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# Master Thesis

## Measuring Social Entrepreneurial Impact

- New Framework Tested with a Norwegian Case Study -

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### 4.1 Allgrønn

Erling Okkenhaug (60 years old) is the leader of Allgrønn which he started around 1990. He has been emotionally interested in life and societies since he was a child. His work possesses both idealistic and commercial. Erling estimates about 20% of his work is commercial and 80% idealistic. The idealistic projects are then funded by the commercial gains. The commercial work is placed under his company Gentle Wave, i.e. marketing and advising company. Then there is the idealistic "organization" Allgrønn where the main work concerns human ecology, i.e. the interactions of people within their environment, e.g. nature environment (climate crisis), created environment (buildings) and social environment. Its mainly focused on preventing "bad things" to happen in the city development. Allgrønn's mission is to change the architects, investors, politicians, planners, etc. way of behaviour, i.e. the ideology that house is only a object. Erling believes that a house is a circumstance, i.e. the surroundings and the area needs to be discussed in relation. The reason for focusing on changing their behaviour is prevention, as today the metaphor for Allgrønn has often been: Ready, too late! That is, when the plans come out, they are already on their way to decision and therefore it is usually too late to do change anything.

One of Allgrønn main strategies has been to attract media attention, and its success in leveraging the media has led to growing public awareness. This action has definitely been a threat towards the concerned parties who are making something which is mostly beneficial for themselves, but could be a threat to the environment and/or the society.

Erling operates alone, but connects to a global network of people working together in projects which are emotionally linked to life and societies. He points out the weakness of this: "It's not easy for us to cooperate, because we are people that demand big space around us." He also works as a coach/mentor for different people. Erling does not believe in having a board and board members, for him it's a waste of time or as he phrases himself: "All the tasks are so obviously important, so I do not need that."

Erling believes in hard work and results, but he has been quite obsessed with results, because that was his upbringing. As he emphasizes: "There has to be results, or else it's really useless." Erling stresses the necessity of some

framework or model that could measure his work, i.e. his social impact. If it could be measured and presented, it could be a lot easier to get funding. He has nevertheless not been able to measure his results and it has therefore been more like a “good feeling” when he knows that he has got his message out, e.g. when he stopped the harbour authorities from building a huge container harbour in the centre of Oslo. Erling also wondered how he could measure his protest. He adds that it is a difficult and challenging task since it has so many elements into it. There are so many activities around every discussion, therefore it’s very hard to single out and measure the importance of his push into the system.

Erling knows his work is not structured and it is necessary for him to improve that and make strategies for their effective operations. As he says: “The way I work is more like an artist which thrives on impulse and ideas, not structure.” Erling mentions it is very easy to talk about his visions and reasons, however it is a huge task to organize the structure of these reflections. Today he is making a structure of all his materials to see if there is a thread that is obvious to follow for the next ten years. Before he never had this strategy feeling, like this is the right thing to do, but now when he finds these 4-5 words that is the lead idea, he believes that all the things that he has done come into place. Based on that, he can then use all the work as evidence.

Erling points out that governments and foundations hardly support his kind of work. He also said that it is his own fault: “I should manage to get funding, but it is time consuming as you have to fill out lot of forms.” Erling emphasizes: “It takes more time to get the money than to do the job.” He therefore often begins his approach even without funding, but his works have often gained sympathy and even got support from the riches. In the last 15 years he has received two major fundings. For last three years, Allgrønn has also had a kind of sponsorship from a funding group. The problem is however how long the projects can be funded with limited resources? Time to time he has had serious financial problems to sustain his running projects and in coming October (2011) Allgrønn has no funding left. Erling stresses his concern: “I have sold everything that I had to do this, my flat and everything, I spend my all money on this.” He concludes: “I am a bit exhausted from this fight. Its been like David and Goliath. We are very small with no resources, fighting people that have billion of kroner as possible profit.”

We see Erling more as a Social Activist<sup>1</sup> as there is no business model behind his operation, therefore he does not fall under our definition as a SE. Erling believes that ideas which really serve people bring no money, or extremely good ideas have very little or no money in them. He even goes so far to say: “The more good it is for the normal men in the street, the less money.” Based on this, it does not surprise us that his hardest struggle has been to survive economically, as he has had to fight his battle straight away without having time to gain funding. However, all this surprises us in a way because his background is from business and we would therefore think that he would focus more on cash flows, as he knows the importance of it for survival. If you can’t keep yourself floating (sustainability), how are you able to keep others from drowning (mission/performance) and finally help them to the shore (scale/depth)? However, Erling’s characteristics and worry about the growing social and

environmental issues in the society, and his radical ideas in addressing those challenges, relates somewhat to Social Entrepreneurship. That is supported by one of Erling's comments: "I want to change the society. When other start to do the same as us, that's the best thing that can happen, than it really changes the society." Then again he moves in a way into the direction of a activist or even charity worker: "Of course it's hard to find business in it, but it's the best approach just to give it. The best idea, belongs to itself, it doesn't belong to anybody. If I think I would own the idea, I would never succeed."

Allgrønn is an interesting case to investigate further, as of course the social impact of a Social Activist has as much importance as of a SE. If the impact left by his ideas and works to the society could be measured it will not only be beneficial for Allgrønn, but the society as a whole, however our main focus with this thesis is to look upon the Social Entrepreneurial field.<sup>2</sup>