Re-imagining Entrepreneurship for a Creative University: What Universities Can Learn from Craft Brewing

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This paper will argue for a progressive view of entrepreneurship that can support a broader sense of value and play a critical role in bringing new worlds into being. As neoliberalism has become a central ideology within the global economy pushing wealth upward into the hands of a smaller and smaller group of people, it has also had the effect of fragmenting universities into skills credentializing entities for the knowledge economy. Neoliberalism has become more than an ideology it has become a practice evidenced by the shifting roles and identities throughout higher education and the organizational frameworks that support the rationalism of audit and accountability. For the people who inhabit academia, whether student or teacher, these shifts are evident in the fragmentation caused by an accreditation fetish that reifies qualifications and attainment of measurable skills and competences.

At the same time, the advanced economy pressures for more creative people who envision a world that values more than the bottom line. Innovation and entrepreneurship have become buzz-words for society. Innovative people, creative industries, and entrepreneurs are idolized to fit the ideology and practice of neoliberalism. However an interesting development out of this dialectical contradiction is the craft economy. Drawing on data from the study of the craft brewing community in Philadelphia, we map out some of the ways that community sustains a broader range of values. Using the Internet and other high tech communication tools, craft producers and consumers develop skills, bring markets into being, blur the line of business and pleasure, embracing values beyond but not excluding the bottom line. The craft industry population seem to be able to offer an alternative life-style to capitalism and entrepreneurship takes on a different meaning with a more robust social outcome. As the university is a central institution in a global educated society, this more progressive view of entrepreneurship could play an important role in the revitalization of higher education, moving it to support the development of both the individual and the community. We suggest that there are already re-imaginings of entrepreneurship in some universities, particularly in the Nordic countries, and that by nurturing these, a new vision for the university that is more creative, pro-active and able to support societal change may be possible in the 21st century.
