

# Entrepreneurial Orientation in Local Authorities: A Case Study of the Healthcare Network in Lorraine

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this communication is to examine the entrepreneurial dimension in local authorities. We use intervention research conducted at a Regional Council in France (Conseil Régional de Lorraine), which decided to develop its healthcare and biotechnologies network, to show that the notion of entrepreneurial orientation is highly relevant in the local authority context. We also conclude that while this particular local authority demonstrates a tendency for innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, the social dimension is a key feature of its entrepreneurial orientation, and consequently argue that particular attention be paid to this feature.

**Keywords:** *Natural gas; Concentration field;*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although the notion of the political entrepreneur is well established in the fields of economics (Abel, 2003; Facchini, 2006; Hederer, 2007), political science (Garaud, 1990; Schneider & Teske, 1992; Le Gales, 1995; Mintrom & Norman, 2009) and sociology (Le Bart, 1992), it has been neglected by the management sciences with the exception of a handful of, now somewhat dated, public management studies (Le Duff & Orange, 1996; Huron, 1999). These studies, based on an attributes approach, too often characterize the locally elected entrepreneur as a 'heroic' and solitary figure, a description largely disputed by the majority of entrepreneurship researchers (Gartner, 1989; Schmitt, 2008). In fact, in the realm of local politics, it appears that a network of elected representatives, administrative officials and local government officers is needed for entrepreneurial behaviour to emerge. It would thus be overly simplistic to view the locally elected entrepreneur as an individual evolving in a social vacuum (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). For this reason, we decided to consider the question of political entrepreneurship by employing the concept of entrepreneurial orientation, which is more commonly used to examine organizations than individuals. Although a proven concept in the management sciences domain (Basso, Fayolle, & Bouchard, 2009), studies addressing entrepreneurial orientation primarily examine private companies and employ a quantitative approach. There is increasing interest in new research relating to this concept, both in terms of its scope of application and in terms of the research methodologies employed. Our work forms part of this research stream by using a support approach to address entrepreneurial orientation in the original context of a local authority.

The sustained economic crisis has generated conflicting opinions towards elected representatives of local authorities. Constituents' employment, security, education and welfare expectations have increased, and growing numbers of constituents consider that their local elected representatives are no longer capable of meeting their expectations. This state of mind is reflected in what Barnes (2010) refers to as a 'democratic disconnect', understood as a situation in which citizens and elected representatives no longer agree how

democratic governance should operate.

The multi-layered administrative structure of French local authorities compounds this crisis of confidence and sense of ineffectiveness. The sheer quantity of structures and the resulting jurisdictional quagmires create competition between the different departments, and cause incomprehension and irritation among constituents and company managers lost in a bureaucratic maze of administrative procedures. In order to resolve this lack of trust and to increase efficiency, certain local authorities are adopting entrepreneurial behaviour to perform their public service duties. This entrepreneurial attitude needs to be supported in the same way that an individual would need support when starting up a business, and leads us, as management science researchers specializing in entrepreneurship, to examine how local authorities can be helped to translate their entrepreneurial orientation into actions.

The objective of this article, based on intervention research carried out at the Lorraine Regional Council in France (Conseil Régional de Lorraine), is to build a support method with which to extend the entrepreneurial orientation construct to local authorities, and to highlight the construct's specific characteristics in a local government context. Our article is set out in three sections. In the first, we analyze the entrepreneurial orientation literature; then, in the second section, we set out our research topic, the framework for our intervention and our methodology. Finally, the third section highlights the distinctive characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation in a local authority setting.

## II. ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR SUPPORT APPROACH

The notion of entrepreneurial orientation has its roots in the work of Miller (1983). According to Runyan et al. (2012), it refers to 'the processes, practices, and choice activities leading to new entrance or opportunity for an individual/firm' (Runyan et al., 2012, p.821). It is generally agreed that entrepreneurial orientation comprises three dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, although certain authors have attempted to add two additional dimensions.<sup>1</sup> The concept has also been adapted to the non-profit sector, with this development proving particularly useful for constructing our support approach.

### The constitutive dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation

According to Randerson&Fayolle(2010), the notion of entrepreneurial orientation was initially composed of two dimensions: innovativeness and risk-taking. These dimensions were intended to 'distinguish enterprising managers from more conservative managers' (Randerson & Fayolle, 2010, p. 6). It was not until the seminal article of Miller (1983), *The Correlates of Entrepreneurship in Three Types of Firms*, that the proactiveness dimension was added to enhance the concept

of entrepreneurial orientation.

### **Innovativeness**

Innovativeness is an organizational characteristic that reflects a tendency to experiment and to generate new ideas, products and combinations. It should thus be understood in its widest sense, moving beyond the classic model of innovativeness, which tends to reduce the concept to its purely technological dimension (Godet, Durance, & Mousli, 2010). Thus, if innovativeness often calls for high-tech input, there are nonetheless many hotbeds of innovativeness in low-tech areas.

### **Risk-taking**

The first definition of the entrepreneur, which we owe to Cantillon (1755), considers the question of risk to be paramount. The author defines the entrepreneur as a speculative agent attempting to take advantage of the arbitrage opportunity between purchasing at a known price, and selling at an uncertain price. This idea clearly highlights the entrepreneur's appetite for risk and ability to manage situations of uncertainty (Sciascia & De Vita, 2004), and distinguishes the entrepreneur from the annuitant, who can predict his or her revenues. The risks incurred by the entrepreneur are in no way limited to merely financial aspects or to private business. They may be personal, emotional or organizational, and relate to all types of organization in which entrepreneurial activity can be identified. This is particularly the case in the non-profit sector (Morris, Webb, & Franklin, 2011) and in local authorities (Huron, 1999).<sup>ii</sup>

### **Proactiveness**

In an entrepreneurial context, proactiveness implies dynamic behaviour on the part of the individual or organization and the pursuit of business opportunities (Cherchem & Fayolle, 2010). According to Morris et al. (2011), it is 'the tendency of an organization to anticipate future wants and needs' (Morris et al., 2011, p. 949), and to pursue 'innovations in advance of others, thereby enabling growth and enhanced performance' (Morris et al., 2011, p.959). This understanding of proactiveness is close to that of Miller & Friesen (1978), for whom proactive behaviour is used to shape the environment rather than to react to its evolution.

### **Competitive aggressiveness and autonomy**

As previously noted, Lumpkin & Dess (1996) propose two additional dimensions in an attempt to clarify the notion of entrepreneurial orientation: competitive aggressiveness, which they describe as the ability to directly and intensively challenge competitors in order to impose a new activity or improve the competitive position; and autonomy, which refers to the idea that the individual can act independently, thereby enabling him or her to create a new idea or vision. Like Basso, Fayolle & Bouchard (2009) and Randerson & Fayolle (2010), we take the view that competitive aggressiveness is merely a component of proactiveness and that autonomy is an element of risk-taking. For this reason we retain the three traditional entrepreneurial orientation dimensions in our study, primarily as interpreted by Morris et al. (2011), who adapted them to the non-profit sector.

### **Entrepreneurial orientation and the non-profit sector**

According to Morris et al. (2011), certain not-for-profit organizations adopt entrepreneurial behaviour for reasons beyond the profit-making rationale found in companies. The current scarcity of resources is, in fact, leading such non-profit organizations to rethink their means of gathering and allocating

resources, to recognize that they are no longer able to meet welfare expectations, and to identify new opportunities for creating social value in their changing environment. Nevertheless, as emphasized by Facchini (2006), the pursuit of profit is not entirely absent in the political context, although it takes forms other than economic profit. The author identifies three types of political profits: predatory profits, where political power is used to obtain a portion of other people's wealth by means other than theft, collective profits that, while pursuing the general interest, also contribute to the personal interest of the elected representative, and specialization profits, defined as 'the difference between the real success of each policy offering in relation to the result required to implement the election manifesto on which the candidate was elected' (François 2003, p.159).

Regarding the non-profit sector, Morris et al. (2011) contend that the three dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation each contain three sub-dimensions. For innovativeness, they identify sub-dimensions that focus on achieving the organization's core mission, that generate new sources of revenue, and that focus on both new revenue generation and core mission accomplishment. The authors define proactiveness as changing the way in which social objectives are achieved compared to similar organizations, changing the way in which financial constraints are addressed compared to organizations with the same objectives, and as implementing change in relation to stakeholder expectations. Finally, they interpret risk-taking as the willingness to introduce measures that are highly likely to lead to substantial losses in terms of social impact and objectives, in terms of financial losses, and finally in terms of non-financial stakeholder support.

## **III. INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH TOPIC AND METHODOLOGY**

### **From intervention framework to research topic**

France's Lorraine region has long been considered to be the nation's industrial heartland, providing the country with the bulk of the coal and steel needed for its economic development. The region's industrial sector has experienced severe difficulties since the 1970s. Today, the mines are closed, the steel industry is virtually nonexistent and textile production has been relocated. The Lorraine industrial landscape has undergone profound change, and what was previously the region's strength is now an obstacle to its economic transformation. The region has acquired the image of a disaster-stricken, overly backward-looking area, with the social conflicts aimed at preventing closures being extensively relayed by the national and international press. These factors have obscured the region's dynamism, its high level of expertise, the quality of its workforce and its strategic position at the heart of Europe. Lorraine's economic activity and its population are currently concentrated around the 'Lorraine corridor' that links the region's three bordering countries (Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg) to the Épinal-Nancy-Metz-Thionville conurbation.

From a demographic point of view, Lorraine is one of four French regions expected to see their working populations decline by 2030<sup>iii</sup> due to the combined effects of youth out-migration and the ageing of the current working population. Unemployment is a major concern for local elected representatives given that the region has seen an 8.5 per cent fall in commercial sector salaried employment over the last five years, with 48,800 jobs being destroyed.<sup>iv</sup>

In 2008, supported by the European Commission, the Lorraine

Region began preparing a regional strategy for innovation. The Regional Strategic Innovation Committee (Comité Stratégique Régional de l'innovation, 'COSTRI') firstly prepared a quantitative diagnosis using indicators such as human and financial resources and the innovation environment. It then conducted an in-depth analysis of the innovation system based on surveys of the different innovation actors. Finally, it used this analysis to define the key public actions required, organized into three main themes:

- Constructing an environment that encourages companies to innovate;
- Strengthening the partnership dynamic; and
- Improving the governance and attractiveness of the overall support system for innovation in the region.

The willingness to construct and develop new networks features explicitly as one of the challenges of the second theme of the Lorraine innovation strategy aiming to strengthen the partnership dynamic. The region identified twelve strategic activity sectors that had the potential to act as driving forces for economic development and that also needed to be developed into networks. In autumn 2011, against the backdrop of these developments, the deputy vice-chairman of innovation approached us, in our capacity as entrepreneurship researchers, to assist him in developing the healthcare and biotechnologies network. Our research topic grew out of this social request. As the management sciences only very rarely address political entrepreneurship, there is no sound theoretical framework on which to build a collaborative approach resembling entrepreneurial support. This led us to formulate our research topic as follows: Can entrepreneurial orientation be considered a reality in local authorities? Our research topic suggests two research questions: firstly, does entrepreneurial orientation exist in local authorities, and secondly, what are its characteristics? To answer these research questions we employ a qualitative approach using intervention research (David, 2012) built on the case study (Yin, 2014) of our supportive collaboration with the Lorraine Regional Council.

### Exploring the notion of entrepreneurial orientation within a local authority via collaborative support

Paul (2003) describes support as a combination of guiding, accompanying and leading. The role of support provider is placed at the crossroads of these three meanings since each aspect of support shares common features with the other two. Guiding and accompanying are linked by protecting, accompanying and leading are connected by monitoring, and guiding and leading are linked by awakening. Like Levy-Tadjine(2011), we interpret the support relationship as a process jointly built by four types of actor: (1) the person being accompanied, whom Levy-Tadjine refers to as the owner (*porteur*), (2) the support provider, or carrier (*porteur*), (3) the carried, grouping together the project itself and partners such as family and friends (*portés*), and finally (4) the prescribers (*prescripteurs*).

We used this support approach to organize our research as a win-win exchange with the Lorraine Regional Council. We used the concept of entrepreneurial orientation to develop our knowledge by studying entrepreneurial behaviour in the new context of a local authority. The objective of the Regional Council was to develop a network-structuring method that it could roll out to the eleven other networks identified.

We performed our support assignment in four phases, from September 2011 to December 2013. In the first phase, we designed the project. Prior to our arrival, the Regional Council

had in fact formed a network oversight committee comprising external actors such as representatives from the university teaching hospital, and members of economic development structures and competitiveness clusters. We helped to enhance the project structure by creating a network committee, primarily comprised of elected representatives, as well as three working groups formed of elected representatives, business leaders and academics. The three respective working groups were 'imaging-diagnosis-instrumentation-telehealth', 'molecular engineering' and 'disability, ageing and autonomy'. For the following three phases, we drew on a method designed by C. Schmitt for entrepreneurial project owners. This method, known as IDéo®, is a support tool that helps to build a scenario that the project owner can use to construct their vision of the future. The IDéo® method aims to develop a scenario, to stimulate problematization and to bring the project actors on board by means of translation (Schmitt C., 2012). It involves structuring working meetings around five key questions (Figure 1).

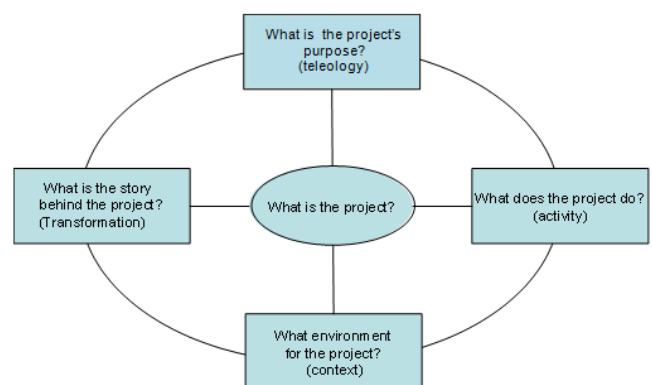


Figure 1: The five modules of the IDéo® method, (Schmitt C. , 2012b, p. 106).

Phase two of our study, focused on defining the objective, the network environment, the strategic functions and their relationships, was conducted using the modules 'What is the project?', 'What environment for the project?' and 'What is the story behind the project?' We used the results of this phase to describe and confront the various visions by applying the 'What is the project's purpose?' and the 'What does the project do?' modules. Once this work had been completed, we were able to construct our proposed action plan.

Our work involved facilitating the different working groups and reporting the results of these discussions to the network oversight committee and to the network committee, the actual decision-making body. We conducted fourteen interviews with the vice-chairman responsible for innovation in Lorraine and the working group heads. Phases two, three and four required a total of fifteen half-days with the groups and the elected representatives, and four half-days of meetings with the elected representatives, the network committee and the different working group heads. The data were collected, examined and formatted using Vafop software. Initially designed for project management, Vafop highlights three types of value: the estimated importance value, used to collectively build the direction of the project; the usage value, shown in terms of performance indicators; and the exchange value, used to allocate resources and to construct the scenario, the real means of translating the vision into action (Grandhaye, Drouard, & Rakotondranaivo, 2005). Our method met the desired objectives, and enabled us to produce both actions and a management model, as detailed below.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our method of collaborative support helped the local authority to construct its vision and to translate this vision into action. By so doing, we were able to highlight, in a political setting, a specific form of entrepreneurial orientation with an integrated social dimension.

##### From vision to action

After facilitating the working sessions with the different groups mentioned above and reporting the output to the elected representatives of the network committee, we asked the network committee to articulate its vision for the healthcare and biotechnologies network in a single sentence. The committee expressed its vision as follows: 'to position the healthcare network as a high value-added ecosystem for growth that will generate employment in Lorraine and improve the quality of life for all'. Taking this aim as our starting point, we proposed focusing on a flagship project from one of the working groups. This flagship project had to be both able to unite actors coming from different economic, scientific and institutional backgrounds, and to trigger a 'snowball effect' for the network being developed. The committee chose the creation of a startup called SpinE. This project is designed to respond to the growing needs of medical device manufacturers<sup>v</sup> with respect to the MRI compatibility of their products. It is essential that these manufacturers understand how the passive implantable devices that they are developing behave in an MRI environment. The regulations also require that each medical device be labelled to show its degree of MRI compatibility. The startup benefits from a multi-disciplinary environment (research, clinical, manufacturing, political), and should therefore be able to bring together academic and clinical experts, medical device manufacturers, and validation and development services to carry out all of the phases necessary to develop a medical device, from creation to exploitation. SpinE will thus be positioned at the centre of a 'lotus blossom of innovation', whose petals are medical device manufacturers, research laboratories, university hospitals and MRI-specialized subcontractors.

The project selected by the network committee to launch the network development process aims to enhance the technological leadership of the Lorraine research team managing the project and to create, in the first instance, 30 jobs at the startup and at the new companies created in the context of this lotus blossom of innovation. After having selected its flagship project, the network committee asked us to draft a project memorandum to outline the essential features of the project for the chairman of the Regional Council. We also prepared the terms of reference, which were transmitted to a law firm for the articles of association to be drawn up. Several weeks later, the network committee received the chairman's approval for the financing of an MRI scanner, the centrepiece of the SpinE project.

By analysing the behaviour of the Lorraine Regional Council and the negotiations that took place during our mission, we identified a form of entrepreneurial orientation strongly imbued with a social purpose.

##### The local political entrepreneur: entrepreneurial orientation enhanced by a social dimension

The decisions made by the Regional Council via the network committee reveal a particular form of entrepreneurial orientation containing a highly significant social dimension. Thus, although we find that the description by Morris et al.

(2011) of the different components of entrepreneurial orientation in the non-profit sector is accurate, we consider that the social dimension should not be diluted but rather accorded particular attention.

The innovativeness demonstrated by this local authority exists on several different levels. From a financial point of view, it is seen in the authority's use of an economic mobilization fund rather than a development fund. This innovative device has the advantage of freeing technology project owners from cumbersome funding application processes by creating a single point of contact.

*The region decided to put in twenty million over five years. After a while, you need to stop this coffee-shop philosophizing. That's it, really. The Regional Council's idea is to set up a fund. Not a development fund, an economic mobilization fund, and to say, well, in terms of what we have chosen, which projects should be on the table? And this project should be there!*

Mr CC, vice-chairman of the Regional Council

From a legal point of view, the network committee focused on creating a simplified joint-stock company (*société par actions simplifiée*) equipped with a scientific committee to enable it to unite all of the project's stakeholders. The structure created thus falls under private law while bringing together partners from different backgrounds, such as government scientists, private companies, the University of Lorraine and the region. The choice of the SpinE project also illustrates the network committee's aim to increase innovativeness within the network by exploiting the strong bond between companies and research laboratories.

The proactiveness displayed by the network committee is essentially geared towards changes in stakeholders' expectations. In fact, its decision to anticipate healthcare demands related to the ageing population and the aspiration for better well-being has led the committee to focus on an economic model based on cutting-edge healthcare and biotechnology expertise. The committee has translated this proactiveness into action by implementing a proactive economic development policy designed to create companies in the healthcare and biotechnologies sector. Furthermore, according to Basso et al. (2009), being proactive implies catching one's competitors 'off their guard'. This is exactly what the Regional Council is attempting to achieve by selecting initiatives that are ground-breaking compared to the experimental models implemented by other French regions such as Aquitaine or Alsace, regions that are nonetheless known for their pioneering approach in the healthcare and biotechnologies field.

*Alsace has successfully developed national and international visibility through the Biovalley cluster, and is about to launch a 'European BioBusiness' economic model. The Aquitaine region, for example, has developed an Aquitaine healthcare cluster. But it is already outdated! What we are creating is a real lotus blossom of innovation, not only focused on business but on well-being, and that really is the future!*

Ms JF, vice-chairperson of the Lorraine Regional Council

From a risk-taking perspective, the Regional Council is potentially exposed to substantial losses in terms of social

impact, as the decisions it makes may fail to achieve either the expected value or the planned job-creation, but may instead intensify the fiscal pressure necessary to finance the projects, thus reducing constituents' purchasing power. The approach taken also obviously entails an element of financial risk. In fact, just as the network committee was due to submit its final negotiations on the SpinE project, the Commercial Court of the Lorraine municipality of Briey ordered the compulsory liquidation with immediate cessation of trading of a company that had received a €21.2 million grant from the Regional Council for its key role in the Lorraine light-aircraft project. Finally, the risk of losing the non-financial support of stakeholders may take the form of a protest vote at the next local elections, initially planned for spring 2015, the electoral calendar and the national political backdrop not playing in the Regional Council's favour.

As previously indicated, the entrepreneurial orientation of the local authority that we accompanied is characterized by the priority that it accords to social issues in addition to traditional dimensions. This is a significant element of the Regional Council's entrepreneurial character. In fact, as the pursuit of profit is not the objective, the social dimension becomes the focus of decision-making, entailing dedication to the local community, improvement of residents' well-being and concern for future generations.

Being dedicated to the local population takes the form of 'widespread action' according to one elected representative serving Lorraine's economy and its local residents, very often to the detriment of the personal, or even family, interests of network committee members:

*It is clear that it's not going to help us win the next elections, because the effects will only be seen in the medium term, but it is worth devoting all our time to it. At some point, you have to know how to choose between the collective interest and your little term of office!*

Ms LC, vice-chairperson of the Lorraine  
Regional Council

This dedication is closely related to the second aspect of the social dimension of entrepreneurial orientation in a local authority, namely improving quality of life and well-being. It involves creating jobs and implementing a high-quality regional healthcare offering. In addition, developing an MRI centre of international repute in Lorraine should help to attract the best researchers in the field to the region and thus significantly improve the quality of healthcare.

*Our objective: employment by creating new economic activities. This objective will be achieved by closing the virtuous circle of higher education, research, development and endeavour. Now is the time for widespread action for employment. We have the courage and we will serve Lorraine's economy and its citizens!*

RP, regional councillor

The concern for future generations is seen in the willingness to turn the page on the steel industry in order to offer a new development model. According to the vision retained, this model needs to be based on cutting-edge technologies, on the need to offer a pleasant quality of life, on long-term economic prospects, on respect for the environment and on the need to promote a positive image of the region.

*You know, by turning towards cutting-edge*

*technologies with projects like SpinE, we can bring Lorraine into the twenty-first century. I want my children and grandchildren to have a future in a Lorraine that creates wealth and that is a great place to live, and with less pollution than in the steel industry days.*

Mr CC, vice-chairman of the Regional Council

## CONCLUSIONS

Our research arose out of the difficulties encountered by elected representatives from the Lorraine Regional Council in responding to the expectations of the actors in their environment. These difficulties led the elected representatives in charge of developing the healthcare network to request our help in translating into action the entrepreneurial dimension that they wanted to bring to their duties within the council. We used this social request both to provide the Lorraine Regional Council with the necessary tools for its political activities by using an intervention-research approach, and to study the concept of entrepreneurial orientation in a new context. We alternated theory and fieldwork in order to highlight the local authority's entrepreneurial character, and have therefore enriched the concept of entrepreneurial orientation by studying the concept within the Lorraine Regional Council using a qualitative approach often lacking in entrepreneurial orientation studies (Miller, 2011).

Our collaborative support assignment shows that entrepreneurial orientation is not only the prerogative of private companies and that it consequently makes perfect sense to study it in other specific contexts, as notably undertaken by Pearce et al. (2010) in the context of religious congregations. Furthermore, although Morris et al. (2011) 'dilute' the role of social purpose in the three dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation in a non-profit-making context, we consider that social purpose merits particular attention because of its significant character in the specific context of local authorities. We argue that this social purpose is seen in local authorities in three main ways: dedication to the local authority and its residents, concern for improving quality of life and well-being and finally, concern for future generations.

Although subject to certain limitations, relating in particular to the temporal dimension of our collaboration, our study provides new research perspectives from both a methodological and a conceptual point of view. Our qualitative approach could be extended by work across all other qualitative methods, from the most 'classic' to the most 'innovative'. From a theoretical point of view, the question of entrepreneurial orientation within local authorities merits further examination using other established management science concepts. As entrepreneurial orientation grew out of the dual concepts of entrepreneurship and strategy, the political entrepreneur could, for example, be analyzed in terms of the strategy employed by an authority to achieve its objectives.

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<sup>i</sup>Lumpkin & Dess (1996) propose, with only limited success, the additional dimensions of competitive aggressiveness and autonomy.

<sup>ii</sup>Huron identifies six inherent risks for the entrepreneurial mayor: the risks of deadlock, impoverishment of the local region, stagnation, personal failure, dependency and lack of a project.

<sup>iii</sup>The three other regions are Champagne-Ardenne, Bourgogne and Basse-Normandie according to INSEE, the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (INSEE PREMIERE n° 1371 October 2011).

<sup>iv</sup>Source: LorraineEESC economic and social scorecard, *Tableau de bord économique et social* n° 57, 08/08/2014, p. 9

<sup>v</sup>The French Public Health Code defines a medical device as 'any instrument, apparatus, appliance, material or other article [...] including the accessories and software necessary for its proper application intended to be used for human beings for medical purposes'.