



The Dawn of a Social Enterprise

Diego Miranda Seevers
Sustainable Design Studio
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Statement of Intent

Introduction

Social Entrepreneurship is an increasingly adopted concept within the spectrum of startups and sustainable business models; which may thread networks of individuals and businesses towards sustainable economic goals, overarching key social factors, while developing environmentally friendly solutions.

Current Issue

The global pandemic of COVID-19 struck the economy of Costa Rica, as it shut down the tourism industry. This situation led to the unemployment of hundreds of thousands of persons who rely on tourism as a direct or an indirect source of income, and created a chain reaction effect on other areas such as education and day to day work routines.

Focus of Study

How can Sustainable Creativity within a Social Enterprise become an economic driver, while aiding socially vulnerable individuals and providing environmentally friendly solutions?

Engaging Design

The following workbook explores the engagement of sustainable design through practice based research, as I develop several diverse design initiatives under the commonality of sustainable creativity and sustainable economics, while projecting the development of a social enterprise.

The overall studio project consists of a collection of sustainably designed products following the basic principles of a Sustainable Business Model while targeting market opportunities based on a formulated Business Plan.

This project takes place in Costa Rica, during the timeframe of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This situation has affected specific socio-economic segments dependent on the tourism industry, and has created alterations in education and work routines within the country in which the focus is developed.

Through research, reflection and a series of design outputs, I aim to create innovative products that benefit both users and producers. The importance of sustainability and design is measured through the economic, social and environmental impact of the project.

The intention of exploring a variety of design outcomes is to analyze through the creation of minimum viable products the opportunities that may be considered for further development within a social enterprise proposition.

Project Outputs

The outputs that will be produced in this module are:

Workbook: a research piece that explores fundamental concepts and examples of social entrepreneurship, sustainable economies, sustainable business models and business planning.

ONCA Toys: a line of Sustainable Children's Toys, created from sustainably sourced and repurposed wood, rescued from the waste stream of a sustainable furniture workshop.

ONCA Wear: a line of locally handcrafted, slowly-produced, comfortable, stay-at-home wear; based on concepts such as capsule wardrobes and zero waste and genderless design.

Theoretical Context

The development of this project and its outcome is based on the principles of social entrepreneurship, sustainable economic models, sustainable business model theory and practical business planning.

On a design level, concepts of the world of sustainable fashion such as Slow Fashion, Capsule Wardrobes, Zero Waste and Universal Design are explored to create durable and high quality garments; optimizing the use and life cycle of materials either from first hand or second hand sources.

Concepts such as Materiality, Circularity, Emotional Design and Precolumbian Design are also engaged throughout the creative process in the development of children's toys, while exploring innovative solutions for existing waste streams in the wood furniture industry.

Influence

The following brands are influential and key comparators for the development of this project:

Fashion Design:

Nabruk - Slow Fashion brand designed and produced in Costa Rica

WARDROBE.NYC - High-end, Luxury Capsule Wardrobes designed in NYC

N16VINTAGE - Up-cycled fashion developed in London-based workshop

El Imperio de las Colitas - Preloved Fashion pop-up store based in Costa Rica

Toy Design:

PlanToys - Push and pull toys developed with up-cycled materials.

TobeUs - Sustainably sourced wooden toys.

Melissa & Doug - Educational, sustainable, plastic-free toys.

Measuring Success

The success of this project can be measured with the extension and complexity of the networks created, but most importantly, the social, environmental and economical impact created by each product.

The final products designed aim to be aesthetically rich, visually attractive and economically marketable, however, the sustainable and holistic social, economic and environmental approaches and the narrative that backs up each piece or product is the main driver and results in the uniqueness of each one of the outputs.

Overall the project is funded on developing several environmentally friendly products, while focusing on the principles of social enterprises through collaborations between networks of artisans, workers, artists, designers and creatives in Costa Rica; following an economically optimized and internationally focused business model.

The motivation behind creating such networks, collaborations and partnerships intends to mitigate and overcome the economical impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has struck the most vulnerable populations in the country.



Introduction

Sustainability and Economic Growth are often considered antagonist concepts which compromise each other's effectivity. However, in the past decades, more and more businesses and organizations are adopting social and environmental missions into their business models.

Social Entrepreneurship has become increasingly popular within start ups and organizations around the world, and has drawn the attention of researchers in fields of economics, sustainability and social studies¹. The surge of new economic models propose healthier market systems focused on a human-environment balance. Some innovators within the world of business have shifted towards Sustainable Business Models² that reevaluate the concept of economical growth³ and prioritize the impact of their products or services over people's socio-economic wellbeing.

Sustainable Creativity is fundamental to maintain economical goals within an already over exploited planet. The materiality of thousands of metric tonnes of resources that have been already utilized, circulates in waste streams of diverse industries around the world. Many of these materials can be harvested to create new sustainable and high quality products. Reprocessing these may generate important workflows which could represent valuable job opportunities for a wide and potential workforce, aiding unemployment and addressing social vulnerability.



Throughout the globe, sustainable creatives are proposing game changing products, which other than being innovative, come as a retrospective approach to classical techniques, applied to the modern post industrial world. From the fashion industry to the world of children's toys, more and more designers are stepping back from the speedy and hyper scaled production lines and transitioning back into more classical design and confection methods; while reclaiming or implementing environmentally friendly materials. Design approaches such as the zero waste pattern making of Timo Rissanen and Holly McQuillan⁴ and the recreation of classical toys using novel technologies by Melissa and Doug Bernstein⁵, are clear examples of successful design approaches that follow up on the fundamental structures of business planning⁶.

There is still uncertainty, however, whether these approaches are truly holistic regarding social and economical opportunities for vulnerable populations. In many cases, projects that seem initially sustainable re-enter the large scaled production methods that are required to fulfill the consumerist patterns of modern times and compromise their environmental impact. Theory on the benefits of slow and small-scaled production processes such as the one presented by E. F. Schumacher's during the 1970's are still relevant⁷. However this path is mostly embraced by start ups and unexperienced entrepreneurs. Production systems that are based on the traditional economic growth model usually seem to lead towards upscaled processes which are then outsourced to industrial economies such as China, in order to satisfy intensive markets or survive the competitiveness within the overly consumptive society of the present.

¹ Weerawardena, Jay, Sullivan Mort, Gillian "Investigating social entrepreneurship: A multidimensional model." Journal of World Business, February 2006.

² Landrum, Nancy E., Edwards, Sandra "Sustainable Business: An Executive's Primer." Business Expert Press, New York, 2009.

³ Jackson, Tim. "Prosperity without Growth." Sustainable Development Commission, March 2009.

⁴ Rissanen, Timo & McQuillan, Holly "Zero Waste Fashion Design." Bloomsbury Visual Arts, September 6, 2018.

⁵ Melissa & Doug - Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.melissaanddoug.com/>

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "business plan," accessed March 23, 2020. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/businessplan>

⁷ Schumacher, E.F. "Small is Beautiful - Economics as if people mattered." Blond & Briggs, London, 1973

My personal interests and the driving force behind this project, stand on the basis of my experience in product design, packaging, and brand development. My ongoing research focuses on developing sustainable business approaches while balancing social aspects such as culture, education and labor opportunities. Through practical design research⁸ I aim to explore the environmental concerns regarding materiality, waste management and use of resources; while promoting the chance to develop economically sustainable approaches to art, design and creativity.

In the following sections I will elaborate on the theoretical context, the creative analysis towards the design process, and the methodology behind the creation of my project: ONCA Sustainable Creativity. The final output of this research piece is an initial collection of sustainably designed products.

PART 1 - Grounding on Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Economics, Sustainable Business Management and Business Planning

Understanding Social Entrepreneurship

Social enterprises are purpose driven organizations that rely on business techniques traditionally used by entrepreneurs to develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues⁹. According to Cambridge dictionary, a social enterprise is **“an organization that aims to make money in order to serve a useful social purpose”**¹⁰.

8 Walker, Stuart. "Imagination's Promise: practice-based design research for sustainability." Lancaster University, July 2013.

9 UPEACE, Center for Executive Education. "Entrepreneurship Innovation and Social Change - Week 1." <https://centre.upeace.org/>

10 Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "social enterprise," accessed May 23, 2020 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-enterprise>

During the 1970's and with an increasing role during the 80's and 90's the popularity of Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) spread out through the world as an aim to address the also increasing environmental, economic and social issues of the modern world; and as a result of the inefficient government to government solutions. The post-Cold War era was permeated by a **“good governance”** policy agenda by the international donor community¹¹.

However, the expectations over these organizations led to a backlash as these initiatives represented solely **“quick fixes”** for development problems¹² and relied purely on funding by donors. On top of this, NGO's began to be questioned regarding the administration and final use of the funds they relied on. In some cases up to 90% of the funds generated by NGO's or charities are used for internal expenses such as salaries, rent, marketing and administration, leaving minimum resources to aid the actual cause¹³.

This led to increasing pressures from the public demanding total transparency from the Non Profit Organizations as to the use and administration of their funds. Parallel to this, and on the other side of the organization spectrum, similar pressures began to rise towards the larger corporations, as consumers became more interested on the (negative and positive) impact these companies were creating. Large companies such as McDonalds and Coca-Cola have lately issued their environmental and social goals as part of their marketing strategies.

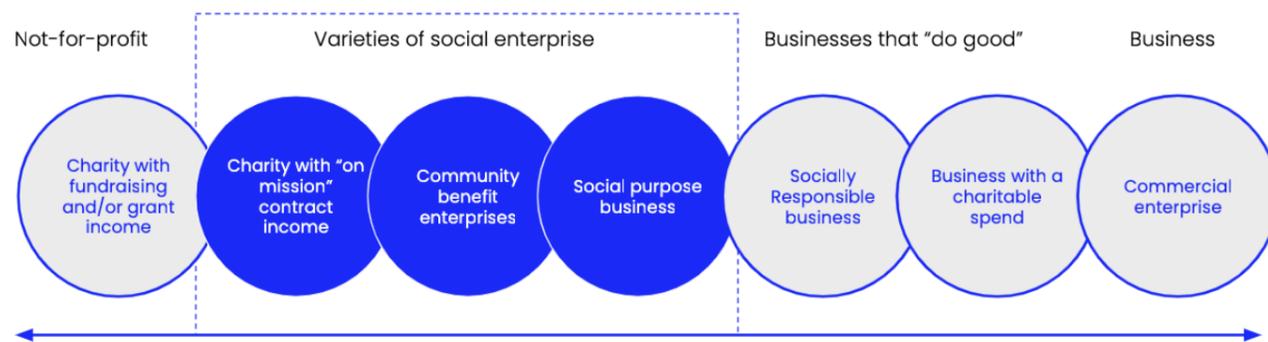
11 Xavier, Dr S Joseph. "Organisation and Management of NGOs: Non Governmental Organisation." Education Publishing 2019, p. 6

12 Lewis, David. "Non-Governmental Organizations, Management and Development." Routledge, 2014

13 Muñoz, Alonso. "Entrepreneurship Innovation and Social Change - Week 1." <https://centre.upeace.org/>

These two opposite realities led to the creation of social and environmentally aware enterprises that on one hand, do not rely on funding and charity to address their mission; and on the other hand, embrace business and economic practices to develop their vision. These are also known as For Profit Organizations. Legally speaking, non profit organizations and for profit organizations have their pros and cons. This has led to the creation of hybrid organizations that work towards the same common goal and are financially tied but legally separated¹⁴.

The Akina Foundation has portrayed a visual representation of the previously referred to organization spectrum. In their Social Enterprise Continuum¹⁵, they layout the types of organizations that may be considered. On one end, there are Not For Profit or Charities which rely on fundraising, donated or granted income and on the opposite end, the Business or commercial enterprises. Closely related to not for profit organizations, there may be a variety of social enterprises such as charities with “on a mission” contract income, community benefit enterprises and social purpose businesses. And closely related to businesses, there may be businesses which “do good” such as socially responsible businesses or businesses with a charitable spend.



¹⁴ Raymond, Eliza. 'Entrepreneurship Innovation and Social Change - Week 2' <https://centre.upeace.org/>

¹⁵ Akina Foundation | Learn More - Terminology. Accessed on June 6th <https://www.akina.org.nz/learn-more/terminology>

Sustainability in Economics

In the past years, new economic theories and models have surged to contrast the environmental and social pressures that the 20th Century GDP growth focused economic model has brought. These new economic systems are focusing on the circularity of materials and waste; aiming for social, environmental and economic balance, as well as decoupling from consumerist and exploitative business models.

Circular Economy

Circular economy redefines growth beyond the unsustainable take-make-waste industrial model, while also focusing on positive social benefits. This system proposes to gradually decouple economic activity from the use of finite resources, while aiming to reduce or repurpose waste streams¹⁶.

The circular economy model suggests a transition towards renewable energy sources while building economic, environmental and social capital. This system is based on the following principles:

- 1 - Designing out waste and pollution
- 2 - Keeping products and materials in use
- 3 - Regenerating natural systems

Fig. 1
Enterprise
Continuum
(Akina Foundation)

¹⁶ Ellen McArthur Foundation - Circular Economy Concept. Accessed on June 6, 2020. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>

OUTLINE OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

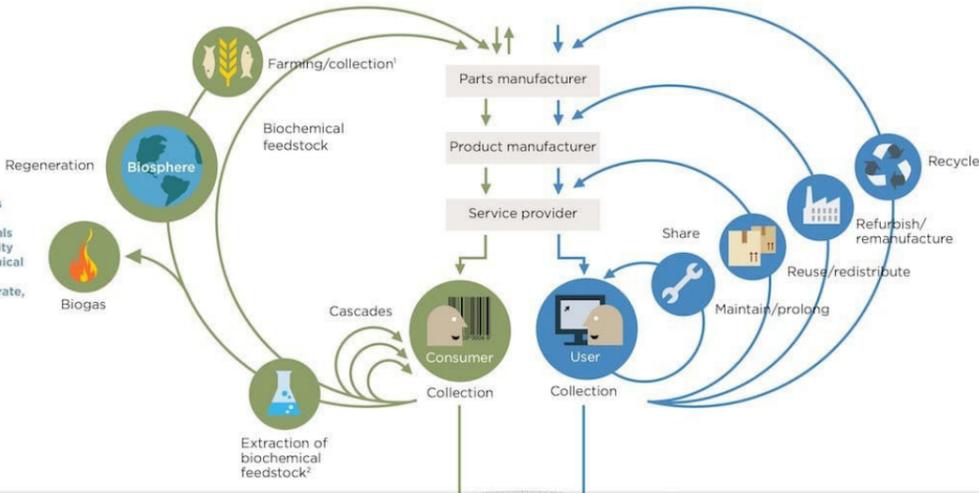
PRINCIPLE 1

Preserve and enhance natural capital by controlling finite stocks and balancing renewable resource flows
 RESOLVE levers: regenerate, virtualise, exchange



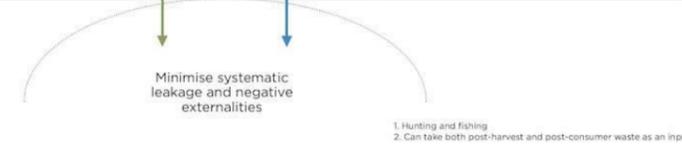
PRINCIPLE 2

Optimise resource yields by circulating products, components and materials in use at the highest utility at all times in both technical and biological cycles
 RESOLVE levers: regenerate, share, optimise, loop



PRINCIPLE 3

Foster system effectiveness by revealing and designing out negative externalities
 All ReSOLVE levers



The circular economy sums up several concepts such as **Cradle to Cradle**, **Biomimicry** and **Natural Capitalism**. Briefly:

Cradle to Cradle was conceptualized by Michael Braungart along with Bill McDonough and is conceived as a certification process. This philosophy focuses on effectiveness of products and their impact on the biosphere. Parting from the flow behind biological and technical processes, Cradle to Cradle design looks towards optimizing the recovery of materials as biological and technical nutrients. The fundamentals of C2C are: **eliminating waste or “waste equals food”**, **maximizing the use of renewable energy** and **respecting human and natural systems**¹⁷.

Fig. 2
Circular Economy
Drawing from
Braungart &
McDonough Cradle
to Cradle (C2C)

Biomimicry “is a practice that learns from and mimics the strategies found in nature to solve human design challenges¹⁸”. Janine Benyus, author of *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*, states the following principles¹⁹ for design through biomimicry: **Nature as a model**, **Nature as a mentor** and **Nature as a measure**.

Natural Capitalism was conceptualized by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins, and proposes to recognize the economical interdependence between human capital and natural capital. The authors suggest four basic principles towards a sustainable economical model: **radically increasing the productivity of natural resources**, **redesigning the industry on biological models towards circularity and zero waste**, **shifting from sale of goods to provision of services**, and **reinvesting in natural capital**²⁰.

Doughnut Economics

In her book *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist*, Kate Raworth outlines in a doughnut shaped model two main boundaries. The inner circle comprises humanity’s social foundation or basic needs: food, health, education, income & work, peace & justice, political voice, social & gender equality, housing, networks, energy and water. The outer circle comprises an ecological ceiling: climate change, ocean acidification, chemical pollution, nitrogen & phosphorous loading, freshwater withdrawals, land conversion, biodiversity loss, air pollution and ozone layer depletion²¹.

¹⁷ Braungart, Michael and McDonough, William. ‘Cradle to Cradle’ (London, Vintage Books 2009)

¹⁸ Biomimicry Institute | What is Biomimicry. Accessed June 6, 2020. <https://biomimicry.org/what-is-biomimicry/>

¹⁹ Ellen McArthur Foundation - Circular Economy Concept | Schools of Thought. Accessed on June 6, 2020. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept/schools-of-thought>

²⁰ Hawken, Paul, Lovings, Amory B. and Lovings Hunter L. ‘Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution’. Earthscan 2010

²¹ Raworth, Kate. ‘Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist’. Chelsea Green Publishing 2017

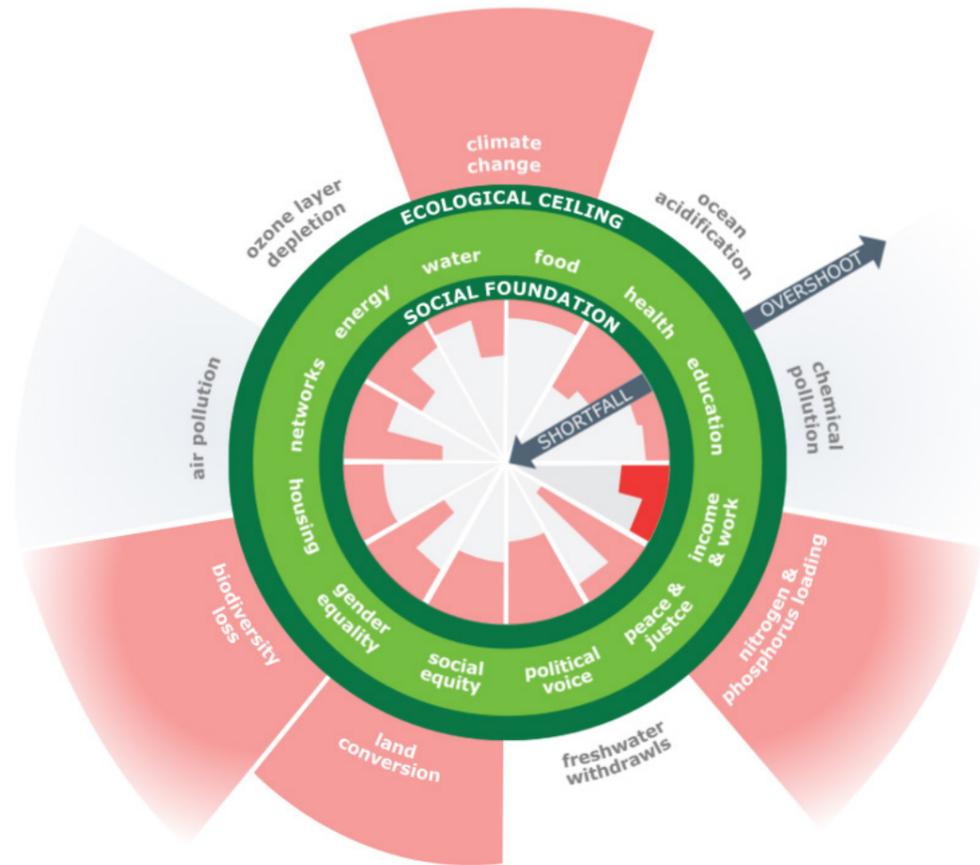


Fig. 3
Doughnut
Economics
(K. Raworth)

- 1) Population living on less than the international poverty limit of \$3.10 a day: 29% (2012)
- 2) Proportion of young people (aged 15-24) seeking but not able to find work: 13% (2014)

Raworth suggests that there is a safe zone for humanity and prosperity within those limits, so long as there is no overshoot out of the planet's boundaries and as long as there is no falling within the inner circle which would represent people's suffering. Currently we have fallen out of those boundaries for which Kate Raworth suggests to adopt the following 7 ways of thinking²²:

Change the Goal - from GDP to the doughnut

Raworth critiques the 20th century strategy of growth as a driver of inequality in some of the world's societies, which has also resulted in ecologic collapse. The Doughnut model suggests to step away from the goals of 'endless' growth and look towards a goal of covering both humanity and the planet's needs.

²² Raworth, Kate. "Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist". Chelsea Green Publishing 2017

See the Big Picture - from self contained market to embedded economy

Traditional economics states that the economy has a circular flow between companies and households in an isolated system that's not tied to ecological systems. However ecological, financial and political crisis can alter the economy. Therefore the economy should be embedded into more holistic systems such as society, nature and the planet.

Nurture Human Nature - from rational economic man to social adaptable humans

Raworth suggests transitioning from self-interested to a socially reciprocating individuals and shift from fixed preferences to fluid value systems. This mindset would then reevaluate human nature and allow ease within the Doughnut.

Get Saavy with Systems - from mechanical equilibrium to dynamic complexity

Economics must be seen as a complex and constantly changing system rather than a simple stable system. Systems thinking allows to view the wholeness of economics and therefore its understanding.

Design to Distribute - from growth will even it up again to distributive by design

Raworth states the design error in traditional economics where wealth (land, health, companies and technology) are unevenly distributed when it comes to generating money.

Create to Regenerate - from growth will clean it up again to regenerative by design

Environmental damage comes as a result of degenerative industrial processes, therefore a new economical thinking with a regenerative and circular approach is required to change the food-to-waste business model into a waste into valuable goods strategy.

Be Agnostic about Growth - from growth addicted to growth agnostic

Raworth suggests following the natural lifecycle of organisms or the 's' curve, meaning that nothing really grows infinitely.

Prosperity without Growth

Professor Tim Jackson developed this report as as Economics Commissioner for the Sustainable Development Commission. He critiques the myth of economic growth that drives the policies we live by. He proposes a transition towards a Sustainable Economy following twelve steps within three categories²³:

Building a Sustainable Macroeconomy by:

1. Developing macro-economic capability
2. Investing in public assets and infrastructures
3. Increasing financial and fiscal prudence
4. Reforming macro-economic accounting

Protecting Capabilities for flourishing by:

5. Sharing the available work and improving the work-life balance
6. Tackling systemic inequality
7. Measuring capabilities and flourishing
8. Strengthening human and social capital
9. Reversing the culture of consumerism

Respecting Ecological Limits:

10. Imposing clearly defined resource/emissions caps
11. Implementing fiscal reform for sustainability
12. Promoting technology transfer and international ecosystem protection.

²³ Jackson, Tim. "Prosperity Without Growth: The transition toward a sustainable economy". Sustainable Economics Commission, March 2009.

Following these economic theories can become a strategic factor to developing new business ideas. Sustainability in economics means a grounding base to develop smart and sustainable businesses with updated or contemporary economical goals.

Sustainability in Business

On the same path towards sustainability, new business strategies and models have been developed based on the traditional business planning methods which have driven the products and services we consume within today's markets. Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Models share conceptual structures regarding mission statements, creation of value propositions and market research that are typical concepts within a Business Plan.

Developing a Social Entrepreneurship

Eliza Raymond, lecturer at UPEACE, suggests a series of steps to follow when creating a social enterprise. To start off, one's company must be funded on innovation and become purpose driven. The development of a mission statement is crucial in order to pitch the organization. Her suggestion is to create an '**eight words or less**' statement that focuses on the 'What' and not the 'How'. This mission statement should follow a '**Verb + Target Population + Outcome**' structure and may serve as a boundary function that can be used to attract and motivate stakeholders. It should also aid in the process of evaluation within the enterprise. The mission statement is also known as the social enterprise's '**mantra**'²⁴.

²⁴ Raymond, Eliza. "Entrepreneurship Innovation and Social Change - Week 2" <https://centre.upeace.org/>

Efficient practices such as the theory of change should be implemented to elaborate on a sustainable enterprise's mission. This theory focuses on a practical "if-then" statement. The application of SMART (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) indicators are also valuable while accounting for social enterprise tasks and goals²⁵. These quantitative measures resemble those proposed by Giff Constable in his book "Talking to Humans"²⁶.

Developing a Sustainable Business Model

A sustainable business may be defined as "one that operates in the interest of all current and future stakeholders in a manner that ensures the long-term health and survival of the business and its associated economic, social and environmental systems"²⁷.

The book Sustainable Business: An Executive's Primer, outlines seven key factors that businesses models should follow in order to fulfill their goals towards sustainability:

- Operations Management
- Human Resources
- Finance
- Research and Development
- Marketing
- Information Technology and Management Information Systems
- Accounting



Fig. 4
ONCA Sustainable Business Model

Developing a Business Plan

In the complementary courses I've followed effective templates such as Alexander Cowan's 20 Minute Business Plan²⁸. A business plan is defined by Cambridge Dictionary, as "a detailed document describing the future plans of a business". This plan "should encompass financial information such as projections for profit and loss and cashflow"²⁹.

The UV2020 webinar by University of Brighton evaluated several approaches to the creation of business plans. Clare Griffiths founder of the Thrive Effect suggests carrying out quick tests to self reflect on ones intentions³⁰:

Regarding Desirability:

- Does your product/service answer your customers' needs?
- How is your business different to alternatives on the market?
- Do you have people or organizations prepared to pay you?

Regarding Feasibility:

- Do you have the necessary skills, resources and passion to realize your ideas?

Regarding Viability:

- Will you generate enough income to cover your costs and create profit?

Louise Stevenson, comedian from the Brighton Comedy Course, suggests creating a sharp 'one minute business pitch' to be used as a sales tool. An initial factual statement should be the first attention driver within this pitch in order to engage with the potential buyers or target markets.

²⁵ Raymond, Eliza. "Entrepreneurship Innovation and Social Change - Week 3" <https://centre.upeace.org/>

²⁶ Constable, Giff. Rimalovski, Frank. "Talking to Humans." 2014 P.59

²⁷ Landrum, Nancy E., Edwards, Sandra "Sustainable Business: An Executive's Primer." Business Expert Press, New York, 2009, p. 4

²⁸ Cowan, Alexander. "The 20 minute Business Plan: Business Model Canvas Made Easy" accessed March 20, 2020. <https://www.alexandercowan.com/business-model-canvas-templates>

²⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "business plan," accessed March 23, 2020 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/businessplan>

³⁰ Griffiths, Clare. UV2020 BeePurple University of Brighton Webinar, Day 1

Eric Ries recommends in his book “**The Lean Start Up**” that one should develop a **Build-Measure-Learn** feedback loop by initially building a hypothesis; in order to develop a minimum viable product; which is experimented through testing; to finally learn from the developed data³¹.

Analyzing Social Enterprises and Sustainable Businesses

The following section outlines a brief analysis of several examples of current social enterprises and sustainable businesses:

Carcel

Danish label Carcel³² founded by Veronica D’Souza, and Louise van Hauen creates high end clothing developed in the Peruvian Andes. Their proposed ‘**Sustainable Business Model**’ explores a labor approach that has caused both praise and critique within the fashion world. Carcel (prison in Spanish) produces its costly garments in Peruvian prisons.

The clothing is hand made by the inmates in a model that operates in alliance with the Peruvian prison system to provide labor opportunities for women who have ended in prison mostly due to poverty related circumstances such as prostitution, theft or drug crimes. The women are allegedly paid fair wages which are higher than the Latin American country’s established minimum wages. Their salaries vary depending on their level of experience, reason for which they also count with training and development of vocational skills³³.



Fig. 5
Carcel
(The Independent)

The creators selected the community in Peru due to the cultural abilities behind traditional activities such as weaving alpaca wool and leather confection. Some of the women who have benefited from this project claim that they are able to overcome their past thanks to the initiative. The prisoners count with an accounting program that provides them with a salary to cover daily expenses and which also transfers savings to their families. Social reinsertion programs are developed once the inmates have completed their sentences to prevent them from falling back into the ‘**anti-social**’ behavior that got them into prison in the first place³⁴. Carcel defends the narrative behind each garment they sell, as each piece represents a story of personal growth for the individual who created it.

In my personal opinion, and standing from a Latin American perspective, this is a positive initiative that definitely enters the spectrum of a social entrepreneurship and a socially focused sustainable business model. Reflecting on the discussion generated during the MASD19-20 lecture led by Sally Sutherland, this project triggered among the majority of the group a sense of rejection under the claim that this was human exploitation and colonial capitalism. Personally I prefer to focus on the cause beyond nationality and product pricing to understand the ‘**if and then**’ theory behind this proposal: If inmates develop positive social and economic activities during their sentence, then they will become productive members of society.

³¹ Ries, Eric. “The Lean Start Up.” Crown Publishing Group, 2011

³² Carcel | Home. Accessed on June 6, 2020 <https://carcel.co/>

³³ The New York Times. “Made on the Inside, Worn on the Outside”. Accessed on June 6, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/fashion/prison-labor-fashion-brands.html>

³⁴ The New York Times. “Made on the Inside, Worn on the Outside”. Accessed on June 6, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/fashion/prison-labor-fashion-brands.html>

Hla Day

Hla Day is a sustainable market initiative based in Myanmar. Their model consists on creating a business-smart support system for local artisans, many of whom are trying to overcome disability, health and poverty³⁵. This sustainable business model generates 'good design' through the creation of a broad network of individuals who carry out specific skillsets. The market operates an e-commerce website which offers a wide variety of products that range from fashion, to jewelry, to art and even food and literature to an international audience.

WARDROBE.NYC

WARDROBE.NYC is a "is a conceptual composite of luxury essentials, distilled into their purest and most desirable form". Their mission statement "heralds a conscious and liberated model for the future of luxury"³⁶. Founded in 2017 by Josh Goot and Christine Centenera, the company offers a true-luxury, direct-to-customer concept. The high-end fashion project offers a radical alternative to the fashion system through the concept of capsule wardrobe.

The term 'capsule wardrobe' was first presented by Susie Faux, the owner of a 1970's London based boutique called "Wardrobe". Faux stated that a capsule wardrobe consists on a collection of timeless, versatile and essential garments that do not go 'out of fashion'. The concept became popular in 1985 after designer Donna Karan released a capsule collection of seven work-wear pieces³⁷.



Fig. 6
WARDROBE.NYC
(WARDROBE.NYC)

³⁵ Hla Day | About Us - Our Model. Accessed on June 6, 2020 <https://www.hladaymyanmar.org/about-us#our-model>

³⁶ WARDROBE.NYC | Home. Accessed on June 6, 2020 <https://www.wardrobe.nyc/>

³⁷ Brass. "A Brief History of the Capsule Wardrobe" Accessed on June 10, 2020 <https://thatsbrass.wordpress.com/2016/01/10/a-brief-history-of-the-capsule-wardrobe/>

PlanToys

PlanToys is a manufacturer based in Thailand. The company develops children's toys from rubberwood, a sustainable by-product of the latex industry³⁸.

TobeUs

TobeUs is an Italian based manufacturer of toys. Their manifesto states to speak to children about conscious consumerism. The products are created by adults under fair wages following a simple design and production model on 16cm x 7.5cm x 7.5cm blocks of Lebanese cedar wood³⁹.

Melissa&Doug

Melissa&Doug is a family owned enterprise. This typical successful American start-up story started its days in a garage in the sub-urban East Coast. They develop their educational-oriented toys based on real customer research that they carry out themselves⁴⁰.



Fig. 7
PlanToys,
Melissa&Doug
and TobeUS

³⁸ PlanToys | About Us. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <http://www.plantoys.com/>

³⁹ TobeUs | A Matter of Toys. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <http://www.tobeus.it/matter-toys/>

⁴⁰ Melissa&Doug | Our History. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.melissaanddoug.com/our-history.html>

PART 2 - The creation of ONCA Creative Sustainability

The following section consists on responses which I addressed following global COVID19 pandemic and the resulting situation in Costa Rica upon my unexpected return from the United Kingdom. The exercise relates intrinsically to the developed research on Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Economies, Sustainable Business Models and Business Planning and considers the described sustainable design practices within the world of fashion design and children's toy production.

A Narrative of Intention

The following exercise narrates the current situation within my home country, prior to and following my return from the United Kingdom.

Costa Rica, Central America Year 2019

As the year ended, the small Central American country closed in on a staggering 3.14 million tourists who enhanced their lifetimes within the tropical and environmentally diverse destination.

For a country that represents only 51,100 square kilometers of land; and is home to 5 million inhabitants, this new record represented a 4.1 percentual increase from the previous year (2018), which had already been the best year itself.⁴¹

The Golden Egg; representing 7% of Costa Rica's GDP and injecting \$3.9 billion USD during 2019 had become a favorable promise for the general population, foreign investors, and developers; as it signed and welcomed more and more direct flights and travelers from around the globe.⁴²

Year 2020

As the Novel Coronavirus conquered frontiers, fear began to spread. The American Continent seemed to be the furthest away from the rapidly spreading contagion. However on March 6th 2020, a citizen of the United States, who had previously visited Italy, became the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Costa Rica and Central America.⁴³

41 Instituto Costarricense de Turismo - Statistics. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <https://www.icct.go.cr/en/statistics.html>

42 Instituto Costarricense de Turismo - Statistics. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <https://www.icct.go.cr/en/statistics.html>

43 Ministerio de Salud del Gobierno de Costa Rica - Noticias. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <https://www.ministeriodesalud.go.cr/index.php/centro-de-prensa/noticias/741-noticias-2020/1552-primer-caso-sospechoso-por-covid-19-en-costa-rica>

Eighteen days later, on March 18th, the Government of Costa Rica crucially decided to close its borders indefinitely to all non-citizens, and prepared the population for an unprecedented lockdown.⁴⁴

At this moment, the Golden Egg was dropped, and shattered into oblivion; leaving hundreds of thousands unemployed, along with desolated hotels and destinations, shut down businesses and an overall sense of awe and uncertainty.⁴⁵

A month and a half after my impulsive and unplanned return to Costa Rica, I find myself as one of many other 'ticos': although unemployed; eager to reinvent myself, and casually happy to be locked down in one of the countries with the lowest fatality rate in the American Continent.⁴⁶

The Land of Pura Vida

Pura Vida translates to pure life; it is hello and it is good-bye; it means that everything is OK and it means you are OK. Pura Vida is the lifestyle of a nation that likes to work, but loves to chill.

While making my transition back to 'life in the tropics', I am positively overwhelmed by the reaction of friends, relatives and fellow Costa Ricans towards the global pandemic.

I observe as the unemployed become entrepreneurs. I watch as digital communities surge into networks that connect and support small businesses. I gaze at the formerly traffic-struck roads that now host family walks and solitary jogs.

As I intermittently cling on to my adventure in England; dipping in and out weekly into a 'Seven-timezone-difference' schedule, I embrace the situation to develop my university project.

Can this global situation become an open ground of opportunities for me and many other collaborators? Where does sustainable creativity piece everything together?

All around the country, kids and parents remain in their homes. Parenting, schooling, entertainment and even dressing have changed. Tele-work, tele-studying and tele-shopping have now become the forced trend.

44 Delfino CR - Noticias. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <https://delfino.cr/2020/03/asi-funcionara-el-cierre-de-fronteras-y-el-aislamiento-obligatorio-durante-la-emergencia-nacional>

45 La República - Noticias. Accessed on May 12, 2020 <https://www.larepublica.net/noticia/desempleo-afectaria-a-mas-del-20-de-la-poblacion-segun-empresarios>

46 La República - Noticias. Accessed on May 12, 2020 <https://www.larepublica.net/noticia/costa-rica-tiene-la-tasa-mas-baja-de-latinoamerica-de-mortalidad-del-coronavirus-bbc-mundo>

My sister Claudia, a 37 year old fashion designer, founder of a slow fashion brand, and mother to a 2 year old, happy, healthy and curious toddler calls me to share her new idea. "I need you to create a drawing wall for Tomás."

Claudia's clothing business relies on a female and foreign clientele, who purchases her comfortable garments in a store located in the touristy Golden Coast of the Northern Pacific. This store, run by my other sister Andrea, has been negatively impacted by the now daunting economic situation.

This whole reality strikes my imagination and creativity, as I acknowledge the opportunity of launching ONCA Toys: a line of sustainably produced, educational toys; and ONCA Wear: a line of comfortable stay at home fashion collection for men.

As I engage in my thought process I split paths in parallel yet very distinctive directions.

First I meet Doña Cecilia. A 70 year old seamstress who is in charge of my sister's production. Cecilia has also been affected by the crisis, as many of her clients, including my sister, have backed down on production.

Claudia has a stock of quality fabrics that she had purchased foreseeing the upcoming high season, which was suffocated into nothingness by the Global Pandemic. With available fabrics, Cecilia's willingness to continue working, and a market niche open to explore, I take a leap into the world of fashion.

Simultaneously, I contact childhood friend Ximena. She's an outstanding entrepreneur who started a furniture business some years ago. Ximena and her company Chimpa are exceptional. She creates high end furniture, using only and exclusively sustainably sourced wood.

Her raw material comes from hardwood trees that have fallen naturally in private rainforest reserves, sick trees that are lumbered with official permits, and driftwood that washes up on the beautiful coasts of the country. Without hesitation, Ximena agrees to collaborate with me and provide me with offcuts from her workshop.

As I explore the idea of purchasing my own power-tools, I'm put down by my own financial situation, so I contact a furniture supplier I had previously worked with. Randall and his dad Don Pilo own a small carpentry workshop in rural Escazú. After meeting up with Don Pilo, he agrees to open up his workshop for me to develop my prototypes.



Evidently I'm not the craftiest woodworker around... so I remember a toy maker that sold beautifully hand-crafted wooden trucks, planes and animal figures in Orotina, a rural village that lies between the Capital and the Central Pacific Coast.

After a failed attempt to contact him via Facebook, I make up my mind to drive to his street-side, souvenir store. Not surprisingly, his store and dozens of other stores, restaurants and businesses are abandoned... closed... shut down.

Bummed but not beaten, I drive back to the capital and fantasize about how maybe, and just maybe, ONCA can become a real life thing. A social enterprise that threads a network of collaborators towards a wide array of marketable products and goals following a sustainable business model.

Can Sustainable Creativity become an economic driver, while aiding socially vulnerable individuals; and provide environmentally friendly solutions?

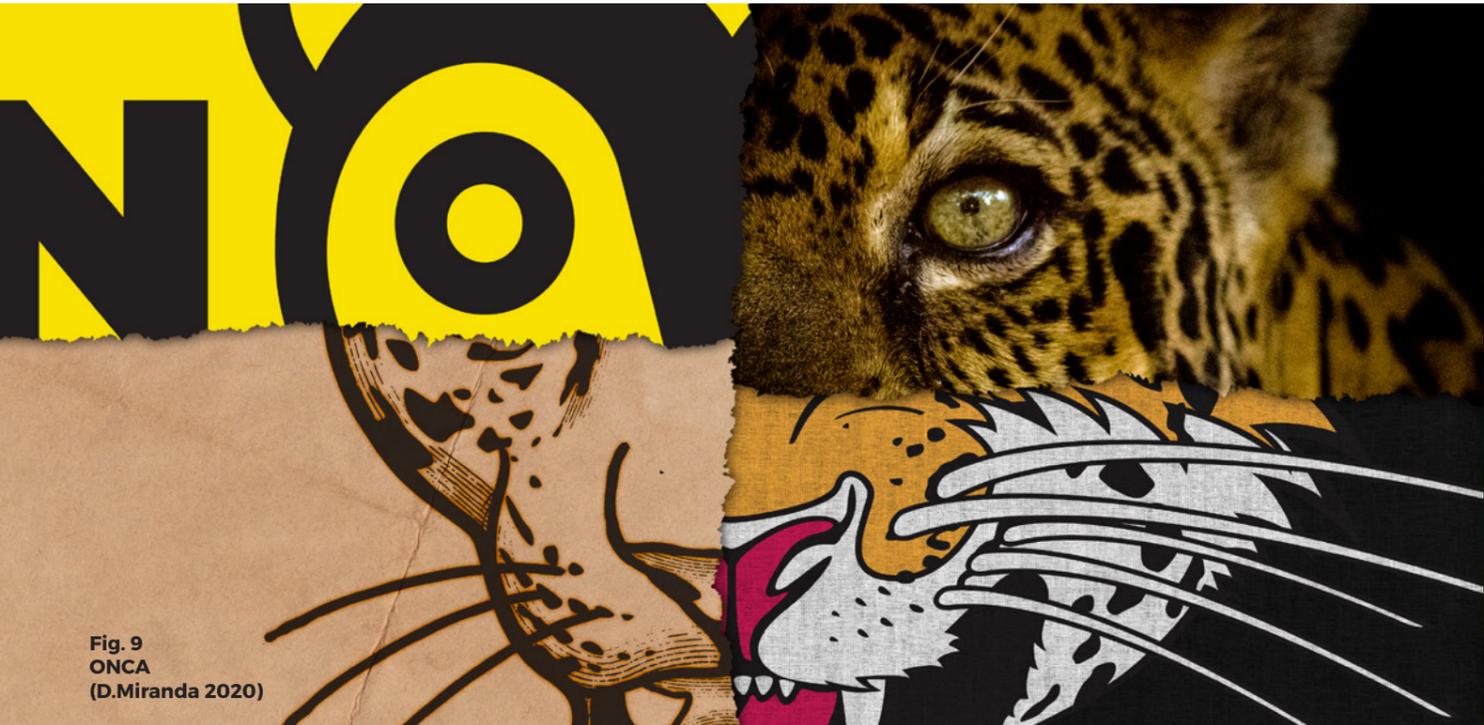
This is a leap of faith I'm definitely willing to take.

Diego Miranda Seevers - May 12, 2020

The Realm of the Jaguar

The following exercise explores the tangential and conceptual inspiration between the Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) and my project ONCA Sustainable Creativity.

Panthera Onca : Balance, Power and Mysticism



Introduction

Throughout the academic year I've brought up my affinity towards the jaguar.
Where does this come from?

Shaping Ecosystems

Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) are the 3rd largest feline of the World, and largest felines of the American continent. These large cats have the most powerful jaw of all felines which has evolved to crush skulls, turtle shells and tear through thick skin such as the caimans⁴⁷. The term 'Jaguar' originates from the Guaraní term Yagua, or Tupi Yaguará. The original name is Yaguareté which translates to "true, fierce beast"⁴⁸.

47 Hartstone-Rose, A.; Perry, J. M. G.; Morrow, C. J. (2012). 'Bite Force Estimation and the Fiber Architecture of Felid Masticatory Muscles'. *The Anatomical Record: Advances in Integrative Anatomy and Evolutionary Biology*, 295 (8): 1336-1351. doi:10.1002/ar.22518. PMID 22707481.

48 Harper, D. (2001-2017). 'Jaguar'. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper.

They are opportunist hunters (not chasers) they stalk their prey and usually pounce from a blind spot, aiming for the skull or back of the neck. The presence of jaguars in an ecosystem represents a healthy balance. They prey mainly on herbivores, which themselves are seed dispersers. So jaguars in a way shape patterns of prey populations and plant distribution and diversity.⁴⁹



Symbolism & Mysticism

Jaguars have represented symbols of power and magic for pre-columbian cultures throughout the Central American and South American regions. Artwork, masks, jewelry and temples depict jaguar heads, faces and skin, and even anthropomorphic beings. Jaguars were believed to connect humans with the spiritual and natural world.⁵⁰ Amazonian natives imitated the jaguars ingestion of a peculiar vine, that would alter their state and enhance their performance in their hunt. This vine is used to produce ayahuasca, which natives say gives them jaguar vision.⁵¹

49 Sáenz-Bolaños, Carolina, Fuller, Todd K. and Carrillo J, Eduardo. 'Wildlife Diversity and Relative Abundance Among a Variety of Adjacent Protected Areas in the Northern Talamanca Mountains of Costa Rica'. April 1, 2020.

50 Christenson, Allen J. (2007). *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya*. University of Oklahoma Press. p. 196. ISBN 978-0-8061-3839-8. Retrieved 11 December 2011.

51 Brown, Chip. 'Inside the Hidden World of Jaguars'. *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/12/shrinking-kingdom-of-the-jaguar/>

Conservation

Today the main threat for jaguars is cattle and soya production. 70% of soya production world wide is used for cattle feed. Farming is increasingly destroying jaguars' habitat throughout the American continent and ranchers often encounter conflict when jaguars target cattle due to poor ecosystems and prey reduction.⁵²

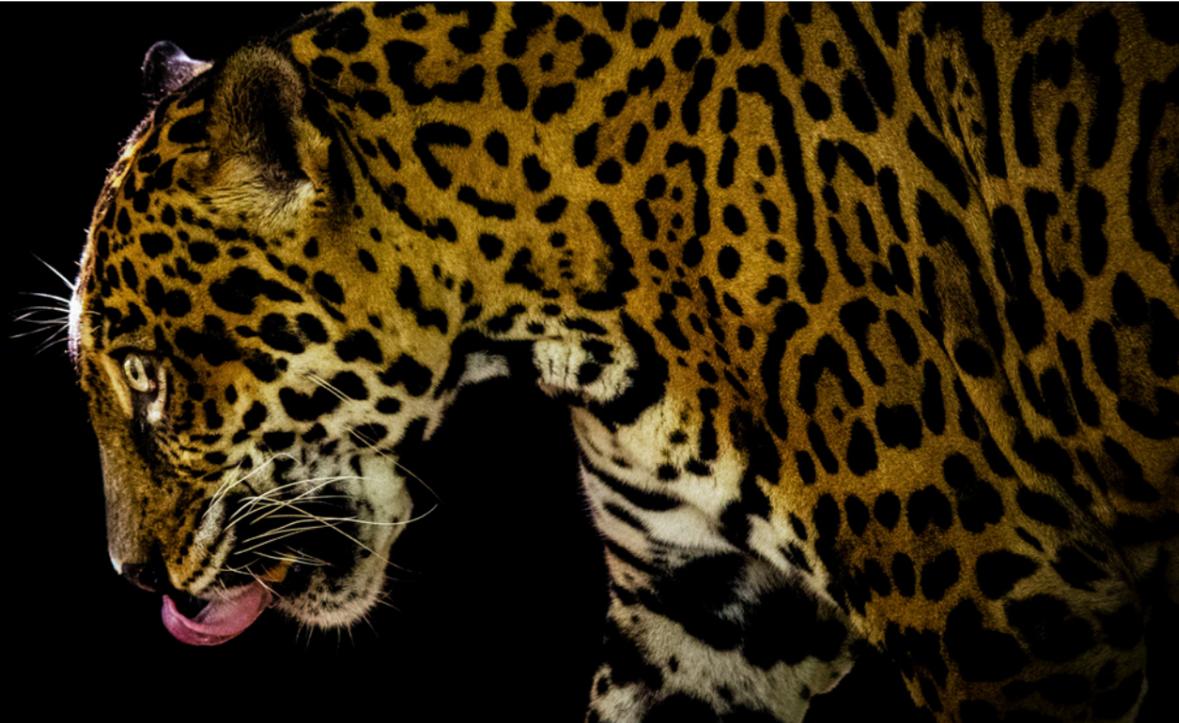


Fig. 11
Rafa the Jaguar
(D.Miranda 2017)

Organizations such as Panthera⁵³ are working with governments throughout the continent to create a biological corridor from Mexico and through Central America, down to South America and the Amazon. The goal of such initiatives is to facilitate and promote genetic diversity amongst these animals and avoid isolation of their genetic groups as well as the species they interact with.

Influence

Jaguars are clearly an element of power and influence for my project, not only from the branding and visual element, but also as a metaphor of balancing social systems and creating healthy economical environments focusing on sustainable design and creativity. The connection to the jaguar also brings opportunity to create bonds with conservation and educational initiatives.

⁵² Romero-Muñoz, Alfredo. "Beyond fangs: beef and soybean trade drive jaguar extinction" The Ecological Society of America. 2020

⁵³ Panthera - Our Work. Accessed on May 12, 2020. <https://www.panthera.org/initiative/jaguar-corridor-initiative>

ONCA Creative Sustainability - the creation of a Social Enterprise⁵⁴

ONCA Sustainable Creativity was established in 2018 in Costa Rica. The brand and company were registered in four strategic classes: Furniture, Children's Toys, Clothing & Accessories and Professional Services.

These four classes are fundamental to the structure of the company. Each class offers an array of possibilities of products and potential customers, but most importantly, each class offers an opportunity of collaboration between professional and socially vulnerable individuals.

The main mission of ONCA Sustainable Creativity is to offer innovative and sustainable solutions for everyday problems through product design and services (within the previously mentioned classes).

The vision of ONCA Sustainable Creativity is to create sustainable networks between professional and socially vulnerable individuals, exploring research and development, professional services, product design and co-working; within a productive, educational and proactive structure.

Each class (product or service) although seemingly unrelated, has a distinctive function or purpose. This is the beginning of a path towards a Social Enterprise that explores the previously researched concepts to be developed in Costa Rica.



⁵⁴ Miranda, Diego. "Sustainable Business Model | ONCA Creative Sustainability" MASD University of Brighton. May 2020

PART 3 - Networking and Innovative Design

In the following section I will refer to various brands, projects and individuals whom I have collaborated with in order to develop this initiative.

Developing Networks : ONCA Wear

Nabruk⁵⁵ is a clothing brand based, designed and produced in Costa Rica. The brand was established in 2009 by Claudia Miranda, a Costa Rican fashion designer who graduated from Fashion Design in Madrid, Spain. As she recalls, the brand was born after a 2 month immersion in the pristine jungle of the Osa Peninsula. Claudia found inspiration in the earthy tones of the tropical rainforest, and developed comfortable clothing garments that enabled free movement and flow.

Developed mainly for women, by women, Nabruk entered the international market niche of yoga, and spiritual retreat tourism. As she states, her first production was sold in the Osa Peninsula at a eco-friendly yoga retreat center. This would mark the beginning of a stable business model that offered locally produced, slow fashion, comfortable garments to the constant and ever changing flow of tourists that visit Costa Rica. Initially, Claudia followed the “start where you are, use what you have, do what you can” model of production. This meant using locally available fabrics purchased in San José, the capital of Costa Rica, and producing slowly and locally in home workshops.



Fig. 12
Nabruk Design
(M. Procter 2016)

The garments produced are stylish and most importantly comfortable. Minimalist design and basic color palettes result in versatile garments that can be worn as casual or formal wear; and even offer the practicality of travel, sport and/or lounge wear. Her client base is usually reached by word of mouth. Many of her clients reach out years after their initial purchase to request a whole wardrobe collection due to the longevity and high quality of the garments. This has led Nabruk to create a valuable International client base and sell in studios and shops in the United States of America and Canada.

Nabruk’s focus on local and slow production has represented a stable work environment for several head of home women throughout the years. Produced in small home workshops, Nabruk has provided economical opportunities for a wide array of women of all ages and (Central American) nationalities. This social relation behind the production guarantees fair wages and positive employer/employee relationships. Nabruk sources fabrics from local distributors to avoid adding transportation carbon footprint to the collections. This also keeps the economic stream within the national territory (Costa Rica).

Through Nabruk and Claudia I met Doña Cecilia. She is a 70 year old seamstress who lives in rural Escazú, a village in San José. Cecilia has worked in the fashion industry for over 50 years. Cecilia told me about her last employer, an offshore brand that outsourced the production of the Canadian Police uniforms. As Cecilia reached a more and more mature age, her employer offered two options, ceasing her contract under full compensation or transferring her to quality control and other duties. Cecilia however had her own plans and accepted the first option and invested in her own home workshop where she began to work independently.

⁵⁵ Nabruk Design - Instagram. Accessed on May 15, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/nabrukdesign/?hl=en>

Now, handling production for Nabruk and 3 other projects, Cecilia provides work to other women who rely on the creation of these garments. Cecilia's experience in the industry has led her to develop optimized production methods and minimum waste strategies. As we develop and co-design a new line of mens wear, we make use of the most material to avoid unnecessary waste, which if created, will be repurposed by other projects, also led by women who develop accessories from textile waste.

For this new project, I am collaborating with Claudia and Cecilia to produce a collection of menswear. I have jumped into the existing production line of Nabruk which had readily available fabrics that were previously purchased to meet the demand of the high season of the tourism industry. However, with the borders of Costa Rica closed indefinitely, this product was not being used. The intention of this collaboration is to create a new market segment aimed to the now stay at home male population who has also been affected by the lockdowns following the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this new product our aim is to continue the established workflow and use the readily available resources in a new production.

El Imperio de las Colitas⁵⁶ is a pop up vintage clothing shop. It was established in 2018 by Silvia María Rojas and Swan Wallnofer. El Imperio de las Colitas offers a curated selection of preloved high-end and high quality garments of some of the fashion industry's most renowned brands.

These garments are rescued from local thrift shops and used-clothing stores, or "americanas", as they're known in Costa Rica. Silvia and Swan look for the highest quality, finest and certainly most extravagant garments; some from the most recognized brands and collections and other treasured finds from the past.



Fig. 13
El Imperio
de las Colitas (2020)

Materiality is important for their collections. They look for silk, leather, cotton, cashmere, wool and other organic materials, avoiding the more modern polysynthetic materials of the growing fast fashion industry.

Their focus is mainly the female market, however they've recently included menswear in their collections. Their modus operandi consists of holding one pop-up shop event every two months. The garments are collected throughout the time lapsed between events. Some days before the event they reveal the location of the pop up and begin a visual campaign showcasing the selected garments on social media. This methodology of collections and transitory location (in space and time) results in a very sustainable approach concerning use of physical space and resources, a strategy that complements with the already sustainable synergy of preloved fashion.

The business model that this project follows is extremely profitable. Most of the purchased garments are practically rescued from a fashion waste stream and after a cleaning and restoration process (if necessary) are later sold with a revenue of 500% and up to 2000%. Marketing strategies are based mostly on word of mouth and collaborations with influential individuals of the fashion industry in Costa Rica. Many of their garments are also looked for to be used as props in several local film and photography productions.

With the current situation regarding the global COVID-19 pandemic and sanitary restrictions, El Imperio de las Colitas digitalized their sales channel and made use of social media to sell the latest collection. Adapting to the use of digital media, online showcasing, drop-shipping and wire-transfers, their latest collections have been complete sellouts.

⁵⁶ El Imperio de las Colitas - Instagram. Accessed on May 15, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/elimperiodelascolitas/?hl=en>

As part of the development of ONCA Wear, I am collaborating with El Imperio de las Colitas to create a line of repurposed and redesigned unisex jackets. These jackets follow the concept of one size fits most and genderless fashion that results in an more widely open market niche.

N16VINTAGE⁵⁷ is a U.K. based business that develops a series of sub-brands and projects. RAGYARD is one of the concepts developed by N16VINTAGE and counts with stores in London and Brighton. RAGYARD is a family business that explores culture through design and textiles. Scouring the worlds ragyards, founder Josephine Starsmore sources the most valuable pieces of clothing that she can find along with her team of curators.

I came across RAGYARD's store in The Lanes during my time in Brighton. Casually the day I visited the store I met Carlota Sierra, the store's retail manager. After telling her of my interest in visiting their workshop as research for my personal university project she surprised me with the fact that 'Jossie' the owner was just around the block. After introducing me to Jossie, they both accepted for me and my classmate Julia Siegler to visit the workshop in London.

Our visit was hosted by Office Manager & HR Executive Negar Shah and Marketing Director Paige Beer. The N16VINGAGE headquarders are located in a 3 story building in Bounds Green Industrial Estate, London. The company employs about 40 people who work in-house on most of the operation. In the most welcoming manner they gave me and Julia a full tour of the building.

On the middle floor, the graphic and fashion design departments develop unique prints, patches, combinations and patterns to

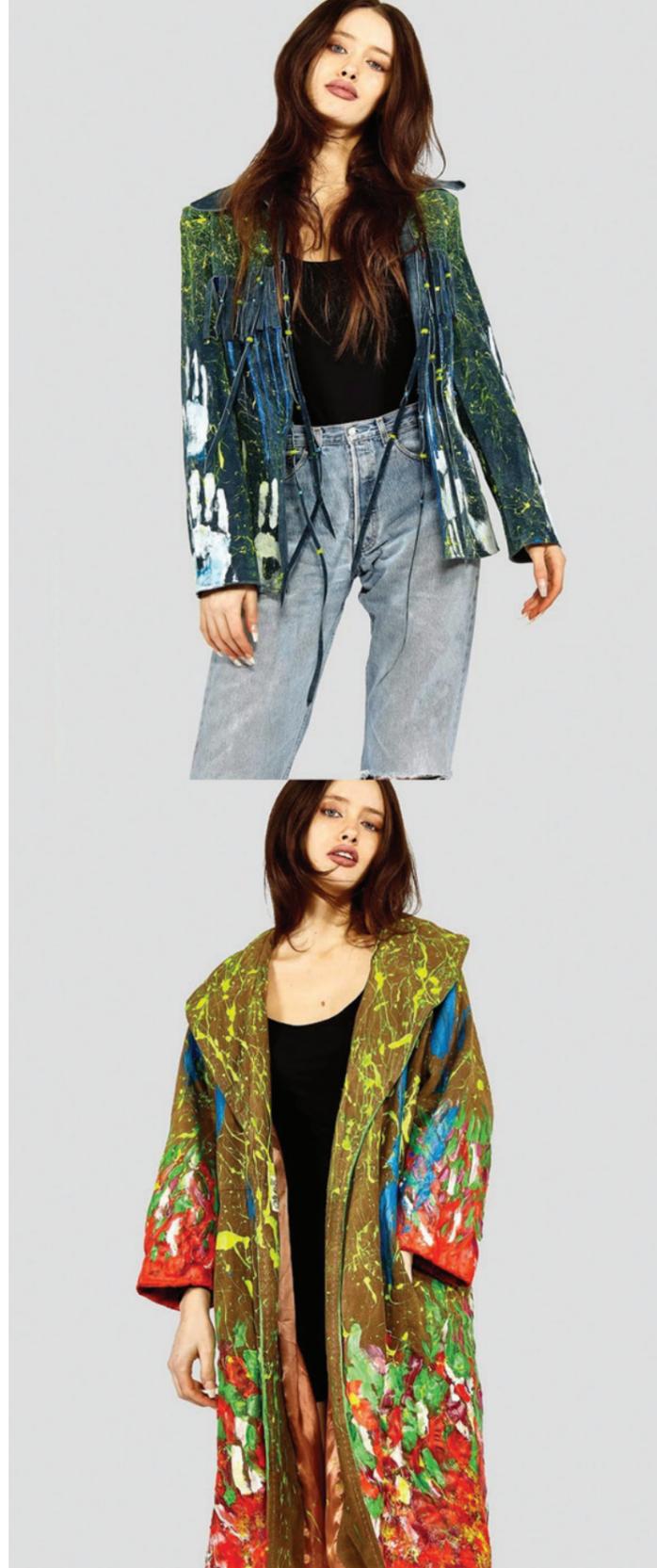


Fig. 14
Ragyard
& Ivea Li

be printed, stitched and brought together into modern and lively street fashion. The creative team also counts with a group of photographers, models and social media managers who develop content creation on a weekly basis and manage their community of fans, followers and customers.

The top floor is occupied by the accounting team. Here the cost structure and financial strategy is developed, based on the garments they collect from around the world. Interestingly, and yet not surprisingly, the majority of clothing is sourced from the United States of America, as they represent the Worlds largest consumer of clothing and hence largest producer of fashion waste in the world. Most of these garments are purchased on large scaled sales in France and other parts of continental Europe, and then shipped to the United Kingdom.

The bottom floor consisted of a sample and prototyping workshop. Several experienced seamstresses and tailors from different nationalities work on one of a kind garments. These garments are created using repurposed or recycled pieces of previously existing fabrics and clothing. On the time of my visit, RAGYARD was developing a collection of up cycled bomber jackets made up from pieces of sports bombers. Paige invited me and Julia to participate on the creative process. She explained to us that in order to keep a cost structure, they design formulas to optimize material consumption and production hours. With this formulated structure they can price the garments effectively and maintain a profitable margin.

The developed prototypes are then outsourced to another workshop where the main production is developed. Other than the two stores in the United Kingdom, RAGYARD sells on digital channels such as their online store and social media.

⁵⁷ N16VINTAGE - Home. Accessed on May 25,2020. <https://www.n16vintage.com/>

Other channels include retail stores and partnerships with other companies such as H&M, Harrods, Urban Outfitters, Asos, Namshi, amongst others. RAGYARD also collaborates with independent artists such as London based artist and designer Ieva Li⁵⁸.

Another interesting business strategy that N16VINTAGE implements is production and distribution of other brands. Housing experimental brands such as Blood Brother⁵⁹, up cycled surplus such as Vintage Supply⁶⁰ and Reclaimed Vintage⁶¹, as well as other renowned brands such as Mossimo⁶² and Socksmith⁶³, results in a family of businesses that make the operation more economically stable.

The most important insight from my visit to N16VINTAGE was learning that a personal project focused on sustainable fashion can become a profitable international operation that promotes up-cycling and repurposing existing clothing from waste streams. The uniqueness of the brands mentioned spring from the extravagant work of a group of international designers, artists and creatives who's ideas and creations come together in a collaborative workspace.

Developing Networks : ONCA Toys

Chimpa is a furniture studio based in Costa Rica. It was founded in 2016 by Ximena Quirós, a Costa Rican, industrial and product designer graduate from Savannah College of Art and Design. Ximena's vision is to create unique furniture using exclusively sustainably sourced wood. Her drive to develop a sustainable business comes from a life long dream of creating a company whose products impacted not only the end user but also its creators.

⁵⁸ Ieva Li - Shop. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.ievalishop/>

⁵⁹ BloodBrother - Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://blood-brother.com/>

⁶⁰ Vintage Supply - Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020. www.vintage-supply.com

⁶¹ Reclaimed Vintage - Instagram. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/reclaimedvintagedn/?hl=en>

⁶² Mossimo - Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020. www.mossimoauthentic.co.uk

⁶³ SockSmith - Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020. www.socksmith.co.uk

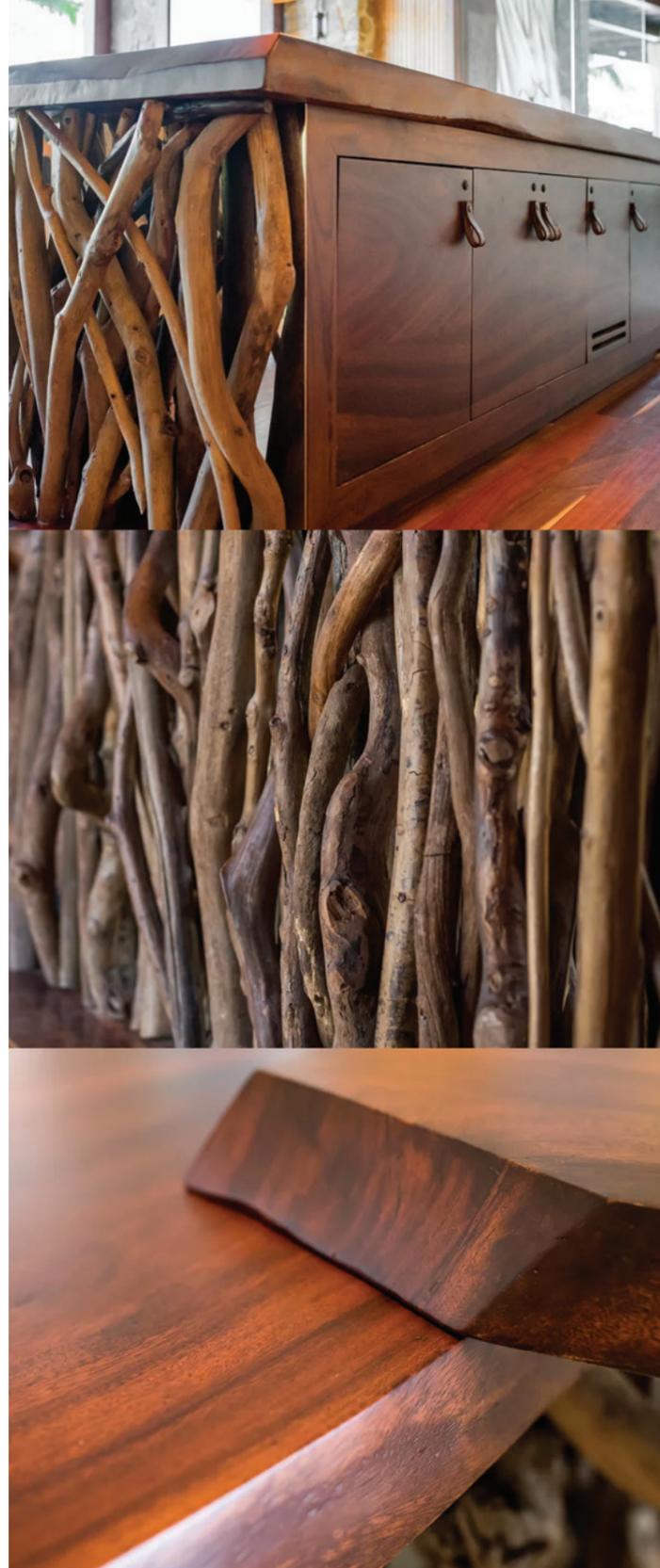


Fig. 15
Chimpa CR
Four Seasons

⁶⁴ ChimpaCR - Instagram. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8JViEndtf/>

⁶⁵ Chimpa CR - Wood. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.chimpacr.com/madera>

As Ximena recalls, her father once told her “ Act as a child, think as a child; keep life simple; seize the day; and do what you're passionate about with all your heart.” Following her childhood values, Chimpa's vision follows the philosophy that if it's not good for Nature it's not worth doing it. The priority behind the creations is to leave no carbon footprint, and instead leave a valuable message of protection of natural resources⁶⁴.

Chimpa sources their wood from fallen trees, drift wood, recycled and/or repurposed wood from boats, old houses and other sources to create unique pieces of furniture. Their slogan “If furniture could talk” triggers the criticality of sustainability in furniture making and interior design. Every piece of furniture is unique and every piece of wood is sourced differently. This concept explores the concepts of circularity in an industry that is responsible for the extraction of non renewable precious wood, or the creation of artificial forests for timber, which affect native and endemic species of flora and fauna.

Chimpa explores key concepts of sustainable production such as recyclability. The use of existing and discarded wood or naturally fallen trees results in a reduction of their carbon footprint. Since they rely on unique pieces of wood, their production is slow and small scale as opposed to massively produced and unsustainable commercial furniture.⁶⁵

Chimpa has developed a strong and important client base in Costa Rica, furnishing with its creations luxury hotels like the Four Seasons in Guanacaste, trendy restaurants in San José as well as design studios and houses.

Arte Indígena Huetar las Tumbas⁶⁶ is a project founded by Esmeralda Sánchez. Esmeralda is a member of the Huetar indigenous reserve of Quitirrisí, located in San José, the capital of Costa Rica. Quitirrisí is home to a population of about 1200 Costa Rican natives of the Huetar ethnicity⁶⁷.

Esmeralda develops workshops to teach ancestral and traditional crafts of the Huetar culture. Some of the disciplines that she and her family teach through her project are: traditional basket weaving, sahumador pottery, clay-stamp making, and creation of instruments such as the ocarina and the rainstick. She began this project as an initiative to transcend the Huetar legacy among the younger generations of her community.

However, amidst the lack of interest from the younger members of her community, she is pushing the craft to a broader audience within the country. Esmeralda and her family have developed a small business around the production of artisan crafts which they sell for cultural but mainly economical purposes. Some of her customers include the Museum of Pre-Columbian Gold of Costa Rica, a gallery devoted to showcase the magnificent arts and crafts of the indigenous and Pre-Columbian cultures of Costa Rica⁶⁸. However, her main customers were mostly foreigners who visited Costa Rica for touristic purposes. She has received students have form all around South America, North America and even Europe, and most of her creations are sold as souvenirs to tourists and visitors. With the on going crisis, Esmeralda's business has been negatively impacted.



Fig. 16
Esmeralda Sánchez
(D.Miranda 2020)

Amidst the novel COVID-19 pandemic, Esmeralda has taken on digital platforms to carry out her workshops. Currently, as lockdown measures ease down, Esmeralda has relaunched her courses following the recommendations from Ministry of Health, of reducing the capacity to 50% to avoid conglomerations. Since non-indigenous people are not allowed to visit the reserve, Esmeralda counts on the support of collaborators who share physical locations for her to develop her workshops.

I reached out to Esmeralda with the intention of developing collaborations between our projects. I manifested my personal interest towards sustainable printing techniques, sustainable packaging and indigenous design. As we elaborated on our initial discussion, we considered the importance of respecting her culture and not falling into negative cultural appropriation practices. This in mind, she manifested her interest in overcoming frontiers to promote her work as an indigenous native and artist.

Esmeralda introduced us to indigenous design techniques and symbolism. The complexity behind the creation of the pieces was contrasted by the simplicity of the designs. The mysticism behind the creations and the intention behind the process resulted in an output charged with narrative and personality.

FABLAB by Veritas University⁶⁹ is a Digital Fabrication Laboratory for fast prototyping and advanced manufacturing that offers affordable design and production technology available for start ups, young designers and independent brands.

Veritas University has pioneered specialized design education in Costa Rica and created their FABLAB to promote and impulse design projects for social change. FABLAB by Veritas University offers special prices for graduates from their University.

⁶⁶ Arte Indígena Huetar Las Tumbas - Facebook. Accessed on May 25, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/Arte-Ind%C3%ADgena-Huetar-Las-Tumbas-2284170168521506/?ref=page_internal

⁶⁷ Anuario Estadístico 2014 - 2015 "Compendio de datos del país". Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://www.inec.cr/sites/default/files/documentos-biblioteca-virtual/reanuario2014-2015.pdf>

⁶⁸ Museo de Oro Precolombino de Costa Rica <https://museosdelbancocentral.org/>

⁶⁹ FABLAB by Veritas | Home. Accessed on May 25, 2020 <http://fablab.veritas.cr/>

PART 4 - Development of ONCA Sustainable Creativity

The last part of this project consists on a visual display of the developed design pieces. The first collections of ONCA Toys and ONCA Wear are grounded on the research developed during this module.

ONCA Wear : A journey into Sustainable Fashion

Who made your clothes? Is it produced under fair wages and humane conditions? Do they promote economic activity within your community? How is the waste managed?

This collection is a result of a collaboration with Nabruk Design. Initially the developed collection was aimed towards a male market niche. Interestingly enough, after initial market tests, a female audience seems to be more interested.

The main concept behind the collection is "Comfort is Luxury". The designed garments explore the previously discussed concepts of capsule wardrobes, and entail principles of simplicity⁷⁰. The idea behind a comfortable, stay at home wear is to promote slowing down, in reference to slow fashion and also to the slow paced lifestyle that has emerged post COVID19. This strategy intends to affect the way people feel⁷¹ about staying at home.



Fig. 17
ONCA Wear
(D.Miranda 2020)

The process behind the creation of ONCA Wear aided three different female entrepreneurs, from fabric sourcing, to confection, to screen printing services. On the confection process, we aimed to develop zero waste techniques. The patterns are created to avoid unnecessary offcuts. The offcuts created are used for smaller details such as pockets, bags for packaging or are donated to local artisans who create textile accessories.

Possible placement strategies may consider developing capsule prices versus individual prices. Post purchase customer service may consider repair and / or replacement of damaged garments

ONCA Toys : Creating a World of Imagination

Where does the wood that you interact with come from? Does it come from renewable species? Is it sustainably sourced? What trees and ecosystems are being lumbered for your consumption?

Nazareno is a tropical hardwood that is greatly valued for its purple color. This extremely dense and heavy wood is listed as a threatened and least common species in Costa Rica (UICN 1988). It is found only in the Central Pacific Conservation Area and the Osa Conservation Area. It is native only to Costa Rica and Panama⁷².

This collection is the result of a collaboration with Chimpa. These toys were handcrafted from some of the samples and offcuts I got from Ximena Quirós, founder of Chimpa. As she recalls, the planks were once the flooring of a house built in San José, Costa Rica, around the 1950's. The planks were rescued and then repurposed into a garden deck, at her house.

⁷⁰ Maeda, John. "The Laws of Simplicity." The MIT Press, 2016. p.iv

⁷¹ Maeda, John. "The Laws of Simplicity." The MIT Press, 2016. p.8

⁷² InBIO | *Peltogyne purpurea*. Accessed on May 23, 2020. <http://www.crbio.cr:8080/neoportal-web/species/Peltogyne%20purpurea>

These precious pieces of a once magical tree were stylized into figurines of some of the animals that inhabit the rainforests and natural wonders of Costa Rica. The design aims to stylize the shape and essence of these animals, just as it was once done by the natives of these lands. A jaguar, a caiman and an anteater will now carry on the materiality of this precious wood. By jumping into a new waste stream I aimed to re-circulate this precious material into new products.

These toys don't rely on toxic lacquers, paints, glue or finishings. They've been only treated with naturally non-toxic and vegan friendly linseed oil.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the development of this workbook and the proposed design outcomes have initiated an exciting opportunity to begin exploring the commercialization of a series of sustainably designed products. The substantial theory behind business and social entrepreneurship concepts and strategies seems to be at the tip of ones fingers. However, the success behind most social enterprises requires much more than intellectual research.

The emotional drive behind building rapport to develop these networks relies on much more than what one can absorb in books. The development of a social enterprise only seems to begin with this first phase. It is becoming clear to me that the creative process must be responsive and adapt to unpredictable situations that may occur along the journey.



Fig. 18
ONCA Toys
(D. Miranda 2020)

At the end of this module, the result is the creation of a series of minimum viable products, or prototypes with which I can now explore market behavior. The next stage consists on a learning process to understand possible customer needs⁷³. Once I prove or fail to find potential business opportunities, I can continue to develop the networks and scale strategies to incorporate more individuals into the enterprise structure.

Further development must be carried out in order to make these products successful. I am considering the possibility of developing further research to analyze the market and revenue potential which could be developed though interviews for prototype feedback.

Overall the project has become a very interesting and challenging personal approach to design which was initially inspired by the desire of producing the design outcomes but eventually led to the theorization of a holistic approach towards Sustainable Design and Social Entrepreneurship.



Fig. 19
Creating ONCA Toys
(D.Miranda 2020)

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Diego Miranda Seevers
Sustainable Design Studio
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