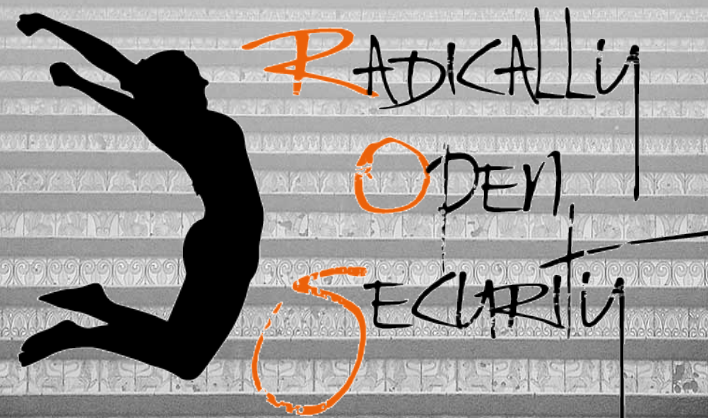


Post-Growth Entrepreneurship

Dr. Melanie Rieback





Agenda

Part 01 — (9:00-12:00)

Questioning Business

- Addiction to Growth
- Business education
- Profit's double meaning

The problem with “Social Enterprise”

- Aren't social enterprises the answer?
- Muhammad Yunus
- A spectrum of social enterprise

What is ‘Post-Growth Business’?

- Definition
- Legal entities
- Attacker model
- Case studies

Micro-level: Human

- Business as art/activism
- No superheroes required
- New forms of management

Part 02 — (13:00-17:00)

Meso-level: Post-Growth Entrepreneurship

- Bootstrapping model
- Serial entrepreneurs
- Business model “recipes”

Macro-level: Forming an economy

- Redirecting cashstreams
- “Boring but necessary”
- Ethical supply chains
- Emergent ecosystems

Business + Liberal/Creative Arts

- Creativity for Business
- Business for Creativity

Mini-Hackathon

- Small group brainstorming
- Plenary: sharing results



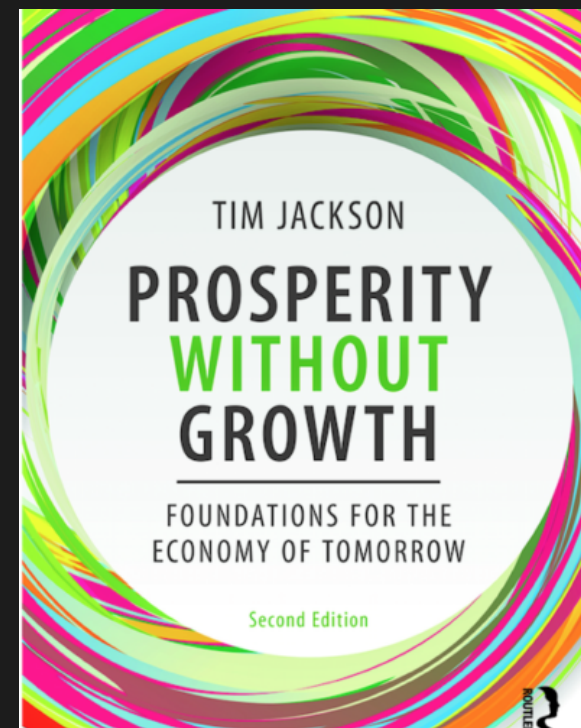
Questioning Business



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Addiction to Growth

- New Wave of Economists:
 - Anti-industrialists - 19th century
 - Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen - Entropy Law and the Economic Process
 - André Gorz - Degrowth (décroissance) (1972)
 - Club of Rome - 'The Limits to Growth' (1973)
 - Tim Jackson - 'Prosperity Without Growth' (2009)



Kate Raworth



TED: 'A healthy economy should be designed to thrive, not grow' (2018)

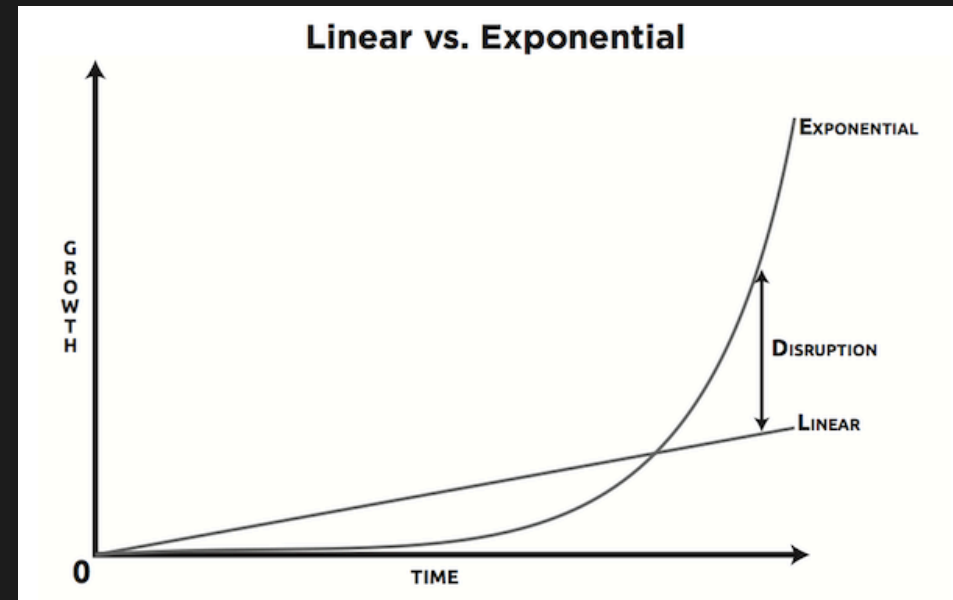


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The “Silicon Valley” Model

- Taught in *every* MBA program and startup incubator
- So what IS it?
 1. Upfront investment
 2. Exponential Growth (Scaling)
 3. “Exit”
 4. (Rinse and Repeat)



The “Silicon Valley” Model

- Who benefits from this?
 - Exponential growth is in service of the exit
 - (If you're not planning on exiting, organic growth is just fine..)
 - Dividend + exits creates the 99% and the 1%



The “Silicon Valley” Model

- VC + exits take control away from the founders
 - This enables “powers that be” to control innovation
 - This is in service of maintaining the status quo



The “Silicon Valley” Model

- Who is hurt by this?
 - Short term thinking: what happens after the “exit”?
 - Social and environmental costs
 - Who bears the “externalities”?

There is no higher God in Silicon Valley than growth. No sacrifice too big for its craving altar. As long as you keep your curve exponential, all your sins will be forgotten at the exit.



Exponential growth devours and corrupts
DHH in Signal v. Noise

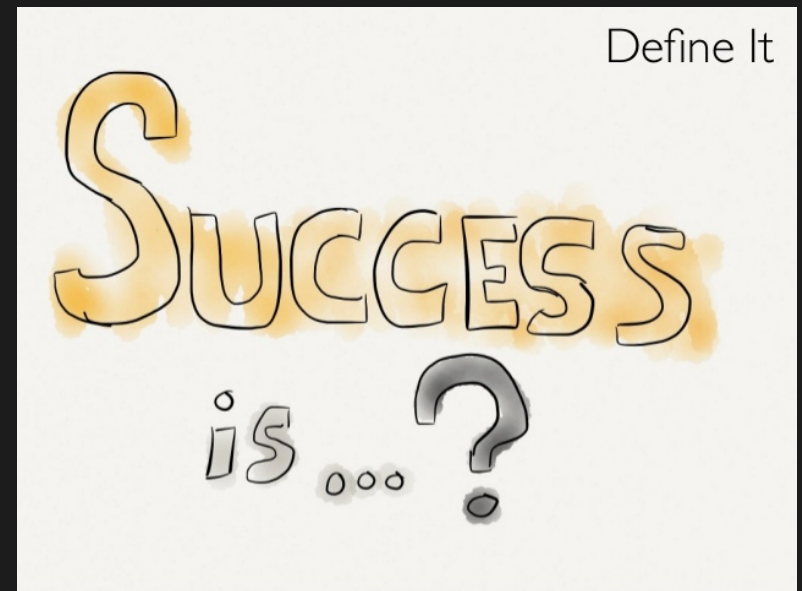


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Defining Success in Business

- How are we defining “success” in business?
 - Founders want VC for emotional (not rational) reasons
 - Founders want exits for similarly emotional reasons
 - Can we envision other ways to be “successful” in business?



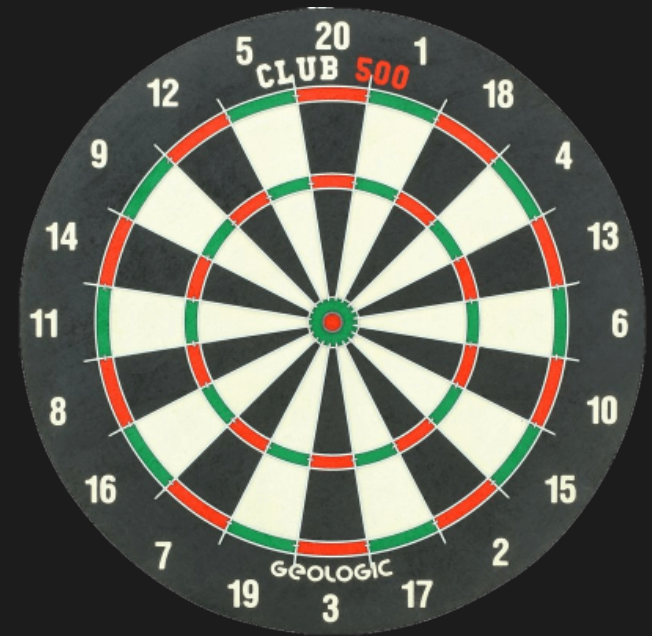
Profit's Double Meaning

- The word 'profit' is very confusing
- It has 2 meanings:
 - 1) Margin-on-Turnover
 - 2) Dividend
- This double-meaning embeds ideology into our language
- We are staring the “the system” straight in the face here



Network effects

- Network effects and economies of scale are a real thing
- However, we are taught that a big pot of money + hypergrowth is the only way to defeat them
- This is making our life exceedingly difficult
- Example: dart board



Network effects

- Example: Spotify vs. Primephonic



'We worden héél snel héél groot, of we gaan spectaculair ten onder'

Het Financieele Dagblad - 7 Sep 2018

'Primephonic', schreef hij, 'heeft de ambitie om de Spotify van klassieke muziek te worden.' Hij vouwt zijn handen om de theekop en begint een ...

Lessons from SW Development

- Waterfall model
- Agile SW development (standups, scrum)
- DevOps: Unit testing, Continuous Integration, Continuous Deployment
- Netflix: “1000 deploys/day”



VC as an Accelerator

- Is this true?
 - “Runways” (VC, subsidy, crowdfunding) distract from a business model
 - Bootstrapping forces you to make financially smart decisions
 - Customer turnover compounds
 - Services can bootstrap products
 - Turnover IS financing



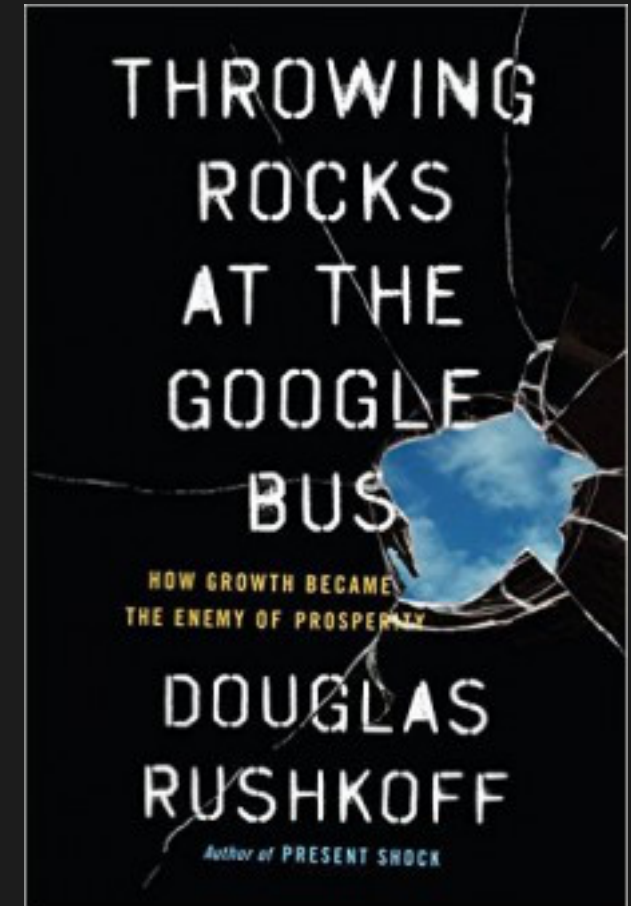
Ethics By Design

- In Computer Security, we have this principle called “security by design”
 - You can’t slap security on something like a band-aid after the fact, and then think that it’s secure
 - It doesn’t work that way. You need to architect security in from the beginning.
- It’s the same thing with ethics
 - You can’t slap ethics on something like a “Corporate Social Responsibility bandaid” after the fact, and then think that it’s ethical.
 - We need organisations with “Ethics By Design”



Douglas Rushkoff

- Economics professor and author
- *“If you need to grow in order to survive, then you’re not a real business – you’re just a brand name on debt.”*
- One of the first thinkers to mention post-growth business
- P2P Foundation: “12 Steps to Post-Growth Sustainable Business”



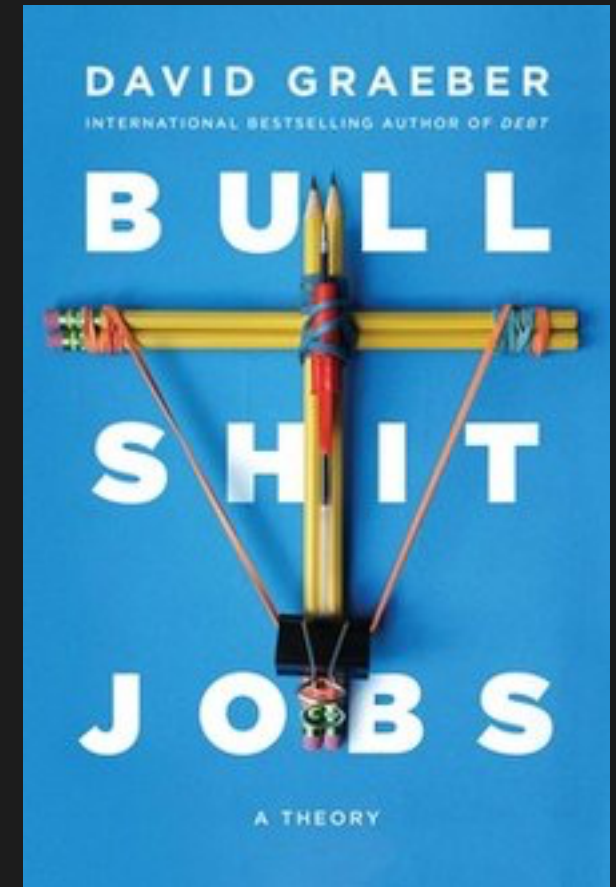
Rutger Bregman

- Rutger Bregman - 'Why Garbagemen Should Earn More Than Bankers'
- *The bottom line is that wealth can be concentrated somewhere, but that doesn't also mean that's where it's being created. This is just as true for your former feudal landowner as it is for the current CEO of Goldman Sachs. The only difference is that bankers sometimes have a momentary lapse and imagine themselves the great creators of all this wealth. The lord who was proud to live off his peasants' labor suffered no such delusions.*



David Graeber

- David Graeber - 'On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs'
- *"If someone had designed a work regime perfectly suited to maintaining the power of finance capital, it's hard to see how they could have done a better job. Real, productive workers are relentlessly squeezed and exploited. The remainder are divided between a terrorised stratum of the, universally reviled, unemployed and a larger stratum who are basically paid to do nothing, in positions designed to make them identify with the perspectives and sensibilities of the ruling class (managers, administrators, etc.)—and particularly its financial avatars—but, at the same time, foster a simmering resentment against anyone whose work has clear and undeniable social value."*



Christian Felber

VALUE	HUMAN DIGNITY	SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	TRANSPARENCY AND CO-DETERMINATION
STAKEHOLDER				
A: SUPPLIERS	A1 Human dignity in the supply chain	A2 Solidarity and social justice in the supply chain	A3 Environmental sustainability in the supply chain	A4 Transparency and co-determination in the supply chain
B: OWNERS, EQUITY- AND FINANCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS	B1 Ethical position in relation to financial resources	B2 Social position in relation to financial resources	B3 Use of funds in relation to the environment	B4 Ownership and co-determination
C: EMPLOYEES	C1 Human dignity in the workplace and working environment	C2 Self-determined working arrangements	C3 Environmentally friendly behaviour of staff	C4 Co-determination and transparency within the organisation
D: CUSTOMERS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS	D1 Ethical customer relations	D2 Cooperation and solidarity with other companies	D3 Impact on the environment of the use and disposal of products and services	D4 Customer participation and product transparency
E: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	E1 Purpose of products and services and their effects on society	E2 Contribution to the community	E3 Reduction of environmental impact	E4 Social co-determination and transparency

Economy for the Common Good - Common Welfare Matrix



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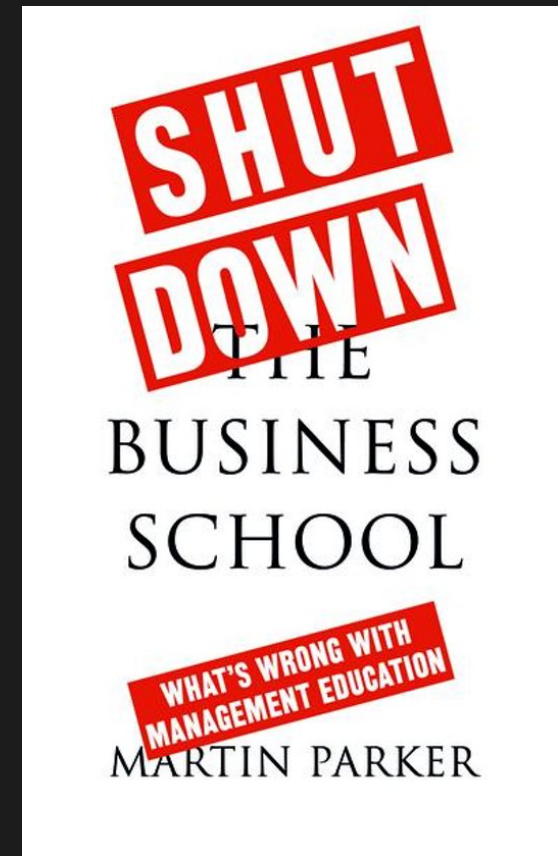
Economics education

- Economics education is outdated
- School sometimes teaches ideology as much as it teaches practical tools
 - Occupy Wall Street's walkout on EC10
 - Reinventing Economics
 - Post-Crash Economics Society



Business education

- Business education is similarly outdated
 - “Why we should bulldoze the Business School” - Martin Parker
 - Why haven't there been any MBA program (or incubator) walkouts yet? ;-)



The Problem With “Social Enterprise”



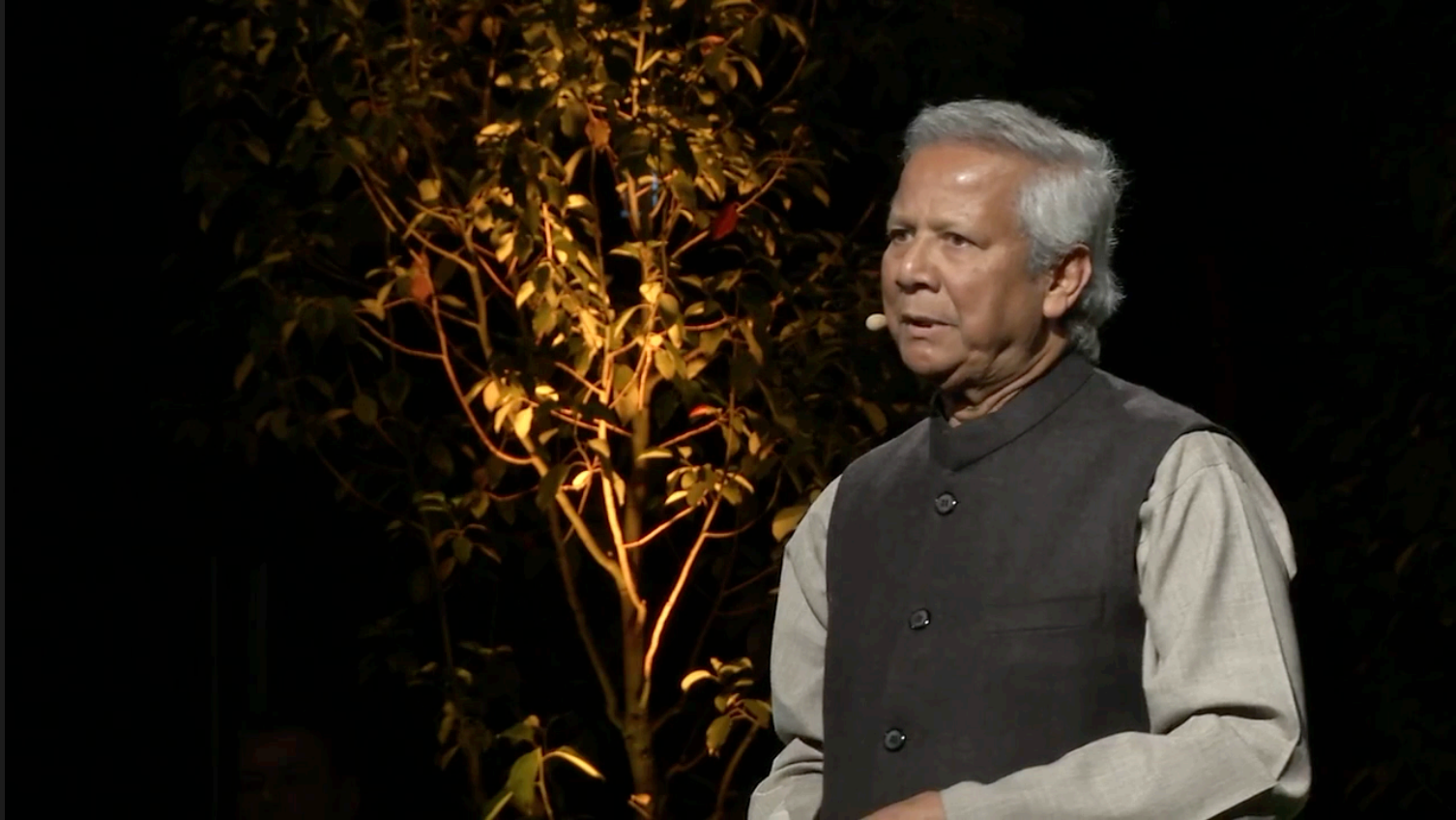
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Aren't Social Enterprises the Answer?

- Post-Growth Economists point to “social enterprise” as being the answer
- But something doesn’t entirely feel right here...



Muhammad Yunus



From: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8OVbpuYXEs>



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The Commercialization of SocEnt

- Silicon Valley embraced Muhammad Yunus' ideas. Sortof..
 - Solving human problems.... YES!!!
 - No dividend? (Let's pretend we didn't hear that.)
- Thus the "Social Enterprise" Ecosystem was formed
 - Triple bottom line (People, Planet, Profit)
 - Impact investors
 - B Corps getting acquired by Unilever
 - "Doing Well By Doing Good"
 - New legal entities (B Corporation, L3C, Social Purpose Corporation, gGmbH, Community Interest Companies, etc..)



The Commercialization of SocEnt

- “What is the difference between a social enterprise and a normal business with CSR?”
- SocEnt hasn’t delivered upon its promise
- There’s talk of: “greenwashing”, “socialwashing”, “opensourcewashing”

WINNERS TAKE ALL

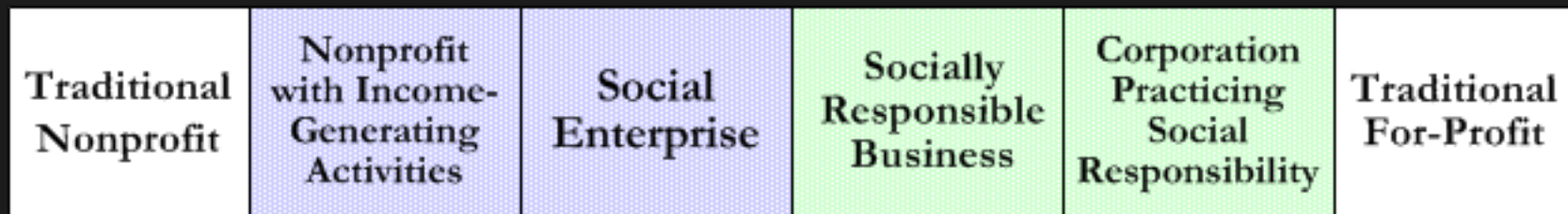
The **ELITE CHARADE** *of*
CHANGING *the* **WORLD**



ANAND GIRIDHARADAS

A Spectrum of Social Enterprise

- There's a spectrum of social enterprise, from commercial to non-profit
 - The commercial side of the spectrum has been well explored
 - The nonprofit (Post-Growth) side is a green field, ripe for exploration
- Social entrepreneurs are doing their best
 - It's not their fault - their intentions are good
 - They are just using the tools that they are given
 - The “system” is the problem



Zebras

- Medium: 'Zebras Fix What Unicorns Break'
- *When VC firms prize time on site over truth, a lucky few may profit, but civil society suffers. When shareholder return trumps collective well-being, democracy itself is threatened. The reality is that business models breed behavior, and at scale, that behavior can lead to far-reaching, sometimes destructive outcomes.*
- <https://www.zebrasunite.com>



P2P + The Commons

- Open-Coops
- Platform-Coops
- Open Commons
- Steward-Owned Companies
- Decentralized Autonomous Organisations
- Post-Capitalist Entrepreneurship
- Community shares
- Ethical banks
- Solidarity economy
- Fair trade
- Circular economy
- Transition Towns
- Local currencies



What is Post-Growth Business?

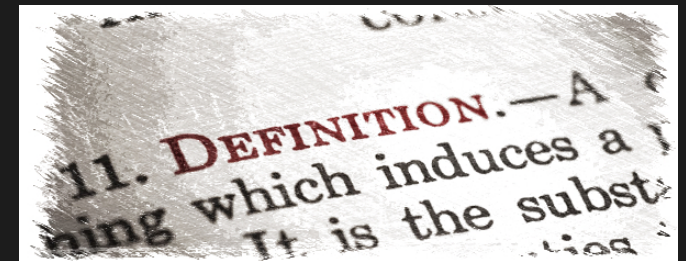


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Definition of Post-Growth Business

I would like to propose the following definition:

- 1.No dividend
- 2.No “exits”
- 3.No investors



Definition of 'Post-Growth Business'

Also important:

- ALL decisions and operations, large and small, should be in service of a well-defined social mission
- Cap on salaries of staff (including the founders and director)
- Fair working conditions for staff
- The contracts cannot be changed, to undo these restrictions
- A suitably draconian “default” clause - to prevent intentional breach of contract



My Own Starting Point

Fiscaal Fondsenwervende Instelling (FFI)

- >90% of profits given to a public benefit institution (ANBI)
- Payments are deductible from the profit at the FFI — but I don't recommend actually using this
- Profits = dividends
- Interesting quirks of an FFI:
 - Maximum amount of cash permitted (negotiated with tax authorities)
 - Required minimum number of volunteers



Legal and Fiscal Model

- The FFI was the model adopted by ROS
 - Combination Foundation/Company (FFI)
 - BUT this is one big business model hack
 - Advantages:
 - Fiscal structure enforces dividend transfer to a charitable foundation (ANBI Stichting)
 - Disadvantages:
 - Allows tax authorities to say “yes” or “no” to your being a post-growth business
 - Only available in the Netherlands
 - Doesn't restrict investment or exits
 - We tried to write this into our statutes - but it's dubious if it's legally binding
 - The FFI is best known for tax-evasion (yes, really...)



Legal Hacking

Alternatives?

- Unfortunately, there's no purpose-fit entity available
- So we need to hack something together with contract law
- Open-source pioneers managed to implement restrictions (on IP) using standard contract law
- So why can't we implement similar restrictions (on dividend / exits / investment) using contract law?
- This is **actually** legal research



Implementation Possibilities?

- Contract hacking
 - Statutes
 - Shareholder Agreement
 - Preamble
- Voting Rights
 - Giving a Foundation a single share
- Decentralized contracts
 - Contractual “constellations”



Attacker Model

Possible Ways to Attack Post-Growth Business

- Default = failure to fulfill contractual obligations
 - If the penalty for unlawfully selling the company is less than the benefit of selling it
- Large “management fees”
 - Could happen in either the Foundation or Company
- Bribing the director to dissolve the company

There's more attacks possible.

- That's why a purpose-fit legal construction would be best.
- Maybe we can motivate lawyers/governments to create it by showing them the use-case. :-)



Case Studies



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Radically Open Security



Non-Profit Computer Security Consultancy

- No Sketchy Stuff
- Teach to fish
- Open-source
- IoCS For Free
- No Selling 0-days

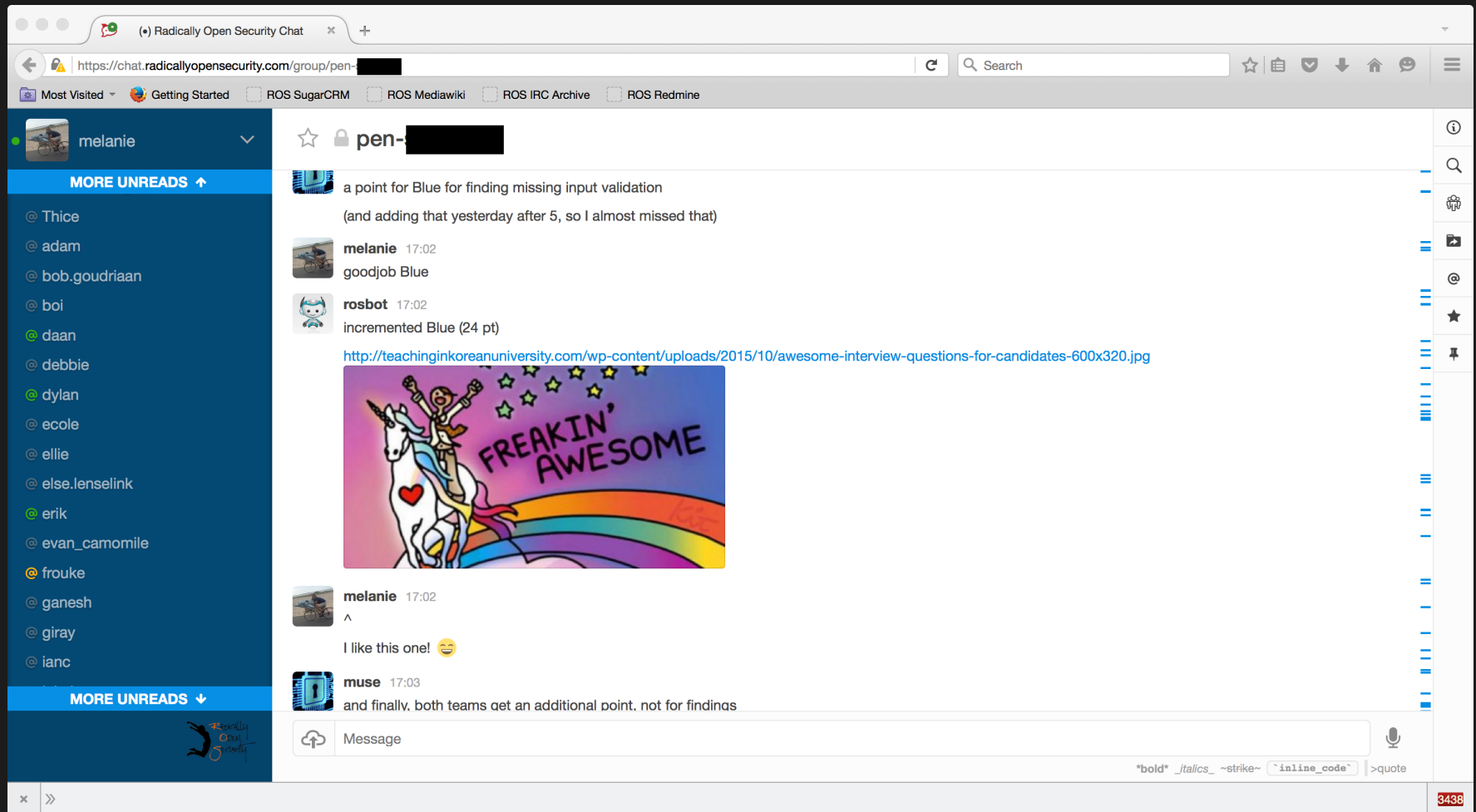
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Pentesting ChatOps



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80+ Customers in 5 Years



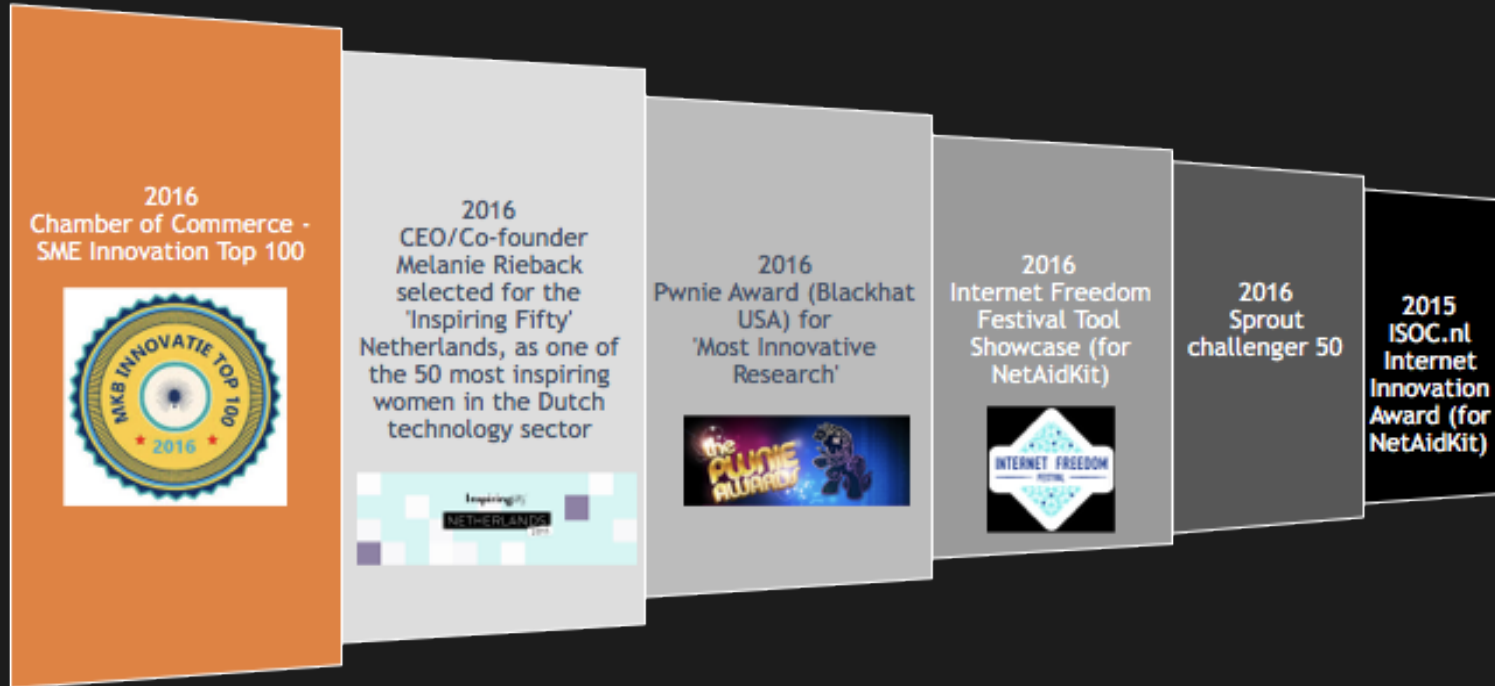
A Few Examples



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Awards and Recognition



Dutch Chamber of Commerce (KvK):
ROS is 50th Most Innovative SME 2016



Awards and Recognition



CIO Magazine: Most Innovative Leader 2017

Nonprofit Ventures

NON PROFIT.
VENTURES



Micro-level: Human



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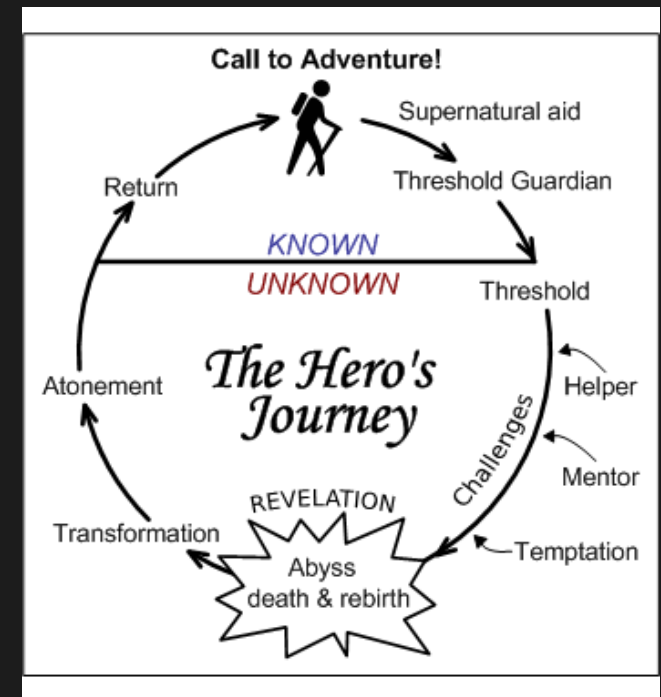
Business as activism

- NGO's and Nonprofits: the problem with donations/subsidies
- We want to create financially self-sustaining platforms for activism
- You can talk to businesses, but they won't necessarily listen
- Compete with them on the market instead



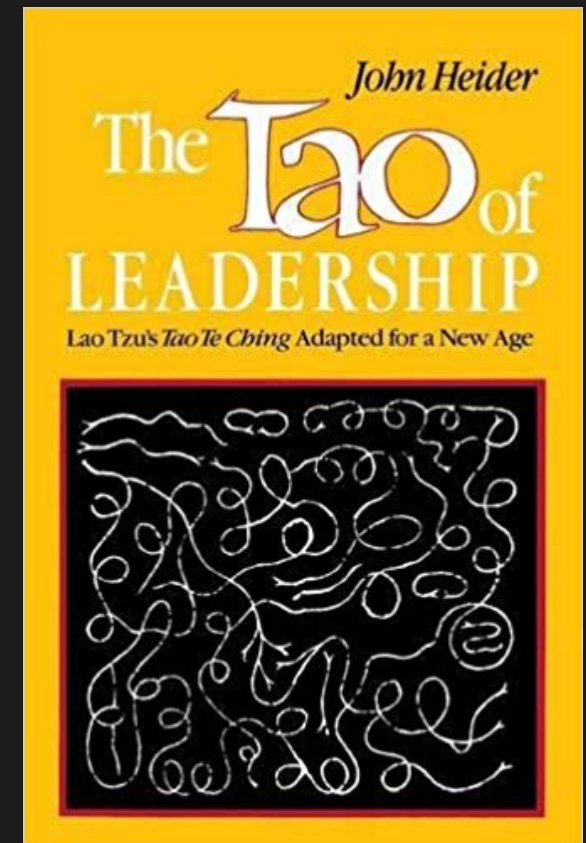
Business as art

- Entrepreneurs as storytellers
- Heroes Journey
- Dramatic Unity



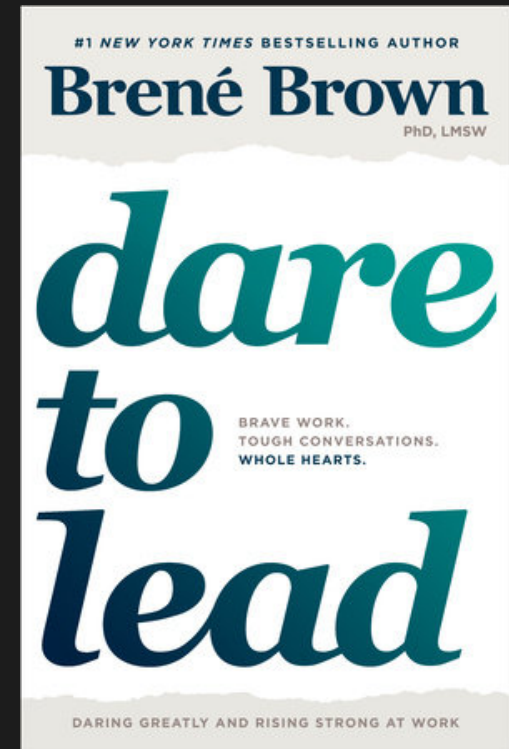
Business as spirituality

- Buddhism: “Right Livelihood”
- Taoism: The Tao of Business
 - Nondoing, acceptance, servant leadership
- Christianity
 - Death and rebirth (i.e. Business Fail culture)
- Spirituality:
 - Liz Gilbert’s “Big Magic” (synchronicity and scavenger hunts)



Communication

- Communications:
 - Marshall Rosenberg - Nonviolent Communications
 - Michael P. Nichols - 'The Lost Art of Listening'
- Vulnerability:
 - Brené Brown - many books



No Superheroes Required

- You don't need to be Elon Musk
- Or Mother Theresa / Ghandi / etc..
- You don't have to be perfect:
 - We all doubt ourselves
 - We all make mistakes
- Entrepreneurial loneliness



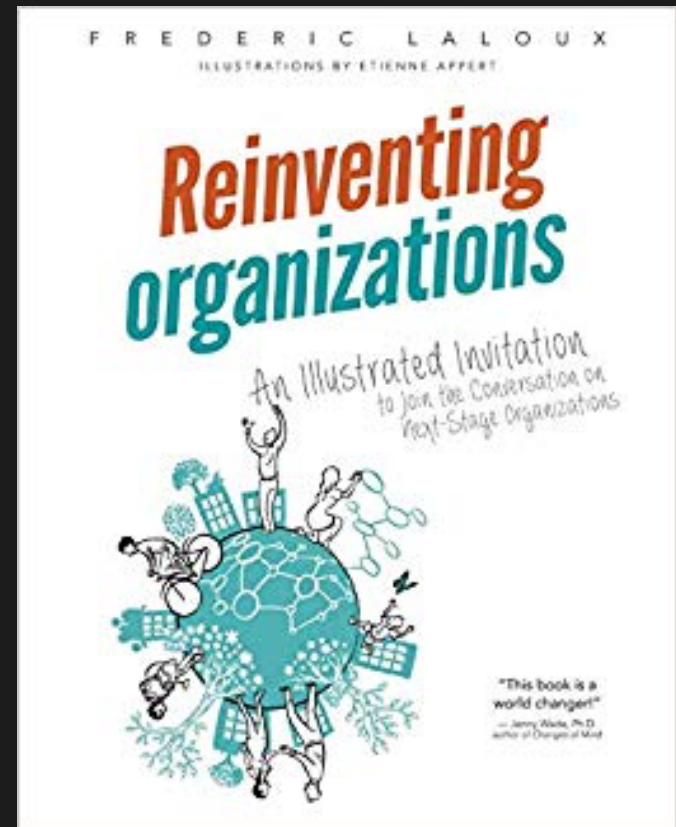
Meso-level: Post-Growth Entrepreneurship



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Decentralized Management

- Decentralized Management:
 - Teal - Reinventing Organizations by Frederic Laloux
 - Holocracy - Brian Robertson

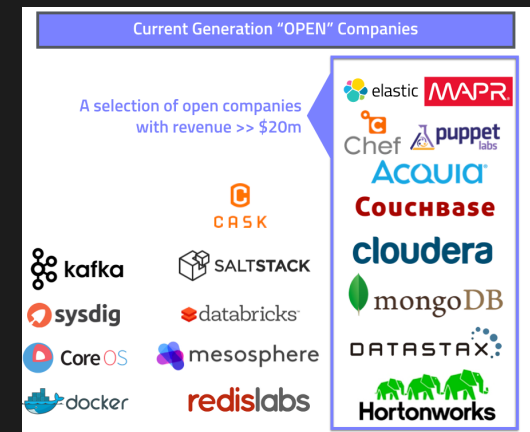
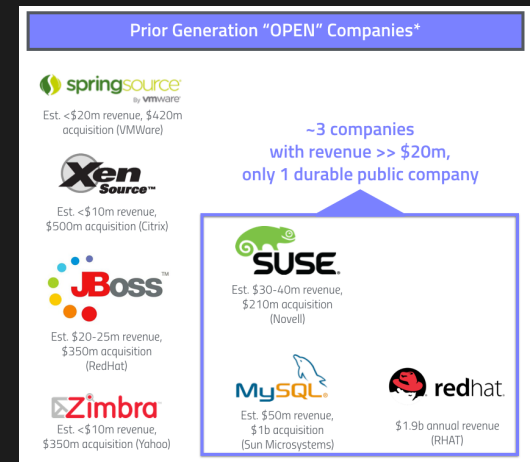


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Intellectual Property

- The Open-Source Business Model is as follows:
 - Give away the products
 - Sell the services
- There's a lot of successful examples of companies who did this!



Sales and Marketing

- Win the hearts of a few idealists, and they will FIGHT to get you into their company
- Ethics (and open-source) is the best sales and marketing that you can't buy
 - Conference talks, newspaper articles, word of mouth, etc..
- DevOps style evangelism works!



Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

Act 1: How To Get Started

- Make sure that you're not starved for money when starting. If you are, get a part-time job to earn enough money per month to take the edge off your desperation. It's hard to build something with patience and integrity when you're financially desperate.
- Understand that no matter how ambitious you are you need to start TINY and grow organically. Growth must always be financed by turnover! (Customer turnover compounds faster than you think.) Attempting to start anything huge is a recipe for disaster, which will lead to lack-of-turnover, which will actually hold you back from growing. Avoid unnecessary overhead (offices, equipment, internal employees) - you won't need this at the beginning.
- Setup your legal entities using the Post-Growth Business template. This includes all putting of the suggested restrictions (no investors, no exits, etc..) into the Company and Foundation statutes. This is essential if you want to build a "social enterprise" of TRUE integrity! And remember that ethics has REAL market value!



Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

- When trying to figure out where to start operationally speaking: start with the pain in the market. Ask what kind of service(s) you can offer that companies would be willing to pay for. Then get them to put their money where their mouth is. The hardest part in the beginning is getting your value proposition right. This should take much of your time and energy at this stage.
- As long as the requests are ethical, leverage freelancers (and your own “sweat equity”) to fulfill those service(s), who are paid by your first few launching customers.
- Start out doing everything by hand - give everyone involved concierge treatment.
- The secret is pairing producers (freelancers) with consumers (customers). Make sure that both the producers and consumers are VERY VERY happy, and treated like kings! The key to success is finding arrangements that are win-win-win! (WIN for the Producer, WIN for the Consumer, WIN for the Platform). Business is the fine art of getting interests aligned. Business is NOT a zero-sum-game, where someone wins and someone loses. (If that's how you experience things, you're doing it wrong!) You don't have competitors - you have “potential collaborators”. Keep that in mind.



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Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

- “Throw lots of things against the wall, to see what sticks.” - perform lots of experiments (MVPs) and see what works. Expect that some percentage of what you try will fail - and that’s okay. Fail, fail again, fail fast - keep trying again with different MVPs until you find thing(s) that work, and that you can actually sell. Just remember.. what you think a-priori will work probably won’t. Life has a way of surprising you - so put yourself out there (get out of the house!), try things, and listen to the whispers of feedback, synchronicity, and support that the universe is giving you!
- Treat these early jobs as MVPs (ala ‘Lean Startup). Collect validated learning. Pivot as the market requests different things. Remain flexible. And remember that what potential customers say matters less than what they will actually pay for.
- Rely upon word-of-mouth and “evangelism” (conference talks, workshops, media coverage, etc..) for marketing. If what you’re doing is TRULY ethical and valuable, this is the only advertising that you’ll ever need.
- Start to refactor out processes when you see certain manual activities happening frequently. This activity is financed by margin on your turnover.



Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

- The automation gradually starts to turn into a supporting IT platform / SW product.. over time. When you're patient, you'll discover that you're building an entire platform of code + processes + staff. ALL of this development is financed by margin on your turnover!
- The more infrastructure you have in place, the smoother things will go - and the larger your margin on the turnover will become. This is your post-growth companies' engine - it will continue to generate turnover (in a compounding way), as long as you're providing something of TRUE value, and everyone - both producers and consumers - are happy!
- Focus on quality and stability - NOT on growth! If things are high quality and stable, you will grow without really trying to. And that growth will compound over time.. ESPECIALLY if you're not really trying.
- Once you have sufficient staff (paid for by turnover from customers), you can delegate more and more of your responsibilities to others, to create room for strategic thinking and creative projects on your side.



Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

- If you're patient and allow growth to remain organic (and you pivot to stay directed toward pain in the market when you see something not working), then the critical mass of what you're building will slowly increase over time. The money from paying customers compounds - and one day, you'll wake up and find that your progress suddenly isn't so slow anymore! I personally believe that - by architecting things organically in this way, your post-growth business can even outpace venture funded companies. And over time, you will (slowly) start to see yourself displacing the (less socially inclined) market leaders.
- Don't even think about exiting. (If you setup your Post-Growth Company right, your statutes SHOULD make it impossible to do this anyways!) If at some point, you are bored of your company, simply delegate more and more of what you're doing to your support staff until you're no longer needed, and then decrease your hours (or leave completely) if you want to focus on something else. See this as a good thing. Congratulations.. you've built a business of integrity and TRUE positive social value that will live on for a long time after you're gone. (Both literally and figuratively). Realize, proud of yourself, that this is how we can leave our legacy in this world. And if enough of us do this, and we do it together, we can change the world. Because "startups are the new government".



Post-Growth Bootstrapping Methodology

Act 2: “Serial Post-Growth Entrepreneurship”

- Think about your next steps: what post-growth passion project can you start, that is a logical extension of your current business? Can you couple that with a commercial service, grounded in the pain of the market? Can you get it launching customers? That will get the ball rolling with your new post-growth Business.
- The best thing is - your original company will help to support your new one. That makes things easier. (Important: make sure that your new post-growth company is good bizdev for the old one. That's how you can justify their working together.)
- Go through the bootstrapping process again - your old business will continue growing (aided by support staff), and you can spend some of your time and energy bootstrapping the new initiative(s).
- Rinse and repeat! Don't forget to also take time off when you desire it. Even heros need rest sometimes. :-)



Possible Post-Growth Companies

Here's a few ideas, that are by no means exhaustive:

- Post-Growth SW Development Consultancy
- Post-Growth Music Streaming
- Post-Growth Carbon Offsetting
- Post-Growth Circular Waste Handling
- Post-Growth Groupon for Tiny SMEs
- Post-Growth Accountancy Firm
- Post-Growth Law Firm
- Post-Growth Childcare Platform
- Post-Growth Vegetarian/Vegan instant supermarket meals
- Post-Growth Incubator and/or Services for Creatives (artists, musicians, etc..)
- Post-Growth Banks
- Post-Growth Insurance
- Post-Growth Company providing a Universal Basic Income (UBI)

This is just a few examples. The possibilities are endless...



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Business Model “Recipes”

- We can hypothetically work through Post-Growth business models on paper
 - This gives us practice working through the principles
 - It demonstrates feasibility of bottom-up design
 - It provides aspiring entrepreneurs with ideas for their own Post-Growth Startups
- We should create a website that collects these “business model recipes” like one big open-source cookbook
 - Some people might contribute “recipes”
 - Others might attempt to “cook” them. :-)



Building Community

- Role models and success stories
- Post-Growth Startup Incubators
- Books, conferences, Internet hubs
- “Business Model Recipe” Hackathons
- Academic research (economic, business, legal, etc..)
- Discussion groups, etc...



Social Procurement

- Businesses (and governments) have lots more money to spend on “fair trade” than consumers
- Governments/companies spend far more on vendors than they give out with subsidies
- Helps with “B2B Crowdfunding”
- “Social procurement” policies

Social procurement:

A deliberate procurement process that targets social impact as a desired or required quality in goods or services available for purchase.



Social Compliance

- Can we use compliance to enforce social practices?
- We should examine compliance rules to see if they are (unintentionally) causing businesses to procure from commercial vendors, rather than social enterprises
- Interesting for both government and large businesses + academics



Retirement for Post-Growth Founders

- Post-growth founders need a source of security
- How to leave the company:
 - 1) Find staff that can replace you
 - 2) The company continues to run without you
- What does "retirement" mean for Post-Growth founders?
 - A "middle class" salary (including pension) should allow a normal retirement
 - Founders can use one post-growth company to help bootstrap another - as interests evolve
 - Yes, we're sacrificing the ridiculous payoff of an "exit"
 - However we're leaving our legacy in the world instead.



Macro-level: Forming an Economy



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Redirecting Cashstreams

- We are collectively redirecting cash streams away from commercial business
- We ARE the economy. If we collectively create enough Post-Growth Businesses, we can implement the Post-Growth Economy.
- We can't change the large commercial players in the market - but we can gradually displace them.
 - The next generation of entrepreneurs is the key here
- Our advantage: we provide better value for money
 - Ethics has market value
 - No “extractive” element from our companies
- The cash from paying customers (B2B and B2C) is the only “funding” that we need



“Boring But Necessary”

- Social enterprises currently tend to be focused on “social missions” involving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- These companies are wonderful and laudable. But it’s a tiny niche.
 - 0.001% of the world’s companies have something to do with the SDGs.
 - 99.99% of the world’s companies don’t. But they are still necessary to keep the world running.
- I like to call this 99.99% of companies “boring but necessary”
 - They aren’t as sexy for social entrepreneurs as the SDGs
 - But it’s not helpful that “social enterprise” has been mostly ignoring them (until now)
- How do we make this 99.99% of “boring but necessary” companies social?
 - How do we make the corner hairdresser “social”? Or the Chinese restaurant? Shoe store? Software company? Plumber? etc...



“Boring But Necessary”

- This is where Post-Growth Entrepreneurship comes in
 - “Boring but necessary” companies can be post-growth and ethical by design
 - ANY company can do this - you don’t need to be focused on the SDGs.
 - In practical terms, this doesn’t effect 1-man shops or small family businesses (or SMEs) much
 - Post-Growth only effects things once a company is large enough for “scaling” or “exits”
 - But the spirit behind being “social” can still affect operational decision making, large and small



Ethical Supply Chains

- Case study: Fairphone
- It's hard (if not impossible) to architect ethical supply chains from the top-down



Ethical Supply Chains

- We need to use reductionist engineering thinking to break down the problems
- Create a shopping list of “boring but necessary” companies that we would need
- Break down that shopping list further, until there’s some “boring but necessary” product or service that is actually doable to implement
- And then we can build the solution from the bottom up
- Forget the Fairphone: can we build a fair LED? Or a fair diode?
- If so, then we can make 1/400th of every cellphone in the world “fair”
- This is how it starts. We solve small atomic problems together.



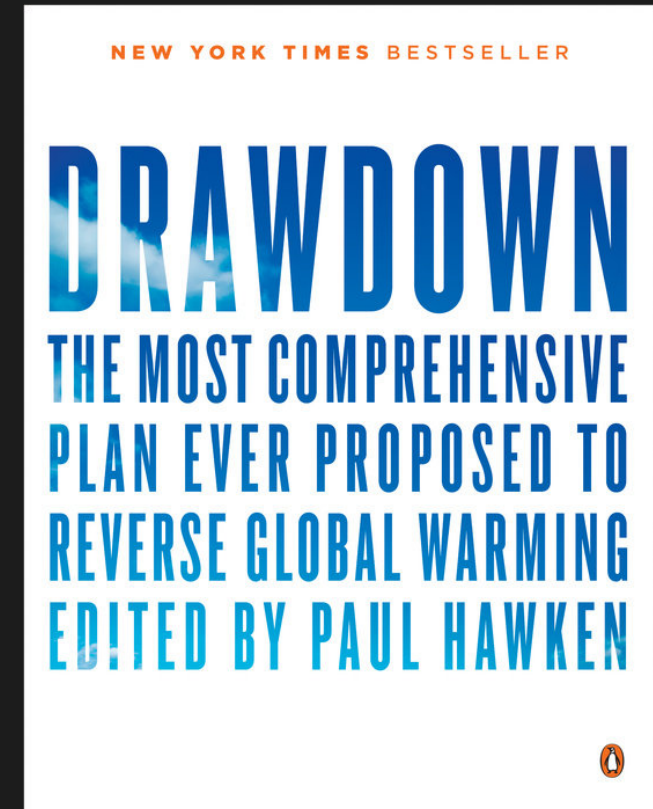
Emergent Ecosystems

- “Boring but necessary” companies (with ethics by design) can interface and collaborate to create larger emergent ecosystems
- We’ve seen examples of simple atomic entities combining to form larger decentralized networks with emergent qualities before: the Internet
- We can build ecosystems from the bottom-up
 - Individual post-growth companies can’t always against the large commercial ones
 - But interconnected networks can
 - THIS is how we create complex products and services



Tech or Business Model Problems?

- It's really easy to fall in love with technology
- (Trust me, I know. I'm a computer scientist.)
- But I'd like to postulate: what if most of today's social and environmental problems are BUSINESS MODEL problems and not TECHNOLOGY problems



Leveraging Ecosystems

- Can we leverage post-growth ecosystems to tackle “capital intensive” problems?
- Example: onshore wind turbines
- Crazy thought: what if we reenvision ALL of our “technology problems” as “business model problems”?



The Case for Liberal/Creative Arts



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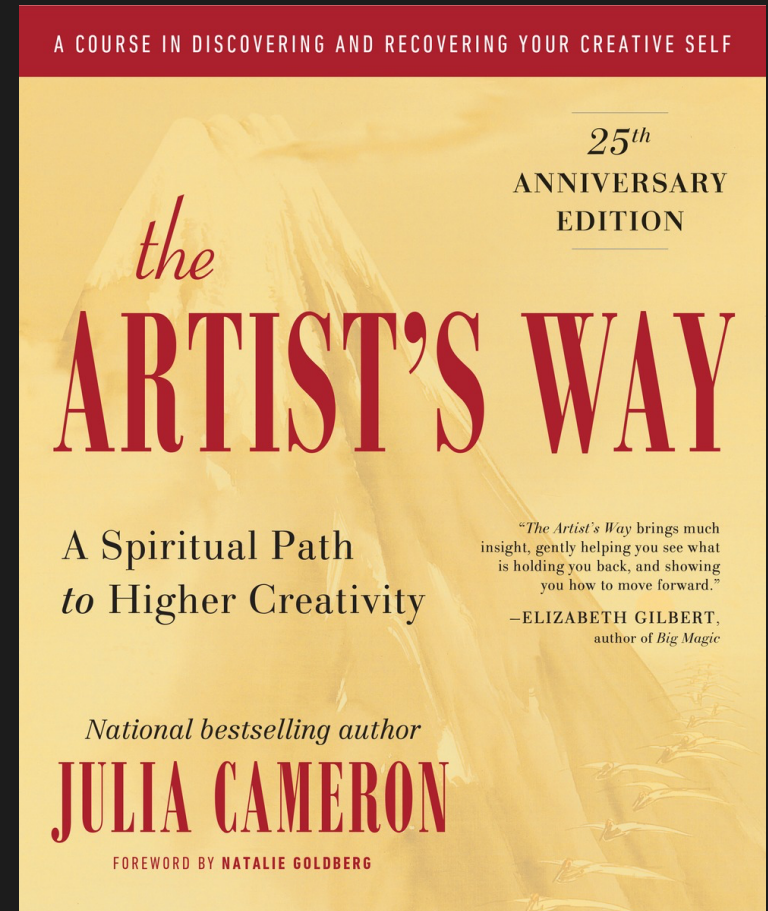
Fixing Our Education System?

- Creative and rational skills are separated in our educational system
 - US vs. Dutch educational systems
 - TED talk: Sir Ken Robinson - “Do Schools Hurt Creativity?”



Creativity For Business

- Entrepreneurs need creative lateral thinking
- Creativity methodologies
 - The Artists Way - Julia Cameron
- Creative lifestyle design
 - Tim Ferriss (4 Hour Workweek + podcasts)



Business For Creativity

- Creatives are struggling to earn a living
- Subsidy is NOT a business model!
- Business skills aren't being taught in art school
 - What is the definition of “commercial art”?
 - Arts schools not transparent about possibilities
- No affordable business incubation for creatives
- Policy: “Subsidy trap” for creatives



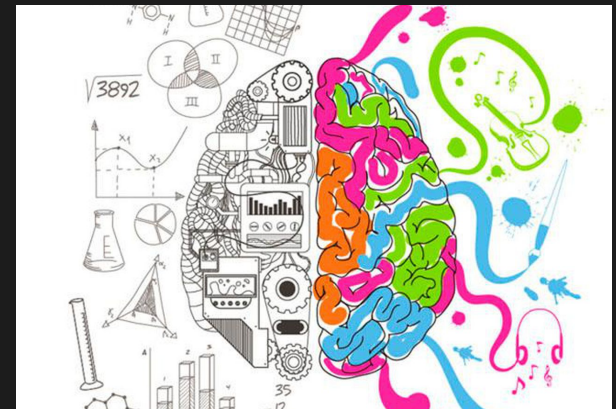
Questions to Ask

- How can creatives help to solve business problems, by practicing their craft and staying true to themselves?
- Corporations frequently suffer from lack of creativity
 - Corporate culture stifles out-of-the-box thinking
 - This has financial and operational consequences
- How can creatives help here?
 - Inspiration can come in the form of painting, music, dance, theatre, writing, etc...
 - Inspired workers bring lateral-thinking to work
 - This helps to solve business problems
- Can we “package this” so corporations will support creatives as vendors, and not as “charity” or CSR?



Unifying Left and Right Brain

- There's a wide cultural gap (and mutual distrust) between “artists” and “rationalists”
- We have so much to offer each other
 - Artists can offer inspiration, ideas, and creative lateral thinking
 - Rationalists can offer practical skills and structural problem solving abilities
- We need to break through the silos
 - “Artists” and “rationalists” can work together to help solve each other's problems
 - “Artists in residence” AND “rationalists in residence”
- We should embrace our left-brain AND right-brain



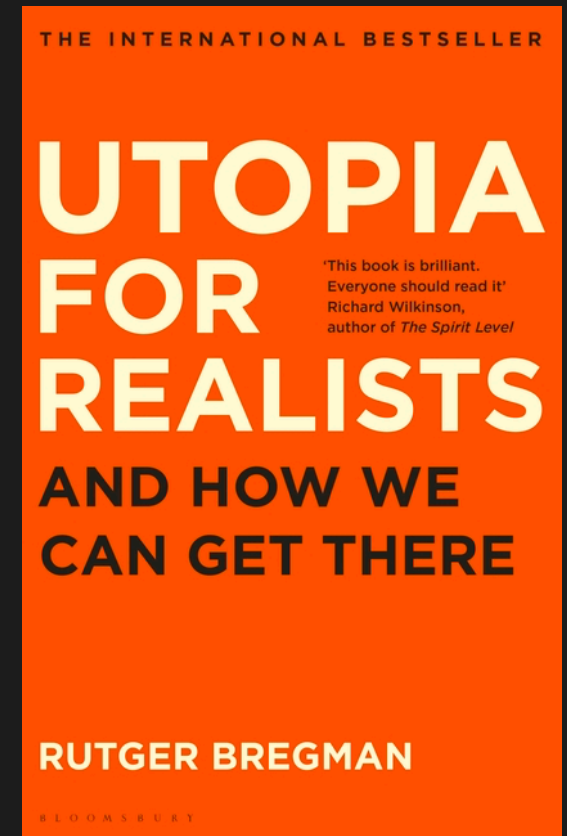
Business (Models) as Art

- We can use business as a "mixed media" for art
 - Can you work out business models on paper for displacing large Silicon Valley tech companies or the Big 4?
- Can you create “avant-garde” or “absurdist” companies?
- Some artists might find the idea of using business to make art offensive
 - That’s okay. It’s instructive to examine why..
 - We are using Capitalism and the markets to fight Neoliberalism
 - It doesn’t get any more subversive than this. ;-)



Universal Basic Income?

- Universal Basic Income could help people to make more creative choices
- How to fund it?
 - We can't rely upon taxpayer money for this
 - Dividend from post-growth companies
 - Can we pilot this in the Netherlands?



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Mini-Hackathon



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Mini-Hackathon



Create Your Own Post-Growth
Business “Bootstrapping Plan”



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Possible Post-Growth Companies

Here's a few ideas, that are by no means exhaustive:

- Post-Growth SW Development Consultancy
- Post-Growth Music Streaming
- Post-Growth Carbon Offsetting
- Post-Growth Circular Waste Handling
- Post-Growth Groupon for Tiny SMEs
- Post-Growth Accountancy Firm
- Post-Growth Law Firm
- Post-Growth Childcare Platform
- Post-Growth Vegetarian/Vegan instant supermarket meals
- Post-Growth Incubator and/or Services for Creatives (artists, musicians, etc..)
- Post-Growth Banks
- Post-Growth Insurance
- Post-Growth Company providing a Universal Basic Income (UBI)

This is just a few examples. The possibilities are endless...



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Plenary: Sharing Results





Questions?

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