
Editorial

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We are pleased to present you this first special issue of the *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business* (IJGSB) about 'Networks of SMEs and Globalisation'. Both the amount and qualitative level of the papers submitted for its call for paper were so good that, according to the Editor of the journal, Professor Susanne Royer, we decided to edit a second special issue about this topic after this first one. We expected a very high feedback from researchers and academicians before launching our call for papers. Our opinion was based on the conviction that, nowadays, networks are the main way to make business and wealth for both large and small companies.

In this special issue of *IJGSB*, we collected six interesting and valuable papers exploring, by different points of view, the role of networks for the development of small businesses. We selected papers from both traditional and hi-tech industries in order to demonstrate how the 'network paradigm' is a valuable strategy for the international growth of SMEs and how it can be applied suitably in sectors based on both knowledge and services or physical outputs.

The first paper proposes how also local networks, small artisan companies, can undertake successfully the globalisation challenge. The authors (Vittoria Marino, Carmen Gallucci and Giada Mainolfi, University of Salerno, Italy) identified some internationalisation strategies for particular categories of SMEs working in the local products supply system. They analysed the ceramic district in Vietri sul Mare (province

of Salerno), and its heritage of culture, resources, relationships, experiences, competence, knowledge and information firmly linked to their territory of origin. The principles leading to this analysis are that proximity plays an active role in the global insertion of SMEs and that their performances depend on the availability and quality of local resources. Since the supply of traditional products is characterised by a strong symbolic connotation, the territory image, thus, can improve greatly the activity of local businesses. In this light, the authors' study strengthened the presence of internationalisation strategies that, prizing the SMEs networking skills, come from the consideration of both the territory image and type of local products marketed. In this background, the link with territory is not only the original geographic space, but it becomes a territorial resource taking an active part in the creation of typical supply system.

The role of territory for the rise of SMEs networks is treated in the second paper as well. But in this case, the business is not based on the traditional resources of the region but it lies on knowledge flows. The paper of Marco Ferretti and Adele Parmentola (University of Naples 'Parthenope', Italy) deals with the rise of Regional Innovation Systems in emerging countries. The main aim of this paper is to give a narrow definition of Regional Innovation System in order to distinguish it from other types of local systems identified in literature. Its second goal, according to this definition, is to identify the most suitable development trajectories for this kind of innovation cluster. Authors verified their theoretical hypotheses analysing the policies adopted for developing the Regional Innovation System of Dubai (United Arab Emirates).

In some industries, local and global networks are not a strategic option, but a compulsory business condition. Emilio Esposito and Lelio Raffa (University of Naples 'Federico II', Italy) claim in their paper that in the aircraft industry, firms are obliged to deal not only with high technological barriers, but also growing financial, market and organisational barriers. In order to reduce these barriers, they developed a complex network of relationships in the last forty years. This network originates a worldwide production organisation. This global organisation is quite complex and involves the large multinational, the leaders of an aircraft programme, as well as the local small and medium suppliers of parts and components. The paper discusses implications and possible trends in the aircraft industry that may be useful both for firms' collaborative strategy development and for government's policies to support the aircraft industry. The enlargement of the Aircraft industry, indeed, seems to favour a more active role for local supply systems of small and medium firms from more industrialised countries, which appear to have the potential to reshape the structure of the international collaboration network.

Of course, international networks do not rely just on territories or regions. Kim Klyver (University of Southern Denmark) and Poul Rind Christensen (Aarhus Business School, Denmark) investigated if differences in social network structure can be found between export oriented and domestic oriented entrepreneurs. Their contribution is based on the apparent need for a network perspective, which is not only oriented towards business relations but also include elements of a personal and social character that might be of importance for our understanding of the internationalisation of entrepreneurial activities. In particular, this study also puts in perspective the dynamic role of entrepreneurs' networks along different stages of the entrepreneurial process. Statistical analyses of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor indicate that export oriented entrepreneurs activate larger personal networks with a higher proportion of business relations compared

to domestic oriented entrepreneurs. However, findings also indicate that any differences existing in early stages of the entrepreneurial process between export and domestic oriented entrepreneurs tend to disappear in later stages of the entrepreneurial process.

Quite similar are the purposes of Sara Melen and Emilia Rovira (Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden) that studied more in detail the phenomenon of 'Born Globals'. These are firms that, from inception, discover and exploit opportunities in multiple countries. The authors used a qualitative case study approach to explore how Born Globals use their networks to learn during their internationalisation and how human capital influences this learning process. The case study (the Swedish Born Global 'Alpha') demonstrates that the personal networks of founders and managers often are used to provide Born Globals with important knowledge, for example concerning who to contact in potential customer companies and what price to ask potential customers for. The author, thus, conclude that the human capital in the Born Global firms influences the network learning of the firms by affecting the conditions in which learning occurs. This implies that the human capital influences with whom and where interactions and learning take place. The authors furthermore acknowledge the importance of considering network dynamics in a Born Global internationalisation process during its three phases (establishment, reorganisation, new market phase).

The last paper of this first special issue comes from the Netherlands. Mei Hsiu-Ching Ho (ECIS – University of Eindhoven) assumed a different and very stimulating point of view of networks. She explored how subsidiaries can contribute their advantages for the whole Multinational Enterprise in knowledge diffusion process. The author carried out an online survey for R&D managers in 15 European countries to collect the data about subsidiary's behaviours. Different multivariate methodologies were used to examine direct and indirect (moderating) effects of the three main factors on knowledge diffusion. Main conclusions stressed that both subsidiaries' innovative characteristics and subsidiaries' network resources can encourage the diffusion behaviours directly. Finally, the linkages headquarters and a subsidiary have both direct and indirect influences on knowledge diffusion behaviour.

And now is the time for our 'grazie'. Our first acknowledgement goes to Professor Gaetano Golinelli, Head of the Department of Management Sciences at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'. His comments and ideas greatly supported and motivated us during all the processes of our two special issues.

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