THE EMERGING FIELD OF
SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSABILITY
- Four tendencies in 2008

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Abstract

An increasing number of companies have started up working strategic and innovative, aiming commercial beneficial performance through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

This requires "social innovation" and one or more of the following four topics can be relevant: CSI (Corporate Social Innovation), CSO (Corporate Social Opportunities), BOP (Bottom Of the Pyramid–thinking), and new binding partnership-models across sectors. (Grason and Hodges, 2004; Morsing, 2006; Hockerts, 2006, 2008; Seelos and Mair, 2008; Jenkins; Hockerts and Dyllick, 2002; Mandl, 2005; Spence, 2007; Hellstrôm, 2004, Mulgan, 2006).

Introduction

New and growing approaches and initiatives in the CSR-field like CSI, CSO, strategic CSR-communication, BOP and new binding partnership-models across sectors, all point toward "social innovation" as a serious and high potential approach, when it comes to financial – AND social performance and impact.

Social innovation is a new field of science in Denmark and Globally, with many contributors: (Hockers, 1999, 2003, 2004; Morsing, 2006; Hulgaard; Ellerup Nielsen; Thomsen; Bornstein, 2004; Lauring; Drucker, 1989; Drejer, 2004; Green 2005, Scharmer, Knudsen, 2006 2006; Epstein, 2005; Florida, 2005; Von Hippel, 2005; Hougaard, 2005; Mulgan/The Young Foundation, 2006; Nelson, 2006; Porter, 2006; Michael E. And Teisberg, Elizabeth Olmsted, May 2006 and Tølbøll, 2006)

Several different definitions exist depending of nation, approach and socio-political and cultural background [1] [2] [3] [4]

This paper relates to the following definition:

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[1] "Social innovation is how cities, national governments and businesses solve compelling challenges facing society – such as urban growth, traffic congestion, an ageing population, chronic disease or unemployment – by designing and developing new and more effective approaches".(www.britishcouncil.org)

[2] Social innovation is often given complex definitions. We prefer the simple one: "new ideas that work". This differentiates innovation from improvement (which implies only incremental change); and from creativity and invention (which are vital to innovation but miss out the hard work of implementation and diffusion that makes promising ideas useful). So social innovation refers to new ideas that work in meeting social goals. Defined in this way the term has, potentially, very wide boundaries – from gay partnerships to new ways of using mobile phone texting, and from new lifestyles to new products and services. (Mulgan , 2006).

[3] Examples on succesfull social innovasitons with Global impact: The Open University – and many other models of distance learning, Fair Trade – with 2500 shops in Europe alone, Greenpeace, Grameen Bank -microcredits, Linux software and other open source methods such as Wikipedia and The Women´s Institute (grundlagt i Canada i 1890érne), (Mulgan 2006, p.14).

[4] Social innovation is not unique to the non-profit sector. It can be driven by politics and government(for example new models of public health), markets (for example open source software or organic food), movements (fair trade), and academia (pedagical models of childcare), as well as social enterprices (microcredit and magazines for the homeless). Many of the most succesful innovators have learnt to operate across the boundaries between these sectors and innovation thrives best when there are effective alliances between small organisations and Social innovationentrepreneurs and big organisations which can grow ideas to scale. (Mulgan 2006 p. 4)

"New ideas that work
to meet pressing un-met needs
and improve people's lives".
Jeoff Mulgan, The young Foundation, London.

The phenomenon of social innovation is in this paper to be understood as society innovation, which means, innovations that on top of creating value for the individual or a specific organization or firm, also create value for stakeholders and for society at large.

The term social innovation represents a field that contains a huge amount of activities and different ways to find solutions to social needs.

The driving forces behind social innovations are manifold. Social innovations are initiated and enforced through governments, through associations (i.e. Fair-trade) user movements (i.e. Wikipedia, Linux) as well as through individual entrepreneurs, through the educational institutions and through commercial corporations.

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It seems like solid knowledge and models about implementation of radical innovative CSR-solutions (with long term economic and social impact and value creation for stakeholders) can bring new to the CSR-field.

Many companies and organizations from all sectors of society are for several reasons motivated to contribute finding innovative solutions to meet the societal challenges and needs facing us today; challenges such as the lack of resources in many parts of the world, illness, environmental problems, corruption and the violation of human rights.

While businesses in the developed world produce a huge output, create employment and generate tax revenues necessary to fund basic services including healthcare, education and other services, large parts of the low-income population in the developing countries are left behind with 2.7 billion people worldwide continuing subsisting on less than US$ 2 per day**.**

As a result of the environmental global heating debate and other global problems, people worldwide are paying attention to how they could somehow contribute to a more balanced and sustainable world. The pressing un-met needs bring new attention to the known phenomena; sustainability [5] and social innovation.

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[5] "A sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" The Brundtland definition on Sustainability.

A membership of Global Compact (pointing out the 10 most important global problems), or a commitment to the coming ISO 26000 Social Responsibility, developed by 70 countries and 40 international organizations and locals, or codes of conduct is important but not enough to insure large social impact.[6]

To higher the success rate for a company's CSR-work as a business case, it need to work strategic and innovative and always with its core business as the point of origin.

"Sustainability will be a decisive competitive advantage in the future. The most successful companies in the future will be those who understand to adjust changes in the global ecosystems and decode business opportunities hiding in sustainable activities.[7]

So the purpose prioritizing sustainable development is not only "doing good", but also being more entrepreneurial, nimble and competitive (Stigson, 2007) [8]

More companies and organizations see social innovation and CSR (corporate social responsibility) as a new field of opportunity for developing their businesses. [9]

The motivation for doing something good is initiated by a pressure derived from the globalization, the technological development and from personal demands.

Due to recruitment, the individual employees and consumer demand and quest for a sense of meaning, personal development, self-realization, happiness, wholeness and an enhanced quality of life through their private and professional lives.

Today value creation is mostly measured commercially and not that much in terms of creating life quality and happiness. In the future non-financial qualities will gain more attention and the share-value will depend on the companies ability to create happiness, sustainability and economical revenue (Hildebrandt, 2007).[10]

There is a heavy increase in number of companies, that not only pay attention to social responsibility, but also actually make different forms and ways of measuring their ethical work and social responsibility (Morsing, 2007).

Olsen and Svendsen argue that the development of society, services and products in the time to come is heading against that we must understand that implementation of innovation (both economic, technological and social innovation) is becoming a social process. They argue that a growing number of innovation activities in companies and society are considering social interaction and attention to meeting human needs.

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[6] www.globalcompact.com

[7] World Business Council for sustainable Development (WBCSD) in Mandag Morgen, Dec. 4´th 2006, "Top 20 of the worlds most sustainable companies"

[8] Bjørn Stigson, WBCSD from the rapport: "Growing Opportunity – Entrepreneurial Solutions to Insoluble Problems" 2007.

[9] "CSR is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large" World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

[10] Steen Hildebrandt on "Gensynsdag 2007 Alumni, ASB: The Keynote Speach: "The company´s responsability – Life before Profit".

It contains such great and important potential that neither companies nor society can ignore it or let developments occur incidentally. Social growth, and in turn social innovation, will become one of the strategic focal points of the future. (Olsen, Svendsen)

These demands are shaped and accelerated from a several hundred years long tradition and a cultural and sociological self understanding, and they are expressed in different ways in the welfare model (in Denmark). These are phenomenons like low power distance, confidence, autonomy, creativity, transparency and anti-authoritative attitude.

For many people it makes them happy that their doings create value to others, bring solutions to social problems and reach out into the future.

The ethical and the political consumer, low unemployment rate (in DK at least), renewed powered NGO´s and very powerful media/ journalists and the uncontrollable social media are elements that influence every company and organization today.

Web 2.0 enables dialogue among a great number of individuals and groups across the world and increases a range of democratizing processes and creations, and it creates the opportunity for co-creation and knowledge sharing across nations and cultures.

The social media are beyond control and at the same time impossible to ignore. Digital media and related communities possess immense potential for creating social innovation.

Consumers are increasingly politically minded and aware of social perspectives. Employees want to identify with the values of their company. New media have contributed to increasing transparency. Competition is global and consumers can easily find alternatives. The media, politicians and authorities have become more demanding in relation to corporate behavior.

The reasons why the private sector (besides the public sector) is an important driver on social responsibility are manifold: No country has ever achieved development in the absence of economic growth and business is the main driver for economic development (WBCSD)[11]

4 tendencies in CSR pointing at social innovation.

This paper tries to outline 4 important tendencies in 2008, that all express ambitious ways of realising and supporting CSR as a business case.

1. Corporate social opportunity (CSO)

Over the past three decades scholars and economists have been paying attention to whether CSR can bee a business-case or still just represents mere drain on a firms profit (Hockerts, 2007).

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[11] From "Doing business with the world" – The new role of corporate leadership in the global development.

Leaders are paying an increasing attention to possibilities for organizational – and business development through CSR, and CSO (Corporate Social Opportunity) has lately been introduced. [12] There are three dimensions to CSO – innovation in products and services, serving unserved markets and building new business models (Jenkins, Grayson and Hodges).

One of the decisive arguments for companies to engage in and implement CSR-strategies is the possibility to measure a direct growth in revenue. Research shows that companies that have been engaged in CSR for a while are able to build up a business case build on CSR., listing up numerous benefits such as improved image and reputation, better market position, more business, increased employee motivation and cost savings and increased efficiency (Jenkins, 2006).

The characteristics of a corporate social opportunity company include focuses on vision and values, communication, top-level management commitment, effective tools and mechanisms and stakeholder engagement (Grayson and Hodges, 2004).

Key characteristics of a corporate social opportunity company
1. Organisation aligns and articulates explicitly its purpose, vision and values consistent with responsible business practice.
2. Leadership fully believes in and lives those values and purpose.
3. Purpose, vision and values are continuously communicated throughout the organisation and beyond.
4. Purpose, vision and values are constantly reinforced through culture, processes and rewards.
5. Effective mechanisms for whistle blowing on any 'values gaps'.
6. Effective tools and processes for scoping and prioritizing risks and opportunities associated with CSR and a framework for ensuring consistency of decisions and values.
7. Decision-making processes at the top of the organisation.
8. Effective stakeholder engagement processes.
9. Ethical code governing relations with stakeholder partners to determine the fair share of risks and rewards.
10. Appropriate measurement and reporting of company's performance.

Table 1. Key characteristics of a company or organisation taking corporate social opportunities (Grayson, D and Hodges, A., 2004, p.14).

"The driver for business success is entrepreneurialism, a competitive instinct and a willingness to look for innovation from non-traditional areas such as those increasingly found within the CSR-agenda – opportunities as commercially viable activities which also advance

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[12] Novo Nordisk (Denmark) is as a pioneer in this area and have long worked with the "Triple Bottom Line," which accounts for the company's financial, environmental and social results. Now they are taking the next step. As their CSR-responsible executive Lise Kingo expresses it:
"In the future, corporate responsibility is likely to evolve into a platform for spotting and exploring needs for systems innovation and business innovation opportunities. A renewed understanding of how businesses and communities rely upon one another is gaining wider acceptance, even among the staunchest critics of corporations' influence in society."

environmental and social sustainability" (Jenkins, Grayson and Hodges).

To profit from opportunities presented by CSR, development of a business strategy, relying on CSR values, objectives and principles, is crucial.

Realizing CSO-activities requires identification and prioritizing of key areas where the company can really make a difference

2. Corporate Social Innovation (CSI)

Several other terms like corporate citizenship, society innovation, CSI (Corporate Social Innovation) and CSR–driven innovation have been introduced recently. [13]

Corporate social innovation is when commercial companies integrate innovative solutions to a problem or a need on a society level in their core business, through core competences.

Two examples: IBM has introduced CSI as an explicit means for promoting a sense of responsibility for the surrounding environment. IBM no longer gives donations or sponsors social projects. As an alternative the company sends employees with IT specific competencies to where it is needed in society to assist in developing software programs as well as teaching and training local stakeholders thus creating empowerment.

The global shipping company DHL's efforts after the earthquake in Pakistan 2006, provides another excellent example. Instead of contributing cash to aid organizations, they went in and took over vital logistics tasks of transporting and distributing emergency supplies. This action was much more valuable in emergency-aid activities. The company created new relations and gained experience in problem solving within an unfamiliar context (Svendsen and Olsen, 2006)

3. The importance of binding mutual beneficial partnerships

There have to be several winners in a successful project; and a modern company would not do it alone (Kolind, 2006, Hildebrandt and Stadil, 2006).

Stakeholders are defined as any group who affects or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives (Freeman 1984).

Stakeholder-driven innovation will play an increasing and decisive role in the renewal of the companies (Mads Øvlisen in Company Karma, 2006).

Bringing stakeholders into the innovation process offers important opportunities to increase both the social and the financial performance of firms (Hockerts, Morsing 2008).

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[13] This frame of mind (CSI) lies behind Bill gates' social commitment. Instead of donating part of his fortune to existing organizations, he takes an active role. He assumes a leader role in providing social welfare, development-oriented research, disease prevention, and does so just as professionally as Microsoft runs its business when striving for a goal. The combination of corporate skills and social objectives provide the company with new forms of development.

"*The purpose of stakeholder management was to devise a framework to manage Strategically the myriad groups that influenced, directly and indirectly, the ability of a firm to achieve its objectives*" (Freeman & Velamuri, 2006)

Stakeholder management concerns how a firm can serve its costumers and be lucrative while also serving its other stakeholders such as suppliers, employees and communities (Hockherts, Morsing 2008). Next level of ambition can be concerning the four-double win-situation ("det firdobbelte win"), where all stakeholders involved are gaining added value and where costumers are co-developing products or services or even making new business themselves.   The Danish architect Bjarke Ingels is proposing: " What if we can create solutions, that comply with everyone's needs".

"HVAD NU HVIS MAN KAN SKABE LØSNINGER, DER IMØDEKOMMER ALLES BEHOV" BJARKE INGELS

There is as well more and more attention to the importance of co-creating with different kinds of stakeholders. The literature on strategic alliances highlights a substantial   failure rate of partnerships and lack of knowledge about success factors for partner selection (Seelos and Mair, 2008)

Openness, transparency and clear communication are needed to build trust and mutual understanding. Knowledge about the potential partners intention and abilities is crucial. The partners need to show respect for differences in approach, competences, time frames and objectives. It is as well important to focus on achieving mutual benefit in a manner that enables the partners to meet their own objectives as well as common goals. At last it is evident to understand the needs of local partners and beneficiaries, with a focus on building their own capacity and capability rather than creating dependence.

It seems like that the new generation of CSR views it as a diving force in the company's innovation, where CSR themes become business opportunities. Explicitly and practically, focus is placed on partnerships with NGOs and socially active entities. They are drawn into the company's developmental activities. Companies enter partnerships or dialogues with public authorities. Among other things, this ensures that social innovations will be implemented on a large scale through the effects of demonstration, through the public sector's own practices, or through legislation or legislative amendments. In this fashion, CSR becomes and integrated part of the company's business activities and, not least, its developmental activities.

One huge dilemma here is the responsibility paradox, which is the fact that stakeholders are holding corporations more responsible for their actions and communications than ever, while corporations understand their responsibilities to stakeholders even less, due to globalizations, social media etc.

Another important issue to consider, for organisations and companies in the "social innovative business", is the attention on establishing binding and value creating partnerships with all the relevant stakeholders. What the SME´s are not able to do, they can manage in cooperation's with the large corporations.

4. "Bottom of the Pyramid" (BOP)

A convergence in the goals for objectives for NGO´s and companies is emerging. The NGO´s are paying attention to the Marked-based approaches to reducing poverty, and companies are looking for new business opportunities with support from NGO´s network and expertise. Given the right conditions, the private sector can improve the lives of people in the low-income or even in the poorest segments. Cooperation's are needed between different sectors and sizes of companies and branches with expertise and access to capital and political contacts aiming to up-scaling the operations and to fulfilling their potentials.[14]

> *"The bottom of the pyramid (BOP) in the global distribution of income has been promoted as a significant opportunity for companies to grow profitably. Under the BOP approach, poor people are identified as potential customers who can be served if companies learn to fundamentally rethink their existing strategies and business models"*.
> (Seelos and Mair, 2008).

The challenge for those interested in implementing BOP activities is the assurances that the engagement generates sufficient financial returns.

To enhance the effect of the work diminishing poverty or fighting the most pressing global social needs, the perspective around selling to the poor is challenged, by arguing that the perspective buying from them instead could give great meaning. This should be done by inspiring the poor and the locals to realize ideas that creates long-term fundamental changes in the mechanisms that fundamentally causes the problems and thereby solve or eliminates the problem on their own (Karnani, 2007).

Seelon and Mair from IESE Business School, Barcelona, Spain, are in their *"Profitable Business Models and Market creation in the Context of Deep Poverty: A Strategic View,* are proposing a strategic framework that scales down many of the hurdles of implementing BOP models, in their research work in Telenor, The Grameen Bank, Map Agro and Waste Concern. Their work show how business models can be structured across partner organizations and how those organizations succeed in creating a symbiosis of significant economic returns and important social development objectives, even though operating in Bangladesh, a country with overpopulation, extreme poverty, political instability and corruption.

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[14] Example: IKEA is cooperating with the NGO Care and The Oxfam around purchasing products in Bangladesh and Vitnam and creating social and economic benefit for local farmers.

In the Telenor/ Grameen Bank case an alliance was established with strategic objectives that created value on several levels: GrameenPhone received a license to operate a mobile network in Bangladesh in 1997. Telenor activities became profitable in 2000, the cooperation caused 6 million mobile subscribers in February 2006 and created 250.000 jobs for micro entrepreneurs "the village phone ladies" in rural districts of the country, and the size of the middle class was build up. The Phone ladies create income, achieve enormous prestige in their families and pay back their loans to Grameen. The ability to communicate created new effective transactions, reduced "transport by food" and enriched social lives for many (Seelos and Mair, 2008).

Reflections

Being strategic and innovative with CSR activities demands a serious will to take a responsibility on a society level as well as a solid knowledge about innovation

When it comes to fulfilling code of conduct and for example securing a high esthetical level among supplier's lots of dilemmas are emerging. SME`s are often to small to have the lack of resources to control and follow up on suppliers and the biggest international companies may be don't have the interest for social needs.

Exactly Mai the 14´th 2008 several of the biggest Newspapers in Denmark have big articles telling that Telenor suppliers in India are having produced mobile-towers in Bangladesh under monstrous conditions like children label and discharging liquid with lead in nature .[15]

There will always be ethetical dilemmas and discussions about the needs, the intention and the legitimacy in the CSR field.

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[15] Politiken Mai 14. 2008 "Telegiganter bruger børn til beskidt arbejde" (Tele giants use children in dirty work) and Berlingske Tidende a full 2 pages article "Skandinaviske Telegiganter afsløret i børnearbejde" =(Scandinavian Telegiants have been disclosed in childrenlabor)

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