New Practices in International Business

Introduction to Part D

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This part of the book reflects the major innovation of the 2011 conference, a new idea of keynote interviews, and we are grateful for the courage shown by our pioneers in this experiment. The purpose of the innovation was to address a problem long identified not only in international business research, but also in other areas of scholarly activity, in the sciences, arts and humanities that are, on the face of it, close to the world of human enterprise. As our specialist skill in addressing some of the fundamental questions that confront us increases, so our distance from those who are the subjects of our research, and who most directly will be the beneficiaries of our answers, our distance from those very individuals can increase. Our perspective, necessarily, moves from theirs to a position distant from theirs. Our language develops to allow us to communicate with each other and develop our science, not to communicate with them.

"Them" and "us" separate, and this separation, if too great, and too long, increases the risk for both parties. The risk for scholars is that we lose our relevance as the world of practice changes, so that we ask yesterday's questions rather than today's or tomorrows. The risk for practice in the world of international business within which more and more of the world's population is working is that the insights and understandings of our discipline are not conveyed for their advantage.

The innovation in this years conference, represented a small step to address this rift, and from the feedback received from both scholars and practitioners, it was a massive success. The number, scale and complexity of large, complex, collaborative projects and programmes is increasing, presenting new challenges for those practicing international business. Our first chapter in this section, is a lightly edited transcript of the conversation led by Tamer Cavusgil of Georgia State University, and chaired by Volker Mahnke of Copenhagen Business School. They interviewed three managers working at the heart of this challenge: Hillary Sillitto from the THALES Group, Paul Holbourn from Selex Galileo S.p.A, and Hermine Schnetler, fom the UK Astronomy Technology Centre.

The process of internationalization was a challenge for the Scottish state and for its entrepreneurs in the 16th century; so it is today. Now, however, we see very different types of firms rising to the challenge, and our second keynote interviewer Pervez Ghauri of Kings College at the University of London interviewed individuals at the heart of the internationalization process from within very different types of businesses. The lightly edited transcript of that conversation, chaired by Simon Harris of the University of Edinburgh is included as the second chapter in this section. We are delighted to hear from Carla Mahieu of Aegon N.V., Arten Moussavi of Biofoodnutrition, SE, Ian Stevens of Mpathy Ltd, and Paul D'Arcy of Raytheyon, UK.

The final chapter here, by Lew and Sinkoviks is a more traditional piece of academic work, but it is included here because of its practice focus. It is based on the practice case example of a firm that creates new business models and penetrates a new market by using global technology alliances to gains value-creating complementary resources that were unavailable from the local market. This chapter explains how global technology alliances help firms' innovation and commercialization of products, looking not only downstream in the value chain towards the customers, buy also upstream to the sources and contexts of the technologies involved. It has a strong message for practice, that internationalizing firms is a process that can play a critical role in strengthening and reinforcing innovation capabilities in high-tech industries, and is not only about finding new markets.

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