Transformative Entrepreneurship and Prosperity: Core Concepts

The module/MSc is a first attempt to decentre US-centricity in social enterprise teaching by emphasizing literature/theories/cases by scholars from the Global South (even if at Western institutions), women, feminist approaches, and designing for community/societal change over markets/products/services.

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Module overview

We find ourselves at a formative moment wherein growth-based financial models and inequality are driving new forms of conflict, dislocation and ecological damage, challenging the veracity of our economic and political systems. These necessitate a bold re-thinking of the relationship between economic activity and global prosperity, as well as new forms of social, political and economic innovation to effect alternative pathways for a prosperous global future. They also require confronting the tension that market actors, seeking to address social and environmental problems through market ‘solutions,’ are often embedded in economic systems that create those problems.

Through interactive seminars, readings, speakers and cases, Transformative Entrepreneurship and Prosperity: Core Concepts is designed to introduce the core concepts, frameworks and theories of transformative entrepreneurship. As part of this module, you will: consider the core ideas of ‘prosperity thinking’ in relation to contemporary responses to socioeconomic and environmental crises; learn about the emergence and forms of social entrepreneurship; understand entrepreneurship as an institution, intervention, policy and practice; study concepts and theories relevant for analysing the transformative potential of entrepreneurship; explore the promise and limits of transformative entrepreneurship to provoke institutional and structural change in different settings including extreme and diverse global contexts; and how to evaluate the potential of transformative entrepreneurship to advance more equitable, inclusive societies and address global challenges.

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- Understand foundational ideas, emergent thinking and theories of transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity;
- Gain a critical understanding of transformative entrepreneurship as a policy, practice, institution and intervention;
- Learn how to analyse cases of transformative entrepreneurship, in their social, cultural, economic and political contexts;
- Draw on diverse knowledge and inclusive ideas to develop their own account of transformative entrepreneurship.

Module Structure

The module begins by questioning the role of transformative entrepreneurship in the context of global prosperity. The remainder of the course investigates the following topics: concepts and definitions of transformative (social) entrepreneurship; understanding entrepreneurship as practice, policy, intervention and institution; rethinking innovation and prosperity; social entrepreneurship metaphors, motivations and tensions; different theories through which to understand transformative entrepreneurship (agency and institutional change, community-based enterprise, and effectuation); transformative entrepreneurship in extreme contexts; and the limits of transformative enterprise.
Students will be challenged throughout to think critically about the possibilities and limitations of transformative entrepreneurship to engender social, political, economic and environmental change. They will write two short reflection pieces and submit a 2000-word literature review, both of which are intended to support other learning activities carried out during the MSc (see assessments section below).

Topics

The module is taught through ten learning topics comprising of a range of introductory materials (short films, readings, interactive tasks) followed by one 1-2-hour live class per week and a range of advanced or extension material. Topic format will vary from week to week but will generally comprise (1) Introduction and framing of the weekly theme; (2) More advanced concepts and reading; (3) an interactive task; (4) live class addressing core questions and sharing of learning (5) advanced extension tasks and readings. Students are expected to complete the pre-set learning tasks prior to the commencement of the live class and to come ready to discuss key topics and issues arising from the advanced readings/films.

The module comprises the following learning topics:

**Topic 1: Transformative entrepreneurship, prosperity, global challenges**

**Topic 2: Introduction: concepts, definitions, emergence, forms**

**Topic 3: Entrepreneurship: practice, policy, intervention or institution?**

**Topic 4: Rethinking innovation and prosperity**

**Topic 5: Social entrepreneurs: metaphors, motivations, tensions**

Reading week

**Topic 6: Agency and institutional change**

**Topic 7: Community-based enterprise**

**Topic 8: Effectuation**

**Topic 9: Extreme contexts and the limits of transformative enterprise**

**Topic 10: Understanding value, measuring impact**
Assessment

**Summative Assessment 1: Reflection I (20% of the final mark)**
Students will write a short reflection of 500 words and submit it on [platform] by [date]
The reflection should critically engage with the concept of transformative entrepreneurship, and seek to apply this to a problem, issue or global challenge of interest. This initial reflection is intended as an opportunity for students to explore the underlying (conceptual, theoretical) assumptions they have about transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity. Please contact the module convenor for advice.
Students will be expected to demonstrate:

1. Clarity of ideas and a structured reflection of the concept/definition of transformative entrepreneurship.
2. Thoughtful reflection and application to a problem, issue or global challenge.

**Summative Assessment 2: Reflection II (20% of the final mark)**
Students will write a short reflection of 500 words and submit it on [platform] by [date]
The reflection should critically engage with one of the theories or concepts covered in the module: agency/institutional theory, community-based enterprise, or effectuation. Students will be expected reflect on what aspects of the theory are relevant for understanding or studying the potential of transformative entrepreneurship to address a problem, issue or global challenge of interest. This reflection is an opportunity to critically engage with and challenge the theory or concept of choice. Please contact the module convenor for advice.
Students will be expected to demonstrate:

1. Clarity of ideas and a structured reflection of the chosen theory.
2. Thoughtful reflection and application to a problem, issue or global challenge.

**Summative Assessment 3: Literature review (60% of the final mark)**
Students will be assessed through a literature review of 2,000 words submitted on [platform] by [date]
The literature review must:

1. Indicate a research focus/question that motivates the review, and a broader area of study the review contributes to.
2. Include a detailed and critical engagement with 10-12 academic articles (at least 60% from the Module reading list).
3. Identify a gap within the literature that future research might address.

Students will be expected to demonstrate:

4. An understanding of the chosen topic.
5. A basic/brief interpretation and analysis of relevant literature.
6. Clarity of ideas and structured argumentation.
Core Bibliography


Sarasvathy, S. (2011). What is effectuation?


Additional Materials


Detailed syllabus and reading lists

**Topic 1: Transformative entrepreneurship, prosperity, global challenges**

**Focus:** This class introduces the module by placing the topic of transformative entrepreneurship in the context of global prosperity. It explores what prosperity means, and how we can imagine and build prosperous futures. It provides an overview of ‘prosperity thinking’, examining how present conceptualisations of prosperity go beyond the economistic paradigm to embrace well-being, quality of life, capabilities and environmental sustainability. In this way, the class seeks to provoke students to not take for granted the end goals and outcomes that are typically associated with entrepreneurship (e.g. innovation, market creation, increased employment, etc.) and instead challenges students to consider how transformative entrepreneurship may be harnessed to address complex social, economic and ecological challenges. Rather than promote a singular view of global prosperity, the class introduces the critical idea of embracing multiple, inclusive and contextually appropriate notions of prosperity. Students will be asked to both draw on and interrogate their own diverse experiences and understandings of global challenges and to consider the kinds of prosperous futures they aspire to.

**Essential reading:**


**Video clips:**
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story (TED Talk 2009), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg

**Extended reading:**


**Topic 2: Introduction: concepts, definitions, emergence, forms**

**Key focus:** This class provides an overview of different streams of thought linking together entrepreneurship with positive social and environmental change (e.g. cooperatives, sustainable, social, transformative, etc.). It also explores different forms socially and environmentally-oriented forms of entrepreneurship may take, both legal and organisational. Students will gain an appreciation for how rooted these different understandings of entrepreneurship are to capitalist notions such as markets and progress, and what it means if proposed ‘solutions’ are rooted in the same systems that produce the very grand challenges we seek to ameliorate. A key objective of this class is to challenge students to cultivate their own definition(s) of transformative entrepreneurship.

**Essential reading:**

**Extended reading:**
Topic 3: Entrepreneurship: practice, policy, intervention or institution?

Focus: This class challenges students to think beyond the dominant understanding of entrepreneurship as practice, and examines it in relation to four dimensions: practice, policy, intervention and institution. Only by taking such a broad view of entrepreneurship is it possible to understand just how deeply 'entrepreneurship thinking' has penetrated across different sectors and fields (e.g. economic development, education, healthcare, social policy, humanitarianism, etc.). Such a view will enable students to critically reflect on and relate the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in the various contexts of interest to them.

Essential reading:

Extended reading:
**Topic 4: Rethinking innovation and prosperity**

**Focus:** This class begins with the question: what is innovation? The topic will address this question by examining dominant understandings of innovation, which are overly tied to modern/Western notions of progress, technical expertise, and niche specialities. Students will have the opportunity to consider alternative approaches required for global prosperity. Different ideas about innovation to be considered seek to decenter dominant notions. Decolonial, community-based and contextually-embedded approaches to innovation will be explored. The topic and discussions will foreground some of the thinking and activities that will take place in Transformative Entrepreneurship and Prosperity: Design.

**Essential reading:**


**Extended reading:**


Topic 5: Social entrepreneurs: metaphors, motivations, tensions

Focus: Who is a social entrepreneur? Why do people, communities and organisations choose social entrepreneurship? This topic offers students a closer look at social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, with a focus to exploring metaphors, understanding motivations and unpacking tensions inherent to the people who practice social enterprise. The topic introduces students to some of the individual and organizational level concerns typically found in the literature, such as hybridity and mission drift. In turn, students will be challenged to think about what these mean for the practice of transformative entrepreneurship, and the capacity of transformative entrepreneurs to provoke positive systemic change in the service of global prosperity.

Essential reading:

Extended reading:
Topic 6: Agency and institutional change

Focus: This is the first of three topics focused on theories (or lenses) useful for understanding transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity. The topic of agency and institutional change underpins a wide variety of theories, including those commonly used in (social) entrepreneurship research. This topic begins with an introduction of key concepts and an overview of different ways to define institutions. Once the basics are covered, students will be introduced to a fundamental conceptual question of agency (also known as the structure/agency problem), namely: How are actors able to provoke change if embedded within the very institutions they seek to change? The topic proceeds by offering students a nuanced view of the topic involving different levels of analysis and conceptions of change for addressing grand challenges. These difficult and complex questions will be brought together in a case study that explores the social construction of collective enterprise.

Essential reading:

Case study:

Extended reading:
**Topic 7: Community-based enterprise**

**Focus:** This is the second of three topics focused on theories (or lenses) useful for understanding transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity. The topic of community-based enterprise will explore the question: What does it mean for a community to act entrepreneurially? This topic will provide students with an overview of the determinants, characteristics, and consequences of community-led, owned and controlled enterprises, especially those that are rooted in a community’s culture, natural as well as social capital. The similarities between community-based enterprises and other models (e.g. cooperative, village-based) will also be examined.

**Essential reading:**

**Teaching case:**

**Extended reading:**
**Topic 8: Effectuation**

**Focus:** This is the third of three topics focused on theories (or lenses) useful for understanding transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity. Effectuation is a relatively new yet powerful theory of entrepreneurship that addresses the question: How do entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty? Rather than promote the idea of causal thinking (planning), effectuation advances new thinking about entrepreneurial logic, and in turn, market creation. In this topic, students will learn about the distinction between causal and effectual reasoning, the core ideas underpinning effectuation, and implications for non-profit and for-profit enterprises. Students will be challenged to consider effectual reasoning in relation to transformative entrepreneurship and prosperity through an effectuation case study.

**Essential reading:**


**Teaching case:**


**Extended reading:**


**Topic 9: Extreme contexts and the limits of transformative enterprise**

**Focus:** In this class, students will explore the potential of transformative entrepreneurship to provoke positive societal and environmental changes in extreme contexts. The focus of this topic is not simply to explore ‘what works’; rather, it is to gain a deeper understanding of how context and contextual embeddedness may influence the shape, trajectory and ultimate survival of transformative entrepreneurship. It is also intended to challenge students to think about the limits of transformative enterprise. Students will be expected to draw upon the knowledge gained from prior topics and readings to consider what sort of policies (support), practices (enterprise models), interventions or institutions are required to support entrepreneurship in extreme contexts, and also which theories or lenses are most useful.

**Essential reading:**


**Blog:**


**Extended reading:**


**Topic 10: Understanding value, measuring impact (SA)**

**Focus:** In the final session, students will discuss and examine different approaches to assessing social value and the societal impact of transformative entrepreneurship and innovation. In addition to discussing mainstream approaches, students will be challenged to reflect on and conceive of their own approach to understanding value and measuring impact. Importantly, students will also consider the role of context, and in particular the degree to which understanding value and measuring should be contextually and temporally dependent, or even flexible to changing circumstances.

**Essential reading:**


**Extended reading:**


