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## SPECIAL ISSUE

# Putting entrepreneurship in corporate change agency: A typology of social intrapreneurs

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## Abstract

Social intrapreneurs can help corporations to address grand challenges and create hybrid value—that is simultaneous commercial and social value—by identifying and exploring entrepreneurial opportunities that address social or environmental issues. However, we still know little about how individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations. Based on a qualitative study of social intrapreneurs and their supporters, we identify variations in social intrapreneurial profiles along two dimensions: the role of the social intrapreneur in the entrepreneurial process (idea initiator versus idea explorer), and their position (within core business departments versus within sustainability departments). We contribute to the literature by identifying four different types of social intrapreneurs as corporate change agents—the Visionary Business Insurgent, the Visionary Sustainability Transformer, the Enabled Business Expert, and the Enabled Sustainability Expert—and by shedding light on four pathways to social intrapreneurship that vary in initial levels of agency and ethical expression.

## KEYWORDS

change agents, corporate social responsibility, hybrid businesses, social innovation, social intrapreneurship, social value, typology

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial approaches to social value creation—once assumed to originate mainly in new social, environmental, and sustainable ventures—increasingly originate in large, conventional corporations (Schaltegger et al., 2016): a phenomenon often referred to as social intrapreneurship (Austin et al., 2006; Mair & Martí, 2006). In this context, social intrapreneurs have been emerging as a new category of corporate change agent that combines “the practice of addressing social problems by means of markets” (Mair, 2020, p. 333) with the ambition to transform business for societal betterment (Austin & Reficco, 2009). Sam McCracken, for example, led the creation of Nike N7, a line of products that incorporates the values of Native

American and Indigenous communities and that since 2009 has funded more than \$8 million in grants to get children involved in physical activity (League of Intrapreneurs, 2018; Nike N7, n.d.). In another example, Myriam Sidibe lobbied Unilever's Lifebuoy brand to change the handwashing behavior of one billion people, leading a 15-year public health campaign that reduced infection and child mortality, and drove commercial growth for Unilever in emerging markets (Ashoka Changemakers, 2013; Sidibe, n.d.).

As these examples illustrate, social intrapreneurs are “individuals or groups of individuals [who] seek to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities that address social problems from within established organizations” (Geradts & Alt, 2022, p. 198). Often acting as ethical champions (Hemingway, 2005) or modern-tempered

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radicals (Meyerson & Scully, 1995), these internal change agents create new business models that combine social and commercial goals in organizations that are not designed for hybrid value creation such as corporations with a predominant focus on making profits (Belinfanti, 2015; Halme et al., 2012). Central to our definition is the notion that social intrapreneurs act on entrepreneurial opportunities, that is, “situations in which new goods, services, raw materials, markets and organizing methods can be introduced through the formation of new means, ends, or means-ends relationships” (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003, p. 336). By devising business models that have the potential of creating social value, social intrapreneurs can enable a more proactive form of ethical organizational behavior that goes beyond the notion of avoiding harm (Aronson & Henriques, 2022).

Although the literature clearly defines social intrapreneurs in terms of what they do, it is less clear how individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations. First, while some studies portray social intrapreneurs as individuals who take discretionary action to express their collectivistic personal values (e.g., Hemingway, 2005), other studies show that social intrapreneurs are those managing corporate venturing initiatives (Venn & Berg, 2013), or springing from corporate contests and incubators (Mirvis & Goo-gins, 2018). This heterogeneity suggests different levels of agency and ethical expression on how individuals become social intrapreneurs. Second, given social intrapreneurs work to combine social and commercial goals, extant literature presents conflicting views on where these change agents are positioned in corporations. Foundational work on business ethics and entrepreneurship offers that social intrapreneurs can assume different positions within their organizations, playing a variety of roles in the entrepreneurial process (Austin et al., 2006; Hemingway, 2005). Subsequent work, however, suggests that individuals who have direct accountability for addressing social or environmental goals—such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability professionals—are simply doing their jobs, and hence are not social intrapreneurs (Davis & White, 2015).

This lack of clarity regarding how individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations has important implications for both the moral agency and the entrepreneurial roles of these internal change agents. Returning to our examples, Sam McCracken was working at a Nike warehouse when he had his initial idea, whereas Myriam Sidibe had been hired as Global Social Mission Director for Unilever Lifebuoy—indeed with accountability for social issues, but freedom to design her mandate. These differences in mandate and access to institutionalized channels of influence (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016) are likely to shape how individuals assume entrepreneurial roles and express their personal values at work, raising the need to clarify the pathways through which one becomes a social intrapreneur.

To address these concerns, in this paper, we ask How do individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations? We answer these questions through a qualitative inductive study of self-identified social intrapreneurs and their supporters across a variety of corporations. Our findings show that while some individuals act as *initiators* of social intrapreneurial ideas that are inspired by

their personal values, others act as *explorers* of ideas that may have emerged within the corporate suite or were initiated by other social intrapreneurs. In addition, we find that social intrapreneurs can assume these different entrepreneurial roles in positions typically associated with commercial goals within core business departments, as well as within units associated with social or environmental goals, such as CSR or sustainability departments.

We contribute to the literature in two ways that offer nuance and specificity to our understanding of social intrapreneurship—an important phenomenon that has received scant attention in the literature (Kuratko et al., 2017). First, we develop a typology of social intrapreneurs that combines our findings on how they assume social intrapreneurial roles with the positions they occupy, offering four pathways through which these actors engage in entrepreneurial action to become “corporate change agents for sustainability.” Second, we build on these insights to expand the initiation of social intrapreneurship beyond the autonomous expression of the moral agency of employees (Hemingway, 2005). Our finding that social intrapreneurs can be not only autonomously “born” but also “made” through an assignment from the corporate suite, implies that they likely operate with different levels of agency (Abdelnour et al., 2017) that may qualify the outcomes of their entrepreneurial actions and the expression of their personal values at work.

## 2 | CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In the last two decades, social intrapreneurs have developed as a hybrid category of professionals that applies the principles of social entrepreneurship inside major organizations (SustainAbility, 2008), including not only corporations but also public and social sector organizations (Ambos & Tatarinov, 2022; Kistruck & Beamish, 2010; Tracey & Stott, 2017). In the corporate context—the focus of our study—social intrapreneurs are increasingly seen to “work to advance solutions to social issues that may range from ‘not-for-loss’ to market penetration in bottom-of-the-pyramid markets” (Alt & Craig, 2016, p. 795), carrying the potential to leverage the scale of corporations to achieve a large positive impact (Schaltegger et al., 2016). Hence, social intrapreneurship can be distinguished from business intrapreneurship by its focus on social or environmental goals, and from the creation of new business and social ventures—the most commonly studied modes of entrepreneurship—by its origination from established organizations (Haski-Leventhal & Glavas, 2021). Furthermore, by focusing on entrepreneurial solutions to social problems, social intrapreneurship can be distinguished from more traditional approaches to CSR or sustainability management, which tend to focus on gaining efficiencies through existing methods and initiatives and to lack in the use of commercial means to innovate (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Geradts & Alt, 2022; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

Within the academic literature, conceptualizations of social intrapreneurship emerged in parallel in the fields of business ethics and entrepreneurship. In the business ethics literature, Hemingway (2005) developed the notion that personal values influence

the ethical dimension of individuals' decisions (Fritzche, 1995) by suggesting employees driven by collective values could initiate social intrapreneurship in corporations. In the entrepreneurship literature, social intrapreneurship emerged as the manifestation of social entrepreneurship inside established organizations (Mair & Martí, 2006), with some authors emphasizing corporations as the locus of social intrapreneurship (Austin et al., 2005, 2006). For these authors, social intrapreneurship emerges not from individuals' personal values, but from "allocating human and financial resources to establish a cadre of corporate social entrepreneurs who will have the capacity to realize important change" (Austin et al., 2006, p. 416). In sum, while the business ethics perspective emphasizes the development of an intrapreneurial ability at the individual level, the early entrepreneurship perspective emphasizes the development of such ability at the organizational level (Hostager et al., 1998).

Although these perspectives are not mutually exclusive, they each paint a different picture of how individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations, which vary in the degree of agency and ethical expression attributed to individuals, as well as organizational support. Extant empirical literature, while still scarce, has offered more insights into corporations engaging in social intrapreneurship (e.g., Ghauri et al., 2014; Tasavori et al., 2016) than on the individual social intrapreneurs<sup>1</sup> doing this work inside corporations, with a few notable exceptions (Halme et al., 2012; Scuotto et al., 2022). While some of this literature acknowledges the entrepreneurial agency of individuals involved in corporate approaches to social intrapreneurship (Spitzeck et al., 2013; Venn & Berg, 2013), it has been more muted on the ethical expression of these internal change agents until recently (cf. Scuotto et al., 2022).

In parallel, recent studies on the microfoundations of CSR or sustainability management have been examining social intrapreneurship as a bottom-up approach, which can enable individuals to find meaningfulness at work (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019). Carrington et al. (2019), for example, recently showed how social intrapreneurs can instigate moral shocks in peers and superiors, as well as influence the moral praxis of corporations, acting as internal activists. This approach is consistent with Hemingway's idea that social intrapreneurs "initiate CSR of their own volition" (2005, p. 239), and Austin and colleagues' notion that social intrapreneurship can lead to more advanced and powerful forms of responsible management (Austin et al., 2006; Austin & Reficco, 2009), yet is less clear on whether social intrapreneurs are positioned within sustainability management or not. Given that corporations have not been designed to blend social and commercial goals in entrepreneurial ways (Geradts & Alt, 2022), there is confusion as to whether social intrapreneurs assume positions associated with commercial goals (such as core business departments), or whether they assume positions typically associated with social or environmental goals (such as within CSR and sustainability departments). Davis and White (2015, p. 16) suggest that in social intrapreneurship the "idea originates from outside [the change agent's] direct area of accountability. Otherwise, this is not intrapreneurship;

it is just doing your job." However, this perspective fails to recognize the agency of sustainability professionals who go beyond merely supporting an existing sustainability or CSR strategy (Girschik et al., 2020; Wickert & Bakker, 2018), and who may also identify as social intrapreneurs (Carrington et al., 2019).

In sum, extant literature on social intrapreneurship, although limited, is clear on the potential of social intrapreneurs as corporate change agents, but less clear on how such individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations. Although we know that social intrapreneurs may assume a role as moral agents and internal activists (Alt & Craig, 2016; Carrington et al., 2019), corporations are increasingly interested in promoting social intrapreneurship (Mirvis & Googins, 2018), raising questions as to whether the occurrence of social intrapreneurship is induced or autonomous and to where in corporations social intrapreneurs are likely to operate with regard to their position. Because variations in mandate and positions<sup>2</sup> are likely to influence the intrapreneurial ability of social intrapreneurs (Hostager et al., 1998), clarifying the pathways that may lead to social intrapreneurship is an important step in advancing knowledge on this new category of corporate change agent.

### 3 | METHOD

#### 3.1 | Research approach

We pursue a qualitative, interview-based research approach to explore inductively how individuals assume social intrapreneurial roles in corporations. Such a qualitative research design is especially appropriate for investigations of real-world phenomena that require an in-depth understanding when there is no need for control of behavioral events (Runfola et al., 2017; Yin, 2018), as it is the case with our research on the role and setting of social intrapreneurs. Our approach allows for contextualized comparisons and conceptual refinements that consider the peculiarities of the observed phenomena.

An inductive approach is suitable, as we aim to understand and explain how social intrapreneurs vary in how they engage in the entrepreneurial process, and in their positions inside corporations. Inductive data analysis is an appropriate method to answer our research question, because it allows identifying patterns and themes in the data and to generate new insights and explanations (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As inductive data analysis starts with the data itself and aims to develop explanations based on the patterns and themes that emerge from the data, it is particularly useful for answering "How" questions, which often require a deep understanding of the processes and mechanisms underlying a particular phenomenon or behavior. Inductive data analysis allows researchers to explore these processes and mechanisms in an open-ended and exploratory way, without being constrained by preconceived notions. In line with the principles of constant comparison techniques, we thus employ an iterative approach of collecting and analyzing our data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We follow established guidelines and procedures for inductive data

analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to ensure qualitative rigor.

### 3.2 | Sampling and data collection

To ensure replicability, this research adheres to the following structured approach. We apply a purposeful sampling approach to identify information-rich interview partners to answer our research questions (Patton, 2015; Suri, 2011). We identified social intrapreneurs as defined in extant literature (Alt & Geradts, 2019; Halme et al., 2012), as well as individuals supporting them, such as team members, leaders, or external partners. 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author, and 36 interviews were conducted by an international social business consultancy with which the first author partnered on a similar project. Given the similarity of the study design and interview protocol of the research partner with our own, we were able to combine them into a single data set, thereby increasing the richness of our data.

To compile a list of potential interviewees and case companies, we conducted an extensive internet search on topics such as “social intrapreneurship” or “social intrapreneur(s),” which brought up blogs, clips, and social network posts. Furthermore, we scrutinized books and practice reports showcasing social intrapreneurial initiatives that were disclosing the names of the associated social intrapreneurs. This process was necessary as social intrapreneurs are often hidden within large corporations without much publicity. Furthermore, these individuals cannot typically be identified by the position they hold. The cases we identified show that social intrapreneurs can be found within any department of the corporation. Hence, focusing only on sustainability managers would have led to an inaccurate understanding of the phenomenon. It was, therefore, indispensable to work with social intrapreneurial communities such as the League of Intrapreneurs and the Circle of Intrapreneurs.<sup>3</sup> The first author participated in online events and spoke to experts in social intrapreneurship as well as individuals that assume social intrapreneurial roles within their corporations to identify further social intrapreneurs. Based on the insights we gained, we then approached interviewees that were designated as “social intrapreneurs” via LinkedIn.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, via telephone, or via Skype to obtain an in-depth understanding of the social intrapreneurs and their relationships within and outside their organizations. Interviews are commonly employed to provide scientific explanations based on an understanding of people's lived worlds and experiences (Kvale, 2007). To minimize confirmation bias by the interviewer and the interviewee, we adopted a semi-structured approach using open questions. By asking open-ended questions, we encouraged respondents to engage in an open and unrestrained dialog with the interviewer (Horton et al., 2004). Specifically, we used a responsive interviewing technique based on an interview guideline with main questions, probes, and follow-ups to generate a high level of depth, focus, and detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Our research

partner adopted a similar approach, covering questions that corresponded to all the key topics included in our interview protocol. All interviews focused on understanding the role of the interviewee as a social intrapreneur, or as a supporter of a social intrapreneur. In addition, we asked about their relationships with internal and external stakeholders to gain further insight on the support network of social intrapreneurs. Finally, we asked social intrapreneurs to share their challenges and successes. For instance, we asked about resistance and what support they were lacking, but also what contributed to their success. We adjusted our interview guidelines throughout the research process by tailoring it to each interview partner, based on prior research from public sources and by taking our initial observations into account (Gioia et al., 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The interviewees were free to provide as comprehensive open narrative descriptions as they considered relevant. All interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed with the help of artificial intelligence tools, followed by manual corrections where necessary. Our data set includes 51 interviews with 49 interviewees (two interviewees were interviewed twice). The interviews had a minimum time of 25 min and a maximum time of 95 min, averaging 50 min. We interviewed a total of 35 social intrapreneurs across 29 corporations. In 10 of these corporations, we were able to interview a total of 16 social intrapreneurs and 12 of their supporters. In the remaining corporations, we were only able to access a single social intrapreneur, interviewing 19 in total and in 2 cases we could only reach out to the supporters of the initiative. Table 1 gives more detailed information on each interviewee.

In addition to the interview data, we used extensive secondary data for triangulation and data enhancement (Jick, 1979). Specifically, we used LinkedIn as a source of information about the interviewees' structural positions, paths, and backgrounds. We deemed this appropriate and helpful, because, for example, the actual job title as well as position in the company was not always obvious from the platforms we used to identify potential interviewees. Furthermore, we screened sustainability and social business reports of the companies and available video material of the interviewed social intrapreneurs to deepen our insights and corroborate the findings from the interview data (see Appendix S1).

### 3.3 | Data analysis

We inductively assessed our data, adhering to the principles of a first and second-order analysis as outlined by Gioia et al. (2013). In our first-order analysis, we openly coded our data to create a long list of first-order categories using informant-centric terms that address our research questions (see, e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In our second-order analysis, we revisited, compared, and contrasted these evolving first-order concepts from our primary and secondary data. In a largely iterative process, we then classified these concepts into second-order themes and aggregate dimensions. Furthermore, we conducted additional literature research to validate our evolving

TABLE 1 Interviewee overview.

Code <sup>a</sup>	Industry	Role in social intrapreneurial initiative	Interviewee position	Initiative	Firm size <sup>b</sup>	Main issue addressed in initiative
1A	Consulting	Visionary Business Insurgent	Former Global Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Global Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Poverty, education
1B		Enabled Business Expert	Global Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			
1C		Supporter (social intrapreneurial team)	Regional Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			
2A	Food & Beverage	Supporter (External Partner)	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (external, initiative separate from company)	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (external, initiative separate from company)	Very large	Communities, health, nutrition, poverty
2B		Enabled Business Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			
2C		Supporter (Leadership)	Vice President Strategy and Corporate Development			
2D		Enabled Business Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (Serial Social Intrapreneur in diverse companies)			
2E		Supporter (Leadership)	VP Culture and Engagement			
3Aa	Software	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Chief Sustainability Officer		Very large	Communities, poverty
3Bb		Enabled Business Expert → Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of Corporate Social Responsibility			
4Aa	Apparel	Supporter (Leadership)	Former Head of Sustainable Business & Innovation		Large	Communities, poverty, responsible sourcing
4Bb		Visionary Business Insurgent	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			Communities, education, health
5A	Automotive	Supporter (External Partner)	Head of Corporate Social Responsibility (external partner)		Very large	Communities, poverty
5B		Visionary Business Insurgent → Sustainability Transformer	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative/Head of Corporate Social Responsibility			
6A	Pharmaceuticals	Supporter (External Partner)	Consultant for social intrapreneurial initiative (external partner)		Very large	Communities, health, poverty
6B		Supporter (Leadership)	Former Head of Strategy			
6C		Enabled Business Expert	Former Global Head social intrapreneurial initiative			
6D		Enabled Sustainability Expert	Former Group Head of Corporate Social Responsibility			
6E		Enabled Business Expert	Former Global Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			
6F		Supporter (social intrapreneurial team)	Regional Head of social intrapreneurial initiative			
7Aa	Consumer Goods	Enabled Business Expert	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative/Senior Strategy Manager		Very large	Communities, health, poverty, waste
7Ba		Supporter (External Partner)	Head of Operations social intrapreneurial initiative (external, initiative separate company)			
7Ca		Supporter (External Partner)	Former Co-Founder of social intrapreneurial initiative (external partner)			
7Db		Enabled Business Expert	Former New Business Unit Manager			Communities, health, nutrition, poverty
8Aa	Media & Education	Supporter (External Partner)	Senior Consultant		Large	Communities, education, poverty
8Bb		Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of Venture Investments (Impact Fund)			

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Code <sup>a</sup>	Industry	Role in social intrapreneurial initiative	Interviewee position	Firm size <sup>b</sup>	Main issue addressed in initiative
9Aa	Chemicals, Materials	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of Global Sustainability	Large	Communities, poverty, climate
9Bb		Enabled Business Expert	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (Serial Social Intrapreneur in diverse companies)		Communities, poverty, responsible sourcing, climate
10Aa	Pharmaceuticals	Enabled Business Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Large	Communities, poverty, health
10Bb		Enabled Business Expert > Supporter (External Partner)	Former Head of SI Initiative		
11	Pharmaceuticals & Consumer Goods	Visionary Sustainability Transformer → Visionary Business Insurgent	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Communities, health, poverty, waste
12	Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals	Enabled Business Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Large	Communities, health, poverty
13	Financial Services	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Communities, poverty
14	Postal Services	Enabled Business Expert	Chairman and Managing Director	Very large	Communities, gender equality
15	Financial Services & Insurance	Enabled Business Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Communities, poverty, health
16	Water, Energy, Waste Management	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Communities, poverty, health
17	Energy, Oil & Gas	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Social Innovation Manager	Very large	Communities, poverty, climate
18	Chemicals	Visionary Business Insurgent → Supporter (External Partner)	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Very large	Communities, poverty, health, nutrition
19	Chemicals, Healthcare	Visionary Business Insurgent	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (Director Inclusive Business)	Large	Communities, poverty, health
20	Financial Services	Visionary Business Insurgent	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Large	Communities, poverty, gender equality
21	Financial Services & Insurance	Visionary Sustainability Transformer	Former Head of social intrapreneurial initiative & Sustainability Manager	Very large	Communities, poverty, health
22	Conglomerate, Manufacturing	Enabled Business Expert	Senior Innovation Manager	Very large	Communities, poverty
23	Healthcare, Medical Equipment	Enabled Business Expert → Enabled Sustainability Expert	Chief Mission Officer & Head of social intrapreneurial initiative (formerly managing director country)	Very large	Communities, health, poverty
24	Beverage	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of Sustainability	Very large	Communities, health, nutrition, poverty
25	Building materials	Visionary Business Insurgent	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative	Large	Communities, poverty
26	Manufacturing	Supporter (social intrapreneurial team)	Product & Brand Manager at social intrapreneurial initiative	Large	Communities, health, poverty
27	Telecommunications	Supporter (Leadership)	Board of Directors mother company	Large	Communities, poverty
28	Apparel	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility	Medium	Climate, waste, responsible sourcing
29	Iron & Steel	Enabled Sustainability Expert	Head of social intrapreneurial initiative and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility	Large	Climate, waste, responsible sourcing, communities, poverty

<sup>a</sup>\*\*Σ 49 interviewees, numbers refer to different firms, large letters refer to specific persons within a firm, small letters refer to different initiatives in the same firm.

<sup>b</sup>Firm size based on global number of employees, classified as small (<50), medium (>50 < 100,000), large (>100,000) and very large (>400,000).

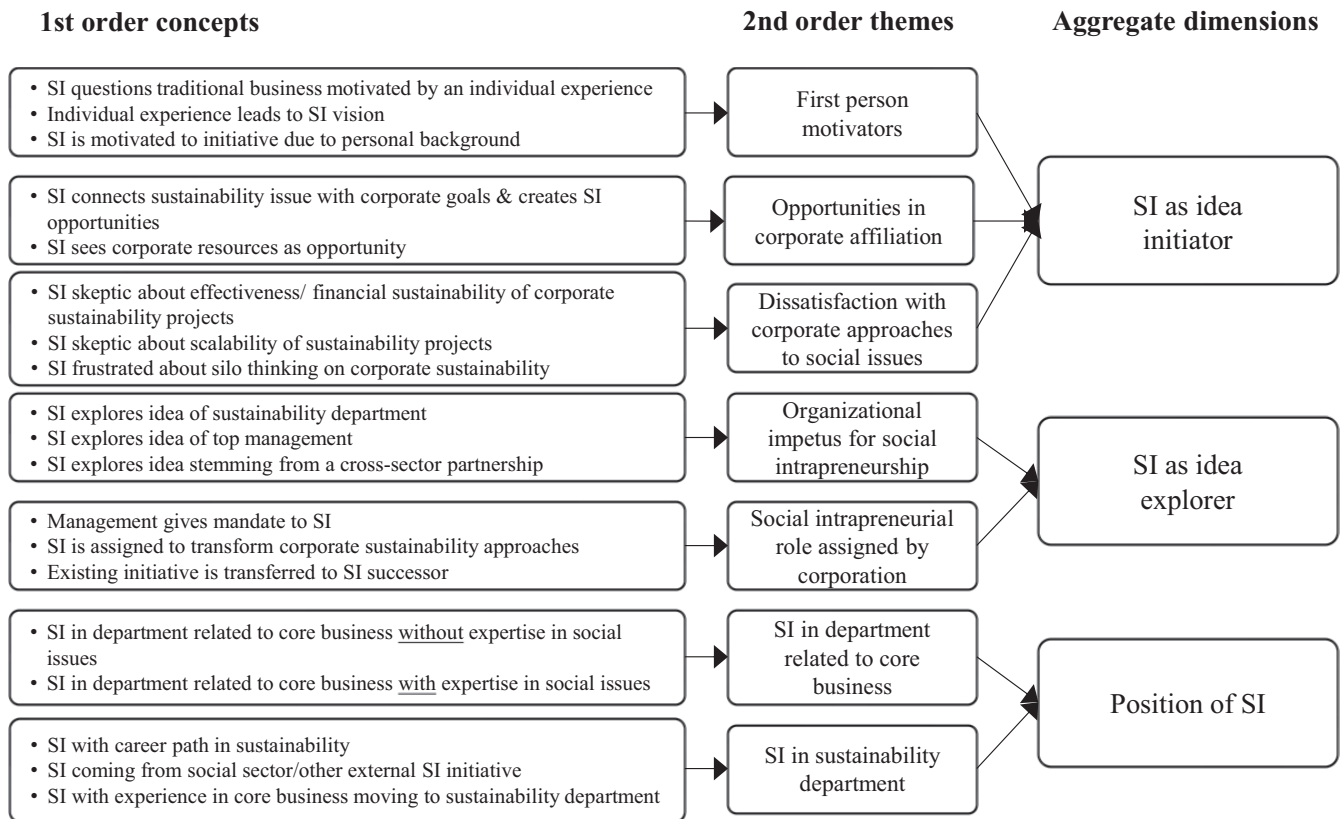


FIGURE 1 Data structure. SI, social intrapreneur.

concepts, themes, and aggregated dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). Figure 1 provides an overview of our data coding.

## 4 | FINDINGS

In our analysis, three aggregate dimensions emerged which help us to paint the picture of who social intrapreneurs are in terms of their role in the entrepreneurial process as well as of their position in the company (see again Figure 1). The first two dimensions illustrate two different roles of social intrapreneurs during the entrepreneurial process in terms of whether the entrepreneurial opportunities were identified by (1) the social intrapreneurs themselves (idea initiator) or (2) within the corporate suite (idea explorer). Furthermore, we found (3) the position to be another factor when determining different types of social intrapreneurs. While some social intrapreneurs belonged to the sustainability department,<sup>4</sup> others were found within core business departments. In the following section, we develop our three aggregate dimensions with further illustrative quotes included in Appendix S2.

### 4.1 | Idea initiator

In numerous interviews, we found evidence of visionary social intrapreneurs who identified entrepreneurial opportunities and drove their implementation. Social intrapreneurship was fueled mainly (1)

by various first-person motivators, (2) by the individual recognizing opportunities for pursuing social or environmental goals in their corporate affiliation, or (3) by a dissatisfaction with corporate approaches to social issues.

First-person motivators describe the reasons underpinning social intrapreneurs' choice to start social intrapreneurial initiatives. This could be their personal background but also specific individual experiences. In many cases, the personal background led social intrapreneurs to take alternative approaches to business. Some of them learned in their studies about inclusive business or read "*books from Prahalad*" (25<sup>6</sup>), others had a background in the development sector and wanted to "*bring some of this knowledge, language and an understanding of social change into the private sector*" (20). In some cases, their background also helped them to implement their ideas within the corporation, especially when communicating with external partners but also in convincing internal stakeholders to experiment with new approaches. For example, one interviewee mentioned how an "*insider outsider*" (25) role as a PhD student working within a corporation helped communicate with internal and external stakeholders and to convince them about the initiative. Although many individuals were motivated early in their careers through their background, others became motivated to start a social intrapreneurial initiative later through specific individual experiences. Sometimes, the individuals felt that "*there was something missing*" (1A) in their daily job and they started questioning traditional business approaches. In other instances, a specific individual experience led employees to their social intrapreneurial



visions, such as a “corporate response [...] to a human catastrophe” (21) or specific encounters with “great thinkers in that area [of social intrapreneurship]” (18). One interviewee, for example, originally followed the traditional business path, “ticking all the boxes of what makes you happy and successful in business” (1A) but then was triggered to the social intrapreneurial idea by a personal experience “working as volunteer [in a developing country]” (1A).

Interestingly, some social intrapreneurs also showed a mindset attuned to possibilities, seeing opportunities in the corporate affiliation to start social intrapreneurial initiatives. For example, some social intrapreneurs proactively applied for a job in a specific department—in the following example the innovation department—where they thought they could best make use of corporate resources to “develop the inclusive business approach and the BoP [Bottom of the Pyramid] markets” (19) or they took “an opportunity [...] to engage more with [their] indigenous communities” (4Bb). Often, they saw that the company “was very supportive in regards to [their] vision” (4Bb) and wanted to “build something sustainable that is more closely linked to [the] business” (21).

Finally, in many cases, social intrapreneurs were also driven by a dissatisfaction with the current corporate approaches to social issues. They were skeptic about the effectiveness and financial sustainability of sustainability initiatives due to their emphasis on philanthropy, often encapsulated in “a nice little campaign” (11). Furthermore, they had doubts that many sustainability initiatives were scalable, as they “didn’t really have very strong connections to the business” (11) and were “not perceived as a business opportunity” (25). Moreover, they mentioned their frustration about how sustainability departments were often stuck in a silo being “a bit dislocated [...] [and] too separate from business” (1A) and “people always said, internally or externally, are you doing it because of CSR or are you doing it for business. [...] [But] it’s not a black and white thing, you have to find the middle ground” (21). Due to these struggles, initiatives where the social intrapreneur was also the idea initiator were then sometimes starting off under the radar, “not necessarily having 100% permission, and yet doing it anyway” (11).

## 4.2 | Idea explorer

In addition to social intrapreneurs acting as initiators of social intrapreneurial initiatives, our data also illustrated that they could act as explorers of existing ideas. Existing ideas could have an (1) organizational impetus—originating from top management, the sustainability department, or from a cross-sector partnership—or (2) be translated into social intrapreneurial roles that top managers would assign to individuals, giving them the mandate to explore social business opportunities and transform traditional sustainability initiatives. In some cases, top managers also appointed successors to social intrapreneurs, where initiatives were ongoing for many years.

In terms of organizational impetus, some social intrapreneurs considered that initiatives were “often driven by individual ideas from certain senior managers” (12). One interviewee, for example, stated that

“the seed idea actually came from [the] former chairman” (6C). Sometimes ideas were also identified within the sustainability department. For example, “Three guys [from sustainability department] decided [...] to launch a social business [...] [and] at the time it was something crazy” (17). In another case, the “project started [...] when [...] [the head of sustainability and his team] had a conversation with the [division] director, [...] and [...] [they were] debating with them the chance of the area,” which then turned into “a company project managed by the [division] and CSR” (29). In a few cases, finally, we also found that social intrapreneurial ideas were not purely emerging internally but rather from a cross-sector partnership, for example in the form of a “joint venture with [an external social business partner]” (16) or in a “collaboration, which was initiated from the top between [...] CEO [...] and the head of [partner NGO]” (3Aa).

Importantly, although some interviewees noted the organizational impetus of initiatives, they also noted that social intrapreneurship “doesn’t start, necessarily, as a full-blown concept but [...] then it’s driven, [...] by individuals that want to take it to the next level” (12) and hence further explore the initial idea. For this purpose, sometimes external experts were hired, or internal employees were assigned that acted as social intrapreneurs to assess, legitimate, implement, and scale initiatives. In some cases, companies preferred internal employees although they may be “less savvy [than an external expert] [...] [because] the head of [such an initiative] is going to need to call in a lot of favors and [people will only do that] because there is a relationship with the person [which is why they could not] imagine recruiting someone from the outside” (15).

Although some of the ideas that had organizational impetus were concrete, oftentimes ideas consisted of loose targets to explore something around social business. For example, the head of a sustainability department was particularly assigned to transform their traditional approaches and “help transition from a situation [...] which was almost entirely focused on philanthropic support [...] to one [...] [which is] focused on market-based solutions, kind of social business models” (6D). Generally, social intrapreneurs often realized that it was important to “involve [...] the business as a whole, [...] Not just a single department, [...] [to create] a sustainable solution” (24).

Finally, in some cases, an idea which was once conceived and initiated by an individual social intrapreneur was transferred to a second social intrapreneur who would then further explore the opportunity. For example, when the original social intrapreneur left the company, management then assigned a successor to take over the initiative. This sometimes also led to a reorganization of the positioning of the social intrapreneur and the successor finding “a place in a different business unit [...] that has a strong P&L [profit and loss] responsibility” (21). Central to our understanding of current social intrapreneurial roles is the fact that, although the initial idea does not stem from the active social intrapreneur (i.e., the successor), they join and shape the entrepreneurial process to explore the idea, either by choice or assignment. The role of successors often involved “creat[ing] a much tighter alignment with the business” (1B) and scaling the initiatives, for example by “synergiz[ing] [different social intrapreneurial initiatives] and think[ing] of it as one [social business unit]” (6E). Despite these initiatives having history within firms, and social intrapreneurial

successors seemingly having more leeway compared to their predecessors, these idea explorers faced continuous challenges, such as “*spending half of [their] time internally [...] just convincing people [...] and resolving political fights*” (6A). This became especially challenging when management changes occurred and the superiors and supporters of these social intrapreneurs left the company.

### 4.3 | Position of social intrapreneur

The social intrapreneurs we interviewed were placed either (1) within core business or (2) within sustainability or similar departments. More than half of the social intrapreneurs in our sample were based within a core business department. This is interesting given that social initiatives in general are often linked to sustainability departments. These social intrapreneurs described their position as “*a little bit unique because [they are] not in [...] corporate responsibility [...] where most of these projects are usually housed*” (12). In some cases, they even mentioned that they did not want to be related to the sustainability department, as these departments were seen as too separate from core business, which then led to tensions: “*If you're trying to strongly say you're not something that they [the sustainability department] are doing and distance yourself from something they're doing. They take it quite personally and as criticism. I said definitely we're not doing CSR*” (1A). Despite seeking to combine social and commercial goals, social intrapreneurs sometimes sought initial philanthropic funding within their organizations, for example being “*funded originally by the [company] Foundation [...] [but later] working directly for the commercial organization*” (11). The same interviewee also clearly stated, though, that they did “*not want to be in the foundation or the CSR team*” (11) after the initial funding. Being positioned in core business can be very diverse, for example “*working in [the] distribution center*” (4Bb) or “*working in the strategy side*” (1A). Some social intrapreneurs within core business may not have any previous experience with social topics, for example being “*trained as an engineer*” (1A). Others, however, had previous experience with social issues. Some of them were even actively selected due to these reasons as “*it [the initiative] needed someone who could understand the commercial dynamics, that could understand the BoP [Bottom of the Pyramid] context, the social context, but also had to have a certain degree of gravitas and [the] ability to understand and navigate complex internal organizational structures and deal with internal opposition and inertia to novel ideas*” (6D). Some social intrapreneurs working within core business had experience with social issues due to their origin. Interviewee 6C, for example, was formerly working for the company as commercial country manager in a developing country and was assigned by management to take over the social intrapreneurial initiative. Others had previous experience working in the social sector, for example “*as a UN volunteer in Panama, Ghana and Thailand*” (18). In a few cases, individuals even already worked as social intrapreneurs in other companies before moving to a new company and inhabiting again a role as social intrapreneur.

The second group of social intrapreneurs in our sample were based in sustainability departments. Some social intrapreneurs

positioned in sustainability departments had previous experience with social issues due to their career path within corporate sustainability, for example starting their sustainability career as an intern and then climbing up the ladder to become “*the head of [global] CSR*” (29) or by taking over the initiative as “*Global Head of Corporate Responsibility*” [after formerly already working in a CSR department of another company] (6D). Others had previous experience with social issues from their work in the social sector such as interviewee 13, who was already linked to the initiative by formerly working with a foundation as external partner. In other cases, their previous work in the social sector motivated them to switch to the corporate side. For example, one interviewee was working “*for the EU foreign ministry and [the] [...] development aid agencies [...] but the projects you do there are very long term [and] [...] it's really hard to see immediate results for what you want to achieve*” (28). Another interviewee, who had been working in business and then switched to the social sector, was “*missing that scale and the pace in which the business world operated*” (11). This person, therefore, decided to move back into the corporate world and start a social intrapreneurial initiative supported by the sustainability department. Several other social intrapreneurs who had previous experience or knowledge within core business were active in sustainability departments. For example, some had previously worked “*for sales and marketing*” (5B). Although their position as sustainability manager may give a social intrapreneur a sort of “*mandate to put [their] feelers out*” (21), this did not necessarily mean that they did not face any challenges, especially if the idea was driven by an individual idea initiator instead of an idea explorer. Being embedded in the sustainability department could lead to being shielded from regular business. They were often merely seen as “*a social project [...] that [the sustainability department should be handling] with their money*”, which is why they often create “*a structure of people [outside the sustainability department]*” (29) in order to be seen as a business opportunity rather than a purely social project.

## 5 | TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL INTRAPRENEURS

From the three aggregate dimensions that emerged inductively from our data—the idea initiator, the idea explorer, and the different positions of the social intrapreneur—we derived four types of social intrapreneurs depicted in [Figure 2](#).

The x-axis depicts two different options for positioning the social intrapreneur: within core business or sustainability departments. In most cases, it was clearly visible whether social intrapreneurs were working in a sustainability department or not. In case the person was working in a general innovation team, for example, this was considered as core business. However, in some cases, some social intrapreneurs inherited positions such as the “*head of social business*,” which did not necessarily belong to one side of the matrix. We consider these “*hybrids*” in our discussion.

The y-axis displays whether the social intrapreneur was initiating or exploring an opportunity (idea initiator vs. explorer). If these

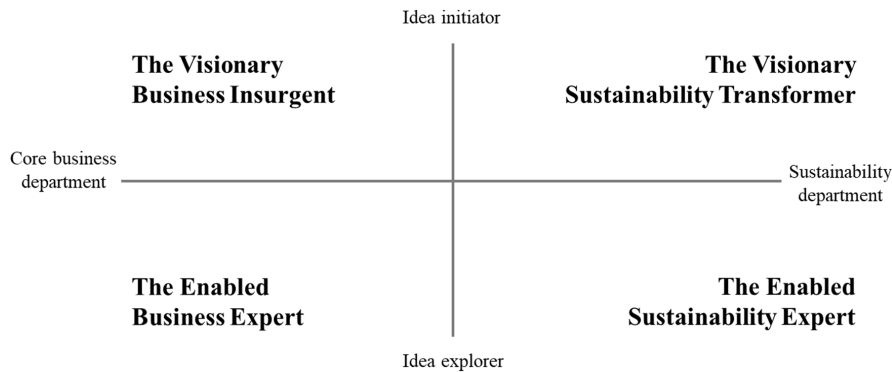


FIGURE 2 Typology of social intrapreneurs.

individuals were the “idea initiators” of such initiatives, we defined them as “visionary.” The terms “insurgent” and “transformer” as displayed in Figure 1 should emphasize the notion, that they had the vision to start a social intrapreneurial initiative either from a role in core business (the “insurgent”) or in sustainability (the “transformer”). However, when they were the “idea explorers,” the idea had organizational impetus or was translated into a specific corporate role so that they were “enabled” by the corporation and chosen as an “expert” (see again Figure 1) to develop the social intrapreneurial initiative. Overall, this leads to four archetypes of social intrapreneurs—namely The Visionary Business Insurgent, The Visionary Sustainability Transformer, The Enabled Business Expert, and The Enabled Sustainability Expert.

### 5.1 | The visionary business insurgent

Visionary Business Insurgents are employees running social intrapreneurial initiatives that emerge from their own ideas (idea initiator) in a core business department. A prototypical example of this type of social intrapreneur was our interviewee 4Bb. Their<sup>7</sup> personal background and origins led them to use a job in the distribution center and seek for an opportunity to help their community with the social intrapreneurial initiative by harnessing their corporate affiliation. The social intrapreneur received a lot of support from the corporation. However, this is not always the case. In many cases, Visionary Business Insurgents had to start their initiatives working under the radar and had to find ways to grow their ideas to an implementation stage.

### 5.2 | The visionary sustainability transformer

The Visionary Sustainability Transformer is based in the sustainability department. In many cases, sustainability managers got frustrated with the traditionally philanthropic approach of their departments and realized that effectively creating social and commercial value requires self-sustaining social intrapreneurial initiatives. A vivid example is interviewee 21, who was working as a sustainability manager. This person was reluctant to run the next donation event and instead decided to implement more financially viable initiatives after a catastrophe occurred. Interestingly, however, the interviewee also mentioned that,

because the sustainability department is not a strong profit and loss unit, the successor chose to switch to core business. In some cases, however, it is also business professionals from core business who switch to the sustainability department to use it as a gateway to implement their social intrapreneurial ideas. Although their position within a sustainability department may influence their degree of leeway to experiment on such initiatives, they may still face several challenges, such as generalized perceptions of sustainability departments as separate from core business, given they do not generate revenue.

### 5.3 | The enabled business expert

This type of social intrapreneur is positioned in a core business department. They assume the role in an initiative exploring an idea that may stem from top management, the sustainability department, or a cross-sector partnership, or from a previous social intrapreneur. It can also be that management assigns a business expert to inherit the position from a Visionary Business Insurgent and sometimes even from a Visionary Sustainability Transformer. Interestingly, the options on who should carry out the social intrapreneurial initiative can be manifold. In some cases, senior management decided to hire someone from outside with expertise on social innovation, in a few cases even former social intrapreneurs from other companies. In other cases, though, senior management decided to stick with someone from core business, who could make use of their existing network to be able to call in favors. Nevertheless, many of those Enabled Business Experts had already gathered experience to some degree in the past, either having worked in the social sector, or at least having a know-how of the local business. Interviewee 6C exemplifies this approach, having formerly worked as a commercial country manager in a developing country. Although this social intrapreneur did not have any background working in the social sector, it was important that they could understand local peculiarities and the commercial context of the initiative, as well as draw on their existing network within the corporation.

### 5.4 | The enabled sustainability expert

For this type of social intrapreneur, senior management gives a mandate to change traditional sustainability management or CSR practices to a more financially sustainable approach. Ideation may again

stem from an organizational impetus or a former social intrapreneur. The ways to choose an Enabled Sustainability Expert are manifold here as well. One possibility is when sustainability departments get permission to experiment on social business models. In some cases, in our sample, management had also hired an external sustainability expert to implement and scale the initiative within the sustainability department. One example for this case would be interviewee 6D. Before being hired by the corporation, the person worked as a sustainability manager for another company and hence already had expertise on social issues. The specific aim of this interviewee in the new corporation was to further develop existing social intrapreneurial initiatives and to transition formerly philanthropic models to social business models. Interestingly, the person did not do this alone but in cooperation with an Enabled Business Expert (6C).

Similar to Visionary Sustainability Transformers, Enabled Sustainability Experts often faced the challenge of being seen merely as adopting a philanthropic approach. This is why the link to core business was very important to these individuals as the example above vibrantly shows. This explains why many sustainability departments are shifting to work very closely with core business on these types of initiatives. In some cases, social intrapreneurs also switched their positions within the company. For example, interviewees 3Bb and 5B switched from a core business department to sustainability in order to be able to carry out the social intrapreneurial initiative. We, therefore, argue that our typology offers a starting point for further development, in particular as new “hybrid” types of social intrapreneurial positions emerge in corporations. Furthermore, the aspect of switching positions also allows for some additional thoughts which emerged during data analysis as outlined in the following.

## 6 | ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS: THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL INTRAPRENEURSHIP AND THE CHALLENGE OF “HOUSING”

Although not covered by our aggregate dimensions, some further interesting insights emerged from the data, as we found that the structural positions of social intrapreneurs were not always stable over time. In some cases, although the social intrapreneurial idea originally stemmed from the sustainability department, it was then handed over to someone in core business. For example, it started as a “CSR project [...] and then [management] look[ed] for a leader” (12) of the social intrapreneurial initiative and appointed someone working within a department related to core business. In other cases, however, employees formerly not working in the sustainability department proactively “decided to move to [...] CSR” (5B) and use it as a platform to realize the initiative. In some cases, they also started “on top of [their] activity [in marketing] [...] coordinating [the social intrapreneurial] project [...] and later being] in charge of social innovation for [the company] foundation” (17).

In one case, it was even a downright “ping pong game” on where the social intrapreneurs should be housed. The idea came from senior management, who appointed an external business expert to

research and evaluate the idea. Once this research was finished, this external business expert then handed it over to someone internally working in core business, who was then accompanied by the head of sustainability to work collaboratively on implementing and scaling the idea. After some years, the initiative was then handed over to a successor working in core business, who combined the existing initiative with several other social intrapreneurial initiatives and turned them into a social business unit. During this time, the management in the sustainability department changed and the new head of sustainability “found it particularly compelling to have a very successful unit like [...] [the social business unit], under his direct watch” (6E), which was when the social business unit was handed over to the sustainability department and the successor decided to leave the initiative and the corporation. This episode provides a vivid example of the dynamics and uncertainty social intrapreneurs face as corporate change agents, as well as the challenges to decide where to house them.

Along with such developments over time, our data shows that the relations between core business and sustainability departments are interwoven and sometimes difficult to distinguish. Consequently, we identified some cases that were at the crossroads between core business and sustainability departments, and which challenged the differentiation of where the social intrapreneur was located. For example, some experts were placed in hybrid divisions termed “social innovation department” or “inclusive business department,” where the focus was on hybrid initiatives that create social and economic value. Although our findings still show little evidence of such official “hybrid departments” within a corporation, this could change in the future.

## 7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our study provides new perspectives on how individuals assume roles as social intrapreneurs, offering insights into an important category of corporate change agents seeking to transform business approaches to social and environmental goals—an area of research that has received little attention to date. Our research shows that social intrapreneurship may vary on two key dimensions: (1) the role of the social intrapreneur as idea initiator or explorer; and (2) the position of the social intrapreneur in the company (core business department vs. corporate sustainability department). We contribute by exposing four different pathways to social intrapreneurship that vary in initial levels of agency and ethical expression. We show that a social intrapreneur who explores an idea may not always be the same person who initiated that idea and kicked off the entrepreneurial process.

Our findings hence extend the foundational work of Hemingway (2005) by illustrating that, although Visionary Business Insurgents and Visionary Sustainability Transformers indeed initiate ideas of their own volition, not all pathways to social intrapreneurship start with an individual impetus. As such, social intrapreneurial ideas do not always emerge as acts of ethical expression, and may also stem from ideas within the corporate suite or even in cooperation with external partners—offering opportunities for individuals to assume roles as Enabled Business Experts or Enabled Sustainability Experts.

Identifying a social intrapreneurial opportunity is one of the first stages of the entrepreneurial process, and advancing these opportunities requires assessing, legitimating, and implementing them (Bloodgood et al., 2015): the work of idea explorers. This begs the question of how the personal values of idea explorers influence their participation in social intrapreneurial initiatives. While the opportunity to join an existing social intrapreneurial initiative could enable one to express their collectivistic personal values, as proposed by Hemingway (2005), it is also possible that one would consider doing so to advance their career (Bode & Singh, 2018), which would be an expression of individualistic values. As we did not analyze this aspect in detail, future research could examine the personal values of all different types of social intrapreneurs identified in our typology.

Furthermore, and similar to Hemingway (2005), we argue that social intrapreneurs can be found throughout the organization at any position. Our findings illustrate that social intrapreneurs may not be identified by their titles or positions. They can rather be identified by what they do—ideating and implementing hybrid business models that generate social and commercial value, which can happen from within core business or sustainability departments, contrary to what Davis and White (2015) suggest. Finding social intrapreneurs in different positions may be explained by the fact that social intrapreneurship neither fits perfectly into core business nor sustainability. We illustrated how social intrapreneurs were exposed to ongoing dynamics and uncertainty concerning their positioning. In many cases, the tasks required to entrepreneurially combine social or environmental with commercial value creation deviated from the official positions of individuals who identified as social intrapreneurs, leading to the subsequent creation of “hybrid” positions and departments in some cases. As more of these positions and departments emerge in corporations, future research could examine to which extent their hybrid professionals gain degrees of agency in contrast to social intrapreneurs housed in “traditional” departments.

Another interesting goal for future research could be to gain a deeper understanding of the support system of social intrapreneurs, for example, by means of an ethnographic study of a social intrapreneurial initiative, or multiple initiatives stemming from a corporate social incubator. Hemingway (2005) differentiated “frustrated” social intrapreneurs operating in unsupportive cultures from “active” social intrapreneurs in supportive cultures. Our research indicates that actual support for social intrapreneurs can be limited even in supportive cultures, or when social intrapreneurs have a corporate mandate. Although a social intrapreneurial idea may stem from the corporate suite, social intrapreneurs face legitimation challenges as they operate outside of the corporation's current concept of strategy (Burgelman, 1983). Hence, we find that even active social intrapreneurs in supportive cultures can be frustrated in their efforts, adding nuance to Hemingway's (2005) original conceptualization.

Our study also offers practical implications for corporations. The elusive issue of where to house social intrapreneurs suggests corporations might have to reconsider their organizational structures to enable social intrapreneurs and their initiatives to flourish. Currently, we have only found limited evidence of positions and departments that

hybridize the pursuit of social and commercial goals (instead of the typical approach of separating these goals). Given sustainability departments usually focus only on social and environmental goals (often with a philanthropic or harm minimization approach), creating a specific team to entrepreneurially attend to both social and environmental goals including commercial needs may be an interesting approach for corporations. This may also facilitate the creation of a social intrapreneurial support system and collaboration across the corporation. This could occur through a social innovation incubator but also a specific social business department. Choosing the right candidates for such social intrapreneurial teams will require managers to look beyond their current sustainability department and extend their search across the entire organization. Future research could analyze typical characteristics of social intrapreneurs in more detail to provide broader assessment possibilities for organizations to identify social intrapreneurial talent.

Implementing such platforms for social intrapreneurs and giving room for social intrapreneurship can also be an interesting path for corporations to engage their employees in social and environmental activities and hence enable them to find meaning and purpose in their work (Haski-Leventhal & Glavas, 2021; Mirvis & Googins, 2018). Our typology raises attention to the importance of recognizing not only the “visionaries” typically associated with entrepreneurial behaviors, but also different types of experts across departments, who can enter the entrepreneurial process at a later stage. Organizations can hence support their employees to develop broader entrepreneurial skills beyond the ideation phase, which is typically the focus of innovation contests. Furthermore, creating a supportive environment for these different types of social intrapreneurs will likely require a nuanced understanding of the challenges they may face in their respective departments and in different stages of the entrepreneurial process.

Our analysis is not without limitations. In our case of a qualitative study, for example, generalizability may be limited. Because the research is based on a small sample of cases or participants, the findings may not be representative of the broader population or applicable to other contexts. Furthermore, and more specifically, we illustrated in our findings that some social intrapreneurs may not be fixed to one of the four types we identified. Instead, the position of the social intrapreneur can change (e.g., switching from core business to corporate sustainability or vice versa). Therefore, a position in our typology might be rather a snapshot of the status quo than a fixed state, and future research could delve deeper into the dynamic aspect of social intrapreneurial positions. However, as inductive qualitative research is also vulnerable to researcher bias and subjectivity, our interpretation of the data may be influenced by our own assumptions (as well as those of the interviewees). We thus call for future research to probe and extend our findings.

Overall, we contribute to the social intrapreneurship literature and show that social intrapreneurs can be either “born” from their personal values or “made” from a corporate opportunity, providing a nuanced typology that indicates the different pathways through which these corporate change agents may assume intrapreneurial roles. With our work, we hope to inspire more research on the multiple ways through which entrepreneurship can be combined with

corporate change agency, and advance the social intrapreneurial promise of transforming large corporations toward sustainability.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the first author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors declare compliance with the ethical standards.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>We note that some authors use the term “corporate social entrepreneur” and “social intrapreneur” to refer to both corporations and individuals. We adopt the term social intrapreneur to emphasize the agency of employees (Carrier, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>While we refer to position as official job positions of individuals within a firm, a mandate can be given concerning a specific assignment, independent from the position.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.leagueofintrapreneurs.com/>; <http://www.circleofintrapreneurs.com/>.

<sup>4</sup>With sustainability departments or sustainability initiatives, we refer to any kind of department or initiative working on environmental and/or social goals, including CSR departments/initiatives.

<sup>5</sup>Famous business professor C.K. Prahalad known for the Bottom of the Pyramid approach.

<sup>6</sup>The numbers following interview quotes refer to interviewee codes in Table 1.

<sup>7</sup>We follow the APA recommendation and use “they/them/their” as a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is irrelevant to the context (<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/singular-they>).

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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