Chapter 10

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a Co-Creative Culture of Sustainability: A Lesson From a Danish Renewable Energy Project

Chunfang Zhou
Aalborg University, Denmark

Kathrin Otrel-Cass
Aalborg University, Denmark

Andrew K. Cass
University College of Northern Denmark, Denmark

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to address corporative social responsibility (CSR) as a key element of co-creative culture in developing sustainability in practice of regional innovation. This point is drawn from a lesson learned from a case study of a renewable energy project, which is called Winds of Change (WoC) in Denmark. In this chapter, the authors firstly regard creativity as a pathway to develop sustainability from a socio-cultural approach that also provides a basis of understanding that in the practice of developing sustainability, it requires a co-creative culture. Therefore, they use a systems view and examine co-creative behaviors in the case of WoC through the interplays between three dimensions including domain, field, and individuals (or organizations). Using this case, the authors conclude that a better sustainable world requires a better practice of CSR among organizations based on which the different actors should contribute to their cooperative efforts in a co-creation process of developing sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability originated in resource management across areas such as agriculture, energy, forestry and fisheries. In these contexts it was used in a specific sense to describe a sustainable yield for the resource in question. “Sustainability” has become a normative concept used in environmental policy-making and politics. However, it has also become a standard observation that the concept is used in a variety of different ways (O’Neill, 2006). The Brundtland report presented a commonly used definition of sustainable development:

*Development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED, 1987, pp. 34)*

However this definition is very broad and can be interpreted in many ways. Vos (2007) explains that sustainability “presents a way of looking at environmental problems in relation to economy and society” (pp.335) and that it requires “working beyond mere compliance with existing laws and regulations” (pp.335). Thus sustainability transition can be described as the process of coming to terms with sustainability in all its deeply rich environmental, socio-ethical and economic dimensions (Sterling, 2001).

Recently, there has been growing interest in linking creativity to sustainability (Lozano, 2011). Generally, creativity is defined as developing new and useful ideas (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999) including in contexts that are dealing with problem solving and its connection to organizational innovation (Bundy, 2002). This discourse argues that creativity can be regarded as a path to sustainability, because it requires new ways of knowing, thinking, acting, and considering oneself differently as a human in a threatened but cooperating world (Vos, 2007). Over the past years, research on creativity has followed a particular trajectory: moving from an early focus upon individuals and their internal traits and capabilities, to a broader understanding of that where creativity is not investigated as a phenomena in isolation but as the result of the interaction between individuals and the environment (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999).

Thus, a systems view to creativity has been broadly accepted. For example, Csikszentmihlyi (1999) developed a systems model of creativity development, which illustrates creativity as a process that can be observed only at the intersection where individuals, domains, and fields interact. Creative individuals are those who generate a novel product; the field stands for a social system of individuals in a discipline.
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