Linking Industries Across the World
Processes of Global Networking

Edited by
CLAES G ALVSTAM
School of Economics and Commercial Law,
Göteborg University, Sweden

EIKE W. SCHAMP
Johann Wolfgang-Goethe University,
Frankfurt/Main, Germany

ASHGATE
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List of Contributors

Alvstam, Claes, is Professor in Economic Geography at the Department of Human and Economic Geography, School of Economics and Commercial Law, Gothenburg, Sweden, Claes.alvstam@geography.gu.se.

Braun, Boris is Professor at the Department of Geography, Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg, Bamberg, Germany, boris.braun@ggeo.uni-bamberg.de.

Buzás, Norbert is Associate Professor of Innovation Management at the Department of Regional and Applied Economics, University of Szeged, Hungary, buzas@eco.u-szeged.hu.

Domański, Bolesław is Professor at the Department of Regional Development, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland, b.domasinski@geo.uj.edu.pl.

Eraydın, Ayda is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey, ayda@metu.edu.tr.

Fuchs, Martina is Professor of Geography at the Department of Social and Economic Geography, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany, fuchs@wiso.uni-koeln.de.

Hsu, Jinn-yuh is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, jinnyuh@ntu.edu.tw.

Mather, Charles is Senior Lecturer at the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, mather@geoarc.wits.ac.za.

Park, Sum Ock is Professor at the Department of Geography and Dean of College of Social Sciences, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea, parkso@smu.ac.kr.

Rogerson, Christian M. is Professor of Human Geography at the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, rogersonc@geoarc.wits.ac.za.
Globalisation is inside everything – globalisation seems to work at all times and in all places, to penetrate all spheres of economic life and to determine both the worlds of practice and scientific discourse. For many it is obviously the challenge to economic development, coming for the individual enterprise as the need for restructuring under increasing competitive squeeze, for sectors as acceleration of ageing in their life cycle and/or growth perspective in new technologies, and for regions – and their population – as a threat or promise to their welfare. There is, of course, a broad scientific discourse on the various aspects of current globalisation. Nothing seems to be really new, however, when globalisation is merely seen as a process of increasing economic exchange between nations and regions. This perspective would open queries about the kind of globalisation in earlier historical periods, in particular the 19th century (Bordo et al., 2003). Most scholars would now agree, however, that something was different in the 20th century. We would argue in this book that globalisation always differs from time to time and from place to place, that it is continuously changing its face and that new ways are emerging for industries to link to each other across the world and across the regions.

More than two decades ago there was a lively debate about the emerging New International Division of Labour (NIDL) (Frobel et al., 1980). One of the driving forces, it was realised, was the new ability of firms to separate labour intensive from capital intensive processes in sectors like the textile and clothing industries. As a consequence, firms were able to relocate labour intensive production to locations that were characterised by low wages and sufficient supply of qualified labour. The emerging ‘globalisation’ seemed to be driven by cost minimizing strategies of firms. In fact, it required a host of accompanying innovations, e.g. in transport technology, resulting in a continuing decline of transportation costs and in process organisation, resulting in new routines. It was based on a diversity of changes in the regulatory environment of the firms, such as the implementation of new standards, regulations for re-imports to the country of origin, foreign investment protection laws in host countries and a new philosophy in the macro-economic policies of developing countries, i.e. export-promoting strategies. In an ex-post perspective it could be argued that this laid the base for learning