

Even-Zohar, Itamar 2005. "Idea-Makers, Culture Entrepreneurs, Makers of Life Images, and The Prospects of Success". In Even-Zohar, Itamar 2005. *Papers in Culture Research*.

## IDEA-MAKERS, CULTURE ENTREPRENEURS, MAKERS OF LIFE IMAGES, AND THE PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This paper argues that for human societies to achieve a level of existence beyond survival and heading for success, it is necessary, often indispensable, to have dedicated individuals, or dedicated groups of individuals, who are able to produce ideas – or at least images – that can be converted to alternative or new options for the repertoire of culture by which the life of societies is shaped and organized. These individuals have been, in the course of human history, of various and different types, but the main core of their activity has lied in their being "idea makers". Whether mostly intellectuals or cultural entrepreneurs, or even makers of life images through poetry and fiction, they have been a necessary condition for achieving well-being and success. Societies where this type of individuals – or groups of individuals – is remarkably missing often harbor in perilous situations, where they either are reduced to survival strategies of existence or fall in danger of cultural and physical dissolution.

1. *Purpose of this paper.* My business in this paper is to discuss the relations between idea-makers and the prospects of success of groups. My question is: are idea-makers – and possibly makers of life images – necessary, or even indispensable, for the success of groups?

This is not a question that has emerged out of the blue, or through some philosophical speculation or theoretical deductions. Rather, it has only slowly and gradually suggested itself, as it were, as a possible direction of research, for a number of puzzling riddles encountered in my work on the connections between deliberate culture planning and the creation of new socio-political entities. However, my subject is not to justify the question, but to try and analyze it as a factor in a larger and more general context than that in which it has originally emerged.

2. *The success of groups.* What is the success of groups? Throughout history, the major endeavor, perhaps the major enterprise, of human groups has been to survive. Those who have not managed to do so, perished. Those who have not perished

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1 Delivered as the Annual Distinguished Lecture for the 2002-2003 academic year at the Department of Modern Languages and Literature, Trinity College, Hartford, 10th of March 2003.

physically often perished culturally. In such cases, although part of the members of the group may have physically survived, the failure to survive as a group with its distinctive culture often has put the individuals – who had previously belonged to a vital group – in an inferior state, if not outright a state of peril. Should we then consider the tenacity of groups, the ability to survive, both physically and culturally, an instance of generic success?

Although logically acceptable, I believe this is not what most people, as well as professional thinkers, mean when they use the word. *Success* is understood as something that is a more advanced achievement than survival. While survival may be conceived of as a minimum condition for *success*, the latter is normally understood as a state of affairs in which there is a *proliferation of options*. The success of both groups and individuals is often expressed in terms of access to resources and the ability, as well as the possibility, to select a desirable course of life *among many*. It implies, of course, that the desirable course of life provide more options, yielding various types of capital, or riches, often economic, but not necessarily nor exclusively so. It does not imply, however, that the success of a collective entity is equally shared by all of its individual members. The opposite, on the other hand, may very well be true, i.e., without group success, there is hardly individual success.

3. *Success as a relative variable*. It is clear, and the vast literature is very explicit about it, that *success* is a relative variable. There could never be *a-priori* set of options, nor a set number for these options, to define a universal state or level of success. The volume of the inventory of options, or the rate of option proliferation, is dependent upon two variables, which may or may not be connected, or even mutually dependent, in any given situation. The first variable is *the handling of changing circumstances*, and the second variable is *the presence of options possessed and practiced by another group*.

3.1. *The handling of changing circumstances* means that when changes occur, if the affected group does not produce new options to cope with these changes, the repercussions might be quite negative for the group. It does not mean that the group would not survive, but it would definitely not prosper, i.e., would have no success. It is a somewhat popular belief that changes, especially of some weight and size, always force human groups to produce appropriate measures. However, human history is full of examples of entities which either have not been able, or have refused, to introduce new options into their way of life, that is to their culture.

Many of these have not even managed to survive, let alone prosper, but others have simply been pushed into declining conditions of life. If they had been prosperous before the changes, they may have become less so after these had taken place.

This inability, or refusal, is not a simple matter to explain. The historical circumstances may be quite misleading, and our ability as researchers may be very limited in trying to understand them. For example, how are we to understand the situation of the Mamluks of Egypt, in 1516, when confronted with the danger of the victorious Ottoman army? According to most historians, the Mamluks – who had been the mightiest force in the Middle East for three hundred years (1258-1517) – refused to use cannons against the Ottomans because they considered the weapon to be "dishonorable". In other words, they are believed to have refused a measure necessary for the physical survival of the Mamluk entity in Syria and Egypt in favor of sticking to their traditional way of life (Braudel 1976: 667).<sup>2</sup> However, we cannot be certain that this is the correct interpretation of the circumstances. Perhaps the overwhelming superiority of the Ottomans derived from a much larger stock of advanced options, in which the cannon was just one – though major – component, that the Mamluks could not possibly have embraced. Here, the inability to generate or provide new options under change is definitely present, too, but to such a scale that the presence of cannons might not have altered the historical outcomes. As succinctly summarized by The *Economist's* anonymous reviewer:

The 20,000 Mamluks relied on tactics and equipment perfected in the 13th century. The highly trained, horse-mounted archers at the core of their army were no match for Ottoman foot-soldiers wielding new-fangled arquebuses, nor for the Turks' deadly light artillery. The Ottomans' logistics, with separate corps for transport, engineering, food supply and surgery, enabled them to keep 60,000 men in the field. [...] The Ottomans also represented *a new kind of thinking* [underline mine – I.E-Z]. The regimes they replaced were feudal and venal. In the Mamluk realm, non-Muslims had been tolerated, but only just. The Ottomans had a different vision. [...] (*Economist*, 12.31.1999, Vol. 353 Issue 8151, p.68)

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2 "The Mamluks, who considered artillery a dishonorable weapon, could not withstand the fire of Selim's cannon on 24th August, 1516, outside Aleppo. Syria fell overnight into the hands of the conqueror who entered Damascus on the 26th September. When the new Mamluk ruler refused to recognize Turkish sovereignty, Selim's army advanced into Egypt. The Mamluk forces were again shattered by Turkish cannon in January, 1517 outside Cairo." (Braudel 1976, p. 667)

Even more puzzling may be the case of the Tasmanians who are believed to have lost their power of resistance because of their unwillingness – among other things – to eat fish when the white man barred their access to other basic resources (Diamond 1993). Nevertheless, it has been argued that the Tasmanians perished mostly because they were cruelly slaughtered by the colonial invaders. They did not even possess the tools and weaponry that were available at the time to the Australian aborigines, with whom they had lost all contacts ten thousand years before the arrival of the Europeans. The Newfoundland Beothuks are believed to have perished because of their lack of capability to establish exchange with the European invaders, or generate sustainable alternative resources to compensate for those they have lost (Pastore 1991, Marshall 2001). The comparison with other Native American tribes, it is argued by the historians, demonstrates that the ability to quickly develop exchange relations is what probably has saved such groups as the Micmacs of Cape Breton.<sup>3</sup>

In any one of these, and a host of similar examples, various causes for the supposed deficiency can be provided. Some of these have nothing to do with cultural preferences as such, but even in some of those which are explained by the unwillingness of some leaders of groups to allow change of repertoire for some whimsical reason, there is an aspect of cultural survival if the new component was identified as a menace to the contemporary state of the culture. On the whole, it seems that we have been too little aware of the sometimes extreme efforts invested by groups to prevent their disintegration into a collection of individual members who do not share at least a partly-overlapping repertoire of culture. While in quite a few cases this can be explained, either seriously or cynically, in terms of the ongoing endeavor to maintain power, in many other cases sticking together maintaining group solidarity, which is often based on a shared culture, has proved itself as the only way to survive.

To sum up, *success* is the ability of groups to provide, or generate – with the help of any accessible means – new or alternative options.

3.2. *The presence of options possessed and practiced by another group* means that if a group is actively exposed to options practiced by some other group, the more linked to a better access to resources these options are, the more likely it is that the exposed group would

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<sup>3</sup> This view is contested, however, by some recent historians. According to Holly Jr., “[...] a careful reading of historical documents and the archaeological record suggests that the Beothuk were actively seeking a means of adaptation throughout the historic period.” (Holly Jr. 2000: 78)

have to adopt them. There are many factors governing the chances of transfer of options from one culture to another (cf. Even-Zohar 2001), but basically what counts most is whether the options practiced by another group may put the exposed group in a perilous situation of inferiority. In the view of most researchers, the sort of relations that takes place under such situations is a state of competition. While some states of competition may be of no further consequences, other may contribute to sometimes a quick deterioration of the exposed group.

For the ancient Egyptians, to take one conspicuous example from world history, the forceful introduction of horses and chariots by the Hyksos (17<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) constituted a real turning point in their history. Obviously, as Benette puts it “The old chariots pulled by mules or oxen did not stand a chance against the swift new horse-vehicles” (Bennette 1997). The import of the horse and chariot thus enabled *to maintain a competitive balance with other groups*, most notoriously with the Hittites and Mesopotamians. It eventually allowed the Egyptians the ability to avoid defeat by the Hittite formidable army of 2500 chariots in the battle at Kadesh (ca 1275 B.C.), an event considered by the Egyptians as a victory (see Redford 1992: 184-185). This allowed, though only some eleven years later, to finally come to terms with the Hittites, signing a memorable peace treaty with them which put the age-old strife behind them.<sup>4</sup> No less importantly, the adoption of the horse (and chariot) carried with it a whole array of new options, having to do with new professions that required new skills. These included knowledge about horses, chariot and wheel construction (Rovetta et al. 2002), and generated various new agricultural crops.

Transfers of repertoire from one group to another as means of proliferating (the repertoire of) domestic options have always been a major process in human history. As Diamond puts it, "competition between human societies that are in contact with each other is what drives the invention of new technology and the continued availability of technology". (Diamond 1999); the word "technology" can easily be replaced here by the more general term of "repertoire". Of course, being "in contact", in contradistinction to

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<sup>4</sup> The implications of the peace are succinctly summarized by Redford as follows: “The fifty years following the Egypto-Hittite peace treaty were halcyon days for the entire Near East. In the Levant, borders were now open from Egypt to the Black Sea, and from the Euphrates to the Aegean; and inter-national trade flourished as never before.” (Redford 1992, p. 241.)

a state of isolation, is a precondition for any movement and flow of options between human groups.

To sum up, success denotes the ability to maintain a competitive balance with other present groups through the proliferation of the repertoire of options available to the group.

4. *Who has got the ability to proliferate options by putting forward new ideas.* What does it mean, in practical and concrete terms, that a group has or does not have the ability to generate and provide new or alternative options? Whose ability is it?

In everyday life, the overwhelming majority of people in any group do not engage in deliberately creating, or thinking about, new options for either themselves or the group. The major concern of “ordinary people” is to go on with their lives with the help of the options of the culture that they are already familiar with. Certainly, the repetition and reiteration of a given repertoire is a re-confirmation of its validity, and therefore people can be said to participate in a daily re-creation of their culture by permanently negotiating it among themselves (Davis 1994). Undoubtedly, to master a current repertoire in a satisfactory manner is not a simple matter, since many individuals never manage to do that, let alone generate new items for that repertoire. For ages life has been – and still is for a vast number of people around the world – sticking to the known and familiar. As Bernard Reilly’s puts it in his description of life in Mediaeval Spain:

The overwhelming majority of people, then, lived in three mental worlds. The first was constituted by the nature to which they lived so close. It was the vegetative round of life, death, and life again that provided their sustenance, conditioned their everyday life, and dominated their mental images. In it everything was in motion but nothing ever changed permanently. (Reilly 1993: 153)

Against the background of this, when in need of new options, along the variables described in the previous passages, *most people are not equipped with the necessary capabilities to provide them.* It has always been the task of a “small dedicated group of thoughtful” people (to use Margaret Mead’s famous expression) to get engaged in the business of thinking, generating or providing alternative or unprecedented new options. These had to do with such disparate elements as family relations, gender roles, social hierarchies, principles of government and social management and organization, methods of writing and the making of texts, as well as the domestication of animals and crops.

This category of a “small group of people” – who are involved with thinking about and providing or generating new options – undoubtedly emerged at the very dawn of history. There is much indirect evidence to that, at least since humans became sedentary. However, it is only in closer, historical times, beginning roughly with the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C., that we begin to learn more specifically about groups and individuals who get a stronger say than others on what shape might take the life of other people than themselves. More often than not, these are people who, by assuming power – normally as part of a group, even when power eventually concentrated in their own hands – have been able to carry out their ideas. These ideas often touched upon many aspects of life, and if they were involved not only in exercising power, but also in designing unprecedented or alternative options, they surely can be viewed as dedicated makers of future practices, thereby proliferating the stock of options made available to their group and contributing to its success. As such, they certainly contributed to the making of the cultures that shaped life for the groups under their control. They also made it their business to laud themselves for these acts, even when the ideas did not necessarily originate from their own heads. Interestingly, these efforts have often been successful, as we can detect accepted ideas in the common lore of many groups around the globe about the contributions of these outstanding – sometimes legendary – individuals. It is only dimly sensed sometimes behind the available explicit records that these individuals had in their group people with the privilege of criticizing them and suggesting new options to them. It is in this context that the story about Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, who takes the liberty of criticizing Moses’ performance, seems to me to be very instructive. Here is how it is recorded in the *Book of Exodus*:

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me [...] When they have a matter [...]; and I judge between one and another [...]. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel [...] Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. (*Exodus*, Chapter 18: 13-24; King James Bible version)

Jethro, a token-representative rather than a historical person, was not unique, however, in historical terms. Gradually, more audacious people who came from outside the dominant group, or at least did not constitute part of the immediate entourage of power-holders, have emerged. These people joined in the activity of making ideas with the purpose of shaping the culture of the groups they belonged to, or creating new or modified groups in the first place. The novelty about them was that they did not aspire to take power themselves, though obviously without some sort of power, and perhaps a power of a different sort, they might have remained completely obscure to us. Their activity eventually led them into conflicts with the power-holders, with possibly costly consequences for them, such as losing life, property, or family. My contention is that these were the first wholly dedicated self-appointed idea-makers in world history, not commissioned by anyone to provide their goods.

I believe that the first figures of that kind we know of are the Hebrew prophets, people known to us by names, such as Amos and Isaiah – eighth century B.C., or Jeremiah – seventh and sixth centuries B.C. In spite of their audacity, they had to legitimize their subversive ideas by claiming to be agents of some higher authority, the invisible ruler of the universe, but in making that claim they also had to increase the power of that authority far beyond what was the contemporary common belief. The local god of the group was transformed to a universal ruler whose authority extends beyond the boundaries of the national territory. It was certainly a new conception that had far-reaching consequences for what could be considered right or wrong.

The next group of idea-makers, making their appearance in Greece of the late fifth century B.C, emerged with Socrates (470?–399) as its leading and exemplary figure. They already forestall the modern brand of idea-makers, because they no longer needed divine legitimization. Instead, they were ready to take all responsibility upon themselves, believing in their ability as human beings to create their own ideas with critical categories that can be created and negotiated by the individual human brain.

5. *Makers of ideas which are convertible to options.* At various stages of my work, it seemed to me that the familiar term "intellectuals" could be used, with some modifications, to denote that particular brand of people who are capable of designing new options by brainwork. The trouble is that such usage is not compatible with some vernacular or academic habits. In both, the

term mostly refers to "people with learning", "scholars", or "people in the academic institutions", or even as synonymous with "scientists". In yet other contexts, the term is used, especially in combination with the word "public", to denote people who publicly express ideas already sanctioned as "preferred". Often, the word is used to loosely denote any kind of people who do any kind of brainwork as their major occupation or engagement. This is of course not what I was attempting to describe in the previous passages. Obviously, there are so many kinds of people normally called "intellectuals" who definitely do *not* have the mental capabilities of producing ideas that may be converted to new or alternative options for the cultural repertoires of social groups. This does not mean that such people have not had these capabilities, or played that role, in some past – a possible reason for the continuous belief that they still carry on – but they often have ceased to be or do so at some remote or recent past.

In much of the traditional discussion of intellectuals, much emphasis has been laid on the first part of my formulation, that is, the "mental capabilities of producing ideas", but little to no attention has been paid to the qualification of these ideas as spiritual products that "may be converted to new or alternative options". I would like to argue that, whatever the label we put on such people, we take both parts of my formulation as necessary conditions identifying them among many other types of brainworkers. This will make, I hope, the connection between certain ideas on the one hand and the cultural and social realities on the other more apparent. In view of this, people who display great knowledge and scholarship, who excel in scientific work, or who give magnificent expression to some shared sentiments of the groups to which they belong, though often recognized as intellectuals, do not belong in the category of idea-makers-as-options-devisers unless what they produce generates unprecedented processes. The historical fact that many types of brainworkers often endure hardships may be an unavoidable outcome of their activity in some societies, but hardships cannot serve as a criterion for identifying the type of idea-makers I am discussing here. It is therefore that I suggest leaving the term "intellectuals" to the market use, and henceforth refer to the type of actors I am discussing here by the hardly elegant yet clear term "idea-makers-as-options-devisers", or "idea-makers" for short.

6. *Idea-makers-as-options-devisers and cultural entrepreneurs.* To what extent idea-makers have been engaged in basically producing ideas rather than promoting them? If by "promoting ideas" we mean talking about them and trying to spread them around, no

doubt most idea-makers we know about have done that either by themselves or through some close agents. Although no doubt world history may also be full of reclusive thinkers, these cannot be considered to be idea-makers in our sense. On the other hand, if we mean by promoting ideas some sort of activity towards implementing them, that is, making them not only heard and accepted, but also converted to socio-cultural reality by implanting them into the active repertoire of the relevant group, then we would find that idea-makers are clearly divided throughout history to those who are mostly engaged in producing and preaching their ideas and those who in addition also become active in attempts towards their implementation.

This latter brand of people, whom we may call “active idea-makers”, actually also assume the role of *entrepreneurs*. Since they are engaged in the creation of new or alternative ideas for the repertoires of culture, it would be adequate to call them *cultural entrepreneurs*. This is not a current term in the human sciences. “Entrepreneur” is mostly used in economics for describing and analysing people engaged in generating new ideas and taking actual steps to implement them for solely economic purposes. Although an old concept (probably dating back to the French Physiocrats of the eighteenth century [Formaini 2001]), it had to slowly break its way into the mainstream of theoretical economic thought. As late as 1986, Marc Blaug complains that,

It is a scandal that nowadays students of economics can spend years in the study of the subject before hearing the term "entrepreneur," that courses in economic development provide exhaustive lists of all the factors impeding or accelerating economic growth without mentioning the conditions under which entrepreneurship languishes or flourishes, and the learned comparisons between "socialism" and "capitalism" are virtually silent about the role of entrepreneurship under regimes of collective rather than private ownership. (Blaug 1986: 229)

Similarly to the lack of recognition of the vital role of idea-makers in various traditions of social and historical research, major traditions of economic analysis have rejected this concept. Marxian economic theories could obviously not accept the role of individuals as major generators of change in any domain of social life. “[...] for Marx”, says Schumpeter, one of the founding modern theoreticians of entrepreneurship, “the business process runs substantially by itself, the one thing needed to make it run being an adequate supply of capital” (Schumpeter 1950: 556).

There seems to be no longer a dispute today among economists about the usefulness of the concept of entrepreneurship as an adequate tool of analysis. Entrepreneurship is also taught as a practical profession. This conceptual change, however, is attributed not to any development in academic thinking, but to the “profound change in the competitive environment”, as Gary Hamel put it, a change which has created the situation, according to him, where,

In industry after industry, it is the revolutionaries - usually newcomers - who are creating the new wealth. [...]. The point seems incontestable: in a discontinuous world, strategy innovation is the key to wealth creation. Strategy innovation is the capacity to reconceive the existing industry model in ways that create new value [...]. Strategy innovation is the only way for newcomers to succeed in the face of enormous resource disadvantages, and the only way for incumbents to renew their lease on success. And if one redefines the metric of corporate success as share of new wealth creation within some broad opportunity domain – e.g., energy, transportation, communication, computing, and so on – the innovation imperative becomes inescapable. (Hamel 1998: 7-8)

Although a very encouraging development from my point of view, there are two flaws, or at least two weaknesses, in the argumentation put forward by Hamel and many similar analyses.

*The first weakness* is that what seems to us as an exciting and speedy change of gear may look to next generations far less dramatic, the way we often look back at events that have taken place in some remote past that seems to us incredibly slow. As I have been trying to argue throughout this paper, without the inventors of new or alternative options, nothing would have happened in world history. The dramatic introduction of grains and animals, the invention of the sickle (between 13,000 and 10,000 B.C.), or the introduction of writing systems has been no less dramatic than modern human and technological inventions. Moreover, it is now the view of most prehistory scholars that these innovations did not occur slowly and gradually, but were introduced rapidly and during very short periods of time, a view supported by archaeological evidence, and which is more compatible with the hypothesis of entrepreneurship than with the idea of spontaneous impersonal emergence of new options. In short, “strategy innovation”, which can unproblematically be replaced with “initiating/visioning new options”, is plausibly more intensive in certain periods than other, but has always been a major factor in the dynamics of human societies.

*The second weakness* is that viewing economic entrepreneurship only in economic terms hides from sight too many parameters which actively participate not only in the environment of entrepreneurial activities, but also figure as built-in features of the

comportment of the entrepreneur. The inventory of available options is intimately linked with any clues for replacements, which makes the connection between the larger context of culture and the capabilities of a prospective entrepreneur an indispensable factor for any adequate analysis. Moreover, what might have been launched as an economic enterprise eventually may produce more consequences in the larger socio-cultural context. On the other hand, economists have deplorably ignored the overwhelming consequences for the proliferation of options, including clear-cut economic innovations, of the work carried out by idea-makers and cultural entrepreneurs.

Some criticism of the narrow definition of entrepreneurship and success has already been vociferated by inner circle members of the trade. For example, in a study by Paula Kantor on women entrepreneurs in South Asia, she says in a very clear voice:

Most studies of enterprise performance measure success through economic outcomes alone [...]. The measures include size of firm, change in number of employees, growth in sales or income, productivity, and returns. This narrow definition of success highlights only economic motivations for entering into self-employment, which tends to fit the male model of self-employment [...]. It does less well in reflecting women's motivations for starting a business, which include a desire for greater income as well as creating more opportunities for advancement than in the labor market, improving a family's livelihood position, self-fulfilment, and a greater ability to balance work and family roles [...] Amongst poor women in both developed and developing nations, self-employment also is perceived as a means of empowerment through which women can reduce their dependence on the state or on male family members by gaining control over their own income [...]. (Kantor 2002: 132-133)

I believe that Kantor has been swept away too far by her distinction between the aspirations of males and females. The desire, attributed by her to women, "[...] a desire for greater income as well as creating more opportunities for advancement [...]" perfectly applies to the gist of intellectual and entrepreneurial labour throughout history. But this is not the main point here; the main point is Kantor's recognition of the fact that the purpose of entrepreneurial labour and part of its consequences are not entirely in the economic domain. This means that the notion of entrepreneurship in economic theories should and can be extended to encompass the socio-cultural context. In concrete terms, this may mean that economic analysts understand that not only what seems to be just economic enterprise may have consequences beyond economy, but that the intellectual labour at large, which is not targeted towards economic enterprises, may constitute a factor in the economy at least on two levels. The first is the idea-makers' direct activity in creating ideas convertible to options; the second is the general socio-cultural consequences of intellectual labour,

which often play a part in creating the necessary environment, the milieu and the ambiance, that can enable entrepreneurship in the first place. On the other hand, it is also high time that the study of intellectuals be not confined only to students of the History of Ideas.

7. *Makers of life images.* While both idea-making and entrepreneurial labour is manifest, more often than not, in explicit and direct ideas, the making of new options has also been carried out throughout history through images, metaphors, and the depiction of alternative, different, or new models of life. Such semiotic products already emerged in writing at the dawn of historical times. While many of these products certainly have served the purpose of reinforcing socio-cultural control by promoting preferred interpretations of life circumstances, other turned out to be at odds with the prevailing preferences. Like many types of intellectual products, these images could then clash with the contemporary accepted options of life by possibly showing that there might be there some other possibilities. I am of course referring to the vast activity that is nowadays called "literature", and to the variety of texts we habitually refer to as poetry, fiction, and drama. It can easily be extended to similar and parallel media like motion pictures.

From the point of view of the subject I am discussing here, these products can be most adequately described as "life images". One of the major achievements of the so-called Russian semioticians – such as Lotman, Uspenskij or Ivanov – was their analysis of literature as a major contributor of "potential models of life". They have shown us the way to conceive of the literary activity as a major industry capable of providing tools for both understanding and operating in actual life. That is, products such as fiction and poetry texts provide not only explanations, justifications and motives, but also – or sometimes in the first place – plans (or "scripts") of action. The people who read or watch these products not only get from them conceptions and coherent images of what is supposed to be "reality", but can also extract from them practical instructions for daily behaviour. Thus, the texts propose not only how to behave in particular cases, but how life should be organised: whether to execute, and in what ways, various options. For example, fall in love, eat profusely or scantily, get married, have children, work or avoid working, feel happy for dying for the fatherland.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Even-Zohar 2002.

The validity of this function goes, of course, only up to a certain limit; as providing these tools cannot be taken to always be the major purpose of this industry, cases of complete misunderstanding have not been rare. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* are only two too famous examples of such *bona fide* misunderstandings. The same holds true of the status of the producers, who sometimes, in particular in more modern times, have been confused with idea-makers and accorded all the latter's privileges as well as hardships. It is because of some historical coincidence since the Italian Renaissance, that the makers of life images have been identified throughout with intellectuals, and the latter with idea-makers-as-option-devisers. Like the case of philosophers and other thinkers who may or may not have functioned as idea-makers, so it is with the case of the makers of life images – writers, poets, painters, composers, film directors and others. It is our task to examine in each particular historical period whether their labour has produced such images that served as a source for ideas that could be converted to the creation of new or alternative options. However, even if these images may have served to only promote, encourage, make more practicable, or more understandable, the sometimes abstract proposals of idea-makers and entrepreneurs, then their status and function as at least part-time generators of proliferation of options need be recognised, too.

In periods of great oppression, when intellectuals of various kinds often must either hide or go in exile, the makers of life images, lyrical poets and storytellers, who are not identified by the oppressor as dangerous, can still engage in their indirect activity of devising different options. Criticism against a ruler can still be expressed in disguise. In poems written for children on a crocodile, a flea, and cockroaches, all criminally oppressing society, the Russian poet Kornei Chukovski – to take one of thousand examples – could still hint that tyranny would not last for ever, and that a brave new world may shine beyond the horizon. Many of the most vital national movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries started with poetry as their only alternative for expressing new preferences. Often, the poets themselves, such as Rosalía de Castro of Spanish Galicia, have become symbols of those implicit ideas that only at a later stage would be formulated more expressedly and compellingly by intellectuals or entrepreneurs. On the other hand, there are also many examples of poets and writers who have become active cultural entrepreneurs, often using the so-called symbolic capital they had accumulated through their imaginative writing as

convertible assets towards efficient entrepreneurship.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that such people have always escaped the fate of being put in jail even for what we would consider today humble suggestions for a different world. And the more colourful the person, the more likely is it to witness dramatic measures taken against him, as might illustrate the infamous case of Alexander Pushkin, whose killing in a duel was concocted and orchestrated by the tsar of Russia and his army's chief-of-staff (Jakobson 1975).

8. *The industry of ideas and who are those who assume roles therein.* The aggregate of activities engaged by idea-makers, cultural entrepreneurs, and makers of life images can be conceived of, in view of its function and consequences for the life of individuals and groups, as an industry. I have argued that it is not some negligible, but a major industry, which I have claimed to be a pre-condition for societies to exist and be able to compete with other societies. It can be labelled "the industry of ideas for the proliferation of options". I would like to emphasise that, much because of the established historical images, clearly created and promoted by the various professional lobbies of intellectuals and artists, we tend to confuse people who may have assumed roles in some periods through specific types of activities, with those who still are carrying on with the same activities, but no longer function, nor create any consequences, for the cultural repertoire in terms of option proliferation. I may be taking a completely wrong direction here, but I believe that, similarly to any industry, if people go on producing ideas or taking initiatives without any consequences for success, then they no longer work within the industry, or that the industry they are engaged in does no longer produce effective products. I am referring to the simple situation where those who engage in those professions historically connected with intellectuals and cultural entrepreneurs may no longer be those who devise and generate the visions for new and alternative options. I would argue that they may still create a certain amount of "noise" which often leads to the creation of "general energy" without which a group may fall into various degrees of stagnation (cf. Even-Zohar 2000: 49), but they no longer contribute to success. Perhaps they even may belong to the forces that reject new options and abhor change.

Its is therefore our task, as culture researchers, to try and trace down, in each particular group, and in each particular time, who are

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6 On the role of literature in contributing to the making of entities see Even-Zohar

the people in the industry. We know that in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people engaged in talking about grammar and spelling of some language not yet in use, philologists and historians, philosophers and other thinkers, sometimes amateur scholars, have intensely participated in manufacturing new options, which indeed changed the state of affairs – and subsequently the lives of many individuals – in many territories and societies. This, however, does not make it an automatic matter to limit our observation to only this group of people, and their likes, in search of those who actually assume the roles today. Not only these may no longer be people in the so-called cultural industries – thinkers, philosophers, writers, artists – but they may hide somewhere far from the public eye, devising the new options or getting involved in enterprises that either gradually or dramatically change the lives of people, through completely different channels to those we have been able to witness or observe in the past. In such cases, the role of idea-makers and cultural entrepreneurs should more adequately be attributed to them than to those who simply perpetuate some established activities that were efficient in some near or distant past. In various countries, such as Catalonia, Scotland, or Iceland, where intellectuals certainly have led towards success during late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it seems to be no longer the traditional type of idea-makers who created modern success. Some other, not yet fully or well identified small group of people, seem to have been functioning more recently as such crucial idea-makers and entrepreneurs.

9. Perhaps the connection between the industry of ideas and success is most visible in those places where it hardly exists. It is the combination of the presence of the industry in the successful cases and its absence in the less successful ones that can serve to support – at least as circumstantial evidence – the hypothesis of the necessity, or even indispensability, of the industry. In their book, *Living on the Edge*, Lawrence Felt and Peter Sinclair analyze the strategies of survival with the help of which communities in Newfoundland manage to carry on with their lives. They name the Newfoundlanders' ability to employ these strategies a “successful adaptation [...] based on flexibility, substitution and co-operation” (Felt & Sinclair 1995: 210). The words of “a former fisher turned truck driver” describe this kind of life:

What do I do for a living? I guess anything that comes along. I fished, worked in the woods, built the high school in Plum Point and been driving this truck for five years. Round here, you do whatever is available.

These heroic strategies for survival are definitely no success in the sense of option proliferation. When the existence is made possible

only through maneuvering – as clever as it may be – between the few options that are available, we have a clear state of lack of success. It is my argument that the fact that idea-makers and cultural entrepreneurs have been very active in such a place as Iceland, while almost completely absent in such a place as Newfoundland, has been a decisive factor in the success versus the non-success of the otherwise very similar groups. It belongs to a different paper to try and explain in more details the whats and the whys of these particular societies, but they certainly make us think that even incredible social solidarity of the kind described by Felt and Sinclair is not a tool that can push a society towards a competitive better quality of living. And no state *Economic Recovery Commission*, such as headed by Dr. Doug House (House 1999) in Newfoundland, even when its work is not obstructed by the local bureaucracy, can unfortunately alter that.

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