



Social Intrapreneurs – Bottom-Up Social Innovation

Maggie Brenneke

Imaginals, London

Heiko Spitzeck

Fundação Dom Cabral

Abstract. This conceptual paper defines the concept of social intrapreneurship as an important component in the ecosystem of social innovation. The literature on social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship is reviewed regarding the personal characteristics of the entre-/intrapreneur, the nature of their innovations and the measures of success. From this literature review social intrapreneurship is defined by social intrapreneurs having knowledge about the organization and its market environment, possessing entrepreneurial as well as social skills, and being driven by societal values to achieve social impact. The social innovation brought about by social intrapreneurs can be of any Schumpeterian type but has to make a large scale impact. To reach critical mass the social intrapreneur uses the organization's business as leverage. The concept of social intrapreneurship is ambiguous regarding the relationship between social impact and profitability. While for the social intrapreneur success is defined by their social goals, their organization is likely to define success by profitability considerations. Future research is encouraged regarding the relationship between social impact and profitability as well as how organizations can create an enabling environment for social intrapreneurs.

Keywords: corporate social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, social innovation, intrapreneurship, social entrepreneurship, social intrapreneurship.

1. Introduction

Our globalized society is facing tremendous challenges such as climate change (Gore, 2006; Stern, 2006), limited natural resources (WWF, 2008) and poverty (The World Bank, 2007; United Nations, 2009) to name just a few. New business ventures with a clear social and/or environmental mission have been heralded as potential mechanisms to address the challenges of our times and have been labelled as social enterprises driven by social entrepreneurs (Briscoe and Ward, 2005; Seelos and Mair, 2005; Mair et al., 2006; Nicholls, 2006; Haugh, 2007; Elkington and Hartigan, 2008; Waddock, 2008). Social entrepreneurship has been defined as a combination of “economic benefits of entrepreneurship with the delivery of social and environmental outcomes” and is perceived as holding “the potential to assist the economic and social development of individuals and societies around the world” (Haugh, 2007: 743). Social enterprises might

therefore be considered a blueprint for businesses developing solutions to the global challenges humanity faces (Pirson, 2009).

The 2006 award of the Nobel Peace prize to Muhammad Yunus has created an increased interest in social entrepreneurship. Never before has a Nobel Peace prize been given for a business idea which blends social and economic value creation. Yunus' Grameen bank helped millions of Bangladeshi people out of poverty and is financially self-sustaining (Haugh, 2007). The visibility of Yunus and other social entrepreneurs as well as organizations like Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation or the Schwab Foundation might have led to the fact that cases of social entrepreneurship are easily identified while similar changes and initiatives inside existing organizations have not been recognized by research. However, social intrapreneurs might be characterized as the "Yunus inside" as in the case of Henry Gonzalez at Morgan Stanley, New York. Henry build Morgan Stanley's Microfinance Institutions Group to "continue and expand the breadth of microfinance, using capital markets as a means for social change" (SustainAbility, 2008: 25).

The independent think-tank and strategy consultancy SustainAbility recently launched a field guide on social intrapreneurs (SustainAbility, 2008). Social intrapreneurs are described as "individuals working inside major corporations or organizations developing practical solutions to social or environmental challenges or as people applying the principles of social entrepreneurship inside a major organization" (SustainAbility, 2008: 4). While the concept of intrapreneurship is well known in academia (Macrae, 1976; Pinchot, 1983; 1985; Pinchot and Pellman, 1999; Nielsen, 2000; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006; Singh, 2006; Gapp and Fisher, 2007) and social entrepreneurship is an emerging discipline (Seelos and Mair, 2005; Nicholls and Cho, 2006; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Elkington and Hartigan, 2008; Pirson, 2009; Yunus, 2009) the concept of social intrapreneurship has not yet been explored academically. Existing literature on social intrapreneurship could only be identified from practitioner sources. Therefore, the question this paper will address is how can social intrapreneurship be defined?

The practical value of studying social intrapreneurship lies in its potential to develop solutions to our global challenges. In contrast to social entrepreneurs social intrapreneurs can leverage existing infrastructures and organizational capabilities to deliver social value at scale. By aligning their organization's capabilities better with societal needs social intrapreneurs create innovation and bring organizational members together working on a common social goal. This brings benefits to society and the organization alike, as societal challenges get addressed and the organization benefits from innovation, creativity, higher employee satisfaction and retention as well as opening new markets.

The theoretical value of studying social intrapreneurship is found at the intersection between intrapreneurship, corporate social responsibility, organizational learning and innovation. Social intrapreneurs are a new form of

intrapreneurs (Pinchot, 1983; Colarelli O'Connor and Rice, 2001; Rodriguez-Pomeda et al., 2003; Gapp and Fisher, 2007), who trigger organizations to learn to adapt to society's increasing expectations regarding responsible behaviour (Zadek, 2004; Spitzeck, 2009). During this learning process they create innovations in terms of products, services, processes and business models, which go beyond traditional innovations as they explicitly include societal aspects (Meyerson, 2004; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Moore and Westley 2009). The field of social innovation is especially concerned with the question of scaling (Kramer, 2005; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Moore and Westley 2009). Here, social intrapreneurs represent clearly a new category, as they can scale their innovations quickly by leveraging their organization's structures and capabilities.

Definitions in social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship use similar heuristics to explain basic concepts by referring to the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur/intrapreneur, the nature and aim of the innovation as well as to criteria of success (Stopford and Baden-Fuller, 1994; Lombriser and Ansoff, 1995; Martin and Osberg, 2007). The analysis of the concepts of social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship will follow this line of thought. Entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are often defined by applying an entrepreneurial skill-set such as being innovative, proactive, action-oriented, creative, and courageous to bring about an innovation. Also as they have to facilitate communication and interaction with sponsors, employees, customers and other stakeholders, social skills such as networking, emotional intelligence, working across sectors, boundary-spanning and leadership have been attributed to them (Hemingway, 2005; Moore and Westley, 2009). Especially social entrepreneurs relate to and are sensible for their environment and have empathy for fellow humans and aspects of human misery or environmental degradation constitute the core mission of their enterprises (Cho, 2006). The nature of innovations has generally been classified (Schumpeter, 1934) as a) the introduction of a new product or service (product/service innovation), b) the introduction of a new process of production (process innovation), c) the opening of a new market (market innovation), d) the conquest of a new source of supply (supply innovation) and e) the introduction of a new organizational form in any industry (business model innovation). The measure of success has been associated with social impact in the field of social entrepreneurship (Kramer, 2005; Nicholls, 2006) and with financial performance and competitiveness in intrapreneurship (Ross, 1987; Lombriser and Ansoff, 1995; Singh, 2006). A literature review (Hart, 1998) of social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship is presented below which describes how personal characteristics, the nature of innovation and the related measures of success are used in either field. These descriptions then help to define social intrapreneurship and to discuss commonalities and tensions between the concepts.

2. Social Entrepreneurship

The first publications about social entrepreneurship appeared in the mid 1990s (Boschee, 1995; Dees, 1998a; b) characterizing social entrepreneurs as change agents in the social or third sector. This broad definition has led to the fact that nearly every innovation in social service provision is currently regarded as social entrepreneurship (Martin and Osberg, 2007). Therefore, this paper does not attempt to define the term in itself but reviews the literature in social entrepreneurship to see how the characteristics of the entrepreneur, the nature of the innovation and related criteria of success are defined.

Personal characteristics of the social entrepreneur

Social entrepreneurs are described as bringing “inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage, and fortitude” (Martin and Osberg, 2007: 33) to a social mission (Leadbeater, 1997). Due to their social values and skills such as empathy and sensitivity for social and/or environmental issues (Drayton, 2009) they are alert to areas where they can improve the status quo (Martin and Osberg, 2007). Social entrepreneurs are willing to take risks and to pursue their ideas with determination in order to make a difference in social and/or environmental terms (Bornstein, 2007; Waddock, 2008). This determination to further the social good led to the description of social entrepreneurs as “a new breed of pragmatic, innovative, and visionary social activists” (Nicholls, 2006: 2).

The innovation

Social entrepreneurs found and lead organizations to achieve “large scale, lasting and systemic social change” (Kramer, 2005: 1). Central to their entrepreneurial idea is positive “social” (Dees, 1998b; Nicholls, 2006; Martin and Osberg, 2007) or “human” (Seelos and Mair, 2005; Spitzbeck et al., 2009) value creation whether the business is “for-profit or not” (Kramer, 2005). The social innovation of the business is usually considered a Schumpeterian business model innovation and not simply the adoption of new processes or the introduction of a new product or service. The impact and the nature of their innovation, therefore, distinguishes social entrepreneurs from other social service providers (Martin and Osberg, 2007). It is generally a new way of offering products and services that enables social enterprises to have large scale impacts. By a new approach to banking Muhammad Yunus helped millions of people out of poverty (Haugh, 2007). Another social entrepreneur, Rodrigo Baggio, facilitated the graduation of more than 700.000 students from the favelas of Brazil by setting up new community-

based computer training schools which used second-hand donated IT equipment (Drayton, 2009).

Measures of success

A successful social entrepreneur has found a way to effectively address an immense social and/or environmental challenge. Therefore measures of success are highly context-specific and guided by the particular vision of the social entrepreneur (Kramer, 2005). Whatever the measure of success it demonstrates that the ideas of the social entrepreneur have either the potential for or have left large scale impact (Martin and Osberg, 2007). Another sign of success is that the founded social enterprise is self-sustaining and able to create the social benefit long-term without financial dependence on donors. To generate sufficient funds from its activities is a prerequisite for scaling up the innovation in order to reach large scale impact. Financial profitability is not seen as a measure of success in itself but rather perceived as a facilitator of social value creation. Running a social enterprise at a loss would inhibit the growth of its impact. If a profit is generated it is usually reinvested into the social value creation process instead of being paid to investors. In contrast to ordinary business organizations it is also a measure of success if the idea is copied (Kramer, 2005; Martin and Osberg, 2007) and brought to other contexts or regions of the world as it has been the case with Yunus' idea of micro credits.

3. Intrapreneurship

Jennings et al. (1994) trace the origins of intrapreneurship to an article published by Norman Macrae (1976) in the *Economist*. The original idea was to bring competition into organizations by establishing profit-centres to foster innovation (Nielsen et al., 1985). Intrapreneurship has since been conceptualized as a source of innovation (Pinchot, 1983; Colarelli O'Connor and Rice, 2001; Rodriguez-Pomeda et al., 2003; Gapp and Fisher, 2007), competitiveness (Pinchot, 1985; Jennings et al., 1994), organizational renewal (Duncan et al., 1988; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006; Kenney and Mujtaba, 2007), and a method to survive a crisis (Singh, 2006).

Personal characteristics of the intrapreneur

Intrapreneurs are self-appointed innovators within existing organizations (Shays and de Chambeau, 1984; Pinchot and Pellman, 1999; Amo and Kolvereid, 2005). They are creative, action-oriented, self-confident, risk-taking and innovative (Pinchot, 1985; Kenney and Mujtaba, 2007; Chakravarthy and Lorange, 2008) and initiate bottom-up change in organizations (Block and MacMillan, 1993) in order to better exploit “business opportunities” (Kuratko et al., 1990; Lombriser and Ansoff, 1995). Intrapreneurs innovate by using their entrepreneurial skills combined with knowledge about their organization’s strengths and weaknesses (Pinchot, 1985; Lombriser and Ansoff, 1995; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006: 129) as well as by aligning others around the business vision (Pinchot, 1985; Kolchin and Hyclak, 1987).

The innovation

Intrapreneurship is intrinsically linked to innovation and organizational change (Pinchot, 1983; 1985; McGinnis and Verney, 1987; Duncan et al., 1988; Pinchot and Pellman, 1999; Rodriguez-Pomeda et al., 2003; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006). However, the nature of the innovation is generally open encompassing all classifications provided by Schumpeter (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2003; Gapp and Fisher, 2007). Whether the intrapreneur creates a new product, process, market, supply chain or business model is irrelevant as long as the innovation fosters competitive advantage and profitability (Pinchot, 1985; Kolchin and Hyclak, 1987; Kuratko et al., 1990). The impact of the innovation can be radical as well as incremental (Gapp and Fisher, 2007). Pinchot described intrapreneurs equipped with a (1985: 116): “... dedication to finding ways, large and small, to make things better and faster”. Therefore, the impact of the innovation is of secondary interest.

According to Kanter (1983) the organizational context determines any employees engagement in innovation and change. This observation has led to a related research stream in innovation management and corporate entrepreneurship (Vesper, 1984; McGinnis and Verney, 1987; Kuratko et al., 1990; Schendel, 1990; Stopford and Baden-Fuller, 1994). Some researchers use the terms intrapreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship interchangeably (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2001). “Corporate entrepreneurship concerns how companies stimulate innovation, enterprise, and initiative from people in the company, and the subsequent contribution of individual behaviour to organizational success” (Amo and Kolvereid, 2005: 9). We follow this perspective, which considers corporate entrepreneurship as a top-down way of stimulating innovation while intrapreneurship is seen as primarily a bottom-up concept (Pinchot, 1985; Block and MacMillan, 1993; Stopford and Baden-Fuller,

1994; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006). However, a combination of top-down and bottom-up support for innovation is clearly desirable (Day, 1994; Chakravarthy and Lorange, 2008). Corporate culture and structures can either foster or hinder intrapreneurial activities (Ross, 1987) and a central research question is around how intrapreneurs overcome organizational resistance (Pinchot and Pellman, 1999) or how organizations can provide an enabling environment for intrapreneurs (Ross, 1987). In some cases intrapreneurs act without explicit management permission (Vesper, 1984; Brunaker and Kurvinen, 2006) and “seek the corporation’s blessing for their accomplishments afterwards” (Amo and Kolvereid, 2005: 10). While the organizational context is important a detailed discussion on corporate entrepreneurship would go beyond the scope of this paper.

Measures of success

A successful intrapreneur has created an innovation for his organization which led to increased profitability and competitive advantage. Financial returns, therefore, are key measures of success and are usually used to further incentivise the intrapreneur and to report profits (Dess and Lumpkin, 2005). If new products or processes are created the corporation usually tries to protect the innovation from being copied by patents or trademarks in order to ensure long-term competitive advantages.

4. Social Intrapreneurship – Towards a Definition

Since the early beginnings Gifford Pinchot explored intrapreneurship in all its facets. On his website intrapreneur.com the reader finds information on “green” as well as “not-for-profit social intrapreneurs”. Intrapreneurial innovation has been suggested long ago for Non-Profit and Government institutions (Nielsen et al., 1985). However, the term social intrapreneur gained popularity by the publication of “The Social Intrapreneur – A Field Guide for Corporate Changemakers” (SustainAbility, 2008). The discussion has spread into popular practitioner journals (Simms, 2008) and already led to reflections on growth and sustainable performance (Baets and Oldenboom, 2009). “Tempered Radicals” (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson, 2004) are a closely related concept describing individuals inside major organizations promoting socially responsible conduct. Similar to the distinction made above on intrapreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship some researchers investigate corporate social entrepreneurship (Austin et al., 2005; Hemingway, 2005; Austin, 2006; Pirson, 2009) which is

understood as the “process of extending a firm’s domain of competence (...) through innovative leveraging of resources, both within and outside its direct control, aimed at the simultaneous creation of economic and social value” (Austin, 2006: 170). Corporate social entrepreneurship is clearly connected to the discourse of corporate responsibility (Austin et al., 2005) and aims to inspire organizations to capitalize on corporate social opportunities instead of focussing only on risks and responsibilities (Grayson and Hodges, 2004; Porter and Kramer, 2006).

The following two examples illustrate how social intrapreneurs capitalize on corporate social opportunities: After spending a year in a voluntary social organization on the Balkans Gib Bulloch helped to create the Accenture Development Partnerships (ADP). The ambition is to combine “Accenture’s convening power in the corporate sector with ADP’s in the development sector to help broker and integrate cross-sectoral coalitions to help tackle major social, economic and environmental challenges” (SustainAbility, 2008: 15). However, ADP should not be confounded with philanthropy as the ADP programme offers Accenture high flyers to be seconded for six months to an ADP while Accenture still pays them 50% of their ordinary salary. There they offer quality business and technology consultancy to NGOs on rates aligned to their sector. Gib Bulloch explains the benefits: “There is a demonstrable effect on our recruitment and retention, but ADP is having a positive effect on our brand and our reputation. We are also gaining useful first-hand experience of the emerging markets where our clients are going.” (Simms, 2008: 49)

Susie Lonie saw the potential of Vodafone’s mobile phone business in Africa to help people without a bank account by offering a mobile payment system (SustainAbility, 2008: 34-35). Her ambition is to offer financial services according to the needs and resources of people in developing countries. On the societal side this helps people participating in safe and cheap financial transactions which they previously did not have access to. On the business side it establishes Vodafone’s core business – mobile communication – as a means to create social value and by doing so, increasing market penetration and sales.

With these case vignettes in mind the term social intrapreneurship will be explored along the lines of the personal characteristics of the social intrapreneur, the innovation and related measures of success. This will lead us closer to a definition of the term as well as differentiate the concept from social entrepreneurship as well as traditional forms of intrapreneurship.

Personal characteristics

Social intrapreneurs are motivated to “incubate and deliver business solutions that add value to both society and the bottom line. (...) They understand business processes and priorities as well as sustainability imperatives” (SustainAbility,

2008: 5). In bringing their values to work social intrapreneurs aim to align business value with societal value creation. They possess social skills as they have empathy and sensitivity for social and/or environmental issues and “exhibit entrepreneurial spirit in terms of idea generation, creativity and drive in the course of carrying out their work” (Hemingway, 2005). Social intrapreneurs are striving more for societal impact than for personal wealth creation (SustainAbility, 2008) and pursue their ideas despite the risk of losing their employment (Meyerson, 2004). Social intrapreneurship is a bottom-up initiative clearly driven by the social intrapreneur.

The limited available literature defines the personal characteristics of social intrapreneurs clearly as having knowledge about the organization and its market environment, possessing entrepreneurial as well as social skills, and being driven by values of empathy to achieve social impact. They have the ability to reconcile seemingly opposable positions, e.g. “green” and “profitable”, in order to create business and societal value simultaneously. It remains to be seen if the personal characteristics of social intrapreneurs result in higher explanatory power than in entrepreneurship research (Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001; Krueger et al. 2000).

The innovation

Social intrapreneurs are described as “creating and delivering new business models” which will “eventually enable a scale of change that delivers value to society and business well into the future” (SustainAbility, 2008: 5). This suggests a focus on Schumpeterian business model innovations as is the case with social entrepreneurs. In contrast, tempered radicals focus on “small wins”, such as running recycling schemes, making “a difference through little acts” (Meyerson, 2004) which eventually lead to organizational changes. This indicates that there might be a useful differentiation regarding the scale and the nature of innovation and change caused by an intrapreneurial person. Social intrapreneurs seem to push for innovations directly related to a corporation’s business model which creates the leverage for large scale social impact. Tempered radicals explore any idea whether related to the business model or not in order to further social and environmental goals. While this might lead to large scale impact this is not envisioned at the outset and tempered radicals therefore seem to be less strategic about achieving social impact.

Table 1: Tempered Radicals versus Social Intrapreneurs

	Tempered Radical	Social Intrapreneur
Strategy	Small wins such as recycling programmes, switching off energy devices	Large scale impact
Link to existing business	Not essential	Essential as leverage for social/ environmental impact
Up-scaling	Potential but not envisioned strategically	Intended from the outset

It seems likely that being a tempered radical is a precursor to become a social intrapreneur as a critical reader might ask: Did Muhammad Yunus have systemic change in mind when he first lent 32 U.S. Dollars to a poor Bangladeshi woman? However, a person switching off lights alone would not qualify as being a social intrapreneur. Tempered radicals might help to create an enabling environment in which social intrapreneurs can prosper as their organization becomes more aware and open to social and environmental initiatives.

Social intrapreneurs can reach massive scales without business model innovations. Imagine a social intrapreneur working at a producer of personal computers on the energy efficiency of laptops. While she might create a mere product innovation by lowering the energy use of the equipment the impact on energy consumption and related carbon emissions could be immense if thousands of users switch to more energy efficient laptops. These gains could also easily offset the additional energy which a firm has to invest in order to produce the innovation. As Gib Bulloch says: “Affecting even small change in large organizations can lead to significant positive social impact” (SustainAbility, 2008: 15). Thus, one should be cautious about limiting social intrapreneurship to business model innovations only. Instead of defining social intrapreneurship by the nature of the innovation it might be more useful to relate the term to the large scale of impact.

The social innovation brought about by social intrapreneurs can be of any Schumpeterian type but has to reach a large scale impact. To reach critical mass the social intrapreneur uses the organization’s business as leverage.

Measures of success

In the case of social intrapreneurship two parties are defining what success looks like. The organization will consider it a success if the innovation leads to profitability and competitive advantage. The social intrapreneur is interested in social change. As SustainAbility put it: “None of the intrapreneurs we met are

motivated primarily by monetary gain; instead they are inspired by a desire to drive real transformation” (SustainAbility, 2008: 13). As for social entrepreneurs measures for the social side of success are highly context specific.

One example for context specific measures is Patrimonio Hoy. Luis Sota was helping CEMEX, a leading provider of cement and building material to set up Patrimonio Hoy, a programme which offers do-it-yourself construction services to low-income households (SustainAbility, 2008: 39). CEMEX offers microfinance as well as architectural and technical advice to help low-income families to build solid and safe houses. Until 2008 Patrimonio Hoy helped nearly 800,000 families in Mexico to build their own homes. Another example is Unilever’s Shakti Programme (SustainAbility, 2008: 40). Vijay Sharma scaled up Shakti, an initiative created to provide women with training in selling, commercial knowledge and book-keeping to set up their own business selling Unilever and other products. By sharing the value chain with these women Unilever fosters their as well as local development and simultaneously increases its market in rural India. The aim is to increase the number of women entrepreneurs from 45,000 in 2008 to 100,000 covering 500,000 villages and reaching over 500 million people.

As these examples demonstrate, innovations need to be profitable in order to convince organizations to invest in a massive roll-out of the concept. “Changemakers need to build the business case for action” (SustainAbility, 2008: 54). Here social intrapreneurs share the same fate as social entrepreneurs: if they want to grow their idea it needs to be at least profitable enough to support expansion. Therefore, social intrapreneurship cannot be driven out of the philanthropy department over the long-term while seed finance might be provided during a conceptual stage (Simms, 2008).

The literature of social intrapreneurship is ambiguous on the relation between social impact and profitability. While for the social intrapreneur success is defined by their social goals the organization is likely to define success by profitability considerations. This can obviously lead to tensions.

5. Discussion

The following table summarizes the arguments presented and gives an overview of the personal characteristics, the nature of innovation and measures of success of social entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs as well as social intrapreneurs.

Table 2: Social Entrepreneurs, Intrapreneurs and Social Intrapreneurs in comparison

		Social Entrepreneurs	Social Intrapreneurs	Intrapreneurs
Personal Characteristics	Knowledge about market environment	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Knowledge about the organization	No	Yes	Yes
	Entrepreneurial Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Social Skills	Extensive	Extensive	Moderate
	Driving Values	Social	Social	Financial
Innovation	Nature	Business Model	Any	Any
	Large Scale	Yes	Yes	No
	Primary Impact	Social	Ambiguous	Financial
	Importance of Organizational Context	Low	High	High
Measures of Success	KPIs	Context dependent	Financial and context dependent	Financial
	Importance of Scale	High	High	Low
	Replication of idea	Encouraged	Protected	Protected

Similarities and Differences – Social Entrepreneurship versus Social Intrapreneurship

Social entrepreneurs and social intrapreneurs have basically the same personal characteristics and are driven by social values. They possess the necessary social and entrepreneurial skills and market knowledge to bring their social innovation to market. However, social intrapreneurs have additional knowledge about their existing organization which they leverage for social impact. While social entrepreneurs generate Schumpeterian business model innovations social intrapreneurs innovate in all areas, whether it is a new product, service, process, market, supply chain, or business model. While innovation from social entrepreneurs is clearly about addressing a social issue, there is ambiguity about the primary impact of a social intrapreneur, which can be either the social issue or profitability. However, both aim for their innovations to have a large scale impact. The ambiguity regarding the primary impact is also represented in the measures of success. Social entrepreneurs are successful if they achieve their KPIs derived from the social mission, having a large scale impact and if their idea is replicated elsewhere. Social intrapreneurs, in contrast, are successful if they achieve their large scale social impact profitably and if they can protect their innovation from being copied.

Similarities and Differences – Intrapreneurship versus Social Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurs and social intrapreneurs may have the same knowledge about the market and the organization, but they are driven by different values and therefore, need different skills. Intrapreneurship is related to business success and therefore intrapreneurs primarily need entrepreneurial skills. As social intrapreneurship aims to create societal benefit social intrapreneurs need entrepreneurial as well as social skills. Intrapreneurs and social intrapreneurs generate any kind of Schumpeterian innovation and their organizational context is clearly of importance. Their innovation differs in that intrapreneurs concentrate on the financial results of their innovation rather than on the scale of their impact, while for social intrapreneurs the scale of impact is clearly most important. The measures of success of intrapreneurs and social intrapreneurs converge on the importance of financial value creation and the protection of the idea, but social intrapreneurs additionally report on the social impact, which has to be of a large scale.

The distinctive element of Social Intrapreneurship

These commonalities and differences now enable us to define the distinctive element of social intrapreneurship. Social intrapreneurs are driven by societal value creation to which they apply their knowledge about the market and the organization as well as their entrepreneurial and social skills. Social intrapreneurs are interested in large scale impact and systemic change. In their activities they are reconciling societal and business needs using their organization as leverage for social change. They aim for any kind of innovation which promises a large scale societal impact and satisfies the profitability considerations of their employers. Their success is measured financially as well as in context-specific terms regarding the desired social impact and, due to the competitive advantage created, the innovation is not freely shared with others.

There is ambiguity in social intrapreneurship regarding the relation of social impact and profitability. The resolution of this ambiguity depends on a clear definition of the purpose of the firm. However, few concepts are debated as controversially as the purpose of the firm and definitions range from making profit (Friedman, 1970; Jensen and Meckling, 1976) to social or human value creation (Elkington, 1998; Spitzeck et al., 2009). At its birth, the nature of the firm is determined by the entrepreneur and social entrepreneurs concentrate on social value creation. They reinvest profits into the social mission. Social intrapreneurs, however, do not have the same amount of control over the generated profits. They are also limited in their ability to share their ideas with

other social intrapreneurs or social entrepreneurs to replicate it elsewhere for societal benefit creation.

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to define the term social intrapreneurship. Social intrapreneurship has been analysed by the personal characteristics of the social intrapreneur, the nature of the innovation as well as suitable measures of success. The limited available literature defines the personal characteristics of social intrapreneurs clearly as having knowledge about the organization and its market environment, possessing entrepreneurial as well as social skills, and being driven by social values to achieve social impact. The social innovation brought about by social intrapreneurs can be of any Schumpeterian type but has to reach a large scale impact. To reach critical mass the social intrapreneur uses the organization's business as leverage. The literature of social intrapreneurship is ambiguous on the relation between social impact and profitability. While for the social intrapreneur success is defined by their social goals the organization is likely to define success by profitability considerations.

Further research directions

The major contribution of this conceptual paper is the definition of social intrapreneurship by combining research on social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship. Defining a new concept always offers many avenues for further research and our results suggest the following:

This research suggests there is little to be gained investigating personality traits of social intrapreneurs as they seem to be quite similar to those of social entrepreneurs. Rather, future research should investigate the relation between the social intrapreneur and its organizational environment.

From the intrapreneurship perspective useful questions for research might be: How much profit does the innovation have to create in order to be pursued – is it 3%, 5% or 20% return on investment? Which are non-financial arguments we can use in order to convince executives of social innovation? Under which conditions should a social intrapreneur leave the organization and try to generate the social impact by setting up a new social enterprise or joining another organization?

From an organization's and corporate responsibility perspective the concept of corporate social entrepreneurship might be interesting to explore if the organization is determined to work on its social performance. Here the question is how can the organization create an ideal environment for social intrapreneurs to prosper? Additionally organizations need to find out how a social innovation can be integrated into their existing business (Alter, 2006; Brunaker and

Kurvinen, 2006). E.g. three different types of corporate entrepreneurship have been defined (Stopford and Baden-Fuller, 1994): (1) New internal ventures, (2) new organizational routines and practices, and (3) frame-breaking changes where the innovation leads to a change of the rules of competition within an industry. Research could help to find out if this holds true in the area of corporate social entrepreneurship as well. Further questions arise regarding the replication of the social innovation. Social entrepreneurs freely share their knowledge and concepts. Social intrapreneurs have to create competitive advantage in order to push for their social innovation and it is suspected that these ideas might be protected by brands, labels, copyrights and patents, which in turn limit their application elsewhere.

Regarding the interdependence between organizations and social intrapreneurs potential questions focus on to what extent social intrapreneurs “use” organizations for creating social benefit and whether they move on as soon as their current employer “gets it” and the social impact has been achieved. As one intrapreneur put it: “The minute I’m no longer solving the problem, I’ll leave the company.” (SustainAbility, 2008: 58)

Scholars in innovation management might be particularly interested in which kinds of innovation social intrapreneurs mostly pursue and how they measure their impact or how traditional innovation research might take into account the scale of the impact of innovations beyond financial terms.

Finally, a social issues in management view might elaborate on questions such as: Can social intrapreneurs serve as change agents and foster organizational moral learning (Spitzeck, 2009)? Do social intrapreneurs contribute to a (re-) discovery of the social mission of their employers? Depending on the corporate responsibility approach of an organization, which can be roughly reactive, compliant or proactive, organizations might make different use of social intrapreneurs or present obstacles to overcome within the innovation process.

Implications for practice

Organizations interested in leveraging the potential of social intrapreneurs need to know how to foster their initiatives and which conditions might force them to leave. There might be useful links between employee volunteering, corporate responsibility training, corporate philanthropy and social intrapreneurship (Pirson, 2009). Internal foundations might invest in social innovation inside instead of outside and serve as an internal venture capital/philanthropy centre. External foundations pursuing a social mission might still favour supporting social entrepreneurs over social intrapreneurs as the social return on investment is higher. After all, social entrepreneurs can reinvest profits into their mission and freely share their concepts to be replicated elsewhere.

References:

- Alter, S. K. (2006), "Social Enterprise Models and Their Mission and Money Relationships", in Nicholls, A. (Ed.) *Social entrepreneurship : new models of sustainable social change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, pp. 99-118.
- Amo, B. W. and Kolvareid, L. (2005), "Organizational Strategy, Individual Personality and Innovation Behavior", *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 7-19.
- Antoncic, B. and Hisrich, R. (2001), "Intrapreneurship: Construct refinement and cross-cultural validation", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 16 No. 5, pp. 495-527.
- Antoncic, B. and Hisrich, R. (2003), "Clarifying the Intrapreneurship Concept", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 7-24.
- Austin, J. E. (2006), "Social Entrepreneurship: It's for Corporations, Too", in Nicholls, A. (Ed.) *Social entrepreneurship : new models of sustainable social change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, pp. 169-180.
- Austin, J. E., Leonard, H. B., Ezequiel, R. and Wei-Skillern, J. (2005), "Corporate Social Entrepreneurship: A New Vision for CSR", in Epstein, M. J. and Hanson, K. O. (Eds.) *The Accountable Corporation*, Praeger Publishing, Oxford.
- Baets, W. R. J. and Oldenboom, E. (2009), *Rethinking growth : social intrapreneurship for sustainable performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Baucus, M. S. and Near, J. P. (1991), "Can Illegal Corporate Behavior be Predicted? An Event History Analysis", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 9-36.
- Block, Z. and MacMillan, I. C. (1993), *Corporate venturing : creating new businesses within the firm*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass.
- Bornstein, D. (2007), *How to change the world*, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York.
- Boschee, J. (1995), "Social Entrepreneurship", *Across the Board*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 20-25.
- Briscoe, R. and Ward, M. (2005), *Helping ourselves : success stories in co-operative business & social enterprise*, Oak Tree Press, Cork, Ireland.
- Brunaker, S. and Kurvinen, J. (2006), "Intrapreneurship, local initiatives in organizational change processes", *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 118-132.
- Chakravarthy, B. and Lorange, P. (2008), "Driving Renewal: the Entrepreneur-Manager", *Journal of Business Strategy*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 14-21.
- Cho, A. H. (2006), "Politics, Values and Social Entrepreneurship: A Critical Appraisal", in Mair, J., Robinson, J. and Hockerts, K. (Eds.) *Social Entrepreneurship*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Colarelli O'Connor, G. and Rice, M. (2001), "Opportunity Recognition and Breakthrough Innovation in Large Established Firms", *California Management Review*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 96-116.
- Day, D.L. (1994), "Raising Radicals: Different Processes for Championing Innovative Corporate Ventures", *Organization Science*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 149-172.
- Davidsson, P. and Wiklund, J. (2001), "Levels of analysis in entrepreneurship research: Current research practice and suggestions for the future", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 81-100.
- Dees, J. (1998a), "Enterprising Nonprofits", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 76 No. 1, pp. 55-67.
- Dees, J. (1998b), "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship", Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City.
- Drayton, W. (2009), "Everyone a Changemaker: Social Entrepreneurship's Ultimate Goal", in Spitzeck, H., Pirson, M., Amann, W., Khan, S. and von Kimakowitz, E. (Eds.) *Humanism in Business*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 388-401.
- Dess, G. G. and Lumpkin, G. T. (2005), "The Role of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Stimulating Effective Corporate Entrepreneurship", *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 147-156.
- Duncan, W. J., Ginter, P. M., Rucks, A. C. and Jacobs, T. D. (1988), "Intrapreneurship and the Reinvention of the Corporation", *Business Horizons*, No. May-June, pp. 16-21.
- Elkington, J. (1998), *Cannibals with forks - The triple bottom line of 21st century business*, New Society Publishers, Oxford.
- Elkington, J. and Hartigan, P. (2008), *The power of unreasonable people : how social entrepreneurs create markets that change the world*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass.

- Friedman, M. (1970), "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits", *New York Times*, New York, pp. 32-33.
- Gapp, R. and Fisher, R. (2007), "Developing an Intrapreneur-Led Three-Phase Model of Innovation", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, Vol. 13 No. 6, pp. 330-348.
- Gore, A. (2006), *An inconvenient truth : the planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it*, Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pa.
- Grayson, D. and Hodges, A. (2004), *Corporate Social Opportunity*, Greenleaf, Sheffield.
- Hart, C. (1998), *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Haugh, H. (2007), "New Strategies for a Sustainable Society: The growing Contribution of Social Entrepreneurship", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 743-749.
- Hemingway, C. A. (2005), "Personal Values as A Catalyst for Corporate Social Entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 60 No. 3, pp. 233-249.
- Jennings, R., Cox, C. and Cooper, C. L. (1994), *Business elites : the psychology of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs*, Routledge, London ; New York.
- Jensen, M. C. and Meckling, W. H. (1976), "Theory of the Firm, Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure", *Journal of Financial Economics*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 305-360.
- Kanter, R. M. (1983), *The change masters: innovations for productivity in the American corporation*, Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Kenney, M. and Mujtaba, B. G. (2007), "Understanding Corporate Entrepreneurship and Development: A Practitioner View of Organizational Intrapreneurship", *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 73-88.
- Kolchin, M. G. and Hyclak, T. J. (1987), "The Case of the Traditional Intrapreneur", *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 14-18.
- Korten, D. C. (1995), *When corporations rule the world*, Kumarian Press; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, West Hartford, Conn. San Francisco, Calif.
- Kramer, M. R. (2005), "Measuring Innovation: Evaluation in the Field of Social Entrepreneurship", Foundation Strategy Group and Skoll Foundation, San Francisco.
- Krueger, N.F., Reilly, M.D., and Carsrud, A. (2000), "Competing Models of Entrepreneurial Intentions", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 15 No. 5/6, pp. 411-432.
- Kuratko, D. F., Montagno, R. B. and Hornsby, J. S. (1990), "Developing an Intrapreneurial Assessment Instrument for an Effective Corporate Entrepreneurial Environment", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 5, pp. 28-49.
- Leadbeater, C. (1997), *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur*, Demos, London.
- Livesey, S. M. (2002), "Global Warming Wars: Rhetorical and Discourse Analytic Approaches to ExxonMobil's Corporate Public Discourse", *The Journal of Business Communication*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 117-148.
- Lombriser, R. and Ansoff, I. (1995), "How Successful Intrapreneurs Pilot Firms Through the Turbulent 1990s", *Journal of Strategic Change*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 95-108.
- Macrae, N. (1976), "The coming entrepreneurial revolution", *The Economist*, London, p. 16.
- Mair, J., Robinson, J. and Hockerts, K. (2006), *Social entrepreneurship*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Martin, R. L. and Osberg, S. (2007), "Social Entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, No. Spring, pp. 29-39.
- McGinnis, M. and Verney, T. (1987), "Innovation Management and Intrapreneurship", *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 19-23.
- Meyerson, D. (2001), *Tempered radicals : how people use difference to inspire change at work*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Meyerson, D. E. (2004), "The Tempered Radicals", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, No. Fall, pp. 14-23.
- Moore, M. L. and Westley, F. (2009), "Surmountable Chasms: The Role of Cross-Scale Interactions in Social Innovation", University of Waterloo Working Paper No. 001, Waterloo.
- Nicholls, A. (2006), *Social Entrepreneurship: New Models of Sustainable Social Change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York.

- Nicholls, A. and Cho, A. H. (2006), "Social Entrepreneurship: The Structuration of a Field", in Nicholls, A. (Ed.) *Social entrepreneurship : new models of sustainable social change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York, pp. 99-118.
- Nielsen, R. P. (2000), "Intrapreneurship as a Peaceful and Ethical Transition Strategy Toward Privatization", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 157-167.
- Nielsen, R. P., Peters, M. and Hisrich, R. (1985), "Intrapreneurship Strategy for Internal Markets - Corporate, Non-Profit and Government Institution Cases", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 181-189.
- Pinchot, G. (1983), "Intrapreneurship: How Firms can Encourage and Keep Their Bright Innovators", *International Management: Europe*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 11-12.
- Pinchot, G. (1985), *Intrapreneuring : why you don't have to leave the corporation to become an entrepreneur*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Pinchot, G. and Pellman, R. (1999), *Intrapreneuring in action : a handbook for business innovation*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco.
- Pirson, M. (2009), "Social Entrepreneurship: A Blueprint for Humane Organizations?" in Spitzzeck, H., Pirson, M., Amann, W., Khan, S. and von Kimakowitz, E. (Eds.) *Humanism in Business*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 248-259.
- Porter, M. E. and Kramer, M. R. (2006), "Strategy and Society: The Link between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 85 No. 12, pp. 78-92.
- Rodriguez-Pomeda, J., Casani-Fernandez de Navarrete, F., Morcillo-Ortega, P. and Rodriguez-Anton, J. M. (2003), "The Figure of the Intrapreneur in Driving Innovation and Initiative for the Firm's Transformation", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 349-357.
- Ross, J. E. (1987), "Intrapreneurship and Corporate Culture", *Industrial Management*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 22-25.
- Schendel, D. (1990), "Introduction to the special issue on corporate entrepreneurship", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 1-3.
- Schumpeter, J. (1934), *The Theory of Economic Development*, Harvard University Press, Boston.
- Seelos, C. and Mair, J. (2005), "Social Entrepreneurship: Creating New Business Models to Serve the Poor", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 48 No. 3, pp. 241-246.
- Shays, E. M. and de Chambeau, F. (1984), "Harnessing entrepreneurial energy within the corporation", *Management Review*, Vol. 73 No. 9, pp. 17-20.
- Simms, J. (2008), "Innovations New Frontier", *Director*, No. October, pp. 48-53.
- Singh, J. (2006), "The Rise and Decline of Organizations: Can 'Intrapreneurs' Play a Saviour's Role?" *Vikalpa*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 123-127.
- Spitzzeck, H. (2009), "Organizational Moral Learning: What, if anything, do corporations learn from NGO critique?" *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 88 No. 1, pp. 157-173.
- Spitzzeck, H., Pirson, M., Amann, W., Khan, S. and von Kimakowitz, E. (Eds.) (2009), *Humanism in Business*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Stern, N. (2006), *The Economics of Climate Change - The Stern Review*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Stopford, J. M. and Baden-Fuller, C. W. F. (1994), "Creating Corporate Entrepreneurship", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 10, pp. 521-36.
- SustainAbility (2008), "The Social Intrapreneur - A Field Guide for Corporate Changemakers", Sustainability, London.
- The World Bank (2007), "Understanding Poverty", The World Bank, New York.
- Treviño, L. K. and Youngblood, S. A. (1990), "Bad apples in bad barrels: a causal analysis of ethical decision-making behaviour", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 75 No. 4, pp. 378-385.
- United Nations (2009), "Human Development Report 2009 - Human Development on the Move", New York.
- Vesper, K. H. (1984), "Three faces of corporate entrepreneurship: a pilot study", in Hornaday, A., Tarpley, F., Timmons, J. A. and Vesper, K. H. (Eds.) *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*, Babson College, Wellesley, pp. 294-320.
- Waddock, S. A. (2008), *The difference makers : how social and institutional entrepreneurs created the corporate responsibility movement*, Greenleaf Pub. Ltd., Sheffield, UK.

WWF (2008), "Living Planet Report 2008", WWF, Gland.

Yunus, M. (2009), "Social business entrepreneurs are the solution", in Spitzeck, H., Pirson, M., Amann, W., Khan, S. and von Kimakowitz, E. (Eds.) *Humanism in Business*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 402-412.

Zadek, S. (2004), "The Path to Corporate Responsibility", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 82 No. 12, pp. 125-132.

