From a classical cognitive perspective, entrepreneurs are problem solvers which do not avoid risks and are open to changes and challenges. Various studies have been conducted with regard to the specific characteristics of the learning styles, decision making styles and problem solving styles of entrepreneurs. None of these studies gives conclusive evidence of causal relations between characteristics and performance. An entrepreneur also is a decision maker. This means that with knowledge of various kinds an entrepreneur a) gathers information, b) looks at alternatives and c) makes a decision. Simon (1964) called these phases: intelligence, design and choice, respectively. Because of non-conclusive outcomes on "styles" we suggest to also look at entrepreneurs from a knowledge management perspective

Every entrepreneur has to deal with knowledge. This knowledge concerns the primary (what the entrepreneur is an "expert" in) and the secondary (how the "small" (SME) organization is run) activities of a small firm. This knowledge has various forms. With knowledge various things can be done: storage, sharing, reuse, creation and transfer. Not every form and not every activity is suitable in every situation. It can be argued that what makes someone an entrepreneur is that he or she can adjust the content, forms and functions of knowledge in an adequate or attuned way. In this way an entrepreneur, as a problem solver or a decision maker, is able to realize what we would like to call: sustainability of knowledge.

BUSINESS-AS-USUAL AND SUSTAINABILITY: WHICH PARADIGM ALIGNS WITH OUR BELIEFS?

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ABSTRACT

For today's businesses, there exist two distinct paradigms about what is real and important. Business-As-Usual practices are remarkably consistent globally, and are based on two foundational beliefs: 1) Everything is Separate and 2) Materialism is the Only Reality. Sustainability Entrepreneurs and Sustainability Companies are remarkably consistent globally as well, and their work is based on two different foundational beliefs: 1) Everything is Connected and 2) Spirit and Matter Co-exist to Form Reality. Logical, internally consistent systems based on these ontologies play out in the marketplace and create both confusion and threads of coherence toward the future of life on the planet. This paper is a parallel comparison of practices and methods that relate to these two paradigms. The paper also introduces a snapshot of the position and tension of the Sustainable Entrepreneur who must navigate among business and government systems dominated by a polar-opposite worldview. As Sustainable Entrepreneurs, until we are more clear about what we believe and why we believe it, until we have investigated how our beliefs align or conflict with Business-As-Usual, we will be less able to generate effective leadership strategies for advancing Sustainable Entrepreneurship.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY? - COMPARING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE SMEs IN HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT

The term 'social entrepreneur' (SE) is understood here as change agent, who implements innovative and sustainable solutions to complex, severe and often systemic problems faced by typically marginalized groups of society. Their major entrepreneurial characteristics are usually captured as being imaginary, innovative, accepting high level of risks, ability to implement their vision, and leadership capabilities. If these are the similarities with entrepreneurs in general than what are the special characteristics of SEs that drive them pursuing their entrepreneurial goals toward a sustainable community? This fundamental question is analysed placing social entrepreneurs in a sustainability and corporate social responsibility framework. As particularly differentiating factors, the motivations of social entrepreneurs are examined in comparison with owner-managers of socially responsible small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Research Methodology: In-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 10 SEs and 20 owner-managers of SMEs having a good track record in CSR in Hungary.

Background of Research: A Social Entrepreneurs elective course was developed for graduate students and has entered the business school curriculum for two years. A picture of very rich and diverse set of SEs' motivations and personalities has been confronted in the local case studies prepared for the course. Now this picture is compared to the motivations of responsible SMEs.

Research Topics and Preliminary Findings: Both SE-SME similarities (e.g. perception of being 'alternative') and differences (e.g. perception of being 'embedded') have been captured while specific characteristics of SEs (e.g. commitment not (only) to the major stakeholder groups but to the activity/core competence itself) were reinforced.

**SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
INNOVATIONS IN THE LOGICS OF ORGANIZING**

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability entrepreneurs seek to use private enterprise as a tool for sustainable development. A study of leading sustainability entrepreneurs from Europe, North America, East Africa, and Asia-Pacific regions provides an insider's look at the critical drivers of success. This research identifies five unique principles of problem solving and enterprise design that have allowed these entrepreneurs to successfully capitalize on market opportunities in the service of ecosystems and communities. This innovative approach to enterprise design suggests the emergence of a new organizing logic that eschews the dichotomy between opportunistic business and altruistic charity in favor of a new logic based on the co-production of multiple benefit streams through the perpetuation of human and natural resource quality. Thus, far from being a middling compromise between business and charity, the organizational forms being pioneered by sustainability entrepreneurs represent innovative organizational solutions that resolve the shortcoming inherent in conventional organizing logics.

**STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION IN SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
THE ROLE OF MANAGERIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL COGNITION IN
SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to shed light on how sustainable entrepreneurs perceive their stakeholder relationships. Entrepreneurial cognition theory has emphasized the need to better understand how individual perception drives the behaviour of entrepreneurs. In particular, within this field an important research stream has concentrated on opportunity seeking in the early stages of business formation. Within the emerging field of sustainable entrepreneurship individuals are viewed as a creative force apt to catalyse sustainable development. Similar to any business formation, the start-up phase for sustainable ventures is of particular interest since strategic positioning defines the manoeuvring space for any positive social, ecological, and economic contributions that will originate from there into the future. Much of the freedom sustainable entrepreneurs will experience in successfully developing their businesses depends on the appropriate management of stakeholders in support of their business ideas. Therefore, an important research question focuses on how critical stakeholders are identified and addressed in this phase. Against the background of entrepreneurial cognition theory, we argue that sustainable entrepreneurs are distinct in the way they deal with this particular task due to the constraint of the triple-bottom-line nature of their ventures.

CONCEPTUALISING SUSTAINABILITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The concept of sustainability entrepreneurship has emerged from the minds of theoreticians and practitioners alike as a merger between the entrepreneurship and sustainable development agendas. Conceptually, it draws on knowledge from conventional entrepreneurship studies, newer research into social entrepreneurship, and business and environment studies, among others. Though fundamental to the concept of sustainable development integration has proved challenging at a theoretical and practical level. This paper uses a model of SE and the pervasive 'three-pillars' model of sustainable development to frame a theoretical examination of the challenges to integration for the sustainability entrepreneur.

ALASKAN ECO-ENTREPRENEURS: THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT

John Park identified the entrepreneur, technology, and knowledge/ experience of the firm as three components of the opportunity recognition process when he looked at innovation at the interface of these three elements in his article "Opportunity recognition and product innovation in hi-tech start-ups" (Park, *Technovation*, 2005.) I am looking at a model that adds the additional role of social entrepreneur to the three components that Park identified. From this four-pronged model, I then look at innovation in the area of eco-entrepreneurs.

The Skoll Foundation defines social entrepreneurs as "society's change agent, pioneer of innovations that benefit humanity." (<http://www.skollfoundation.org/>). How do Alaskan entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs work together to innovate and to take advantage of opportunities related to risk: regulatory, supply chain, product & technology risk, litigation risk, reputation risk, and physical risk (Lash & Wellington, "Competitive Advantage on a Warming Planet", *Harvard Business Review*, March 2007) if we use Park's definition of innovation: "Innovation is really the practical application of new or emerging knowledge for profit." How well do these Alaskan entrepreneurs form and take advantage of knowledge and technology developments? How well do they form and utilize international networks?

Presentation will include Alaskan case studies.