

## Mission Driven Enterprises in Ecosystems as Drivers for Sustainable System Change

**Authors :** Monique de Ritter, Annemieke Roobeek

**Abstract :** This study takes a holistic multi-layered systems approach on entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability. Concretely we looked how mission driven entrepreneurs (level 1) employ new business models and launch innovative products and/or ideas in their enterprises, which are (level 2) operating in entrepreneurial ecosystems (level 3), and how these in turn may generate higher level sustainable change (level 4). We employed a qualitative grounded research approach in which our aim is to contribute to theory. Fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with mission driven entrepreneurs in the Netherlands in which their individual drives, business models, and ecosystems were discussed. Interview transcripts were systematically coded and analysed and the ecosystems were visually mapped. Most important patterns include 1) entrepreneurs have a clear sustainable mission and regard this mission as de raison d'être of their enterprise; 2) entrepreneurs employ new business models with a focus on collaboration for innovation; the business model supports or enhances the sustainable mission of the enterprise, 3) entrepreneurs collaborate in ecosystems in which a) they also regard suppliers as partners for innovation and clients as ambassadors for the sustainable mission, b) would like to improve their relationships with financial institutions as they are in the entrepreneurs' perspective often lagging behind with their innovative ideas and models, c) they collaborate for knowledge and innovation with several parties, d) personal informal connections are very important, and e) in which the higher sustainable mission is not a point of competition but of collaboration.

**Keywords :** sustainability, entrepreneurship, innovation, ecosystem, business models

**Conference Title :** ICEMSD 2015 : International Conference on Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development

**Conference Location :** San Francisco, United States

**Conference Dates :** June 07-08, 2015