
Foreword

After a century dominated by large-scale enterprises, there has been a resurgence of academic and political interest in entrepreneurship and its potential to contribute to economic growth and development. During the twentieth century, corporations exploited economies of scale and Fordist production methods to become the pre-eminent organisational form in the developed world. The rise of large-scale industrial enterprises characterised capitalist and central-planned economies alike. By 2000, half of the biggest 100 economic 'entities', ranked by value-added or gross domestic product, were multinational corporations rather than countries; and at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, each of 6000 basic commodities was produced in only one factory, with these highly-specialised state enterprises employing tens of thousands of workers and often constituting towns in their own rights.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, a combination of factors, notably deindustrialisation, the failure of state corporatism and the migration of manufacturing to low-wage developing countries, sparked renewed interest within developed countries in the economic importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in general, and the contribution of business start-ups and entrepreneurship to wealth and job creation. Within the European Union, for example, governments have heavily invested public funds in new initiatives to promote and nurture new, high-growth businesses.

It has long been recognised that cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship vary considerably, even within developed economics that share basic belief systems. For example, it is widely acknowledged that, in the United States, generations of economic migrants seeking a better life have created a culture which is more fertile and nurturing to entrepreneurs than those of the countries the migrants left behind – notably, Europe and, more recently, East Asia and Latin America.

Much less is known about cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship amongst the world's indigenous peoples, whose beliefs and values long predate current western economic orthodoxy. This book sets out to fill an important gap in our knowledge, drawing on an interdisciplinary understanding of the way that indigenous societies are ordered to provide insights into cultural perceptions of entrepreneurship, economic activity, risk and opportunity. The book draws together research from leading authorities on entrepreneurship, providing a comprehensive and fascinating range of case studies of indigenous peoples from across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and the South Pacific.

It is particularly pleasing that a book which throws such important new light on indigenous entrepreneurship should have been edited by a colleague at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Under the Treaty of Waitangi, the university works closely with Ngai Tahu, the Maori tribe (*iwi*) within whose tribal lands (*takiwa*) the campus and the city of Christchurch are located. As discussed by Charlotte Paulin in Chapter 43, Ngai Tahu is widely regarded as a 'New Zealand success story' for the way in which it has managed the *iwi*'s natural assets and seized opportunities to develop innovative, environmentally sustainable new businesses. The case studies of Ngai Tahu specifically, and

Maori in general, make a valuable contribution to this wide-ranging, global analysis of indigenous entrepreneurship.

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