

Editorial

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1 Introduction

Morocco's King Mohammed VI gave an opening speech to the Parliament on development in His Majesty's Kingdom, and lamented the negative image of banks, "this image is justified by facts, such as the difficult access of young entrepreneurs to credit, the poor support of graduates and small and medium-sized enterprises during their creation." The monarch urged the banks to "promote access to bank loans for the largest number of qualified young people with projects and from different social categories to enable them to engage in entrepreneurship and to have the best chances of success" (Moroccan Press Agency and HuffPost Morocco, 2019).

Similarly, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, emphasised the Islamic Republic's need for entrepreneurship to enhance 'the country's readiness for leaps from bounds' and to overcome 'the economic pressure of the enemies'. These considerations were both regarded as proof that Iran more than ever needs to pursue entrepreneurship (Office of the Supreme Leader, 2010).

The King and the Supreme Leader are unlikely to listen to each other. Rather, they both listen to the global regime of entrepreneurship, led by the World Economic Forum and other global organisations. The global regime is advocating entrepreneurship for national, economic and social progress, and is advising governments on ways to promote entrepreneurship. The global regime is a force pressuring for similarity of institutions around the world, an institutional isomorphism.

Local culture, however, is counteracting the pressure toward similarity among societies. The culture in MENA is traditional, in that life is guided by tradition, rooted in the Islamic religion. A far less traditional culture prevails in Europe, where traditionality is derogated and newness is celebrated, and where life is more secular and guided by rationalistic calculations of benefit versus cost, a secular-rational culture contrasting the traditional culture in MENA. Such local culture shapes daily life and shapes an only partial adoption of prescriptions flowing from the global regime for entrepreneurship.

The countries in the MENA differ from one another and from other countries in their eco-systems for entrepreneurship. The eco-system for entrepreneurship in a country includes institutional framework conditions for entrepreneurship such as financial support, public policies and programs, education, R&D transfer, service and physical infrastructure, ease of entry, and norms. National eco-systems comprising these conditions are measured by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in its annual survey of experts around the world, summarised in the National Entrepreneurship Context Index, scaled from 1 to 10 for increasing elaboration of support for entrepreneurship. The indexes in the most and least elaborate eco-systems and in the MENA countries surveyed in 2019, are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 National Entrepreneurship Context Index for the top five and bottom five countries and the countries surveyed in MENA in 2019

Switzerland	6.05
Netherlands	6.04
Qatar	5.91
China	5.89
United Arab Emirates	5.84
Jordan	5.24
Saudi Arabia	5.04
Oman	4.61
Egypt	4.33
Morocco	3.95
Pakistan	3.95
Croatia	3.57
Guatemala	3.56
Paraguay	3.43
Puerto Rico	3.18
Iran	3.15

Source: Bosma et al. (2020, p.71 [online] <http://www.gemconsortium.org> [accessed May 1, 2020].

First, elaboration of national eco-systems is related to wealth. Four of the five top countries are wealthy, and four of the bottom five countries are rather poor. The coupling with wealth is understandable, in that it is costly for a country to support entrepreneurship.

Second, elaboration of eco-systems is not completely determined by wealth. China is not wealthy but is among the top five, and Croatia is rather wealthy but is among the bottom five. The high elaboration of the eco-system in China, despite its limited wealth, is a result of the high priority that China is giving to entrepreneurship.

Third, the MENA countries are spread across the entire spectrum. The median among all the countries in the survey is at Oman, and Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar are above the median, spread all the way to the top, whereas Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Iran are below the median, spread all the way to

the bottom in elaboration of the eco-system for entrepreneurship. This spread indicates that the MENA countries are quite heterogenous in their eco-systems.

Our understanding of life in a place is enhanced when we compare to other places. We understand life in MENA better, when we compare MENA to other places around the world. And we understand life in a country in MENA, when we compare to other countries, in MENA or elsewhere.

The difference in culture between MENA and other regions in the world calls for comparing entrepreneurship in MENA with entrepreneurship in other regions, focusing on influences from culture. The variation among the eco-systems in countries in MENA calls for comparisons among countries in MENA, focusing on influences from their eco-systems. Such comparisons – between MENA and other regions, and among countries in MENA – are undertaken in the articles in this special issue of the *MENA Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*.

2 Overview of the collection

MENA differs from the outside, notably in its traditional culture contrasted the more secular-rational culture prevailing especially in Europe and North America. This comparative perspective is adopted in the first four articles.

The first article is ‘Innovation and growth ambition of female entrepreneurs: a comparison between the MENA region and the rest of the world’, written by Mehrzad Saeedikiya and Zeynab Aeni. Their question is, for women entrepreneurs, how does location in MENA or outside affect innovation and expectations for growth of their businesses? The find that women in MENA are more innovative than women elsewhere, and that innovation affects expectations similarly in MENA and elsewhere.

The article on ‘Organisation and outcomes in social enterprising: comparing Europe and the Middle East and North Africa’ is written by Haya Al-Madadi, Imane El aouissi, Maria Bajjou, Mohamed Kamal Zaraba, Oumaima El Azzouzi, Oussama Er-rady, Salma El Haddaji, Yassine Errachid and Thomas Schøtt. The question concerns, how is social enterprising pursued in Europe and MENA? Participation in social entrepreneurship is found to be wider in Europe than in MENA. Society and environment are valued in social enterprises more in MENA than in Europe. Informal sources of financing prevail in MENA whereas formal sources dominate in Europe. Market orientation is enhanced when economy of enterprising is valued rather than society and environment. Reinvestment is pursued by women more than by men. Innovation in social enterprises is higher in MENA than in Europe. Expectation for growth is coupled with use of formal and informal sources of financing. Assessment of impact is extensive for female-led enterprises and promoted by market orientation. The study contributes to knowledge about social entrepreneurship as organised and pursued as a social institution in society, but differently in Europe and MENA.

The article on ‘Employees’ entrepreneurial work shaped by human capital and shaping entrepreneurial intention: Spain, Denmark, Middle East and North Africa’ is written by Asmaa Dahalla, Abderrahim Barakat, Sanaa Haouata and Peter Theis Nordenbøge. They focus on employees who work entrepreneurially, rather than routinely, and analyse whether such employees are intending to start a business. The find that they

do so, and that human capital underlies both employees' entrepreneurial work and employees' intention to become autonomous entrepreneurs. These effects, however, depend on the context, in that effects differ among MENA, Denmark and Spain.

The article on 'Entrepreneurs' gender, age and education shaping motives: push of necessity and pull of opportunity in MENA and Denmark' is by Mahdokht Sedaghat and Peter Waring Lei. In MENA, people are often pushed into entrepreneurship by the dire necessity to make a living. In Denmark, by contrast, people are more often pulled into entrepreneurship by seeing an opportunity in the market. The entrepreneurs' motives of pull and push are affected by their gender, age and education, but the effects of background upon motives differ between the two societies.

MENA is heterogeneous, especially in that these countries differ in their eco-systems for entrepreneurship. Differences among countries in MENA are brought to the forefront in three articles.

The article on 'Impact of education and training on adults' entrepreneurial mindset: a comparison among MENA countries' is crafted by Mustapha Benouadni and Najlaa El Cati. The authors ask how people's entrepreneurial mindset is shaped by their background in education and training and by the local culture. They find that education and entrepreneurial training, especially training after leaving school, are positively related to acquiring an entrepreneurial mindset. This coupling, however, is moderated by national entrepreneurial culture, which is more prevalent in some countries than others, also within MENA.

The article on 'Impact of innovation and international networking on firm openness to foreign markets strategy in Middle East and North Africa: individualism' moderating effect' is written by Abderrahim Barakat, Najlaâ El Cati and Mériem Filali. They analyse how, in MENA, firms' market strategy in terms of exporting is related to their innovativeness and their networking with foreigners, and also related to the context in form of local culture. Exporting by a firm is found to be positively related to its innovativeness and international networking. The effect of networking, however, differs among countries in MENA, in that networking promotes exporting especially much in countries where the culture is individualistic rather than collectivistic.

'Education affecting entrepreneurial intention: moderated by institutional and cultural conditions' is crafted by Bahi Slaoui Chaimae and Dinia Mohammed. People with education are likely to use their education to spot opportunities, and therefore intend to start a business. People with little education are likely to experience difficulty finding a job, so the dire necessity to make a living may make them intend to start. Whether intention is promoted by education or by lack of education may depend on the context. The authors find that the effect of education on intention is dependent on institutional and cultural conditions in the MENA countries.

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