

Foreword

Within the paradigm of ‘Open Innovation’, there is an increase in network-like, international forms of collaboration. This is also true for small and medium-sized firms in the area of research and development meaning that ‘Global Open Innovation’ is expanding over large geographic distances.

Certainly, geographic proximity is an important precondition of interactive collaboration; however, Innovation Research increasingly finds that this is neither a necessary nor sufficient precondition. Finally, inter-organizational collaboration can also take place in a virtual environment. Against this background, it is commendable that Ms. Hartig has investigated both qualitatively and quantitatively, the possibilities and barriers of ‘distance’ and ‘proximity’ from the point of view of different dimensions and categories based on 39 cooperation projects by German biotechnology SMEs, and has herewith broken new ground.

Ultimately, this dissertation is about the research question; how different forms of distance influence interactive learning in inter-organizational co-operation projects in R&D in order to generate effective innovation. With regards to the management of inter-organizational cooperation, it turns to the question of how, despite great ‘distances’, a sufficient level of ‘proximity’ can be established. This is an intriguing question which will, doubtless, enrich Innovation Research to a great extent.

Meritoriously, the author addresses a theme that is not only highly complex but also topically relevant. Against the research background, her empirical investigation is methodologically consistent. The theoretical foundation is sound as are the proper deduction of hypotheses and the apt interplay of quantitative and qualitative research.

With particular regard to the developed process model of inter-organizational co-operation and the degree of influence as well as partial interplay of different forms of distance, Ms. Hartig has derived interesting findings which will, doubtless, stimulate further research. Therefore, this dissertation deserves broad dissemination.

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