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Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Innovation: Categories and Interactions

S. Schaltegger and M. Wagner

Business Strategy and the Environment, 2011, 20(4), pp. 222–237

By extending the framework of Schaltegger ([2002](#)), this article, first, describes the links between sustainable entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship, social entrepreneurship and institutional entrepreneurship and, second, relates entrepreneurship to



society' (p. 225). This means that sustainable entrepreneurs identify market opportunities for sustainability innovations (like demands from important stakeholders, changes in regulations, etc.) and successfully implement these innovations. Sustainable entrepreneurship is thus mainly defined from a business perspective. The most desirable form of sustainability innovation is then the one where positive social and private benefits coincide. Since it often occurs that positive social benefits do not compensate for negative economic benefits, changes in regulations and market conditions may be required. This explains why the authors consider institutional entrepreneurship as a part of sustainable entrepreneurship. According to the authors, this indicates that sustainable entrepreneurship might not only contribute to the sustainable development of the organisation itself, but also to the sustainable development of the market and society as a whole.

Using the innovation literature and some case examples, the article touches upon the conditions for sustainable entrepreneurship. The main conclusion is related to the size of the organisations. The authors argue that, although large firms have more difficulties with radical innovation, they should be a fast second, because they are the ones that have the necessary assets to diffuse the innovation into the larger market. Interaction between small and large firms might thus be necessary to enable sustainable entrepreneurship. Therefore, a fruitful avenue for further research is to study the interplay between small and large firms in transforming industries towards sustainable development.

While the introduction of the framework might provide a common ground for future studies, it is regrettable that the authors did not probe deeper into their suggested research avenue to investigate under which conditions sustainable entrepreneurship occurs and which form it takes. Therefore, I am not convinced that the article lives up to its promise to provide a reference for managers to introduce sustainability innovation and to pursue sustainable entrepreneurship.

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