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ENTREPRENEURSHIP – A TOOL FOR DECOLONIZATION**NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTER OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP (NURCE)****Shumaila Yousafzai, Nurlykhan Aljanova, and Wojdan
Omran****NAZARBAYEV
UNIVERSITY****GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS**

Entrepreneurship - A Powerful Tool for Decolonization

1. Introduction

The legacy of colonialism continues to shape economic, social, and cultural systems in many parts of the world, perpetuating inequalities, marginalizations and limiting opportunities for local self-determination and empowerment, particularly in the context of developing countries. Entrepreneurship has been increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for economic, social, and cultural decolonization (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Decolonization refers to the process of dismantling the political, economic, social, and cultural structures that were put in place by colonial powers. Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is the process of creating and growing businesses, often through innovative ideas and solutions by creating alternative economic structures that are based on local knowledge and resources, promoting social and economic justice and cultural diversity, and reasserting cultural identity.

In this business digest, we draw on a range of scholarly articles to synthesize key themes and perspectives on the potential of entrepreneurship to challenge dominant Western-centric views of economic development and promote more inclusive and sustainable economic and social systems. Our review suggests that entrepreneurship can be a means of promoting decolonization by empowering marginalized communities, creating opportunities for cultural preservation and revitalization, and challenging dominant models of economic and cultural development. We conclude by highlighting the challenges entrepreneurs may face in this process and the need for further research and practice to fully realize the potential of entrepreneurship for promoting decolonization.

2. DEFINING DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a shift away from colonial systems of power and control. Frantz Fanon was a prominent anti-colonial thinker and activist, whose work has been influential in the fields of decolonial studies and critical race theory. In his book "The Wretched of the Earth," published in 1963, Fanon offers a definition of decolonization that emphasizes its multidimensional and complex nature by defining decolonization as deconstructing the colonial mindset and dismantling the structures and institutions that maintain the colonial order. According to Fanon, decolonization is not simply a matter of achieving political independence from colonial powers, but also involves the transformation of the social, economic, and cultural structures that were imposed by colonialism. He writes that decolonization "is the substitution of one 'species' of mankind by another 'species' of mankind" (p. 36), meaning that it entails a fundamental change in the relationships and power dynamics between colonizers and colonized peoples.

Fanon also notes that decolonization is a traumatic process, both for the colonized and the colonizers, and that it requires a deep reckoning with the legacies of colonialism. He writes that "decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: the 'thing' colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation" (p. 232). In other words, the process of decolonization is transformative and generative, but it requires a collective effort to build new social structures that are grounded in the principles of equality, justice, and freedom. Fanon's definition of decolonization has been influential in shaping the discourse around anti-colonial struggles and postcolonial theory and highlights the ongoing challenges and possibilities of decolonizing the world today.

Several other scholars and activists have written extensively about the importance of decolonization, particularly in the context of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities. For example, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued that decolonization is about recovering our histories, acknowledging our place in the world, and moving beyond the legacy of colonialism (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Similarly, Indigenous scholar and activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has written about the importance of decolonization as a means of reclaiming our territories, revitalizing our languages, and rematriating our cultures (Simpson, 2017).

Table 1 provide a summary of definitions relevant to decolonization.

Table 1. Definitions of key terms relevant to decolonization

Author (Year)	Term	Definition
Fanon (1963)	Decolonization	The process of undoing the political, economic, cultural, and psychological effects of colonialism.
Battiste (2013)	Indigenization	The process of restoring, revitalizing, or preserving indigenous cultures, traditions, and ways of life that were suppressed or destroyed by colonialism.
Said (1978)	Postcolonialism	The cultural and intellectual movement that critiques the legacies and consequences of colonialism, and examines the cultural, social, and political dynamics of postcolonial societies.
Mignolo (2009)	Epistemicide	The erasure or destruction of indigenous knowledge, languages, and worldviews by colonialism, often through the imposition of Western education and cultural norms.

3. Entrepreneurship: A powerful tool for decolonization

Decolonization is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a shift away from colonial systems of power and control. At its core, decolonization is about reclaiming agency, identity, and power that has been taken away by colonial forces. Entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool for decolonization, as it provides a way for communities to take control of their own economic destinies and redefine what success means to them. Decolonization can take many forms, including political, social, cultural, and economic. In the context of entrepreneurship, decolonization involves creating economic models that are just, equitable, and sustainable and are rooted in local contexts and cultures by prioritizing community's well-being over individual profit. Other scholars have focused on the potential of entrepreneurship to promote cultural decolonization by enabling the preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge and traditions. For example, Adhikari and Nadvi (2019) argue that entrepreneurship can be a way to reassert cultural identity and challenge the dominant Westernized view of development that has been imposed on many developing countries. They suggest that entrepreneurship can enable the creation of businesses that are based on traditional knowledge and practices, such as organic agriculture or traditional crafts, which can help to preserve cultural heritage and promote local self-determination. In addition, several scholars have explored the potential of entrepreneurship to promote

social and economic justice by creating opportunities for marginalized communities. For example, Peredo and McLean (2006) suggest that entrepreneurship can be a means of promoting economic empowerment for marginalized communities, by creating businesses that are owned and operated by members of those communities. Similarly, Yeboah and Asiedu (2019) argue that entrepreneurship can promote social justice by creating opportunities for women and other marginalized groups.

Table 2 provides a summary of studies in the context of entrepreneurship and decolonization.

Table 2. Summary of key studies in the context of entrepreneurship and decolonization

	Author (Year)	Key Themes and Findings
1.	Adhikari and Nadvi (2019)	Entrepreneurship can enable the creation of businesses that are based on traditional knowledge and practices, which can help to preserve cultural heritage and promote local self-determination.
2.	Algan, Lafuente, and Vaillant (2019)	Entrepreneurship can promote cultural diversity by creating businesses that are based on the unique cultural characteristics of different regions.
3.	Dacin, Dacin, and Matear (2010)	Entrepreneurship can play a key role in creating economic value that is based on local knowledge and resources, rather than relying on multinational corporations and other external actors.
4.	Davies and Sigthorsson (2019)	Entrepreneurship can promote decolonization by creating alternative economic structures that are based on local knowledge and resources.
5.	Laville and Moulaert (2010)	Solidarity economy can help to challenge dominant models of economic development and promote more inclusive and sustainable economic systems.
6.	McLeod and Devine (2021)	Entrepreneurship can promote cultural preservation and revitalization by creating businesses that are rooted in indigenous knowledge and traditions.
7.	Mignolo and Walsh (2018)	Entrepreneurship can involve creating new economic and social systems that are not based on colonial models, in order to disrupt colonial power structures.
8.	Peredo and McLean (2006)	Entrepreneurship can be a means of promoting economic empowerment for marginalized communities, by creating businesses that are owned and operated by members of those communities.
9.	Yeboah and Asiedu (2019)	Entrepreneurship can promote social justice by creating opportunities for women and other marginalized groups.

3.1. *Entrepreneurship creates economic opportunities that are rooted in local contexts and cultures*

One of the main ways that entrepreneurship can engage in the process of decolonization is by creating alternative economic structures that are rooted in local knowledge and resources, rather than relying on colonial knowledge structure (Adhikari and Nadvi 2019; Davies and Sigthorsson, 2019). In doing so entrepreneurship can foster local ownership and control over economic resources, which can help to build more resilient and sustainable economies. In many cases, colonial economic systems have led to the exploitation of local resources and the displacement of local communities. By starting businesses that are rooted in local resources and cultures, entrepreneurs can create economic opportunities that benefit local communities.

This perspective is supported by several scholars who have explored the potential of entrepreneurship to promote economic development and decolonization in the context of developing countries. For example, Dacin, Dacin, and Matear (2010) suggest that entrepreneurship can play a key role in creating economic value that is based on local knowledge and resources. By doing so, entrepreneurs can help to challenge the dominant Western-centric view of economic development and promote more inclusive and sustainable economic systems. Similarly, Chua and Chrisman (1999) argue that entrepreneurship can enable local communities to create their own economic systems that are not based on external actors or dominant economic models.

In addition, several scholars have explored the potential of entrepreneurship to promote social and economic justice by creating opportunities for marginalized communities. For example, Peredo and McLean (2006) suggest that entrepreneurship can be a means of promoting economic empowerment for marginalized communities, by creating businesses that are owned and operated by members of those communities. Similarly, Yeboah and Asiedu (2019) argue that entrepreneurship can promote social justice by creating opportunities for women and other marginalized groups. For example, in many Indigenous communities, entrepreneurship has become a way to reclaim traditional practices and promote economic self-sufficiency. Many Indigenous entrepreneurs are focused on building businesses that are rooted in traditional knowledge and practices, such as sustainable agriculture, traditional crafts, and eco-tourism. By doing so, they are able to create economic opportunities that are more just, equitable, and sustainable, and aligned with their cultural values and that benefit their communities. Such efforts further support the reclamation of agency and identity that has been taken away by colonial forces. In Indonesia, for example, the social enterprise "BaliWISE" is focused on providing vocational training and job opportunities to disadvantaged women. BaliWISE offers training in traditional crafts, such as weaving and basket-making, as well as in modern skills, such as hospitality and tourism. By providing women with skills and job opportunities, BaliWISE is able to create economic opportunities that are aligned with local values and that support community development.

Other examples can be seen in the context of central Asian countries where soviet colonialism often resulted in the exploitation of local resources and the displacement of local communities, leading to poverty and inequality. Entrepreneurship has been able to provide a way for these communities to take back control of their economic destinies by creating businesses that use local resources in a sustainable way, and

that are rooted in local knowledge and practices. For instance, in Kazakhstan, the social enterprise "Zhasyl Damu" is focused on promoting sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. Zhasyl Damu works with farmers to promote sustainable practices, such as organic farming and crop diversification, and helps to connect them with local markets. By creating economic opportunities that are aligned with local values and practices, Zhasyl Damu is able to support the development of sustainable and equitable economic systems. In Tajikistan, a group of entrepreneurs have formed the organization "Pamir Energy" to promote the use of hydroelectric power in rural areas. Pamir Energy is working to reclaim the natural resources of the region, which have been exploited and damaged by Soviet-style industry. Another example in Uzbekistan is the "Kunduz" project, which is focused on promoting sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. Kunduz works with farmers to promote sustainable practices, such as crop rotation and water conservation, and helps to connect them with local markets. In Kazakhstan the "NOMADFOOD" project is focused on promoting sustainable food production and distribution. NOMADFOOD works with local farmers to promote sustainable practices, such as organic farming and crop diversification, and helps to connect them with local markets. In Uzbekistan, the social enterprise "Bukhara Sustainable Tourism" is focused on promoting sustainable tourism in the ancient city of Bukhara. Bukhara Sustainable Tourism offers tours and activities that are focused on eco-tourism, such as walking tours and bike tours, as well as visits to local cultural sites and craft workshops. By promoting sustainable tourism, Bukhara Sustainable Tourism is able to create economic opportunities that support the preservation of local heritage and natural resources.

By promoting sustainable energy and natural resource management, such enterprises are helping to create economic opportunities that are rooted in local contexts and that prioritize community well-being.

3.2. *Entrepreneurship as a tool for reclaiming cultural heritage - cultural decolonization*

While, entrepreneurship has been increasingly recognized as a tool for promoting economic development and innovation (Makhija & Rivera-Santos, 2018), its potential as a means of reclaiming and preserving cultural heritage, especially in the context of decolonization has received less attention (Adhikari and Nadvi 2019). Cultural heritage is an integral part of a community's identity and serves as a reflection of its history, traditions, and values (Caruana, 2002). Unfortunately, cultural heritage is often endangered during the process of colonization. The loss of cultural heritage can have far-reaching implications for a community, including the erosion of its identity and the loss of its cultural legacy. Therefore, the preservation of cultural heritage is vital for maintaining social cohesion and promoting cultural diversity. Entrepreneurs in many parts of the world are motivated by a desire to reclaim cultural heritage that has been suppressed or erased by colonialism or other forms of domination. By reviving traditional practices and crafts, entrepreneurs are able to connect with their cultural roots and preserve them for future generations.

Research has explored the potential of entrepreneurship to promote cultural decolonization by **creating businesses that are rooted in indigenous knowledge** and traditions (Mason & Brown, 2014; McLeod and Devine, 2021). For example, Adhikari and Nadvi (2019) suggest that entrepreneurship can be a way to **reassert cultural identity** and challenge the dominant Westernized view of development that

has been imposed on many developing countries. For example, in Peru, the social enterprise Munay Rumi is focused on reviving traditional Peruvian textiles and crafts that have been suppressed by colonialism and modernization. Munay Rumi works with local artisans to create high-quality, sustainable products that are sold both locally and internationally. In India, the Jaipur Rugs Company has created a successful business by promoting the use of traditional carpet-making techniques and supporting local artisans.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the development of "cultural entrepreneurship," which involves using cultural assets to create economic value (Amato & Amato, 2019). Cultural entrepreneurship not only generates economic benefits but also promotes the preservation of cultural heritage by integrating it into business practices (Peredo & McLean, 2006; Algan, Lafuente, and Vaillant, 2019). Social economy, of which entrepreneurship is a key component, can promote cultural diversity and challenge dominant Western-centric views of economic development (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005). For example, in Kenya, the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust has created a sustainable tourism business that promotes the preservation of Maasai culture and the protection of wildlife.

Similarly the entrepreneurs in Central Asia are using decolonization as a tool is by revitalizing traditional crafts and knowledge. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, a group of women entrepreneurs have formed the organization "Altyn Kol" to promote the traditional art of felt-making. Felt-making has a long history in Kyrgyzstan, but it has been overshadowed by the dominance of Soviet-style industry. Altyn Kol's members work to preserve this traditional craft and promote it as a viable economic opportunity. Through their work, they are reclaiming a piece of their past and creating new economic opportunities that are rooted in local knowledge and practices. In Kyrgyzstan, the social enterprise "Bai Tyryk" is focused on promoting traditional Kyrgyz cuisine and hospitality. Bai Tyryk offers a range of services, from catering and cooking classes to tourism packages that include visits to local villages and cultural sites. In Uzbekistan, entrepreneurs are working to reclaim traditional textiles and crafts that have been suppressed under Soviet-style industry. For example, the social enterprise "Artel" is focused on promoting traditional silk weaving in the Fergana Valley. Artel works with local silk weavers to create high-quality, sustainable products that are sold both locally and internationally. In Kazakhstan, the social enterprise "Sabyrzhan" is focused on promoting sustainable nomadic practices, such as animal husbandry and pasture management. Sabyrzhan works with nomadic communities to create economic opportunities that are aligned with their cultural values and that support the preservation of traditional knowledge and practices.

Entrepreneurship can further promote creative industries that draw on local cultural resources to create innovative products and services (Daryanto and Wibowo, 2018; Hong, Kwon, and Koo, 2020). Overall, entrepreneurship has the potential to be a powerful tool for promoting cultural decolonization by creating businesses that are based on traditional knowledge and practices, promoting cultural diversity and innovation, and providing opportunities for cultural empowerment and social inclusion.

3.3. Entrepreneurship an act of epistemic disobedience - challenges dominant narrative around success and value

In many colonial contexts, success is defined by Western standards of productivity, efficiency, and profit. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) propose the concept of "epistemic disobedience," which involves challenging dominant knowledge systems and creating

alternative ways of knowing that can disrupt colonial power structures. They argue that entrepreneurship can be a form of epistemic disobedience by enabling individuals and communities to create their own economic and social systems that are not based on colonial models. Thus, entrepreneurs can challenge the hegemony of Western capitalist models of economic development and create new possibilities for economic empowerment and self-determination. In doing so entrepreneurs also challenge the dominant narrative around success and value by providing a way for communities to define success on their own terms, based on their own values and priorities.

One example of epistemic disobedience in the context of entrepreneurship is the concept of "solidarity economy," which is based on the principles of cooperation, self-management, and community ownership (Laville and Cattani, 2015; Moulart and Ailenei, 2005). Solidarity economy initiatives often involve creating cooperatives or other forms of collective ownership that are based on principles of social and economic justice, rather than profit maximization (Noya and Clarence; Peredo and Chrisman, 2006). By doing so, they challenge the dominant capitalist model of entrepreneurship and create new possibilities for economic empowerment and community-building.

For example, in many Indigenous cultures, success is often measured by community well-being, rather than individual wealth. By starting businesses that prioritize community well-being over profit, Indigenous entrepreneurs can challenge dominant narratives around success and value and create economic models that are more aligned with their cultural values. In South Africa, the social enterprise "Siyavula Education" is focused on providing access to high-quality educational resources to disadvantaged communities. Siyavula offers digital textbooks and educational resources that are free to access, and that are aligned with the South African curriculum. By providing free and accessible educational resources, Siyavula is able to challenge dominant power structures that prioritize profit over educational access and equity. In Tajikistan, the social enterprise "Sughd Community Tourism" is focused on promoting community-based tourism in the Sughd region. Sughd Community Tourism works with local communities to create tourism products that are aligned with local values and practices, and that prioritize community well-being over individual profit. By creating economic opportunities that challenge dominant power structures and prioritize community development, Sughd Community Tourism is able to support a more just and equitable economic future for the region.

4. The challenges involved in decolonization through entrepreneurship

While there is growing recognition of the potential of entrepreneurship for decolonization, there are also **critiques of the concept**. Some scholars argue that entrepreneurship can be co-opted by dominant economic and political actors and used to reinforce colonial power structures, rather than challenging them (Saunders, 2018). Others argue that entrepreneurship is not a panacea for the complex and multifaceted challenges of decolonization and that broader structural changes are needed to address systemic inequalities and marginalization (McGee and James, 2018).

Decolonization through entrepreneurship is not without its challenges. There are several challenges that must be addressed to ensure that entrepreneurship can effectively contribute to the process of decolonization. Entrepreneurs who are working to reclaim traditional practices and crafts may face a lack of resources, such as access to capital, markets, and infrastructure, particularly if they are working to create businesses that challenge dominant power structures. They may also face a lack of

support from government and other institutions, which can make it difficult to establish and grow their businesses.

Additionally, many post-colonial contexts are characterized by the colonial legacies of systemic barriers that make it difficult for marginalized communities to access economic opportunities. Furthermore, entrepreneurs need to work closely with local communities to ensure that cultural preservation is a shared goal. Entrepreneurship that is driven solely by profit can undermine cultural preservation efforts and lead to the commodification of cultural heritage (Zahra et al., 2009). Entrepreneurs who are challenging dominant power structures may face resistance from those who benefit from the status quo. This can include large corporations, government institutions, and other entities that are invested in maintaining the current economic system.

Another challenge is the need for entrepreneurship to be guided by a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of the heritage being reclaimed. Entrepreneurs must take the time to understand the cultural context of the heritage they are seeking to reclaim and work with local communities to ensure that their initiatives are culturally appropriate and sensitive.

Entrepreneurs who are working to reclaim cultural heritage may face cultural suppression, either from external forces or from within their own communities. They may need to navigate complex power dynamics and cultural barriers in order to establish and grow their businesses. Entrepreneurs may also face a lack of education and training in the areas of sustainable development, natural resource management, and other key areas that are necessary for creating businesses that are aligned with local contexts and values. Furthermore, entrepreneurs may face political instability and social unrest, which can make it difficult to establish and grow businesses. They may need to navigate complex political and social dynamics in order to create economic opportunities that are aligned with local values and priorities.

Finally, entrepreneurship must be accompanied by effective policies and regulations that promote the preservation of cultural heritage. Governments and other stakeholders must create an enabling environment that supports cultural preservation and encourages entrepreneurship that aligns with cultural preservation goals. This could include providing financial and technical support for cultural entrepreneurs, creating policies that protect cultural heritage sites, and promoting education and awareness-raising initiatives that emphasize the importance of cultural heritage preservation.

5. Conclusion

While entrepreneurship is not a one-size-fits-all solution for decolonization, it can be a powerful tool for promoting economic, cultural, and epistemic empowerment in marginalized communities. By enabling local ownership and control over economic resources and promoting alternative knowledge systems, entrepreneurship can help to challenge colonial power structures and build more equitable and sustainable societies. However, further research and practice are needed to fully realize the potential of entrepreneurship for promoting decolonization. This may involve developing new frameworks for understanding the role of entrepreneurship in promoting decolonization, as well as implementing policies and programs that support the creation of alternative economic structures and promote local self-determination and

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Shumaila Yousafzai

Director

Nazarbayev University Research Centre for Entrepreneurship
(NURCE) www.nurce.kz

Nurlykhan Aljanova

Postdoctoral Researcher

Nazarbayev University Research Center for Entrepreneurship
(NURCE)

Wojdan Omran

Research Associate

Nazarbayev University Research Center for Entrepreneurship
(NURCE)