
Editorial

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“The only thing that is constant is change” is a saying that very well describes the business reality of entrepreneurial firms. Change is related to development, which is a characteristic of entrepreneurial firms. An entrepreneurial firm can be understood as a firm that is innovating, developing and enlarging its activities. The development activities of entrepreneurial firms can be seen as more or less constant, meaning that renewal is a part of everyday business. These types of firms are not only important for the business environment, but they are also important for society in general in terms of for example providing job opportunities.

However, no firm can develop alone. According to Håkansson and Snehota (1989), no business is an island. This means that each enterprise exists and develops within a larger network of firms. This network may either facilitate or hinder the development within an entrepreneurial firm. Within the business network approach (e.g., Easton, 2004) it has been stressed that one cannot fully understand the nature of enterprises without recognising the surrounding business network.

This special issue consists of five articles. All articles include various topics of interest within the field of business networks and enterprise development. Topics

included in the articles are among others internationalisation, the political environment, inertia and performance. Three of the articles are based on qualitative single case studies. One article is based on two cases. Case studies can be seen as an appropriate research strategy for increasing knowledge and understanding about business networks and enterprise development. The last article is based on a quantitative survey. The studies cover several industries – the IT-industry, the furniture industry and the medicine industry. From a geographical perspective, the empirical studies included in the issue are carried out in the following countries: Finland, Sweden and Portugal.

The first article combines the network approach to internationalisation and research on networking in opportunity discovery and new venture creation. The focus of the article is on identifying how entrepreneurs use relationships to create a basis for emergence of international new ventures. According to the tentative theoretical frame, international new venture emergence through entrepreneurial venturing involves four elements: learning and creation, legitimising, resourcing and venture drafting. The empirical part of the article is based on a single case study of a firm operating within software business. Based on the findings of the study, the authors argue that the development of the opportunity should be in focus when studying international new venture emergence. Moreover, the findings suggest that networking behaviour prior to establishment assists international new ventures to simultaneously overcome liability of newness and utilising the learning advantage of newness.

The second article focuses on how new small firms can manage the political environment in which they are embedded, in order to facilitate their business development. Political entrepreneurship constitutes the core of the article and it concerns small firms' interaction with political actors to promote the entrepreneurial process of the firms. Previous research within the same field has mainly been concentrated on large firms. According to the theoretical viewpoint of the article, political entrepreneurship is attained by a high degree of knowledge and commitment for each issue in the relationship between political actors and the small firm. On the other hand, low level of knowledge and commitment leads to obedience. The empirical part of the article is based on a case study of a small firm within medicine industry. According to the findings of the study, political entrepreneurship tends to be issue-related and loosely-coupled with a more temporary active life. The article puts forward several interesting possibilities for further studies.

Generally, research within business networks has focused on positive issues such as trust and commitment. There are scarce studies concentrating on difficulties and there has been a call for more research into such issues (e.g., Ford, 1998; Holmlund-Rytkönen and Strandvik, 2005).

The third article contributes to this field by focusing on inertia that describes the constraints and difficulties related to changes in business relationships. One of the main arguments in this article is that what has occurred in previous business relationships may facilitate or hinder future activities of a firm. Focus lies on the concept of inertia in relation to resources within business relationships. The empirical part is based on a case study of a furniture producer. The unit of analysis is a long-term relationship between this firm and one of its customers. The findings of the study show that the inertia influencing the development of a firm several times is of a positive kind. The findings distinguish between inertia on several levels: mental/perceptual, core, technological/operative, strategic and competitive. The article represents a cross-disciplinary view on inertia from the perspective of development of firms.

The fourth article discusses how companies benefit from engaging with other companies like in a new business relationship with an enterprise resource planning (ERP) vendor. The main reason to implement an ERP system is usually to reach higher efficiency by integrating all business data into one integrated system. This integration leads not only to increased productivity, but often also to a better service responsiveness. The article focuses on the selection companies make when they choose their system, this in order to give themselves a competitive edge. A network context is made up of business relationships and from a managerial perspective one could see benefits in using the vendors' existing business relationships. In the exchange process, the parties learn and test each other and make certain adaptations (Johanson and Mattsson, 1987; Medlin, 2004) and investments, which need to be managed. This also means that a firm can seek business relationships that give access to important resources and know-how and hereby it has a better chance to succeed in its business. The empirical part of the article is based on two case studies including 11 companies and over 100 interviews. The ERP system is a result of the vendor's business relationships and adaptations. The findings of the article concludes that the functions developed by the ERP vendor and its customer only offer a temporal competitive advantage and given that this can be used later in the ERP vendor's other connected business relationships.

The fifth article is a study of strategic alliances and performance in these. Alliances have become an important strategic choice for many companies. The study contributes to the dimensions of performance and success and it provides an innovative analysis through the use of subjective as well as objective indicators of performance. The empirical part of the article is based on a quantitative study of 114 alliances formed by Portuguese firms. The study contributes to the literature and interface in cooperative business relationships and strategic entrepreneurship. The findings of the article conclude that the performance should be based on several criteria of evaluation, which reflects the firms' new competitive priorities which can be adapted to the changes in the environment where the firms operate. It is stressed that managers should not only turn to measures of financial character when measuring performance. Firms evaluate the degree of satisfaction with their partners based on subjective indicators.

In summary, the articles of this special issue shed light and contribute on various aspects related to enterprise development and business networks. The editors wish to thank the authors for their contributions to this issue and a special thank you is also sent to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable contribution in giving insightful comments on the development of the articles. We wish all readers an enjoyable reading!

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