

# Exam in Organizational Psychology, Bachelor, Autumn 2013

Course code: PSY2406

## Formal issues:

- The home exam is handed-out by the reception at the Department of Psychology on October 30 at 9:00. It will be available on Fronter shortly after that.
- You can contact Sabine Raeder [sabine.raeder@psykologi.uio.no](mailto:sabine.raeder@psykologi.uio.no) if you have **formal** questions during the exam period. Answers to all questions will also be posted on Fronter.
- The maximum length of your exam assignment is 3000 words.
- Make sure your candidate number, which you will find in StudentWeb (do not use your name) and course code is written on the front page of both copies. Remember to fill out the "obligatorisk erklæring" (Declaration).  
Obligatorisk erklæring: <http://www.sv.uio.no/psi/studier/admin/>  
Declaration: <http://www.uio.no/english/studies/admin/examinations/cheating/index.html>
- Please submit the exam assignment in 2 copies to the reception of The Department of Psychology until November 13 at 14:00.

It is not required for this exam to refer to scientific work apart from the textbook. However, if you use other people's scientific work, please use the APA-style for citing:

<http://www.sv.uio.no/english/studies/resources/sources-and-references/APA-guide-summary>

## **Exam in Organizational Psychology, Bachelor, Autumn 2013**

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Please answer all questions on the case The Eden Project:

1. Analyse Tim Smit's leadership in the light of appropriate theories, and answer the following question: Does it help or hinder his leadership that, as chief executive of a project about plants, he is 'not a horticulturalist'?

You can refer to several leadership theories for answering this question.

2. What is Tim Smit's approach to the creation of work groups and teams? What are the strengths and the risks of taking such a view about people who work for you?

Again, you can refer to several concepts of work groups and teams to answer this question.

3. Analyse the organizational culture of The Eden Project in the light of the competing values model.

## PART 3 CASE STUDY

# The Eden Project

If a single word can be used to sum up the achievements of Tim Smit, that word might be 'regeneration'. To turn one derelict, neglected corner of south-west England into a successful tourist business attracting millions of visitors is a remarkable achievement; but to do it twice is simply astonishing. Yet this is precisely what Smit has done; and in the Eden Project we can see the nature of this achievement through a blend of visionary and innovative leadership combined with a strong sense of the value of teamwork.

### Before Eden

Cornwall is one of several parts of the UK which suffered economic decline during the later 20th century. Its industrial heritage has all but disappeared in the wake of globalisation and the shifting nature of the industrial world landscape. The last tin mine closed in 1998, and the ruined mine towers are witness to what was once the largest tin-mining industry in the world. The production of china clay remains one of Cornwall's oldest current industries, but that too is in decline and job losses in this sector continue to be announced. The fishing business is contracting, and traditional agricultural and horticultural production, mainly vegetables and flower bulbs, is being challenged by similar, year-round levels of production in developing countries. Cornwall as a county has, for some years, been in receipt of European Union Objective One funding destined to assist with economic regeneration in Europe's poorest regions. This level of relative poverty is probably something which many of the tourists who visit Cornwall's beautiful landscapes, historic properties and wild coastland do not generally see; and indeed tourism has become one of the largest single income-generating business sectors in the area. Whilst there are some strong indications that the Cornish economy might be revitalised by the arrival of new, knowledge-based industries which are supported by technological developments, tourism remains at the heart of the county's economy.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, in a project which would contribute substantially to Cornwall's reputation as a tourist destination, John Willis, Tim Smit and John Nelson began to restore the long-derelict gardens surrounding the stately home and seat of the Tremayne family at Heligan, near Mevagissey. The story of this garden, its dereliction after the start of the Great War of 1914, its rediscovery following a storm in 1990 and its



Source: Tamsyn Williams/The Eden Project

The Eden Project is the realisation of one man's extraordinary vision through powerful teamwork and global co-operation.

restoration, in part as a memorial to the gardeners who would have died in the war, is one of enormous poignancy and beauty.<sup>2</sup> For Smit, an archaeology and anthropology graduate who had also developed a love of gardens, it was a project which enabled him to use many of his professional skills, and the garden itself has become one of England's most loved,<sup>3</sup> and a major attraction for Cornwall.

However, while Heligan is horticultural archaeology and the gardens today are, in essence, a living museum of 19th-century estate gardening, the Eden Project was a very different type of restoration, and one which drew upon Smit's additional skills as a rock music producer and showman. What Smit was restoring in his second major project was land; and the vision and purpose behind the Eden Project looks to the future rather than the past.

### Ten things to do with a disused clay pit . . .

Photographs of what was to become the Eden Project prior to the arrival of Tim and his team reveal the extent of the transformation. In the mid 1990s the worked-out Bodelva china clay pit near St Austell looked very much like what many believed it to be: a derelict, polluted and worthless piece of land stripped of fertile soil – essentially a 34-acre puddle. The statistics behind its transformation into one of the most spectacular tourist attractions in the country are mind-boggling. The first task, in 1998 when the project began, was to landscape the site, and shift 1.8 million tons of earth to reduce the pit side gradients, a task which took twelve dumper trucks and eight bulldozers six months. During the first

two months of work, it rained almost continuously which resulted in 43 million gallons of water draining into the clay-lined pit.<sup>4</sup> This was both a problem and an opportunity; the problem was to design a drainage system which would prevent the whole site turning into a soggy bog during the average English summer; but the opportunity was to demonstrate one of the founding principles of sustainability, and use the run-off water to service the site. The system designed to meet this purpose collects, on average, 22 litres a second, and almost half the water needed to run the project (including plant watering, a 22-metre waterfall in the tropical biome and the numerous toilets!) is 'grey' water, in other words that which can be harvested from the site itself. Over 85,000 tonnes of soil, made from waste products and other organic material, were needed to turn the clay-lined puddle into the fertile ground in which over a million plants of 5,000 and more species could grow, to create a series of global gardens.

The two original 'biomes', spectacular greenhouses which re-create a humid tropical environment and warm temperate climate respectively, are perhaps what most visitors remember about the project, although more than half the site is actually open-air. The Humid Tropics biome was confirmed, in 2004, by the *Guinness Book of Records* as the largest conservatory in the world at 240 metres by 100 metres by 55 metres high, enclosing 15,590 square metres. It houses 'the biggest jungle in captivity' and contains plants native to the tropical areas of the world including Malaysia, West Africa and South America as well as islands like the Seychelles. The Warm Temperate biome covers 6,540 square metres, and replicates a mediterranean climate housing plants which represent those which grow between 30° and 40° north and south of the equator. A recent addition to the buildings on site is 'The Core', the Project's education centre, the roof of which is constructed on the same mathematical principle (the Fibonacci sequence of interwoven spirals) which appears in nature in many plant formations, and which appears to be the way in which some plants pack the maximum number of seeds, spines or leaves into the smallest possible area.<sup>5</sup>

#### **If you build it, they will come**

The Annual Report of 2005 stated that, to that date, the Eden Project (which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Eden Trust, a registered charity) had cost £120m to build. The money has been raised from a variety of sources including grant funding such as that from the UK government's millennium project fund; and further funding is being sought from the National Lottery to finance additional building. Together with commercial loans, the grant money is used for capital investment on the site and educational or conservation projects in

other parts of the world. Running costs in 2007/8 were £20m, and revenue comes from both the commercial activities of the Project and gifts or donations.<sup>6</sup> The money is used to run the operation, maintain the asset base and service the commercial loans; so although as a charity it does not make a profit, it does have to run at commercially successful levels. Visitors are the major source of revenue. In its first year of operation it attracted twice the number of visitors estimated in the business plan, and over 7 million in its first five years of operation. Visitor numbers appear to be stabilising at about 1.2 million a year. But what exactly do people come to see?

Tim Smit's vision for Eden is far from being that of just another garden. He is, as we have noted, not a horticulturalist, but an archaeologist, anthropologist and former rock show organiser. The purpose of Eden is essentially to educate people about the environment and the relationship of humanity with the plant world, but to do so in such a way as to set a conservation and sustainability example which is, above all things, spectacular fun. The 2007–8 Annual Review explains this purpose thus:

*The Eden Project exists to explore our dependence on the natural world; rebuilding connections of understanding that have faded from many people's lives. We use the living collection of plants as a canvas on which to tell stories that illustrate our dependence on plants and resources, that we are part of nature not apart from it, and that by working with the grain of nature we can develop more resilient individuals, communities and societies to face the challenges of the 21st Century.*<sup>7</sup>

The Project identifies three essential elements in its approach to this task;

- educational programmes; this includes the design of the site, and all the events which happen there, many of which are connected with schools and colleges or seek to convey important social messages.<sup>8</sup> Current programmes include 'Gardens for Life' which co-ordinates school gardening and educational activities involving 25,000 children at 400 participating schools in the UK, Kenya and India; and the 'Mud Between Your Toes' experience which aims to reconnect children with nature and the environment.
- operational practice; Eden believes the way it runs the site should be an inspiration and example to both commercial corporations and public bodies; this is part of its aim to develop the notion of Social Enterprise, 'Where the twin needs of good citizenship and the rigour of sound commerce meet'.<sup>9</sup> A good illustration of this is its 'waste neutral' initiative.
- Eden as convener and agent for change; this aspect involves using the Eden venue to host major events

that facilitate dialogue and debate about significant environmental matters. For example, in May 2007 it hosted a conference of business and community leaders as part of the Prince of Wales Business Summit on Climate Change; and it has developed the Post-Mining Alliance which focuses on the problems of managing the environmental legacy of former mining areas like Bodelva itself.

The educational purpose which underlies the Project shows that this is, indeed, far more than just another garden.

*Eden's education programmes present the need for environmental care to the widest possible public audience through celebrating what nature gives us – the focus is unashamedly on love and awe rather than guilt and fear, weaving expertise in horticulture, arts, media, science, technology, education and commerce in order to raise awareness and inspire people to action.*<sup>10</sup>

The achievement of this objective requires both focused and decisive leadership, but also powerful teamwork.

### Taking a lead

The television series *Gardeners of Eden*<sup>11</sup> which presented a year in the life of the Eden Project gives some insight into both the nature of Tim Smit's leadership style and the range of activities undertaken by the different teams required to run the Project. It also shows some of the very human problems associated with such an enterprise, including conflicts of interest between the Project's main purpose and some of the professional teams whose tasks are to contribute to that objective.

Smit generally dresses casually and has the slightly scruffy air of someone who is not accustomed to spend much of his working day in an office or behind a desk. In a *Guardian* article prior to a major lecture at the RSA, the interviewer noted some of Smit's key qualities.

*Smit's secret, if there is one, seems to be that he can bring people of very different disciplines and skills together, get them to brainstorm and collaborate, and come up with the extraordinary. The Eden Project, he says, has attracted locals by the score, but also high-flying artists, businessmen, architects, scientists, engineers, educationalists, horticulturalists and ecologists from all over Britain. 'It feels like a renaissance organisation,' says one woman who left a senior management job to work there as a director and has been amazed both at what gets done and the way it works. 'It's attracted a critical mass of people, and there's this passionate belief, right through the project, that it belongs to everyone who works there, that it's a team thing. I guess it demonstrates that you can have an organisation that is highly effective financially, environmentally and socially. It's a kind of experiment to show that you can work in different ways.'*

*A local woman who has been with Eden since the start is more succinct. 'It's the most equal place I've known,' she says.*

*'This is a stage for change,' says Smit, who admits that Eden can seem like a sect to outsiders. 'Many people have made life choices to come here. Most could earn five times as much elsewhere. But I'm aware that if you want to effect real change, and we do, that you must not own it. You have got to make sure that it's owned by more than one person.'*<sup>12</sup>

Smit is described as optimistic and positive, with a mission to make people think differently. He is concerned to challenge dogma from all sides, and is happy to question the views of committed environmentalists like José Bové as well as those of traditionalists. Although educational, he is convinced that the Eden Project need not be stuffy or seek to preach; above all fun, excitement and spectacle are integral to the educational process. This lays him open to the accusation that it is no more than a 'green theme park'; and indeed his desire to make the project a centre for spectacle and display brings him into conflict with the horticulturalists on the site. In the year of filming, it was clear that the two managers of the biomes deeply resented the disturbance and damage done to their plants by teams of electricians hired to lay lighting cables in and around the buildings to support some of the spectacles and events which are planned. A third curator-in-waiting is frustrated that the project to build the dry tropics biome which is planned to house his extensive cactus and succulent collection has been put back by several years, leapfrogged by the project to build the 'Core' education centre.

Smit is also very 'hands-on' in the sense that he is both integral to many of the special events (for instance the Rainforest Conference organised in September 2005) but is equally prepared to help selling tickets and guiding visitors on the peak season 'tricky days', peak visitor days on which staff who do not normally work with visitors are encouraged to follow his example and pitch in to help keep the operation moving.<sup>13</sup>

### Working in Paradise

By 2008, the Project had grown to be a major local employer with 450 staff on the payroll, and 150 or more additional regular volunteer workers who are drafted in to help with (mostly) peak seasonal activities such as horticulture and visitor operations. The workforce is focused into a number of 'Eden Teams', the main one being the **Destination Team**. This team includes the **Green Team** of horticultural curators and other experts who manage the biomes and the planting, but in addition the people who run events and exhibitions as well as the retail and catering operations. This team is very much the 'front of house', as the

gardeners work in the public eye during the day. However, as the programme shows, they also work outside opening hours, often at night, to carry out certain potentially hazardous activities, such as lopping unstable branches from trees in the rainforest. It is also clear from the series that there can be significant differences of opinion and interest between the Green Team and Smit. This came to the fore when Smit planned the first major winter event, the 'Time of Gifts' festival. This was partly an attempt to increase winter visitor numbers to the site, but required special construction (of an ice rink) and lighting in order to accommodate a variety of story-telling activities in the biomes, as well as 'light-and-magic' processions and shows. The whole event clearly opened something of a rift between members of the 'green' team and Smit since many felt that their values were being compromised and the whole Project was becoming a sort of Disneyland. One curator told the BBC crew that the events not only did physical damage, but also damaged the morale of staff. Not only were curators upset, but the catering and housekeeping staff were also very concerned by the heavy demands (not least of which was having to learn to skate!) which would be made, and Smit is seen running a fairly fraught staff meeting with Destination personnel in an attempt to encourage them and gain extra commitment. When the event was successful, the staff were thrown a celebratory party, but nevertheless some of the Green Team were absent in protest. Smit explains his view about this conflict of interests:

*I'm not into horticulture; my role isn't horticulture. My job is to fizz people into getting excited about horticulture, which is a very, very different activity. And actually, the*

*certainties that horticulturalists want are exactly the sort of thing I want to shake up.<sup>14</sup>*

While the Destination Team is clearly the face of the Eden Project, other teams include: the **Foundation Team** who work with supporters of the Project and also look outwards to develop education and other scientific and technological projects; the **Marketing Team** and the **Communications Team** who run an in-house publishing company as well as more traditional communications activities including the website;<sup>15</sup> the **Development Team** which is involved with major projects such as building and includes people from partner organisations such as architects and construction companies; the **Finance Team**, who ensure the project is economically viable and fully accountable to its various stakeholders; the **Creative Team** which develops and produces events, including the regular concerts, many of which feature major pop and rock artists; and the **Organisational Development Team** who 'look after our people' and are essentially concerned to link the processes and operations and build the Eden culture. Eden also includes the public as their **Visiting Team**, in other words the paying customers whose interaction with the project is vital to its continuation.

Between them Tim Smit and the Eden Project teams have been tremendously successful in both business and educational terms. Not only has a vision been realised in terms of the physical development of the site, but the benefits include an estimated increased incremental value to the Cornish economy of £1.2m in 2007–8.<sup>16</sup> It has created over 400 jobs, and the majority of staff were recruited locally. But above all, it has provided millions of people with a memorable and exciting experience which almost all would recommend to others.

In the television programme, Smit explains part of his management philosophy thus:

“It is essential for me to like everybody I work with which is not a very professional thing if you were doing an MBA; you employ people on their merits and their CVs. Bugger that for a game of darts! If I'm going to get out of bed in the morning to do something like this, I want to walk through that door really looking forward to seeing everybody that's there. And you know what? I have the tremendous privilege of that being so.”