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# TENDERPRENEURSHIP: AN APPRAISAL OF THE NATURE OF STATE-DEPENDENT CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NAMIBIA

Morris Musema Zombo, PhD

Professor and Dean; Faculty of Economics and Management,  
University of Kikwit, DR Congo, Associate researcher,  
Centre d'Etudes des Modes d' Industrialisation, EHEES-Paris France

Gurvy Kavey, PhD

Head of Department, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences,  
University of Namibia

Jermia Kahundu

Head of Taxation, Ministry of Finance,  
Kavango East Regional Office, Rundu, Namibia

**Abstract:** This paper answers the question “to what extent the tenderpreneurship contribute to the developing countries ‘economy and to the behavioral practices of companies that had a bottom line solely based on the acquisition of tenders as well? This exploratory study of the business environment and opportunities generated by tenders in Namibia, analyzes the dialogue space between tenderpreneurship and entrepreneurship. It shows the usefulness of the public policies responsible for the corruption, unemployment, wait-and-see behaviors of the complicit companies that lead the practices of tenderpreneurship.

**Key-words:** Tenderpreneurship, corruption, kleptocracy, entrepreneurship, unemployment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This study is constructed as follows. It begins by identifying and describing the newly imported tenderpreneurship phenomenon from South Africa to Namibia, centered respectively on the complexity of the dynamics between the entrepreneur and the tenderpreneur, its impact and the environment in which it evolves. Based on a set of definitions and its South African origins, the article confronts these definitions with a Namibian empirical case study (Tenderpreneurship: An Appraisal of the Nature of the State-Dependent Culture of Entrepreneurship in Namibia), to illustrate a number of their shortcomings. Based on a sample of winning tenderers ‘companies, also, the article

identifies different groups of tenderpreneurship actors and their profile and traces the trajectory of the public resources mobilized and diverted from the decision-making center to its privileged recipients. Finally, the paper discusses the motivations behind tenderpreneurship in Namibia, and in particular its sustainability, challenges and opportunities it offers; and the political and institutional contexts in which its promoters evolve.

## II. METHODS

This qualitative case study on the tenderpreneurship took place in Namibia. The value of studying this Namibian business community lies largely in the fact that it found already in Namibia an entrepreneurial culture strongly linked to the easy generation of income through the bidding proposed by the Namibian State. In the first quarter of 2017, we personally met the members of the national anti-corruption commission, the winners of the tenders as well as the losers. That is a total of 26 individuals in total, including 8 members of the anti-corruption commission, 18 bidders including 6 winners and 12 bidding losers over a period from 2014 to 2017. The following selection criteria dictated the inclusion whether to be a Congolese auto entrepreneur under our study: (i) to be part of the Namibian anti-corruption commission, (iii) to be a losing bidder after adjudication of bids, or (iii) to be a winning bidder in the competition.

For example, the sample surveyed completed a questionnaire that included 33 mostly closed questions,



covering topics such as the respondent's socio-demographic profile, entrepreneurial path, business, management practices and business network. Due to the limited number of respondents, it was possible to assist some respondents in administering the questionnaire in order to reduce the ambiguity of certain questions and thus increase the quality of the answers. These individual meetings lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. Questionnaire data were captured and analyzed to obtain a clear profile of Namibian bidder. Subsequently, we compared the profile of the losing bidders with that of 8 winning bidders known as tenderpreneurs. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Namibian bidders, the main beneficiaries of government bids, and stakeholder interviews, other than Namibian bidders, were also aimed at validating and to enrich the data collected from them. Qualitative data were captured on a computer using Sphinx Plus 2 software. The interviews provided a better understanding of Namibian tenderpreneurship and provided some explanations for differences between the three groups following analysis of survey.

#### **Understanding tenderpreneurship through kleptocracy theory**

The tender system has been around for centuries. From France (Bréchon-Moulènes, 1987) to England (Turner, 1988), the tendering process has been used by governments and companies to outsource services. In South Africa, on the other hand, tenderpreneurship rose to popularity post-apartheid (Maistry 2014), using the procurement process as a strategy to empower black people in terms of goods, services, and infrastructure development work which would likely be delivered out through a tender process.

Generally, tenders can be used by government as a stepping stone to grow your business. The money you make from winning a tender will give you capital to grow your small business. It is very important to emphasize that "tenderpreneurship is a good new business concept when it's not being abused by individuals in the business sector. It is viewed as a system that gives any small business man a giant leap ahead into realizing his dreams without going through the red-tape of loan financing from the banks. Tenders offer a lucrative source of income. Also, through the tender, small entrepreneur will be able to empower and employ people. Tenders don't just benefit the main beneficiary, but also have a positive social impact in communities. As a result, the tendering environment is an incredibly competitive space and you are not guaranteed to win every tender you bid for. Unfortunately, because of uncertainty in always securing tender opportunities in most developing countries, the government procurement process has been marred by widespread corruption.

Therefore, tenders are always contaminated with some form of corrupt activity. The flip side is that, in isolation,

tenderpreneurship is not a sustainable career path, as income is not guaranteed but it can be used as a crucial building block for a small business. It is well known in the Southern Africa region that a tenderpreneur is a person in or outside government who abuses their political power and or influence to secure government tenders and contracts. The word tenderpreneur is then considered as a portmanteau of "tendering" and "entrepreneur".

Nowadays it is believable that this practice might give rise to a kleptocracy as a deviant mutation of a democracy if left unchecked. In this regard Turton (2010) defines a kleptocracy as a condition arising when a political elite manipulate the three arms of government (legislature, executive and judiciary) with the intention of capturing resources that will enrich that elite, a general phenomenon known as elite capture (Dutta, 2009).

According to the Star (2010), a tenderpreneur is also described as "someone politically well-connected who has gotten rich through the government tendering system.

Kleptocracies are generally associated with dictatorships (Wintrobe, 2006), oligarchies (Gorodnichenko, 2008), military juntas, or other forms of autocratic and nepotism (Sidani & Thornberry, 2013) governments in which external oversight is impossible or does not exist. This lack of oversight can be caused or exacerbated by the ability of the kleptocratic officials to control both the supply of public funds and the means of disbursement for those funds. Kleptocratic rulers often treat their country's treasury as a source of personal wealth, spending funds on luxury goods and extravagances as they see fit. Many kleptocratic rulers secretly transfer public funds into hidden personal numbered bank accounts in foreign countries to provide for themselves if removed from power (Robinson, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. Kleptocracy is most common in developing countries whose economies are based on the export of natural resources. Such export incomes constitute a form of economic rent and are easier to siphon off without causing the income to decrease. A specific case of kleptocracy is *Raubwirtschaft*, German for "plunder economy" or "rapine economy", where the whole economy of the state is based on robbery, looting and plundering the conquered territories. Such states are either in continuous warfare with their neighbors or they simply milk their subjects as long as they have any taxable assets. Arnold Toynbee has claimed the Roman Empire was a *Raubwirtschaft* (Derrick, 2017).

In terms of effects, the effects of a kleptocratic regime or government on a nation are typically adverse in regards to the welfare of the state's economy, political affairs and civil

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<sup>1</sup> In recent times, Namibia was implicated in the Panama, Paradise Papers and even blacklisted by the EU as a likely heaven for money laundry. According to Kavei (2018 :37), Namibia lost more than N\$6 billions between 2005 and 2017 through illicit outflows.



rights. Kleptocratic governance typically ruins prospects of foreign investment and drastically weakens the domestic market and cross-border trade.

As kleptocracies often embezzle money from their citizens by misusing funds derived from tax payments, or engage heavily in money laundering schemes, they tend to heavily degrade quality of life for citizens. In addition, the money that kleptocrats steal is diverted from funds earmarked for public amenities such as the building of hospitals, schools, roads, parks – having further adverse effects on the quality of life of citizens (U.S. State Department, 2006). The informal oligarchy that results from a kleptocratic elite subverts democracy (or any other political format) (NSAHLIC, 2008).

### **Tenderpreneurship, entrepreneurial event and kleptocracy**

Our study mobilizes three theoretical frameworks to answer the questions of this research, including the concept of tenderpreneurship, the model of the entrepreneurial event and the theory of kleptocracy. The research leads us to interrogate the concept of tenderpreneurship to successively answer the first question of our study, relative to the profile of a tenderpreneur and the influence of this one on the public policies. This framework notably concerns the work of Turton (2010), The Star (2010) and Mahlangu (2010) who have focused on the historical foundations of tenderpreneurship and the political influence that a tenderpreneur possesses to enrich himself ad libitum through institutionalized tendering process. The work of these authors gives us some ideas for understanding the merit of tenderpreneurship as one of the elements of the composite of bad managerial practices in the management of public resources.

According to Musema (2017), Shapero and Sokol's model of the entrepreneurial event forms the whole theoretical framework that we have mobilized to elucidate the entrepreneurial motivations of Namibian tenderpreneur, their social environment, their behavior and the opportunities offered to them. This literature trend aligns with that of Ajzen's planned behavior theory (Teemu et al, 2013), which argues that any behavior requires some planning. Giacomini, Janssen and Guyot (2016) argue that necessity entrepreneurship and opportunity entrepreneurship are the two types of entrepreneurship that lead to very different entrepreneurial behaviors. According to Shapero and Sokol (1982), for an individual to lift the option of embarking on a process of change of direction in his life, as with the decision to start his own business, an event must precipitate such a decision or at least break the established routine. For such an actor, his decision will then depend on: (i) his perception of the desirability of the behavior in question, (ii) his propensity to act according to his intentions and (iii) his perception of the feasibility of the behavior

envisaged. The social environment of tenderpreneur is also likely to have a considerable influence on these perceptions of the desirability of taking an entrepreneurial initiative (Sheriff & Muffatto, The present state of entrepreneurship ecosystems in selected countries in Africa, 2015). "The perception of desirability and the perception of feasibility characterize this model of the entrepreneurial event.

The concept of desirability is the interest of a person to adopt a behavior, such as the initiative of social self-innovation or the creation of a company. The presence of different types of entrepreneurs that an individual has in his or her most immediate environment, the presence of business opportunities, and the needs of accomplishment and independence of an individual, are examples of the factors that can influence the aspirant tenderpreneur. The perception of feasibility translates as to the degree of serenity of an individual towards his abilities not only to create a formal business but less to embark on a business adventure. The territory and the presence of business opportunities clearly influence this perception of feasibility. The notion of opportunity (Julien, 2005) is particularly interesting for the study of social self-innovation because it facilitates the consideration of space and time as determining factors that influence entrepreneurial behavior. The theoretical framework of kleptocracy developed by Machan Tibor (Tibor, 2008) will be used to deepen the discussion on the third question of our research: what is the role of the government in the emergence of tenderpreneurs in Namibia? This framework will allow us to propose a measurement grid and proceed to the evaluation of tenders and the performance of services provided by tenderpreneurs through the diagnosis of 5 anecdotal tender cases in Namibia. The evaluation focuses on the criteria of equity, efficiency, quality, accountability and economic development as proposed by the authors.

### **Manifestation of kleptocratic corruption in Namibia.**

There appears to be about three key conditions in the Namibian entrepreneurial eco-system (Sheriff and Muffatto, 2015) which gives rise to the shape and form of tenderpreneurship in the country. These are the Fairness Treatment Syndrome, Crony Patriotism and the Brown Envelope Syndrome.

- **Fair Treatment Syndrome** (Affirmative Action). On the one hand, the struggle for independence that Namibians waged was mainly for elimination of unfair and imbalanced apartheid development. Upon independence, therefore, a wave of fair treatment in virtually all aspect of the new political economy became the order of the day. In 1998 the Affirmative Action Employment Act No. 29 implored on employers to give positions to the so-called "previously" disadvantaged persons such as blacks, women,



marginalized minorities. This would mean that, in a designated firm, blacks would be placed in position hitherto tenable only to white people. Inherently this would imply that one's rise to the helm of business would not necessarily be driven by merit but the tenets of this act alone. By extension, the advent of the Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 (Act No. ) ensured that black-owned businesses would enjoy preferential treatment in public procurement space. To this end, "about 84 percent of government building construction contracts are generally awarded to local firms but a significant number of such tenders end up being wholly subcontracted to foreign companies without the approval, and sometimes knowledge, of government" (Ikela, 2017).

- **Crony Patriotism** (Jobs for comrades). For the ruling party, those veterans who took part in the liberation struggle deserved an exceptionally heroic reward. This position transformed into the creation of the Ministry of War Veteran Affairs (National Assembly, 2008) from which registered veterans would receive once-off lump sums of N\$50'000.00 and N\$200'000.00 as well as a monthly stipend of N\$2200.00 until death. Furthermore, although not a written policy position, the ruling party appears to favor awarding of top positions and possibly

tenders to party royalists – a position grievously confronted by the opposition parties in parliament since 2005 (DENTLINGER, 2005), and continuing to stir unrests. Should this be anything to go by, it would with or without officially being pronounced, have far-reaching effects with regard to institutionalisation of corruption in the country. Because of the ruling party having become a hegemony (based on its excessive majority in parliament) (Melber, 2017), a dynasty of elites tender "magnets" always favoured by the system is very much unlikely to detect or avoid. But they are there, (Patriot, 2017).

- **Brown Envelope Syndrome.** This would usually refer to those who happen to win tendering opportunities due to the amount of bribes they are able to pay. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC, 2013; 2014; 2015) has a good track of anecdotal cases of such allegations from time to time.

To the extent that these three above conditions remain entrenched and insurmountable, the country is likely to remain afflicted by the curse of corruption.

We therefore take a look at the nature of recent corruption cases in the public space in order to understand the scope and nature of the challenge the country faces.

Table 1: Notable prosecutable Anecdotal Cases of corruption in recent times

Year	Case Reference	Details	Suspect's Position	Institution Concerned	Value or Potential Value
2014	ACC HQO 14001045	Allegations of corruption levelled against the CEO of Namibia Airports Company in respect of a tender for an Integrated Security Management system at Airports	CEO	Namibia Airports Company	N\$ 6,585,740-65
2015	ACC HQO 1400097	Alleged corruption in respect of warding of a tender at UNAM for the construction of facilities at Neudamm Campus	VC & Manager	UNAM	N\$ 16,229,232-55
2017	N/A	A tender award to upgrade Namibia's main airport was nullified by Namibia's Supreme Court after it found that proper procedures had not been followed in the procurement process	CEO	Namibia Airports Company	NAD 6 billion
2016	N/A	A N\$920 million Oil Storage Facility tender costs jumps to N\$5.5 billions in a year's time.	No one takes responsibility	Namibia Petroleum Corporation	N\$5.5 billions
2014	N/A	A 35km (MR120 Okatana-Endola-Onhuno road upgrade to bitumen standard, was abandoned due to lack of technical capacity – leaving 700 hopeful employees dashed	CEO	Namibia Road Products and Services	N\$187 million



Source: Anti-Corruption Commission Annual Reports (2013/2014/2015; GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal (<https://www.business-anti-corruption.com/>); (Immanuel, 2016); (Informante, 2015)

### III. DISCUSSION

The key question of this research was "to what extent the tenderpreneurship contribute to the developing countries 'economy and to the behavioral practices of companies that had a bottom line solely based on the acquisition of tenders as well?" Previous studies rather encourage creating entrepreneurs instead of tenderpreneurs (Penfold, 2015) and show that the support for further entrepreneurial activity hinges on a number of factors. This article has highlighted some of the most pressing challenges, which include inadequate skills/education, the legislative environment and focused entrepreneurship training. In addition, it has reflected on the challenges posed by a constraining global economic climate. The role of the government has also been highlighted, and it has underscored how critical it is to generate greater momentum towards supporting small business ventures.

Ultimately, though, action on all of these will be dependent on the extent to which accountability is built into the system. Whether we create entrepreneurs, who through their ambition and skill create growth, employment and more sustainable livelihoods, or tenderpreneurs, who seek to sway government procurement with money rather than ability, will depend on the extent to which government procurement is subjected to proper transparency and accountability practices. The introduction and consistent implementation of these measures have the potential not only to stimulate growth outside of the traditional employment sectors, but also to ensure that we continue to promote the potential of the youth to succeed even under challenging conditions.

An illustration of the space element would be the existence of a territory despite its resources where bad governance has become legion and the public power is not intended to meet even the most basic social needs felt by its inhabitants; which at least partly explains the multitude of tenderpreneurship players in Namibia. An example of the time element would be the government's anti-apartheid movement decision in southern Africa (whose rise began in the early 20th century with a truly significant dominance by elite political cronies in awarding of tenders under the crony patriotism syndrome as discussed above).

The objective pursued at the time by the most respectful young governments of public salvation stemming from the ANC in South Africa and SWAPO in Namibia was to promote the emergence of small businesses in favor of blacks coupled with the unilateral favoritism required by their own influential public decision-makers in the state apparatus, whose vocation is their own self-promotion. The social environment of these deprived people is also likely to

have a considerable influence on their perception of the desirability of self-innovating, creating a business, an income-generating activity, a self-organization. The form these entrepreneurial initiatives can take may vary from one community to another as long as social, economic and environmental differences exist between communities.

For example, the Namibian community, whose members operate in the executive, judicial and legislative apparatus, has several tenderpreneurs operating at the expense of public resources, are strictly committed to influencing the results of the majority of tenders in the country, while the rest members of the Namibian community who have no influence over the state, includes several self-employed artisans in the fields of crafts, agriculture and petty trading. Hindle & Morroz (2010) who discussed the issue of Aboriginal entrepreneurship also believe that it is not easy to talk about entrepreneurship rooted in a territory if the heritage and importance of culture among actors is not an issue for such a business venture.

The presence of business opportunities in an environment, identifiable by the individual in question, will convert the intention into action. This theoretical model of an entrepreneurial event was chosen to guide the methodological approach of this study. The questions and approaches of this research on social self-innovation finally take root in sociocognitive theories of entrepreneurship. While arguing that entrepreneurship is a major economic driver for poverty alleviation and better distribution of wealth in both developed and southern countries (Adebayo and Nassar, 2014), these theories incorporate both individual and contextual to explain the entrepreneurial path (Chabaud and Ngijol, 2005). Unfortunately, this contextualization has the effect of reducing, as part of our future thinking, limiting the concept of entrepreneurship to only formally created companies. In the manner of conventional entrepreneurship, the tenderpreneurship is mainly driven by not only singular actors (Baume, 2009), but influential and dominant in the governmental decision-making sphere, but the entrepreneur is very precisely the person who makes the bet innovation, which it ensures through its own dynamism (Clayton, 2001). Harrison (2012) argues that creativity's share of social innovation is not only identified by its overall goal of promoting the well-being of individuals and communities, but tenderpreneurship by "its outsized character can be placed as well as social self-innovation (Musema, 2017), with the only difference that self-social innovation (SSI) is a relative newcomer to the social innovation sphere. It is "a practice of a person or a group of persons, or a group of persons for reasons of survival, change or curiosity." "

Be it entrepreneurial or tenderpreneurship, some initiatives never culminate in the creation of an organizational structure, a sustainable enterprise in time, but perpetually perpetuate in the informal sector and that is what makes



tenderpreneurs protected and favored and favored by the public power, a loss of profit for this same public power which shelters it without it being objectively under its true control. In view of the results obtained and especially the harmful nature of the tenderpreneurship, it appears that it is better to promote entrepreneurship than the tenderpreneurship. However, this choice would require public decision-makers to be responsible for the management of public resources.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that tenderpreneurship is one of the biggest contributors to corruption and unemployment in developing countries and in Namibia in particular, as it encourages businesspersons to be corrupt, outgoing public protector advocate. As per the records, it seems that those companies that had a bottom line solely based on the acquisition of tenders, were inclined to this behaviour as they needed to ensure their futures. Every time these companies apply for a tender, they ensure they get something out of it," unless the companies had another viable source of income, they were more inclined to corruption.

Also, the study highlighted that black economic empowerment was meant to support smaller companies that vied for tenders, but that this had also failed. Further, it is plausible that out that, when a tender was awarded to a less competent company, it impacted on the venture, which was often not completed. Unluckily there is also impacted on the employees of the tenderpreneurs, as they often lost their jobs, while the most competent company, that should have been awarded the tender, lost revenue. As a last resort, unemployment and corruption pose a risk to democracy, justice and peace in developing countries.

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