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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

AVIGNON - 28 & 29 May 2020

**THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON ENTREPRENEURIAL DYNAMICS:
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

Call for papers

Submission deadline : 29 February 2020



Symposium location :

«Le Petit Louvre» - 23, rue Saint-Agricol, 84000 Avignon

To what extent are entrepreneurial dynamics explained by cultural variables? The social sciences have grappled with the question since the industrial revolution that Europe experienced at the end of the 19th century with its resultant development of trade and business.

In a well-known analysis first published in 1904, Max Weber was one of the first to examine the links between religious belief and the development of capitalism. He argued that Protestants (and especially Calvinists) prefer success on earth, here and now, which leads

them to value work, business and asceticism in the world – while he also indicated that Catholics were more sensitive to the redemption of their souls and salvation through redemption, which places them ‘outside the world’ and thus diverts them from their professional achievements (Weber, 2003). This perspective has motivated valuable research streams taking into account that history and economic development matters. Economic development refers directly and causally to a cultural fact, in the case of Weber’s analysis religion. The idea continues to thrive and remain widespread. For the American historian David Landes (1998), the wealth and poverty of nations can be explained by the existence of the cultural systems that determine the level of economic performance. By openly attributing character traits to the countries studied, he puts forward an interpretation that can be described as ‘culturalist’, since it tends to reduce political, institutional or economic phenomena to questions of beliefs, representations and quasi-naturalized values. As seductive and stimulating as they may be, these explanations have been widely criticized for their simplicity and systematic nature, particularly when they claim to explain development phenomena (Petiteville, 1995).

Possibly in an attempt to address this criticism, economists have tried to specify some of the mechanisms underlying culturalist reasoning. For example, Valencia Caicedo (2014) explains today’s higher income level in regions with Jesuit missions in the 17th and 18th century in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil by the effects of human capital and intergenerational knowledge transmissions. More generally, Klüppel et al. (2018) argue that shake-ups that alter cultural building blocks such as trust, religion, or moral beliefs reshape the long-term evolution of the business environment.

One such example is that the access to finance in regions that were most heavily affected by slave trade is by today the lowest in the world (Pierce and Snyder, 2017).

In management sciences, a large number of studies have attempted to refine and operationalize the link between culture and entrepreneurship. For example, Geert Hofstede (1980) developed a series of indicators for explaining why certain national cultures favour (or discourage) initiative, innovation and risk-taking – the dimensions typically found in an entrepreneurial approach. Initially, Hofstede distinguished four dimensions: a) hierarchical distance, defined as the degree of acceptance of an individual’s inequalities of power and authority within a group; b) individualism/collectivism, which differentiates societies that favour the «I» from the «us»; (c) masculinity/femininity of social roles, which distinguishes societies with a strong emphasis on success, achievement and ambition, from societies with a strong emphasis on caring and sharing; (d) uncertainty avoidance, i.e. the way in which a society accepts, tolerates and manages unexpected or unknown situations. In subsequent work (1990; 2010), Hofstede uses two further variables to complete this list, namely (e) the short- or long-term orientation of societies, which refers to the way of perceiving change, tradition and thus the relationship to knowledge and education; (f) the question of pleasure, which measures the ability of societies to satisfy the immediate desires and needs of their members or, on the contrary, to regulate them in order to moderate or delay them.

Hofstede’s influence has been instrumental in developing research into the impact of culture on entrepreneurship (Hayton, 2002; Kirkman, 2006). Drawing from this framework, studies on the subject have multiplied in an attempt to verify the validity of his proposals in very

different fields. The field of research that has gradually developed is not free of bias or a priori; for Hofstede, societies that are the most economically enterprising have cultural systems that favour the emancipation of individuals and the satisfaction of their needs or interests, the mobility of roles and status, or a high degree of adaptation and evolution of norms. The evaluation of these elements has been interpreted by some as the glorification of a so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' model – which, since Schumpeter (1942), has often been presented in the specialized literature as the reference to follow in terms of entrepreneurial dynamism. Overall, investigations on the subject have developed around two axes (Pacitto and Jordan, 2017), one concentrating on the question of the effect of cultural contexts on the profile of entrepreneurs, the other on understanding the mechanisms through which cultural areas could encourage specific entrepreneurial approaches.

Historically, entrepreneurship studies have mainly focused on the attributes and characteristics of entrepreneurs, sometimes to the point of maintaining a quasi-heroic representation of their role (Cyr, Meier and Pacitto, 2011). As Hernandez (2008) points out, entrepreneurship has long been considered as an issue focusing on the persona of the entrepreneur. However, the approach has gradually been renewed and broadened, to focus not only on the question of the entrepreneur's identity but also on what the person does (Gartner, 1988), thus integrating much broader organizational, contextual and cultural dimensions into the analysis. Several studies have been inspired by Hofstede's model in this regard. For example, based on a comparative study conducted in 11 countries, Scheinberg and MacMillan (1988) point out that entrepreneurs' practices do vary across cultures. One of the

authors' conclusions, echoed by many others, is that the pursuit of profit is more accepted and even legitimized in Anglo-Saxon countries than in Latin countries, which strongly contributes to boosting entrepreneurial logic. Similarly, Thomas and Mueller (2000) argue that the closer people feel to or are imbued with American culture, the more entrepreneurial they become. According to the authors, there are therefore many cultures that are more favourable to entrepreneurship than others, depending in particular on the degree to which individual freedom is valued and situations of uncertainty are accepted. The study by Kreiser et al. (2010) with entrepreneurs from 6 different countries (Australia, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) broadly confirms these results. Interestingly, these studies have not painted a clear picture of the effects of being embedded in several cultures. While ambicultural individuals often trace back their entrepreneurialism to their ambicultural experiences, few studies have focussed on this particular group (Chen, 2014; Arndt and Ashkanasy, 2015).

In recent years, at a more national/macro-level, and especially with regards to international comparisons on the relationship between culture and entrepreneurship, the number of studies has also increased (Alon, Lerner and Shoham, 2016). Also in the wake of Hofstede, Williams and McGuire (2010) argue that the most individualistic societies, accepting a high level of uncertainty and a low hierarchical distance, are the most creative and innovative. For Baughn et al. (2003), national culture determines both the orientations of entrepreneurs and the institutional conditions that encourage and facilitate - more or less according to the circumstances - the initiative of economic actors. They point out that the percentage of adult entrepreneurs in the United States is five

times higher than in Sweden and ten times higher than in Japan, which they believe reflects the quasi-structural importance of cultural variables, particularly the issue of access to resources. Based on data from 44 different countries, the authors show that issues which are decisive for economic development (such as: available means of financing; undertaking administrative burdens; and, the quality of infrastructure or labour flexibility), refer to value systems and especially to the belief that individuals can or should take risks. For his part, Shane (1992) wonders why: 'some companies are more inventive than others'. After researching 33 countries, he concludes that the countries in which individualism is most developed and where the hierarchical distance is low are those that are the most enterprising and innovative. In this respect, it confirms the work of Hofstede and all those who consider that individual initiative is the foundation for economic development. It is interesting to note that in subsequent research, Shane et al. (1995) strongly nuance their response, distinguishing between forms of innovation that are differentiated according to the degree of individualism or collectivism. Thus, they show that companies that impose strict and binding operating rules on their members do not necessarily lack entrepreneurial capacities, but design them according to particular procedures that respect the standards in force, based on rationalities that involve the group as a whole and, above all, the holders of authority. After an extensive literature review, Hayton and Cacciotti agree, pointing out that: "evidence has begun to accumulate that individualism and low uncertainty avoidance are not always positively associated with entrepreneurial behaviour" (2014, p. 32). Furthermore, it is worth noting the work on "entrepreneurship by necessity" (Tessier-Dargent, 2014; Nongaine-

ba, 2018) – which considerably broadens the question of the impact of culture on economic development, by showing how some people with low resources or in situations of great instability will become entrepreneurs 'by necessity', without their behaviour being guided by values or beliefs in their 'individuality'. As we can see, there are many uncertainties and the debates remain open. Three issues in particular merit discussion. First – and this is a major criticism of Hofstede's model and the work it has inspired – the supposed correlations between culture and entrepreneurship have not been verified in some parts of the world. Thus, after a comparison between European and non-European countries, Strychalska-Rudzewicz (2016) concludes that a low hierarchical distance and a high level of individualism are not associated with a high level of innovation and do not explain the behaviour of entrepreneurs in South East Asian countries. Similarly, Pinillos and Reyes (2011) show that the entrepreneurial dynamics of developed countries are radically different from those of developing countries, since they are positively correlated with the level of individualism in the former case and negatively in the latter. In the same vein, Taylor and Wilson (2012) note that what they call 'institutional collectivism', including patriotism and nationalism, strongly promotes the innovative capacity of some countries. The key question raised here is that of the scope – universal or contingent – and therefore the degree of validity of explanatory categories used by researchers who hold Anglo-Euro centric countries as an ideal of economic success, all examples where growth and development are culturally linked to the exacerbation of the individual as a value. Secondly, even if the geographical coverage of research on the link between culture and entrepreneurship has grown progressively

over time, some parts of the world remain under-researched. Recently, Codogni regretted that few publications provide information on the situation in Central and Eastern European countries (2017, p.7). Similarly, Akhtar et al. (2015) emphasize that: “the established literature on entrepreneurship takes into account the developed countries’ perspective and majority of the studies are conducted in well-established entrepreneurial cultural settings” (2015, p. 243). Finally, the very notion of culture proves to be problematic. While it is difficult to refute that there are cultural differences from one country to another, or from one region to another, finding serious and scientific explanations – often nuanced – for these phenomena is both complex and often problematic (Thurik and Dejardin, 2012). Can we talk about cultural determinants? The social sciences teach us that cultural phenomena are often relatively stable – especially when we talk about national culture – without being immutable or irreversible. Other aspects to analyse in detail include ‘social constructs’ (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), in other words, the product of human factors, certainly part of a long history, but which are never totally fixed. In this sense, institutions and public policies are themselves the product of a cultural context and vice versa (Douglas, 1986), so it is difficult to distinguish clearly each of these dimensions or to assign a predominant, let alone exclusive, role to the ‘cultural factor’ (Baumol 1993; Pacitto, 2015). Nguyen et al. (2008) note with surprise that the level of business creation intentions is higher in Vietnam than in Taiwan and even in the United States, without being able to attribute this result to a single factor, simply pointing out that a particularly incentive institutional framework doubles the cultural elements conducive to innovation and economic development. A cultural approach to entrepreneurial

logic therefore requires: “an understanding in all their complexity of the political-institutional contexts that may or may not promote entrepreneurial development” (Pacitto and Jourdan, 2017, p. 272). In other words, and in the form of a warning: “by too easily isolating the cultural factor and making it a causal variable that alone explains the development or decline of nations, we are making a mistake of perspective that inevitably leads to a methodological impasse” (Ibid., p. 271).

Another difficulty inherent in analysing the impact of culture on entrepreneurial dynamics is to find the relevant territorial level. Xuhui et al. are opposed, for example, to the idea of an ‘African culture’ that would explain entrepreneurial logic in general (2018, p. 60). In the case of Tanzania, they even use the notion of national culture with caution, as it covers very heterogeneous realities at the local level. What is valid on the African continent is valid for other regions of the world. In Sweden, Davidsson and Wiklund showed that beliefs and values play a significant role in differences in business creation rates from one region to another, underlining the need to address the cultural particularities that may exist within a country. The emphasis on the national prism also results in the neglect of certain cultural and economic phenomena that can be described as ‘communitarian’, which can develop at the local level initiated by ethnic minorities or groups with a migrant background (Stambouli, 2017). Conversely, one can also question the weight of supranational integration processes, of which the European Union still provides perhaps the most successful example today, on national entrepreneurial dynamics. We can indeed think that the cultural and institutional particularities that have gradually developed in national spaces are increasingly impacted by economic policies, but also expectations,

values and representations, which go beyond these frameworks and are increasingly globalized. The 'culture-entrepreneurship' duo may have to be thought of on the scale of what Wallerstein called, in Fernand Braudel's wake, 'the world economy' (2004). In sum, what the above analyses and problematisations allude to, and underline, is that all too often we look for, and indeed anticipate major differences when conducting inter-comparisons (for example, between countries, industries or organizations) yet all too commonly we find that still more intense and profound differences reside in intra-comparisons, for example, between particular regions within a given nation state, within different parts of an industrial sector, or indeed, sometimes even within different divisions and departments of a single organization (Stokes et al. 2015; 2018). The analysis of the cultural impact on entrepreneurial dynamism therefore requires identifying the most appropriate level of analysis and comparison for understanding and measuring the phenomenon being studied (Fayolle, Basso and Bouchard, 2010).

Finally: "while the intuition that culture matters is still a powerful one, the evidence of predictable associations between culture and entrepreneurial outcomes at regional and national levels is remarkably mixed, perhaps more so now than ten years earlier" (Hayton and Cacciotti, 2014, p.34). This international symposium will discuss these key issues as widely and openly as possible. Theoretical and/or empirical proposals are welcome. Similarly, comparative analyses between different territories are strongly encouraged. We welcome submissions exploring the themes set out below. The following list is not exhaustive, but more illustrative in character:

- Which frameworks and models, extant or novel, might be used to explain the influence

of culture on entrepreneurial dynamics? How does the work of Hofstede fit with other views?

- Regarding the link between individualistic culture and entrepreneurship, what alternative explanations possible? To what extent does the concern for sustainable development, and especially the protection of the environment, encourage us to reconsider entrepreneurship in a more global and collective perspective?
- To what extent did the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 challenge, and/or transform, traditional business models?
- Is social entrepreneurship based on values compatible with traditional entrepreneurship? In what ways can we make a link between culture and social entrepreneurship?
- Can we identify national or sub-national traditions of entrepreneurship? Here, analyses of thinly studied regions (or countries) of the world provide prospective cases and materials.
- Is there a European entrepreneurial tradition distinct from an American tradition? If so, on which points?
- What is the role of history and historical events for entrepreneurship?
- What about «entrepreneurial failure»? Depending on the culture, can it be interpreted as a virtue and understood as a form of learning?
- Are specific forms of entrepreneurship emerging in developing countries or 'transition economies'?
- In the age of globalization, to what extent are we seeing the emergence of trans-national cultures that impact upon entrepreneurial dynamics? For example, what are the values and beliefs of major international organizations

(EU, OECD, IMF) regarding entrepreneurship?
Are they converging? How are they appropriate (or not) by national actors?

- More broadly, are entrepreneurial dynamics spreading between countries or regions? Can we identify logics of circulation, transfer, or on the contrary obstacles or even incompatibilities, which refer to cultural variables?
- How do prevailing populist and nationalist movements relate to the themes of entrepreneurial and cultural dynamics? Are they regressive, or can they potentially engage popular dynamism for innovation?
- What role(s) do the cultures other than those of predominant social groupings, such as for example, ethnic minorities or immigrant groups, play in entrepreneurial dynamics?
- How are entrepreneurial dynamics affected by multi- and ambicultural experiences and backgrounds?
- Are specific values and forms of entrepreneurship emerging in countries experiencing military and civil conflict (Somalia, Syria), devastated by natural disasters (Haiti), or in the midst of severe economic crises (Greece)?
- Since Schumpeter's pioneering work, what can be said about the values and beliefs of entrepreneurs?

Manuscripts should be sent to :

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by **29 February 2020**.

They must comply with Harvard Referencing standards :

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The layout (A4 format) should have margins (upper, lower and lateral) of 2.5cm. The text must not exceed 8000 words, all inclusive – written in Times New Roman (font 12) with 1.5 line spacing and be justified. The numbered pages must be without headers or footers.

Each proposal received will be subject to a double-blind review.

Contacts have been made with the following journals to consider a selection of contributions for submission to their regular referee process :

- *Small Business Economics*
- *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat*
- *Recherches en Sciences de Gestion*
- *Entreprendre & Innover*
- *Gestion 2000*
- *Question(s) de Management*
- *Industry and Higher Education*
- *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*
- *Journal of Management & Organization*

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KEY DATES

29 February 2020 : deadline for submitting proposals

27 March 2020 : notification of acceptance

30 April 2020 : submission of final texts and mandatory registration

28/29 May 2020 : conference in Avignon

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