**Program and notes from AAU-Cph Seminar March 7th 2016**



Social Entrepreneurship and Development/Tourism Strategies

Aalborg University Copenhagen

Seminar Program

Venue:

A.C. Meyers Vænge 15

Room C1/2.1.005

Moderators: Helene Balslev Clausen & Vibeke Andersson, Aalborg University

Discussant: Mario Velázquez García, El Colegio del Estado de Hidalgo

9.30 –9.50: Introduction Speech by Benjamin Antezana, Embassy of Bolivia, Copenhagen

9.50- 10.00: Questions and discussion

10.00 – 10.30: Anna Pollock (founder of Conscious Travel)

10.30- 10.45: Questions and discussion

10.45 - 11.05: Anna Hübner (social tourism entrepreneur in Vietnam, joining in via Skype)

11.05- 11.25:Thilde Langevang (Copenhagen Business School), Social entrepreneurs in Africa in development context

11.25-12.00: Questions and discussion about future collaboration

**Social Entrepreneurship Seminar March 7th 2016**

As a representative of the Bolivian Embassy, Benjamin E. Antezana Berton offered invaluable insights not just into specific cases in which social responsibility is present in Bolivia, but the central integration of socially responsible objectives present in all Bolivian policy. Similar to the principles of sustainability, the three core pillars of social responsibility are perceived in Bolivia through social, economic and environmental aspects. At the heart of these core competencies is the integration of local indigenous populaces in policy creation. Traditional Bolivian responsibilities to Mother Earth, Pachamama, remain of high importance to public and private entities, which additional focus now given to providing local communities with effective tools to further securing Pachamama principals.

Anna Pollock is the founder of Conscious Travel. Her presentation can be summarised as a call for shifting consciousness’s and a realisation that structural and systemic flaws in the system, along with external forces, leave business as usual as an unsustainable notion. Inabilities to fully comprehend the end game of exponential development herald the arrival of alternative conceptualisations in growth, from a quantitative perspective to one which encapsulates the presence of net positive impacts. Such a shift in the global consciousness ceases futile attempts to address the symptoms of an ailing economy and instead seek out the root causes for treatment. Anna primarily questions the structures currently in place and the fundamental lack of connectivity to the lives of people therefore negating flourishing potentials of all those involved in tourism and development. The interconnectivity of the economy must be recognised, individual remedies or examinations will not detail overall impacts.

Anna Hübner detailed her involvement in setting up an enterprise, a coffee shop named Tree Hugger, in Dong Hoi Vietnam. Vietnam is presented as a fast moving economy, with changes from agrarian to urban lifestyles offering a complex mix of opportunities and challenges. Growth is recorded in domestic and international tourism markets but so is a rise in social and economic disparities. With regards to the coffee shop itself, Anna doesn’t fully recognise a social enterprise tag for her establishment yet goes on to list several qualities related to a socially responsible entity. One such example is the training of staff with regards to encounters with foreign guests, improving social skills and encouraging empowerment principals. Governmental support is seen to be present through a lack of interference with operationalization of the business. This scenario however unfortunately sees the Vietnamese government failing to make the most of a valuable asset, and questions the misuse of similar organisations who may be flying under the raider.

Thilde Langevang detailed her research in Gambia and Uganda in the field of social entrepreneurship. A central focus was given to the role of social entrepreneurship in generating youth employment. In Central Africa, young people are being encouraged to create their own jobs opposed to actively seeking employment. With regards to the terminology of ‘social entrepreneurship’ however, it appears as a foreign term to locals, who witness themselves as acting opportunistically, were social cohesion happens to be present. Furthermore the term social entrepreneurship actually has become distrusted in Africa, with a rise in non-socially orientated enterprises adopting the term to take advantage of funding and support. While profit is typically needed to achieve social missions it is generally not the core objective of a social enterprise. Moving the focus on foreigners going abroad to engage with se and look at the local mobilization of se even if they don’t refer to themselves as such.

Today’s similar while providing empirical sources from a variety of locations, presented key thematic similarities in global social entrepreneurial activities. One such theme is the importance of the youth in social entrepreneurial development. They are seen as the agents of change for a shifting global consciousness to a more socially responsible form of growth. This leads to a key component of future socially responsible development being the education of younger generations, as seen in Bolivia, to stimulate a re-imagination of the constitutes of success and growth. What will remain challenging, yet a vital measurement of progress, will be the ability to measure the impact of social enterprises over time. Whether this will be the responsibility of private or public sectors remains to be seen but it must be considered a vital component of policy discussion for years to come. A major difficulty with regards to this however presented itself several times in today’s seminar and that is a failure of organisations to identify themselves as social entrepreneurial in nature. As the global consciousness is intended to shift, then too perhaps should quantification of social entrepreneurship, with an indigenous world view, as stated by Anna Pollock, fundamental to responsible and ethical growth.

(Eóin Meehan, March 8th 2016)