

Re-thinking entrepreneurship through the lens of culture: Snapshots from Indonesia and Bhutan and their implications for sustainability

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1. Introduction

Fostering entrepreneurship is an important vehicle to promote more diverse and inclusive economic growth. Yet certain characteristics of national cultures have been identified as barriers to entrepreneurship that effectively drives such growth. This paper argues, in contrast, that thinking differently about the role of national cultures in entrepreneurship can provide a meaningful perspective on business and its connections to sustainability. Based on research from Indonesia and Bhutan, it explores alternative conceptualizations of entrepreneurship among entrepreneurs themselves that re-define the nature of business based on national cultural values. The paper examines what these culturally driven re-conceptualizations mean for sustainability and provides some modest recommendations for Bhutan as it moves forward with operationalizing Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the private sector.

2. Culture and entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is broadly defined as new business creation that provides self-employment, is focused on growth and usually creates jobs (Hayton, George & Zahra 2002: 33). Empirical evidence suggests there is a link between greater entrepreneurial activity and economic growth, both regionally and nationally (Acs & Armington 2004; Audretsch and Keilbach 2008; Berkowitz & DeJon 2005; Foelster 2000; Robbins et al. 2000; World Bank 2016). As an engine for economic growth, entrepreneurship drives innovation, enhances competition,

boosts employment and creates new products and markets (Fernandez-Serrano & Romero 2013; Thornton et al. 2011; Wennekes et al. 2002; Tambunan 2007). At the same time, the level of entrepreneurship activity itself differs across countries (Kelley, Singer & Herrington 2012; Peterson & Valliere 2008). Previous research points to a number of variables that attempt to explain this difference. Some point to a relationship between the level of economic development, usually measured in per capita income, and entrepreneurship activity. This research suggests there is a U-shaped relationship, where entrepreneurial activity is higher in countries with lower and higher levels of economic development while subsiding in between (Fritsch & Schroeter 2011; Wennekers et al. 2005). Others point to the process of economic development as having a relationship to entrepreneurship. In this case, lower entrepreneurship activity is seen as a function of economic development processes that emphasize large firms or mass production (Chinitz 1961; Stuetzer et al 2016). Still others explore the role of the location of economic development, arguing that urban-focused development strategies generate greater entrepreneurship (Acs & Armington 2006).

While each of these explanations provides important insights, they are not sufficient to explain country differences in entrepreneurial activity (Liñàn & Fernandez-Serrano 2014). In this context, the role of national culture has received considerable attention (Hayton, George & Zahra 2002; Herbig 1994; Liñàn & Fernandez-Serrano 2014; Mueller & Thomas 2000; Shane 1992; 1993; Valliere 2014; Wennekers et al. 2001). This body of research generally argues that national cultural values that emphasize risk-taking and competition are associated with entrepreneurial behavior while cultural values that emphasize collectivity and conformity are less likely to promote entrepreneurial behavior (Hayton, George & Zahra 2002: 33). Cultural values can therefore influence, positively or negatively, individuals' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, society's demand for entrepreneurs and the attraction of entrepreneurship as a vehicle for self-employment. Indeed, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, an on-going multi-country study, identifies social and cultural norms as a key part of its framework that defines the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurship (Kelley, Singer & Herrington 2016).

Culture is defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another and includes systems and values” (Hofstede 1980: 25). This conceptualization understands culture to be complex. Several characterizations of culture involving multiple dimensions have been developed to recognize this complexity (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede et al. 2010; House et al. 2001; Schwartz 1994; 1999). While there are challenges with each of these, Hofstede’s dimensions of culture have been the most influential (Puumalainen et al. 2015: 278). These dimensions address the basic issues faced by any society, including relations to authority, the conception of self, and ways of dealing with conflict (Hofstede et al. 2010: 29-31). Hofstede’s six cultural dimensions include the following:

- i) Power distance: the degree to which people in a society accept hierarchy and unequal distributions of power as normal.
- ii) Individualism versus collectivism: the degree to which people in a society prefer a framework of loosely knit individuals who take care of themselves versus a tightly knit collective that is interconnected.
- iii) Masculinity versus femininity: the degree to which people in a society are motivated by achievement, competition, assertiveness and quantity versus cooperation, caring and quality.
- iv) Uncertainty avoidance: the degree to which people in a society are comfortable with uncertain or ambiguous situations.
- v) Long-term versus short-term orientation: how members of a society prioritize maintaining links to their past while preparing for the challenges of the future.
- vi) Indulgence versus restraint: the degree to which members of a society prioritize the gratification of human desires versus the suppression of these desires.

Each national culture is characterized by where it falls on an index of 100 points for each of these six dimensions (Hofstede & Minkov 2013). Using the national level as a unit of analysis to study culture has faced criticisms given the existence of subcultures and within-nation

variance (Peterson & Smith 2012; Tung 2008). Yet focusing on national culture remains a meaningful category that can provide insights into patterns of entrepreneurship as basic cultural values cluster at the national level (Liñàn & Fernandez-Serrano 2014: 97; Minkov & Hofstede 2012). In general, according to Hayton, George and Zahra (2002), past studies have hypothesized that low power distance, high individualism, high masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance contribute to a more entrepreneurial national culture. The literature suggests these relationships do not always hold, including across all levels of economic development, the entrepreneurial cycle or over time (Baum et al. 1993; Pinillos & Reyes 2011; Tiessen 1997) but they generally are consistent with a national culture that promotes entrepreneurial motivation and activity. What, then, are the implications of this conceptualization of the dimensions of culture for entrepreneurship in Indonesia and Bhutan?

3. Two snapshots: Indonesia and Bhutan

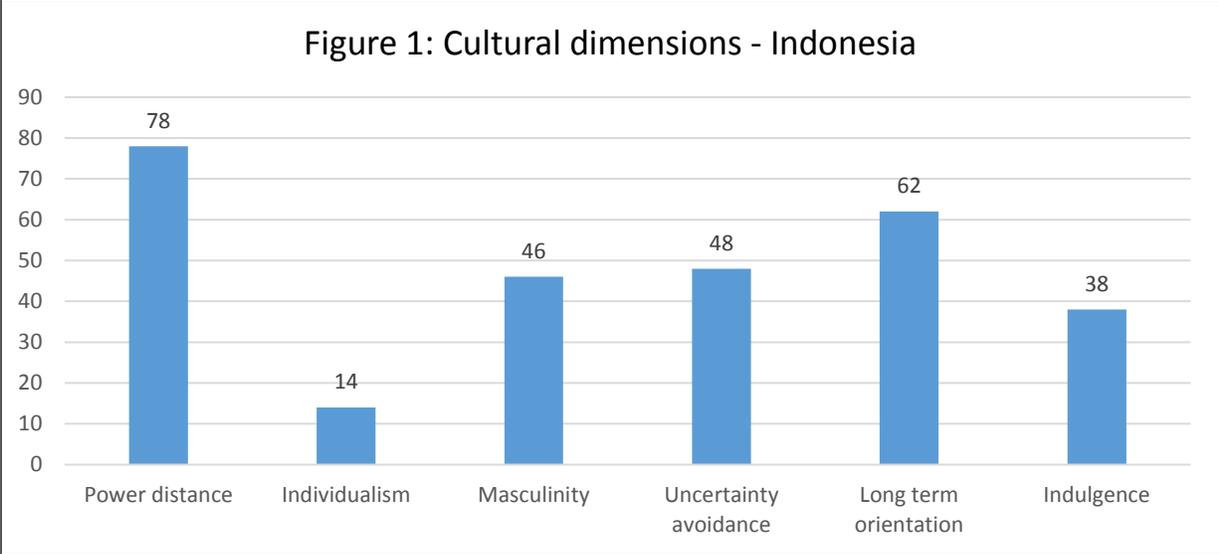
Two separate studies were undertaken that provide overlapping data on the conceptualization of entrepreneurship by entrepreneurs themselves in Indonesia and Bhutan, and the connection of these conceptualizations to national culture. The Indonesian study focused on the nature and impact of entrepreneurship activities among new entrepreneurs who had completed entrepreneurship education (Schroeder 2017) while the Bhutanese study analyzed the broader governance dynamics surrounding the implementation of Gross National Happiness policies (Schroeder 2018). The governance focus of the latter was larger than entrepreneurship but it involved an exploration of the role of entrepreneurs in GNH implementation, including their conceptualization of entrepreneurship in a GNH society. This section will draw on the findings of these two studies. Given that the studies had somewhat different intentions despite the overlapping data, the current paper will refer to the two cases as “snapshots” as they are primarily exploratory when used comparatively. In both cases, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with entrepreneurs. Fifty-six entrepreneurs took part in the Indonesian study and 25 in the Bhutanese study¹. Drawing on these interviews as well as

¹ The 25 interviews used here are respondents from the private sector that took part in the larger GNH study. The larger study itself involved 157 respondents from the public sector, civil society organizations, international donors and the private sector (see Schroeder 2018).

available data on Hofstede’s dimensions as applied to Indonesia and Bhutan, the next two sub-sections explore how cultural values influence the understanding of entrepreneurship by those directly engaged in it in Indonesia and Bhutan respectively.

3.1. Snapshot #1: Indonesia - Entrepreneurship as a collective social good

Indonesia is a country with significant entrepreneurial potential. Approximately 60% of Indonesians are confident they have the skills needed to start a microenterprise (Nawangpalupi et al. 2016: 31). Moreover, 90% of Indonesian businesses outside of the agricultural sector are microenterprises that provide half of the country’s employment (Vial 2011; Tambunan 2007). The success in generating employment is not matched, however, by the contributions of these enterprises to national economic growth (Tambunan 2007). This is a reflection of the nature of micro and small enterprises in the country. They tend to lack innovation, are risk averse, have low productivity and experience little growth (Widyarim et al. 2016; Tambunan 2007: 99; Vial 2011). Applying Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture to Indonesia would seem to help explain this situation. While low power distance, high individualism, high masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance are generally hypothesized as contributing to a more entrepreneurial culture, Indonesia’s national culture is characterized by high power distance, extremely low individualism, medium masculinity and medium uncertainty avoidance (figure 1).



Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/indonesia/>

According to Reisinger and Turner (1997: 141-143), this cultural character of Indonesia means risk is to be avoided and stability sought; hierarchy, obedience and conformity are valued; and harmonious collective relations fostered. The implications for entrepreneurship are clear. Cole (2007: 470) states that these Indonesian cultural values are “inhibitors” to economic development as “high power distance, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism all hinder entrepreneurship.” This represents a significant challenge for Indonesian policy that strives to promote entrepreneurship to spur economic growth (see Mirzanti, Simatupang & Larso 2015). National culture is a barrier to fostering such entrepreneurship. Yet it is only a barrier when entrepreneurship is defined in economically deterministic terms. Moving to a more integrated and sustainable understanding of entrepreneurship changes how Indonesia’s national culture should be perceived in its entrepreneurial role. The culture then becomes not a barrier but a potential contributor to sustainable business. This is very evident when interviewed Indonesian entrepreneurs discussed their own understanding of entrepreneurship. Many of the businesses started by these entrepreneurs were still young but they were often successful in generating profit. This is a positive development for entrepreneurship as a vehicle for increasing individual incomes and promoting economic growth. Most respondents themselves, however, viewed entrepreneurship in much broader terms. They conceptualized the concept rooted directly to their collectivist culture. Entrepreneurship is as much about contributing to collective social good as it is about personal wealth building. This is no mere focus on corporate social responsibility or social entrepreneurship. Enhancing collective bonds and wellbeing is a foundational and inherent part of entrepreneurship, as respondents understood it, which exists in parallel to its economic function. These entrepreneurs are not “choosing” to be socially responsible or to focus on social entrepreneurship; it is their default understanding and practice. “Our collective values,” according to one respondent, “mean entrepreneurship is about strengthening social bonds and harmony.” Profit is not unimportant but it is paralleled by an equally important, and sometimes more important, need to promote collective social good.

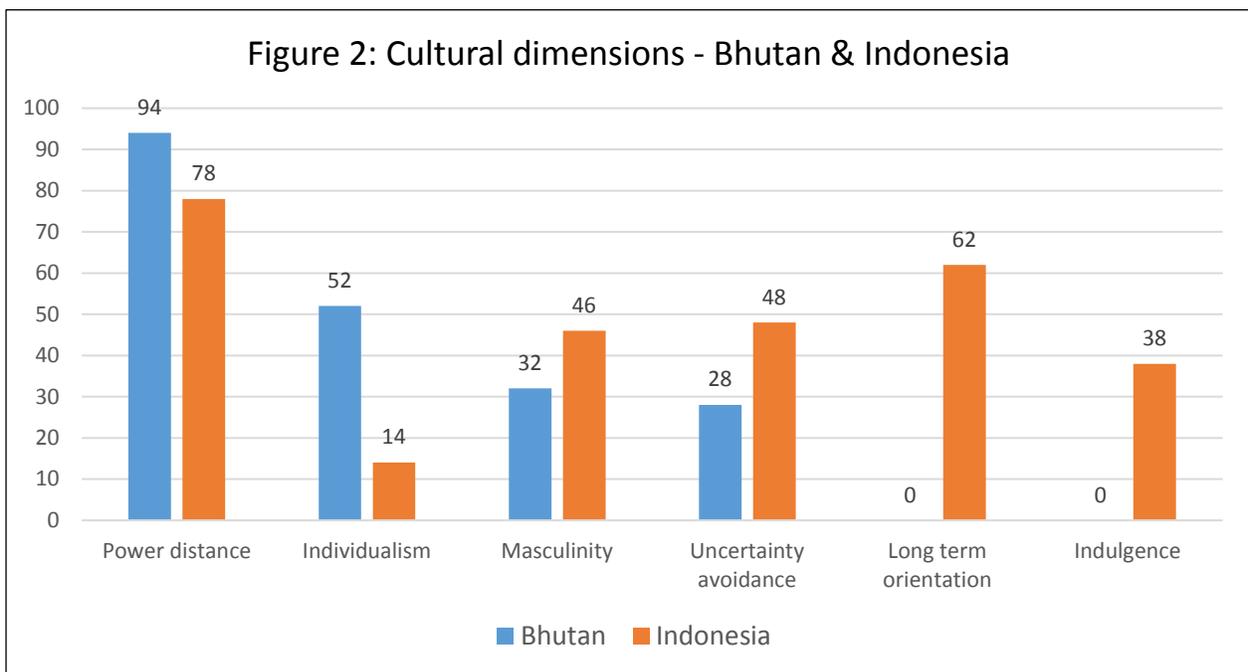
Creating employment was a frequent issue raised as a core function of Indonesian entrepreneurship. “The biggest happiness in my life is when I pay my employees,” said one respondent. Another stated, “It’s not about the money but how we help people, how people

can be supported through the business.” In many cases, respondents outlined how they specifically provide jobs for people who are marginalized. Respondents’ businesses employ poor students, orphans, people from broken homes and a people with disabilities. Respondents pointed to other ways their businesses fostered a larger social good. Those with culinary businesses frequently outlined their focus on providing healthy food options to promote better health in their communities as obesity rises in the country. Others spoke of using their business to support their families, particularly through providing tuition money for siblings. This snapshot does not suggest that these Indonesian entrepreneurs are more compassionate than entrepreneurs from other cultures. It suggests their collectivist cultural values direct them away from an economically deterministic understanding of entrepreneurship to one that is culturally relevant, prioritizing social and economic systems as equally consequential in business.

3.2. Snapshot #2: Bhutan - Entrepreneurship as interdependence

The private sector in Bhutan has been identified as a key player to help drive the country’s Gross National Happiness strategy (Planning Commission 1999b: 52; Royal Government of Bhutan 2005: 3). At the same time, it has also historically been small. A glance through Bhutanese policy documents over the last few decades bears this out. The *Fifth Five Year Plan* (1981-1987) states “the private sector is still very weak” (Planning Commission 1981: 58). *Bhutan 2020*, the country’s long-term development vision published in 1999, concurs in its claim that “the pace of private sector development... continues to lag behind expectations (Planning Commission 1999a: 33-34). More recently, the *Tenth Five Year Plan* (2008 – 2013) continues this theme, stating “the small and underdeveloped private sector ... has been unable to fulfill the potential of becoming the engine of growth and provider of employment” (Gross National Happiness Commission 2009: 79). The government of Bhutan has, in response, made significant efforts to promote private sector development and entrepreneurship. The *Economic Development Policy* of 2010 (Royal Government of Bhutan 2010) sets out to promote a private sector enabling environment that restructures the macro-economic base of the country. The *Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy* of 2012 further prioritizes the development of an entrepreneurial culture as one of its six strategic areas of focus (Royal Government of Bhutan

2012). A look at where Bhutan falls on Hofstede’s dimensions of culture, however, suggests there may be challenges for developing such an entrepreneurial spirit. Again, low power distance, high individualism, high masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance are generally hypothesized as contributing to a more entrepreneurial culture. Bhutan’s national culture is characterized by very high power distance, medium individualism, low masculinity and low uncertainty avoidance (figure 2). While the latter bodes well for an entrepreneurship culture, the other three are less promising.



Note: Long-term orientation and indulgence figures are not available for Bhutan

Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/bhutan,indonesia/>

The implications for entrepreneurship in Bhutan, like in Indonesia, are potentially challenging. While relatively little research on entrepreneurship in Bhutan exists, Valliere (2014) provides intriguing insights into what this character of Bhutanese national culture means for entrepreneurship. Valliere’s study uses a number of additional dimensions beyond Hofstede and he finds a higher degree of masculinity than above, but he reaches a similar conclusion about the entrepreneurship challenge as it relates to Bhutanese youth: Bhutan’s national culture

provides mostly negative signals to youth about the attractiveness of entrepreneurship as a career path. Ultimately, Valliere (2014: 141) concludes: “The development of effective national entrepreneurship programs in Bhutan will face significant challenges from adverse cultural factors.” Vallier’s findings are significant for fostering the entrepreneurial culture envisioned by Bhutan’s *Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy*. They illustrate that Bhutan’s national culture may act as a brake on the pursuit of economic growth through entrepreneurship. But, again, a more positive picture emerges for the role of cultural values if the concept of entrepreneurship itself is re-framed in Bhutanese cultural terms. As was the case with Indonesian respondents, Bhutanese entrepreneurs re-defined the concept beyond economics. Where Indonesian respondents re-defined it in terms of collective social good in parallel with economic growth, Bhutanese respondents re-defined entrepreneurship in terms of interdependence. For them, a tight and inherent interdependence exists across economic, cultural and environmental systems. Entrepreneurship is about a holistic interlinkage across all of them rather than each as connected yet stand-alone components. Again, profit is not absent in this equation but it is inextricably linked to cultural and ecological concerns. According to one business owner in the tourism sector: “Profit is not everything. Our philosophy and belief is if we are profitable as a society, as a community, as a tour company, we need to take care of [cultural and ecological] things. If not we’ll kill the golden goose.” The notion of interdependence is at the heart of this statement. The relationship between economic, cultural and ecological concerns is not viewed as a struggle among competing issues but as an integrated whole where each is mutually beneficial to the others in a virtuous circle. In contrast, killing cultural and ecological integrity kills the golden economic goose. Moving to this more interdependent conceptualization of entrepreneurship re-positions the role of Bhutan’s national culture from one of a brake on entrepreneurship to one of a facilitator.

The re-conceptualization of entrepreneurship as interdependence by Bhutanese respondents demonstrates a clear connection to GNH. The focus on the interrelationship across economic, cultural and ecological concerns directly represents dimensions of both the original four-pillar approach to GNH and the more recent nine-domains. Moreover, the cultural values that underlie the re-conceptualization of entrepreneurship include balance, harmony among all

living things, and interconnectedness across the past and present. These Buddhist-inspired cultural values are the same values that are the foundation of GNH as Bhutan's multidimensional development model (Givel 2015; Planning Commission 1999a: 19; Rinzin 2006). Indeed, a number of respondents explicitly referred to the cultural values that underlie their understanding of entrepreneurship as GNH values. Interestingly, however, most respondents did not. In these cases, the values were described as "Bhutanese values" "Buddhist values" or "Buddhist-Hindu values". The GNH connection, in many cases, was lost or misunderstood. According to one business person involved with a civil society organization representing the private sector: "GNH is too complicated for [business people].... It is a good philosophical guide but I don't really understand it." This snapshot suggests, therefore, that even when Bhutanese entrepreneurs do not understand GNH and its potential connection to business, their cultural values fill the void, driving a re-conceptualization of entrepreneurship that is entirely consistent with GNH.

4. Fostering sustainable entrepreneurship through the lens of culture

An emerging picture arises from these two snapshots from Indonesia and Bhutan. While the national cultures of both countries may inhibit entrepreneurship when defined solely as an economic phenomenon, those same cultures, in contrast, likely contribute positively to fostering a more *sustainable* entrepreneurship. If entrepreneurship is to be a meaningful vehicle for sustainability, the cultural values of Indonesia and Bhutan are not barriers; they are part of the answer. The parallel prioritizing of social and economic issues in the Indonesian conceptualization of entrepreneurship and the interdependence across economic, culture and ecological concerns in the Bhutanese conceptualization direct entrepreneurship in a more integrated and holistic direction. Culture becomes a springboard on which to effectively build a more sustainable private sector in both countries. In the case of Bhutan, it means that national cultural values - GNH values – are a central ingredient for infusing GNH and its integrated notion of sustainability into business.

What practical applications emerge from this discussion? How can a more sustainable notion of entrepreneurship be fostered that is rooted to the national cultures of countries like

Indonesia and Bhutan? For Bhutan in particular, how might the role of national cultural values contribute to putting a GNH-infused culture of entrepreneurship and business into action? To start at the broadest level, the design and implementation of policies and programs directed at developing a sustainable private sector, whether implemented by the government or the private sector itself, need to be *explicitly* grounded in national cultural values. Cultural values direct attention to what is most valued in the sustainability equation and what, conversely, is less emphasized. The case of Indonesia, for example, demonstrated the cultural value placed on understanding Indonesian entrepreneurship as a combination of individual economic and collective social concerns. At the same time, Indonesian respondents placed very little emphasis on ecological issues. Explicitly rooting sustainable business policies and programs within a culturally contextualized framework gives direction to strengths that can be consolidated and weaknesses that need to be addressed. Welter (2011: 165) argues that a “contextualized view of entrepreneurship contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon.” It also enables us to diagnose where attention needs to be paid to promote sustainable entrepreneurship effectively. While there are many areas of private sector development that would benefit from this, such as reforming the regulatory environment and improving access to capital, two areas will be briefly addressed here: entrepreneurship education and sustainable business measurement tools.

4.1. Entrepreneurship education and training

Entrepreneurship education assumes it is a phenomenon with skills that can be learned (Fretschner & Weber 2013; Nabi, Holden, & Walmsley 2010). An applied and mixed pedagogical approach is important in the learning process as it builds both practical skills and entrepreneurial motivation (Draycott & Rae 2011; Lourenço, Taylor & Taylor 2013). Just as importantly, applied entrepreneurship curriculum and teaching methods need to reflect their cultural and social environments (Jones & Iredale 2014). Nonetheless, many entrepreneurship education programs are primarily located in Business Schools and take a one-size-fits all approach (Lourenço, Taylor & Taylor 2013: 506) which is rooted in the western experience. The two snapshots in this study indicate that this is a mistake. Grounding entrepreneurship education in national cultures within the Global South means not simply replicating western

curriculum. Doing so will miss the richness of culturally appropriate conceptualizations of entrepreneurship which may, in the cases of Indonesia and Bhutan, help foster a more sustainable approach to business. The Indonesian case is again instructive. One of the respondents was highly critical of his entrepreneurship education, which occurred through a partnership of Canadian and Indonesian institutions that drew on Canadian curricular expertise. He stated: “The class focused on entrepreneurship as a concept related to profit. The curriculum forces students to run after money. Entrepreneurship is not just about money here but how to benefit people. The curriculum misses this.” Another respondent simply stated, “we sometimes get trapped in a western model.” For Bhutan, this suggests that entrepreneurship education should ensure the country’s cultural values are the foundation of curriculum; it should ensure that a culturally appropriate understanding of entrepreneurship as economic-cultural-ecological interdependence is the core of how entrepreneurship is taught. It should not be merely a focus on corporate social responsibility or social entrepreneurship as sub-themes within a larger, economic-centric entrepreneurship curriculum. In essence, this means Bhutan should ensure to “GNH” entrepreneurship curriculum, whether this is within formal public education programs or short-term private sector training. Bhutan has a history of infusing GNH into curriculum (Gyamtsso, Sherab & Maxwell 2017). Ensuring this extends to both public and private entrepreneurship education and training will help foster a distinctly ‘Bhutanese’ entrepreneurial spirit that is culturally relevant in its connection to the interdependence at the core of meaningful sustainability.

4.2. Measuring sustainable business

Bhutan has taken significant steps in developing a set of public sector policy tools and structures to implement GNH as a national development strategy. These tools, such as the GNH policy screening tool and GNH Index, attempt to infuse GNH into public policy, planning and programming. Doing so promotes the integration of the multiple dimensions of GNH and the cultural values that underlie them into all policy and programs regardless of sector or focus; it promotes the institutionalization of GNH in the public sector. Previous research illustrates that effectively operationalizing GNH would benefit from moving even further in institutionalizing these kinds of policy instruments (Schroeder 2018: chapter 8). The recent decision to develop

and implement a GNH certification framework for business, to be unveiled during this conference, is a step in the right direction². It will help better infuse GNH into business that, in turn, will better incorporate the private sector as a key vehicle for realizing GNH as a sustainable national project.

The tool will potentially serve two purposes related to the issue of national culture's role in entrepreneurship and business. First, it will explicitly ground the cultural values at the core of GNH into measuring the activities of individual businesses, thereby encouraging greater sustainability in the private sector. Business will be measured as more than economic activity. It will be measured as a multidimensional concept rooted in interdependent socio-economic, cultural, ecological and governance concerns. As such, the GNH tool will measure and certify business activity in the way Bhutanese entrepreneurs in this study already understand its culturally defined interdependent nature. This leads to the second purpose. As the Bhutanese snapshot in this study illustrates, Bhutanese respondents conceptualize entrepreneurship based on the same cultural values that are the heart of GNH, yet are often doing so without recognizing this connection to GNH. The certification framework can therefore play an important educational role. It will promote a better understanding among entrepreneurs of what GNH is as a national development strategy. Lack of understanding of GNH within Bhutan is an Achilles heel for its effective operationalization despite the fact that Bhutanese entrepreneurs and others are driven by the same set of cultural values as those that underlie GNH (Schroeder 2018: chapter 8). The GNH certification framework for business, in concert with the public sector GNH tools, will help address this by directing both private and public sector actors towards a more unified understanding and pursuit of GNH.

A notable complication, however, exists. Culture is not static. It is socially constructed through shared meaning-making where language, historical circumstances and power relations continually shape a common understanding of the world (Ross 2009; Wedeen 2002). Culture can both act on and be acted upon. The larger GNH study upon which this current paper draws found that there may indeed be an evolution in Bhutanese cultural values driven by such things

² A draft version of the GNH certification framework was viewed by the author prior to the conference.

as international media exposure, the consolidation of democracy and emerging ecological threats to rural livelihoods (Schroeder 2018). In the face of cultural evolution, GNH must tread a fine line between reinforcing the cultural values at its core and adapting these same values to remain meaningful as Bhutanese culture evolves. Gross National Happiness has always been open to evolution and change (Planning Commission 1999b: 53; Upreti 2005: 6). Indeed, the expansion of the four pillars to nine domains and the introduction of policy tools demonstrate this in practice. For the GNH certification framework for business, a similar openness to evolution is necessary. This is particularly important as cultural value shifts may occur more quickly in a private sector that increasingly engages with the global economy. On the one hand, the certification tool can reinforce existing cultural values that underpin “GNH” business through its consistent and explicit use, drawing the private sector into directly engaging with GNH dimensions and values in an on-going manner. On the other hand, the tool also needs to be sensitive to cultural evolution to maintain a *relevant* notion of business sustainability.

Two modest and related methodological suggestions can assist in walking this balance between consolidating cultural values while remaining open to cultural change. First, the framework should be as broadly participatory as possible. It might engage not only business owners and employees, for example, but consumers and other societal stakeholders as well. Doing so will provide insight into the impact of potential cultural changes not only on business practices but also on consumption patterns among consumers and their (shifting) perspectives on sustainability. A policy response, where necessary, can then result. For example, how can existing GNH values be further consolidated to strengthen a sustainable private sector and dissuade a potential culture of overconsumption from taking root? Or how might a specific evolution in cultural values be positively harnessed to further a profitable notion of sustainability? A broadly participatory framework will generate information to help identify and address such issues. Second, a broadly participatory approach should be paired with the collection of qualitative data in addition to the quantitative focus that currently makes up the framework. Incorporating qualitative data will enable the framework to dive more deeply not only into the ‘what’ of cultural change but the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of business and consumer behavior in response to such change, again allowing a more accurate response by both the

private and public sectors. Overall, these two suggestions for the GNH framework for business are clearly very modest. Nevertheless, they will contribute to a framework more attuned to the influence of potential cultural changes that may strengthen or weaken GNH in the private sector. This, in turn, will enable a policy response that strengthens the infusion of GNH into the private sector in a meaningful and culturally appropriate manner.

5. Conclusion

A focus on which cultural values promote or inhibit an economic-centric view of entrepreneurship provides only part of the sustainability picture. Thinking differently about the role of national cultures in conceptualizing entrepreneurship and private sector development enables a deeper exploration of how to promote a sustainable private sector within individual cultures. As the two snapshots from Indonesia and Bhutan suggest, their national cultures are not barriers to entrepreneurship, they are a different entry point into a meaningful understanding and operationalization of sustainable business in their cultural contexts. Explicitly using cultural values – GNH values in Bhutan’s case – can be a foundation for fostering sustainable entrepreneurship that recognizes the centrality of socio-economic, cultural and ecological interdependence as its core.

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