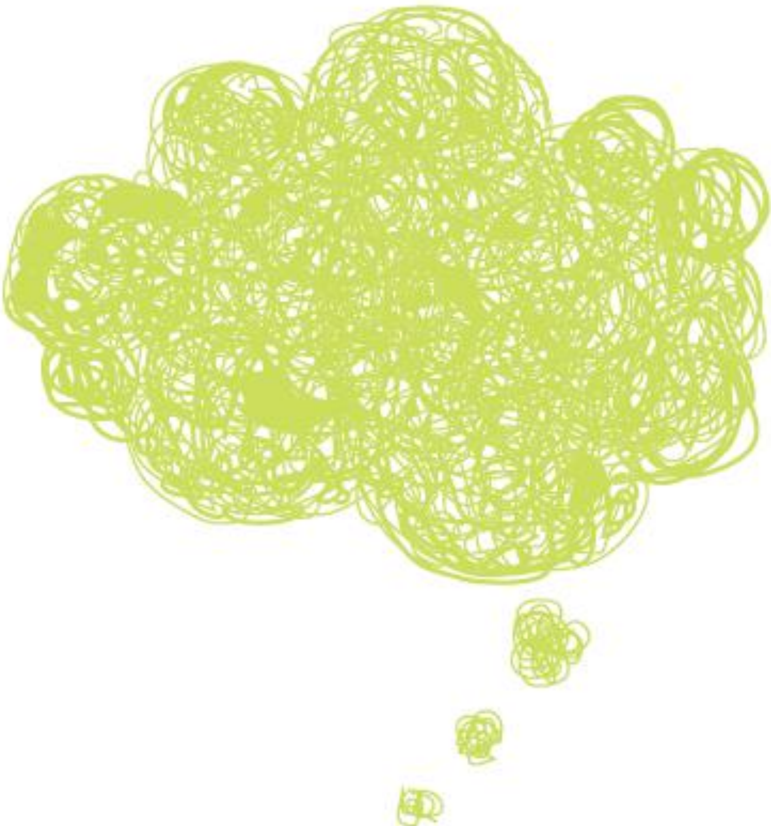

Working Paper Seven:

"I just thought it was something that needed to happen": Diverse economies perspectives on SME engagement with low carbon transitions

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June 2013

"I just thought it was something that needed to happen": Diverse economies perspectives on SME engagement with low carbon transitions

> 'for a year or so now I've been telling anyone who cares to listen that business is the new rock 'n roll. Got a great idea? Then get a business plan, some funding, make millions and buy some fast cars and a mansion with a guitar-shaped swimming pool.' (Peter Jones, Dragons Den entrepreneur[i])

> "At the time I was reading articles … that were saying that something needed to happen ... about reducing your carbon footprint about trying to stop using as much electricity. I believed the rhetoric about the environment, that we were harming it. ... I think it sparked something. I just thought that it was something that needed to happen." (MD, illuminated sign manufacturing company).

A Introduction

This paper critically reviews the literature on greening business and rethinking entrepreneurialism to develop cultural and diverse economies perspectives on the social construction of economies in the context of rethinking a neglected area of study (Bulkeley and Betsill 2013), the role of business actors in the facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy. This matters as in facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy, public sector managers must work within a division of labour in which they must influence private sector actors that they do not control, As Elkin (1987:18) argues in a North American context that remains true in many neoliberal economies:

> "The way in which popular control operates in contemporary cities is largely a consequence of the division of labour between state and market … (a division which means) that ownership of productive assets in the city is largely placed in private hands. Public officials share responsibility for the level of citizen well-being with these private controllers, but these officials cannot command economic performance."

Thus in setting urban agendas business voices are listened to (Bennett 1998; Valler, Wood et al. 2000) and economic development managers will reject conceptions of low carbon futures that they feel business will think are antithetical to 'growth', widely conceived. The hegemonic status of the entrepreneurial thesis of urban management (Harvey 1989) means that the maximisation of a city's employment and business opportunities in competition with other cities drives the strategic thinking of urban managers who have to follow the logic of urban competition by making their city's production costs as competitive and regulations as light as possible, providing infrastructure, and making administration business-friendly' (Peterson 1981). The city is constructed and marketed to make it attractive to mobile business (Hall and Hubbard 1998). The literature suggests that business actors participate in discussions about economic development for instrumental and rational reasons, to enhance the profitability of the region (Bennett and Krebs 1991; Valler, Wood et al. 2000) and, while local conditions matter, the role of the private sector is "geared to the reproduction and stability of capitalist society" (Valler, Wood et al. 2000:412) through processes of state restructuring (Mayer 1995). Consequently, business can be persuaded to participate in low carbon policy making only if it is conducted within the constraints of a debate about how to maximize sustainable growth (Bulkeley 2013:102-3), and business managers assume, as it was put to us, that “if it doesn’t create jobs and businesses, we won’t do it” (North 2010). The environment is harnessed to growth. Thus New York’s PlaNYC (2012:9) claims:

> “To thrive economically, we must create a setting where talented entrepreneurs — and the businesses they grow — want to be. … Where do talented workers want to live, in an age when they can choose to live anywhere? They don’t consider great parks or clean air to be a frill”.

This paper draws on recent geographical work on cultural (Thrift and Olds 1996; Amin and Thrift 2007) and diverse economies (Gibson-Graham 2006a,b; 2008; Gibson-Graham, Cameron et al 2013) as a point of departure to challenge this assumption: do private sector actors focus entirely on growth maximisation in utilitarian ways? As Lovering (1995:110) argues, structuralist accounts underestimate the role of local agents in fashioning urban responses to processes of state restructuring or, in the current situation, to processes of low carbon transition. Economic geographers argue that structural forces provide the context which constrain and channel local actors, but they do not alone explain processes of local economic policy making (Valler, Wood et al. 2000:414), or when actors do not necessarily play the role that structural forces identify for them. The paper argues that SME owners should not be seen, a priori, as rational profit maximisers unconvinced of any other arguments for taking act on issues apart from a positive impact on the bottom line. Entrepreneurs are people, with human flaws, not heroic, calculating, optimising machines identifying optimal economic outcomes through some magic process that the rest of us do not possess.

The paper focusses on SMEs rather than large businesses. SMEs, businesses with few than 250 employees, are a crucial element of the economy (Storey 2000). They make up 99.9 per cent of UK enterprises, 60% per cent of private sector employment, and 49 per cent of private sector turnover[1]. In 2012, there were an estimated 4.8 million businesses in the UK which employed 23.9 million people, and had a combined turnover of £3,100 billion. They account for 99.9 per cent of all private sector businesses in the UK, and 59.1 per cent of private sector employment[2]. They represent a perhaps untapped source of greenhouse gas emissions reduction (Bradford and Fraser 2008), given that they are responsible for 60% of industrial emissions (Revell and Blackburn 2007:494), 20% of overall UK carbon emissions (AXA 2008), and 70% of all pollution (Parker et al. 2009:279). The dominant neoliberal script is that SMEs are set up by entrepreneurs, those 'movers and shakers', heroes that create the wealth we need to redistribute, and who employ those not so gifted or motivated. As they are so lauded by the political right, entrepreneurs usually engender scepticism from the political left (Scase and Goffee 1982). Yet given that, post-1989, the alternative to an economy based in some way on markets and entrepreneurialism – state planning – has few advocates, is it time to think more deeply about entrepreneurialism and reclaim it for project of socially just low carbon transitions? When is someone creating value and to be applauded; when are they a ruthless exploiter of value created by someone else (Hart 2001)? What is the role of the businessperson acting as an entrepreneur? How are the factors of production put together in new ways and surplus generated and distributed in ways that can contribute to the avoidance of dangerous climate change?

The paper argues that SME owners *do* think about the relationship between their business and climate change and resource crises in ways that in their diversity go beyond conceptions of corporate social responsibility (ie the consideration by business of social and environmental factors beyond narrow economic, technical or legal concerns). They think

[1] http://stats.bis.gov.uk/ed/sme/Stats_Press_Release_2009.pdf
[2] See http://www.fsb.org.uk/stats

about the continued viability of their businesses in creative ways, and can be very aware of the responsibilities for and implications of climate change and resource crisis for their future prosperity and happiness: something environmentalists are not alone in doing. Thus it is possible to go beyond conceptions of 'greening' business that put conceptions of profitability and efficiency above (secondary) social or environmental factors. This creates new spaces for the engagement of SME owners in low carbon transitions in ways that go beyond debates constrained within growth paradigms.

A Gibson-Graham's non-capitalocentric economic ethics

JK Gibson-Graham (2006a,b; 2008; Gibson-Graham, Cameron et al 2013) argue that totalising conceptualisations of a unitary `capitalism' diverts analysis away from an understanding of the wide range of motivations on the part of economic actors for engaging in economic activity beneath metanarratives of utilitarian profit maximisation. They argue for the production of a non-capitalocentric discourse of economic difference, for a conceptualisation the economy as `heterospace' of capitalist and non-capitalist, profit orientated and more political, ideological, emotional and affective (rather than strictly economic) reasons for engaging in economic activities. (Gibson-Graham 2006a: xxv), beliving that this "language of the diverse economy can be used to explore the multi-dimensional nature of economic existence and the possibilities this creates for political acts of economic transformation." (2006b:77). They argue that economies are "contingent outcomes of ethical decisions, political projects and sedimented localised practices, continually pushed and pulled by other determinations" (2006a:,3). Why, they ask, do we totalise as 'capitalist' myriad practices in which actors with diverse motivations for engaging in economic activity and diverse perceptions of what are or are not acceptable practices interact with each other and with customers to create, share and consume wealth? Why do we assume that what drives participants in market economies is individual utility maximisation to the exclusion of all other values? Of course, many economic actors, especially business owners, *do* focus on short term utility of profit maximisation for themselves or their shareholders. But not all do. Thus, Gibson-Graham argue that entrepreneurs are not just profit makers, and may be interested both "profit" and "food, sex and saving souls" (Cyert and March 1992:9 quoted by Gibson-Graham 2006a:187). Firms are not unitary organisations with a single objective, profit. There are heterogeneous institutions composed of human beings with different motivations, drives and objectives (2006a:186-189). They expand understandings of the 'enterprise' to include family, unincorporated, green, and socially responsible firms, as well as publically-owned enterprises and co-operatives (ie, enterprises that do not focus on profit maximisation for the owners or shareholders alone), and think in new ways about how the good and services we need are produced and distributed (2006b 65-68).

Gibson-Graham's project has not gone unchallenged. Perhaps the harshest criticism was that of the poststructuralist nature of Gibson-Graham's project. Critics argued that an attempt, in effect, trying to 'think capitalism away' by seeing economic practices in a different light was making what Castree (1999), following Bhaskar, called the 'epistemological fallacy', which conflates knowledge and the world. For Castree, the economy is a concrete, real-world phenomenon based on real commodities, prices and profitability levels, not a performance or representation. It exists independently of people's ability to call it into reality through practices and has a logic of accumulation that operates outside individual perception. Castree argued that the essential characteristics and logics of capitalism can be theoretically identified, even if they are hard to find in their pure state in the real world, conditioned as they are by other social phenomena.

The second major criticism was that an uncritical and under theorised empirical analysis of actually existing alternative economic practices is likely to degenerate into a 'flabby pluralism or explanatory 'everythingism', in which examples of non-capitalist rationality or interesting experiments are uncritically championed (Castree 1999: 145). In a similar vein, Samers (2005) argued that Gibson-Graham and others have a tendency to celebrate 'alternatives' without investigating to what extent they genuinely *are* examples of freer, more unconstrained and liberated forms of economic activity for those who engage in them. Are they better than capitalism or are they coping mechanisms for those excluded from labour for capitalist firms? Samers argued that exploitation (and by implication, what is freely chosen economic activity) is not theorised, while small-scale, local economic activity is privileged with no investigation of its internal power relations, which might be very exploitative. Are non-market relations celebrated as intrinsically 'good' while the development gains of neoliberal capitalism are ignored (Curry 2005)? Are Gibson-Graham throwing the wealth-creating baby out with the capitalist bathwater, limiting opportunities (Curry 2005: 129)? Similarly, Aguilar Jr (2005) asked who decides what forms of economic life are 'ethical'?

In the second edition of *The End Of Capitalism As We Knew It* and elsewhere, Gibson-Graham engaged with their critics. Their response was to recognise many of the very valid objections raised but to prefer to see them less as fundamental limits to what can be done through alternative economic projects than as 'challenges, problems, barriers, difficulties – in other words, as things to be struggled with, things that present themselves as more or less tractable obstacles in any political project' (Gibson-Graham 2006a: xxv). Answers would come through engagement. They wanted to examine the conditions rather than the fundamental limits of possibility and stressed being hopeful rather than uncritically optimistic. They saw themselves as 'dancing, participating in creating a reality in which we are implicated and involved', disrupting 'the great clanking gears of capital' (Gibson-Graham 2003:35). They stressed that they focus on the possible, not the probable: on the 'not yet', not the 'never'. They de-emphasised understanding the barriers in favour of working out ways to overcome them. They rejected 'a simplistic assertion that we can think ourselves out of the materiality of capitalism', understanding that the forces that militate against that which 'may work to undermine, constrain, destroy or sideline our attempts to reshape economic futures' (2006b:xxx1). Theirs is a politics of hope tinged with realism, not with a complacent structuralist smugness that 'nothing can be done', except bewail our fate and rage against those changing the planet for the worse. While Foucault famously argued that the point of understanding how power circulations work was "so we can fight them" (Rabinow 1984:6), surely it is right, academically to be open to possibilities and hopeful about prospects for change rather than privileging an explanation and critique of power without any analysis of 'what is to be done' to change things for the better?

However, while their journey towards conceptionalisations of alternative economies has extensively explored different forms of non-capitalist economic action in families, communities, co-operatives, local money networks and the like (2006b), their engagement with alternative conceptions of business ethics was less well developed. In their latest book, "Take Back the Economy Anytime Any Place" (Gibson-Graham, Cameron et al. 2013:49-84) Gibson-Graham and their collaborators go some way to redress this deficiency and explore a number of ethical decision points through which businesses decide what to produce and distribute, what business expenses are necessary, and any resulting profits should be distributed, but their analysis is still less well developed theoretically than their epistemological standpoint, or their discussion of economic alternatives. Here, an engagement with discussions of business greening and of CSR that are well developed in the management literature can take our geographical analysis forward, especially in the context of the transition to a low carbon economy forward. Consequently the argument in the next section engages first with an exploration of the nature of entrepreneurialism, and the Marxist critique of it, before an engagement with the literature on the contribution of business to policies to avoid dangerous climate change, which, it is argued, take forward cultural economic understandings and the community economies collective's project of the development of an economic ethics for the anthropocene (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010), that period in geological history where humanity's economic activity is having a potentially catastrophic effect on the planets ecosystem. Is, as the entrepreneurial thesis suggests, business always an advocate for growth and climate change is a diversion, or can businesspeople be actors for climate change policy in their own right, with their own voices?

Exploring Entrepreneurialism

Richard Cantillon's *Essay on the Nature of Commerce in General*, written in French around 1734 was the economic theorisation that identified the importance of entrepreneurialism in the wealth creation process. Cantillon saw entrepreneurialism as a form of arbitrage, whereby entrepreneurs buy low, at currently known prices, in the expectation of selling higher, as yet unknown future prices (Murphy 1986). Entrepreneurs, unlike landlords and labourers, looked into the future, weighed up the likelihood of certain events occurring or new needs emerging and acted accordingly, in order to meet these new needs or handle new events. They relished uncertainty and took on the risk of engaging with it on others' behalf. They connected producers and buyers, taking a percentage of tha takings in business costs and in the hope of profit above that. Cantillon had a democratic view of entrepreneurialism: everyone who produces and sells is in some way acting entrepreneurially, but those who focus on connecting buyers and sellers and accepting the risk that prices might fall rather than rise are key (Hébert 1985).

Building on Cantillon, Adam Smith (1776/1981) conceptualised the economy as a network of entrepreneurs working according to humanity's innate tendency to barter, truck and trade. Leaving individuals alone to decide their best interests would ensure that the baker fed people in his own self interest, guided by the famous invisible hand. Schumpeter identified entrepreneurs as the generators of economic development, as they identify and implement new combinations of land, labour, machinery and capital in new production processes that add new value (Schumpeter 1949). Without this process of innovation, development would stall. Consequently, even business crises can be opportunities for 'creative destruction' in that they release factors of production that are no longer profitable so they can be recombined in new, innovative and more profitable ways. Note that, for Schumpeter, not all business owners are entrepreneurs. They may be conservative, sticking to the tried and tested, eventually succumbing to the next business crisis. In contrast, 'serial entrepreneurs' enjoy this process of indentifying new ways to combine the factors of production: founder of the EasyGroup of companies, Stelios Haji-Ioannou, showed no interest in running the company once he had established the low cost airline as a new innovation (Martinson 2006).

The left critique of entrepreneurialism, which cultural and diverse economic geographies do not engage with as well as they might, is based on the core Marxist conception of surplus value. Cantillon, Smith and Schumpeter praised entrepreneurs as the driving force of the economy and Marx agreed that this new force, capitalism, melted 'all that is solid into air' in front of it (Marx and Engels 1848/1980). For Marx, capitalism is sublime, breaking up all pre-existing local dominations and petty prejudices before the all-important altar of profit. As seen, Cantillon argued that the entrepreneur was entitled to the profit between buying at known low prices and selling them in the future for as yet unknown higher prices and for accepting the risk that future prices will be higher, 'otherwise he would not do it'. Marx countered that what entrepreneurs actually do is buy labour power at currently known prices from those who have no other option and extract profit by paying the worker less than the also known value of all he has produced. Thus Marx critiques the need to reward risk-taking behaviour. He sees profit not as a reward, but as extraction of surplus labour beyond that needed to produce goods, which is held by the entrepreneur, not the labourers who, Marx argued, created that value through labour (Marx 1976/1867:325).

This, Marx argued, is inherently exploitative. The labourer produced the shoe, not the entrepreneur, who contributed nothing. Of course this can be debated; the labourer did produce the shoe but with hides bought in advance by the entrepreneur, made on machines provided by the entrepreneur, and sold in shops provided by other entrepreneurs. For Cantillon, the value would be that shoes produced now at a known price could be sold at a future unknown price, that the design of shoes meets future preferences, and the profit would be a reward for employing people to transform hides into shoes, and then transporting the shoes from the factory to the market. Schumpeter would see rewards for the entrepreneur who identified ways to make shoes as quickly as possible, to as high a standard as possible, thereby providing cheap and/or well produced footwear. An artisan shoemaker, for Smith and Cantillon, could be labourer *and* entrepreneur.

The second leftist critique is that Cantillon, Smith and Schumpeter paint a picture of an economy constructed of free producers providing goods and services at the best price out of their own self-interest. They say little about the relationship between the entrepreneur and the labourer who produces that which the entrepreneur sells, assuming it was freely entered into. In '*The Great Transformation*' Karl Polanyi, (1944/1980) points to the violence of UK capitalist development though enclosure and forced emigration to the cities, to the criminalization of trade unions and the violence of the Black Acts (which massively increased the number of capital offences in early capitalist Britain). State violence was used to create the modern relationship between entrepreneur and worker. Free peasants were forced off the land into the factories as the working class was constructed (Thompson 1981). Workers did not freely choose these relationships and those with no capital except their labour to sell are similarly in a disadvantageous relationship today.

The third objection would be that uncritical or hagiographic conceptions of the role of the entrepreneur are utopian. Smith himself noted that 'people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices' (Smith 1776/1981:232). He recognised, and Marx emphasised, that capitalism has a tendency to monopoly as larger, more efficient forms buy out Smith's small entrepreneurs until wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. We see violent, corrupt gangster and crony capitalisms. Thus, in considering the transition to a sustainable society Kovel (2007) and Wall (2005) have little time for what they call a naïve neo-Smithian valorisation of the entrepreneur, arguing that markets have an in-built tendency for growth and monopoly that, in the present environment, inevitably leads to increased carbon emissions and dangerous climate change. For Kovel, capitalism, with its inevitable tendencies towards growth and monopoly, is the 'enemy of the planet'. More fundamentally, O'Connor (1991) points to capitalism's tendency to environmental crisis: it destroys the environment from which it draws its wealth. Frankel (1987) argues that small firms set up for ethical or lifestyle reasons must grow or they lose their competitive edge when a less ethical competitor challenges them on price.

The final objection, from a structuralist perspective, would be that too much emphasis is put on the role of the entrepreneur as the hero who creates value and generates development, whereas the ability of the entrepreneur to create new value is very small when set against the consumption decisions of millions of consumers with individual choices and preferences, entrepreneurs taking or not taking decisions and investing or not investing, banks advancing credit or refusing to, trade unionists fighting for higher pay, and state regulations. The entrepreneur is not free to do as he or she sees fit. Of course, the libertarian right would argue that this is the problem; entrepreneurs should be free to work their magic (Hayek 1944). Polanyi, though, showed that this leads to the destruction of society. We do not therefore have free markets; we have constructed markets that the entrepreneur must work through. The logic that dominates business decisions is that of the market: does the economic activity engaged in produce a profit, jobs and businesses? If not, should it be engaged in? Thus Milton Friedman's infamous contention that the only responsibility of business is profit maximisation for the owner or shareholder (Friedman 1970).

Of course, both cultural and diverse economies perspectives would challenge what they would call a deracinated account of business motivation. Culturally informed economic geographers look at the role of passion, sympathy, moral judgement, embodied knowledge and practices, sentiment, trust, mutuality and reciprocity (Amin and Thrift 2007). The word entrepreneur is a loan word from the old French, *entreprendre*, 'to take between'. It means no more than that; many other people take goods or ideas from one place to another, put things together in new ways. The worth of the entrepreneur comes from the skill in identifying and organising these new combinations, accepting the risk that they might fail, overcoming barriers and, when they succeed, providing new products, services, innovations and employment for those less innovative and willing to accept risk. North (2011) argues that many other actors do this: people providing services to their neighbours, running community groups, or even the work of miners' support groups in developing a sophisticated resource mobilisation process to collect money and food to support striking miners and their families during the year-long 1984-5 strike in the UK. They all put resources together in new ways to create value, as do the activists behind the range of diverse economies activities championed by the community economies literature: co-ops, local currency networks, worker run firms and the like. Amin and Thrift (2007) argue that while this attention to the diversity of and cultural construction of markets may not come as any surprise to human geographers, it might come as a surprise to urban managers who reduce everything to their understanding of the imperatives of competitiveness, to what they think business wants. Through an engagement with the literature on greening business, we can unpack the entrepreneurial process more. What is produced, and how, with what social and environmental impact? What role do business actors identify for themselves? Do they produce goods and services that contribute to, or mitigate, the crisis of the anthropocene?

A Greening business

Much of the literature on business engagement with the transition to a low carbon economy focuses on the role of business and of markets in developing solutions to problems associated with climate change within an international policy environment, with a focus on larger, perhaps multinational businesses who may have well developed environmental strategies, or on the role of innovation and market mechanisms like carbon trading (Pinkse and Kolk 2009; Newell and Patterson 2010). Some authors go as far as identifying the innovative capacity of markets as central to the avoidance of dangerous climate change through a business-led transition to a low carbon economy (Porritt 2005; Friedman 2008). CSR advocates argue that while business was once seen as part of the environmental problem, it is now part of the solution: taking action to reduce environmental dis-benefits is a win-win (Porter and Reinhardt 2007).

Eden (1996) suggests three drivers of engagement with sustainable, low carbon practices on the part of business: the bottom line (taking environmental action is good for business), regulatory compliance (you must do it or break the law), and ethics (you *should* do it). Bansal and Roth (2000:717-8) argue that businesses engage in pro environmental action as a result of (a) competitiveness pressures and in response to new economic opportunities, (b) from the need to comply with legislation and regulation, (c) from stakeholder pressure, perhaps in response to crucial adverse events (a consumer boycott, an accident, criticism of business decisions), and (d) as an ethical commitment driven by individuals in the business. First, CSR advocates argue, greening makes business sense by saving costs and boosting profitability by reducing waste, making more sales to green customers in new markets through the provision of high quality green products that inspire brand loyalty (Pinkse and Kolk 2009. 63-88), and boosting the green businesses' reputation as a good corporate citizen through positive publicity. Community and stakeholder relations matter. Poor performance of CSR can lead to reputational damage or even consumer boycotts, while a good reputation can lead to a light touch from regulators and more sales. Thus Bansal and Roth (2000) argue that greening is often seen by 'normal' business owners as a process of reducing quantities of inputs and waste, process intensification, and capital investment, i.e. as an integral element in a competitiveness agenda. Businesses who do not take this approach, it is argued, will flounder. SME owners motivated by these conceptions make cost-benefit calculations of environmental behaviours and economic return, and legitimate their actions in terms of longevity and profit.

Epstein (2008) and Bansal and Roth (2000) argue that there are costs from non-compliance with regulation – fines, intrusive inspection, closure of operations, reputational damage, boycotts. Pinkse and Kolk (2009) argue that businesses want workable environmental regulations to pre-empt criticism and unhelpful regulation, and to avoid a race to the bottom. Other businesses do not engage in mitigation actions, preferring to compensate for their emissions through emissions trading mechanisms, or take action to mitigate against future vulnerabilities. Echoing Friedman, Cairncross (1995) argues that companies are not moral individuals: their job is to create shareholder value, and without regulation to prevent a race to the bottom you cannot expect them to do the right thing if it means they will be undercut by a less ethical alternative. But, she also argues that some business leaders *do* want to do engage in ethical practices, and have an environmental record they can be proud of (for example BP's John Browne). Pinkse and Kolk (2009) argue that good environmental performance can show that a company is contributing to the solution. Some businesses attempt to completely reengineer their business models in response to climate change (for example Marks and Spencer's Plan A). These business leaders argue that many young people are critical of businesses with poor ethical or environmental standards, so pro-environment businesses will recruit and retain the best young staff.

Thus the environment is now conceptualised as an opportunity for business, not a threat. Critics argue that is an over optimistic conceptualisation. Eden (1996) is concerned that this is a way of taming and commodifying a critical, anticapitalist ideology. Walley and Stubbs (1999) argue that we see little more than a green spin which interprets changes in business practices as environmental transformation. Is 'greening' a utilitarian process of 'amoralisation', specifically editing out responsibilities to the non-human world, people in other places, or future generations, accepting economic growth and material accumulation (Crane 2000)? Other businesses in similar economic positions to that of BP do all they can to support climate scepticism (Levy and Kolk 2002). As Epstein (2008) and Pinkse and Kolk (2009) point out, there *is* still too much greenwash, not enough genuine action driving through change on a material scale with significant results. There are reputational payoffs from minimal CSR activities, promoting a small part of wider businesses as sustainable and ethical, ignoring fundamentally unsustainable practices that make up the bulk of that business's operations. Critics and shareholders can be mollified at little cost, while concrete transformation of processes can be more difficult than it first appears given that there *are* genuine trade-offs between social, environmental and business performance. How ethical, sustainable should a business be? What forms of business are unacceptably unsustainable or unethical? Should these profitable but unsustainable practices be discontinued? How will shareholders and customers respond to these decisions (Epstein 2008:23), given that we don't agree on the extent of climate change as a danger? We need to understand these trade offs, and how people decide between competing options (Hahn, Figge et al. 2010).

There is, then, much that business in general does to reduce its environmental impact, proactively for economic, social and environmental reasons, or reactively in response to stakeholder pressure, legislation and regulation, or to stay in business. However, the focus of the literature on greening discussed so far is on larger business, global corporations even, not SMEs. Are the arguments above transferable to smaller enterprises?

B SMEs and low carbon transitions: why SME owners don't take action

The balance of the literature on SMEs suggests that in contrast with larger businesses most SME owners do not prioritise environmental issues when making business decisions (Petts, Herd et al. 1999; Collins, Lawrence et al. 2007; Bradford and Fraser 2008; Parker, Redmond et al. 2009). Climate change, a global issue, is not something the average SME owner focuses on when faced with the day to day practicalities of running a business. Indeed, in his critique of diverse economies perspectives, Samers (2005) specifically rejects an association of the small and local with the ethical, and of larger businesses and multinationals with the unethical. Scase and Goffee (1982) argue that many small business people are seen as the epitome of small-minded reaction, opposed to any progressive agenda, and often uncompromising, short term profit maximisers uninterested in ethics. They may even be seen as “optimising, selfish and materialistic” creators of unsustainable growth, of “stuff” created beyond the capacity of the ecosystem to provide resources to fuel it or absorb its wastes (Anderson 1998). At the other end of the scale, they may be unentrepreneurial, insecure reluctant business people getting by, in the margins, with their business practices characterised by self-and family exploitation to maintain a precarious niche in difficult circumstances (Scase and Goffee 1982). Either way, critics from this perspective would argue that SME owners the last group of people we can expect to take action that will benefit distant others. They are interested in freedom and independence, personal satisfaction from success, and challenge, not addressing environmental or climate change problems, or social change (Anderson 1998:138; Spence 2007:539).

Hillary (2000) argues that SME owners are often unaware of their businesses’ environmental impact, ignorant about legislation or about their responsibilities to maintain a healthy environment, cynical about the benefits of sustainability, and difficult to reach and engage in environmental action. Large companies can be more susceptible to consumer and NGO influence, and to regulation (Pinkse and Kolk 2009:94), whereas the emissions of a small enterprise can seem insignificant (Revell and Blackburn 2007: 405; Parker et al 2009:279). Carbon regulation is for the big emitters, they think (Bradford and Fraze 2007:164). They can feel that action to reduce the insignificant emissions attributable to their individual business is costly (Petts, Herd et al 1999) and the benefits do not justify them (Tilley 1999; Revell and Blackburn 2007). Environmental action will put costs onto business not faced by profit driven ‘cowboys’ and overseas competitors who will then outcompete them (Drake et al 2004, Revell and Blackburn 2004, Rutherfoord et al 2000).

SME owners think that climate change is someone else's problem, probably central and local government's (Revell and Rutherfoord 2003). They see government policy as contradictory, influenced by too many political and economic vested interests, particularly from energy supply companies who they do not trust. They are particularly resistant to interference with their business, by people they do not respect, who they believe do not understand business, and who they see as meddlers (Hillary 2000; Revell and Rutherfoord 2003). Many businesspeople doubt climate change is an issue at all, given the influence of climate sceptics in the popular press (Williams and Schaefer 2012).

If they do take environmental action, Williams and Schaefer (2012) argue that SMEs often do less than larger firms, and have fewer codified processes and structures (Spence 2007; Hammann, Habisch et al. 2009). SME owners convinced of the need to take environmental action and who want to make changes struggle to. They can feel that their customers are uninterested 'rampant consumers', and that the demand for environmental products and services can be overstated. They have limited time, cash and resources to draw on (Bradford and Frazer 2007:165). They can have a limited number of customers and suppliers, and the pressures on SMEs from their customers and suppliers to go green can be absent or over stated. Supply chain pressures might be just on the first tier, not further down (Revell and Blackburn 2007:407) and the costs of so doing can be greater than stated both in cash terms and in terms of disruption. They may be struggling, barely profitable businesses with few customers, limited cash flows, and an unsympathetic bank manager. They may be part time or lifestyle businesses. They focus on current performance, not strategically. They firefight, especially in difficult economic times, and are concerned only about the survivability of their business into the immediate future (Petts, Herd et al. 1999;

Collins, Lawrence et al. 2007; Bradford and Fraser 2008). In such times, environmental regulations and carbon reduction targets should be relaxed, they argue.

Consequently, Tilley (1999, 2000) argues that a lack of technical and scientific understanding about environmental issues acts as a barrier to more than a superficial engagement with sustainable practices, and business owners rarely have more than a shallow environmental ethic, putting business issues first and only taking action if it benefits the bottom line. For example, she suggests that SME owners rarely make the connections between economic and environmental drivers, for example understanding how reduced energy consumption can also have wider environmental benefits. They focus just on energy efficiency, believing that a low energy business is a sustainable business, and do not think more deeply about the resource flows that the business is engaged in. She argues that a deep engagement with the environment, or even the achievement of standards such as ISO 14001, can be beyond the management capability or structure of many small enterprises. Williams and Schaefer (2012) found that SME owners lacked technical knowledge, and often drew their understanding of climate issues from popular, non- business sources. They struggled to translate their understanding of the need to take action on social and environmental grounds into practical actions for their business, or to weigh up the costs and benefits of different actions. They lacked technical knowledge.

Consequently, reluctant SME owners may need to be forced to address emissions and resource use through regulatory compliance, much as they have to in the fields of employment (Gadenne, Kennedy et al. 2009) so a policy environment that seeks to reduce rather than increase regulation will not encourage better environmental performance. For these businesses, perhaps biggest factor might be higher energy prices that drive voluntary cost reduction measures (Bradford and Frazer 2007:168), along with employment law, consumer protection, or health and safety (Parker, Redmond et al. 2009).

B Why SME owners *do* take action

Given the above, the tone of which seems to reinforce Friedman's argument that business has a responsibility only to the bottom line, why *do* some SME owners take action to improve their businesses' environmental performance? Spence, (2007), Williams and Schaefer (2012) and Murillo and Lozano (2006) argue that while SMEs owners engagement with pro-environmental actions might be at a lower level or less visible and include fewer formal policies and procedures than that of larger organisations, SME owner managers have more freedom to run their businesses according to their values than managers of larger companies who have to report to shareholders and owners. They can spend their own money as they see fit (Spence 2007:537). If they want to act, they can.

As suggested by cultural economy perspectives, SMEs are often embedded in local communities and culture (Spence 2007) and reliant on personal relationships which makes them open to wider influences from communities and NGOs, and less able to remove themselves from the locally perceived consequences of their actions than remote multinationals. Jack and Anderson (2002) argue that the social and material environment in which business activity takes place will shape it. Society and environment affect economic outcomes, and entrepreneurs draw on their social networks and the values that emerge from them in developing their businesses. Physical proximity may mean that if things go wrong there is nowhere to hide, no one to pass the buck to. Their personal reputation at a local, personal level matters, as does how they treat their employees, who may be family, friends or neighbours. Their social networks and the values these networks hold help the entrepreneur to identify opportunities that fit with the environment their business works in. Conversely, a business that does not fit with the environment it is embedded in, with it local rules, customs and expectations, and with the values of its customers, will encounter a barrier to business operation. A business embedded in a supportive value system is more likely to prosper. Thus Hammann, Habisch and Pechlaner (2009) found that responsible management practices towards employees, customers and to a lesser extent society on the part of the German SME owners they researched had a positive impact on the firm and its performance. Values create value, they argue. Rutherfoord at al's (2000) study of Dutch SMEs found that they had a strong sense of responsibility for the environment of the community which housed them, which they did not find replicated in the UK. Spence (2007:538) argues that given that as many SMEs cannot compete with larger businesses on price alone, they need to provide additional value through good community or environmental values.

Further, and in line with cultural and diverse economies perspectives, Williams and Schaefer (2012) argue that that given that acting on environmental issues is often seen as problematic, difficult, a cost, not an uncontroversial win/win, SME owners may be unconvinced by the business case for taking action alone. Values and personal commitment are what come to the fore in driving owners to take action. These can be ethical and ecological motivations, rather than purely business drivers. In their analysis, they found managers who were more interested in and knowledgeable about climate change than previous studies suggested. They argue that their research uncovered managers with a highly developed and long standing engagement with issues around the environment and climate change, based on their personal values or beliefs. They thought holistically, refusing to compartmentalise their business and personal values and actions. While outside pressure or economic arguments to act on environmental issues had an effect, their locus of control was internal. These SMEs understood climate change as part of the social and environmental agenda, not just as a technical or business issue. They got their data from popular sources, not from information targeted on them as businesspeople.

This is not to say that they saw themselves as environmentalists. The opposite. They saw themselves as practical business people and constructed environmentalists negatively as 'hippy tree huggers'. Theirs were (business) values - prudence and thrift - *but also* care of the natural world and the rights of future generations. Their values can come from their biography, perhaps from travelling, leading to an understanding how climate change is affecting distant others, what Doreen Massey (2004) calls a geography of personal responsibility. They felt that they could and should make a difference, and it was their responsibility to do so. Thus, despite the more pessimistic analyses above, the evidence of these studies seems to be that, in line with cultural and diverse economy perspectives, some SME owner do engage with pro-environmental work. Further, Fiona Tilley (1999, Tilley and Young 2006) argues that specifically sustainable or ecological businesses see themselves as the sustainable wealth creators of the future, running their businesses with the health of future generations, people in other places affected by their actions, and the non-human world in wider ecosystems in mind. Bradford and Frazer (2007:164-5) found that 82% of the firms they surveyed were aware of the overall policy environment of reducing greenhouse gasses, and energy costs were a driver of environmental performance for 62-64% of them.

SMEs then are not homogenous: we need to differentiate between motivations for being in business. Williams and Schaefer (2010) argue for a differentiation between highly driven profit maximising orientated entrepreneurs, perhaps uninterested in ethical considerations, and lifestyle entrepreneurs interested in a work life balance with sufficient profits to support their chosen lifestyle, who may take ethics more seriously. Parker et al (2009:288-9) differentiate between environment, advantage, compliance and profit-driven SMEs. Environment driven SMEs have a high commitment to environmental performance out of moral obligations or a sense of duty. Advantage driven SMEs are innovative and proactive, and see environmental improvements as a way to better business. Compliance driven businesses need regulation, while profit driven businesses will drive down costs at every opportunity. Some will respond to moral arguments, others to purely business arguments, some will self-manage improvement, while others will need to be regulated into doing the right thing. A third group, social or ecopreneurs put ethical and sustainability considerations at the heart of what they do (Amin 2009; Gibbs and O'Neill 2012).

Conclusion

Thus the literature of entrepreneurship and greening business reviewed above, by no means exhaustively, would suggest that geographers interested in cultural and diverse economies have a wide literature to draw on in conceptualising an economic ethics for climate change. Research on entrepreneurialism and SMEs has begun to recognise that there are forms of entrepreneurship "in terms of focus, definitions, scope and paradigms" which need to be "systematically developed" (Steyaert and Hjorth 2003:5). Tilley and Young (2009:83) identify social, economic and environmental forms of entrepreneurship, and argue that cultural conceptions that change in time and over space inform the "meaning, role and function" of entrepreneurship in society. Consequently, Tilley and Young argue that entrepreneurship need not be associated only with competition, economic growth, and profit maximisation, but also with other value systems: independence, self-actualisation or sustainability. Anderson (1998) argues that entrepreneurs' perceptions of what is important for their business are not limited to financial profit, but connected to and socially embedded in wider value systems. Further, as agents of change, entrepreneurs can and do embed these environmental values in their businesses, thereby constructing organisations able to make changes in the material practices – the goods and services produced and consumed - that make up economies and societies, thus giving environmental values real "substance and form by their actions" (Anderson 1998:135). Thus Anderson argues that while entrepreneurs are engaged in value creation, producing new reasons to engage in new economic activities, often to sell new products and services, these new products and services can be environmentally benign, or damaging. There is nothing in the entrepreneurial process of value creation that mandates the entrepreneurial process itself to be unsustainable. Entrepreneurs, and their customers, make choices, and choices matter.

Nodding towards concerns with economic ethics for the anthropocene, Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) argue that it is necessary to go beyond the business efficiency case for greening as a win-win to eliminate unsustainable but profitable economic activities, and develop new ways to meet our needs in ways that are compatible with what we need to do to avoid dangerous climate change. Thus Tilley and Young's (2006) conception of 'sustainable entrepreneurship' adds preservation of ecosystems, economic, social and environmental equity, intergenerational equity, and futurity into the CSR triple bottom line, producing, they argue, sustainable entrepreneurs who genuinely do aim to integrate social, economic and environmental values in ways that go beyond greening economic values to enable business to be sustainable over time. Green businesses, they argue, still focus on growth, and have a regard to the future, inequality and the needs of other species, but these concerns are not central to their business models. A diverse economies perspective would look to see if we can identify these values and practices out of niche ecopreneurial domains. Do 'normal' SME owners also concern themselves with avoiding dangerous climate change?

This is not to say that SME owners are attracted to some of the radical, community-based conceptualisation of local economies that Gibson–Graham advocate. Still less does it suggest that SME owners are embracing Gibson-Graham's economic ethic for the anthropocene (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010), completely decarbonising what they are doing, thinking of future generation and other species, without thinking of the health of their business. Profits, of course, matter. Tilley and Young's (2009) call for sustainability entrepreneurship specifically recognises the real world limits of businesspeople developing the sustainable forms of wealth creation that might be necessary to avoid dangerous climate change. Fossil-fuel based businesses may continue to be actively hostile to emissions reduction policies that threaten their profitability (Owen and Bignell 2011). But, the paper argues, cultural and diverse economies perspectives open up a space for dialogue with local businesses through which they can be seen to be acting in low carbon ways that is more than simple ecological modernisation undertaken by technologically innovative, or values-based businesses aiming for the win-win, having regard for social and environmental issues, but, at the end of the day, putting profitability and growth first. It does show that even very traditional businesses can be shown to have diverse motivations for how they conduct their business, with an eye to future generations, that inspire them to take concrete actions to reduce the emissions that their businesses are responsible for. As the quote at the beginning of this paper shows, entrepreneurs don't all want to make a million and have a guitar shaped pool, they can have a sophisticated understanding of the implications of dangerous climate change and resource constraints for humanity.

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