

Book Review

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Entrepreneurship in Western Europe: A Contextual Perspective

by: Leo Paul Dana

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I am writing this review shortly after returning from a trip to Brussels, the undoubted capital of Europe, where, from chocolate to beer, visitors and inhabitants can breathe Europe and European values at every corner. A short visit at the Parliamentarium or at the Little Europe can foster every European's pride of belonging to the Old Continent. Yet, despite the troubled history of divisions and conflicts that plagued our beloved continent for most of its existence (interrupted by the few times of peace during the Roman Empire and the Sacred Roman Empire), it appears that everywhere in Europe the populist revolution is trying to destroy the surely incomplete, but fundamental political and economic integration we achieved with the European Union. Indeed, reviewing *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe* by Professor Leo-Paul Dana comes at times of uncertainty for Europe and the world. On 23rd June 2016, the British population voted to leave the European Union and to interrupt a marriage lasting 43 years. Few months later, the USA unexpectedly voted Donald J. Trump as the President. In Italy, France, and many other EU member states, several political parties, from right to left, are calling not only for reforming the EU system but also to re-consider the membership to the EU. Common to those cases is the confirmation of a post truth environment, where experts and facts are diminished in favour of populist slogans, fake news and gut-provoking statements.

It is my opinion that now more than ever, academics, especially those involved in business schools (and perhaps like me, convinced Europeans and Europeists working in a country that decided to leave the EU), have to rethink their role into the world, and take a stronger stance in educating the future generations of leaders to counter effect the populist, post truth, storm that is affecting our world. We do not only have the duty to create impact with our research but also with our teaching, perhaps the most important, often forgotten, task of our job. Given this environment the book from Leo-Paul Dana, *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe*, offers a great occasion to teach our topics with a European flavour in it. Explaining and dissecting the benefits and issues of a united Europe, which is surely not perfect, to foster the desire in future generations to work for a better world than the one we live in.

It goes without saying that teaching entrepreneurship is a constantly growing important part of every business school curriculum in the world. One of the most

challenging tasks for those who teach it is to search for appropriate and up-to-date textbooks that provide case studies, examples and insights to bring real world experience in class. In other words, context-based material.

Written by Leo Paul Dana, *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe* (2017) is a comprehensive response to these dilemmas, and represents the output of an innovative approach. It tries to find an uneasy answer to the implicit question: Does a Western European entrepreneurship model exist? At least two reasons make it harder to find an answer and at the same time extremely interesting the inquiring journey. First, Europe is a culturally, politically and economically diverse area. It is a heterogeneous environment where, to mention one, about economic activities to the Calvinist views are juxtaposed the Catholic views. Second, the concept of entrepreneurship is not a simple one. Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon with multiple facets, intertwined with different disciplines such as economics, business administration, sociology and psychology. When seeking a European model of entrepreneurship, the discipline of political science and the history of integration policies to foster innovation and economic development enter the field of inquiry. Nevertheless, Leo Paul Dana takes the burden and brings us in an exciting journey to unveil common aspects that the Western European entrepreneurship has.

Aimed at provoking thought, analysis and discussion, Leo Paul Dana has produced a concise and introductory collection of facts from 21 economies. The book allows the reader to decide the level of interests for details, it offers many details as well as the sources for independent research and deepening of the concepts. The book cites almost 800 works, many of which are inspiring for future research. Following an introductory chapter that covers the various streams of research in entrepreneurship, shedding light on debated topics and concepts, providing definitions as well as an historical and human perspective on the study of entrepreneurship, the book is organised in 23 chapters. Economies are presented in alphabetical order to facilitate the reader's consultation. The following are covered: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

Every chapter goes beyond the classical context of analysis and give the reader the opportunity to know about very specific environments and dynamics, such as the status of free port in Andorra, the roots of fishing traditions in Iceland, and the labour market dynamics in Sweden. Moreover, one of the main key lenses used by the author is the highlight of the human aspect in entrepreneurship. Indeed, every chapter, although relying on statistics, offers an excellent investigation of the cultural and social dynamics on entrepreneurship in each context, integrating the history, tradition and natural environment, to name some, into the analysis. This whole body of knowledge is directed toward deepening the reader's knowledge of the great variations entrepreneurship has in Western Europe in terms of propensity, characteristics, and role in the society. There is a wide spectrum of topics, making the chapters most suitable to be used in the teaching, as well as in training. Moreover, readings from *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe* (2017) can be suitable to be used in both introductory and advanced courses in business related topics, allowing the audience to freely deepen the investigation in the entrepreneurial context of one or more Western European countries. The length and complexity of the chapters make them flexible in their use.

Reading Leo-Paul Dana's *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe* (2017) made me reflect on how Europe's diversity is such an advantage, an agent of unity and interdependence, rather than a risk and agent of independence for each country. I hope that *Entrepreneurship in Western Europe* does not remain one of a kind and future projects tackle the issue of unifying continents toward a world that relies on the integration of differences, rather than separation. It is with these considerations in mind that I strongly recommend this book as a useful research and teaching tool, not only in entrepreneurship, but for business and management studies at large. Finally, I borrow the words of Professor Sabine Urban from the Foreword of the book to end this review, highlighting the characteristics that interested me most: "Léo-Paul Dana demonstrates in every chapter of this book that people count. Human quality is the decisive factor of progress. We are grateful to the author for this message, anchored in the past, and key to having confidence in a worthwhile future".