

CONFERENCE REPORT

Managing Global Trends and Challenges in a Turbulent Economy

International Conference organised by the Department of Business Administration, University of the Aegean, 13-15 October 2005, Chios Island, Greece

The Department of Business Administration of the University of the Aegean in order to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its foundation organised an international academic conference with the theme 'Managing Global Trends and Challenges in a Turbulent Economy'. The conference was held 13th - 15th of October 2005 at the Department's at the state-of-the-art amphitheatre on Chios Island. The conference was chaired and presided by Prof Vassilis Aggelis, one of the academic members who has been with the University of the Aegean and has greatly contributed to the development and advancement of the Department of Business Administration since its foundation.

Nothing in today's chaotic environment stays the same long enough... change is the only constant in today's economy and the aim of this conference was to gather research studies, academic and professional papers that would explain the means and methods that organisations can use in order to better understand, manage, evaluate, address, prepare for, lead and survive in a dynamically turbulent economy. Change can be of a small or large scale, at a micro or macro level, and can have an impact on political, social, cultural, technological and economic environments.

In order to address such challenges, the conference aimed and attracted a highly diversified and multidisciplinary academic audience that addressed four major issues that organisations need to address so as to achieve excellence and competitiveness namely; product and service customisation, development of customer relations, new member states and new economy and inter-firm networks. The content and proceedings of the conference were also structured around these four themes that also consisted of four parallel conference tracks. Furthermore, each track was chaired by a team of three experienced and international academics in order to guarantee a wide coverage of issues within their track.



Analytically, the conference tracks and the sub-themes addressed have been:

1. Customizing and personalizing products, services and processes for enhancing firm flexibility and competitiveness:

Track chairs: Peter Jones, University of Surrey, Lucas Petruzzellis, University of Bari, Marianna Sigala, University of the Aegean

- Flexible operating and control systems
- Mass customization and Supply Chain Management (SCM)
- Mass customization and Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Information & Communication Technology (ICT) strategies, mass customization and personalization
- Economics and evaluation of mass customization-personalization strategies
- Marketing issues and customization-personalization, e.g. pricing, promotion, distribution strategies

2. Developing high quality relationships as a means to organizational excellence:

Track chairs: Mustafa Ozbilgin, Queen Mary, University of London, Laura Costanzo, University of Surrey, Olivia Kyriakidou, University of the Aegean

- High quality relationships, behaviours and emotion at work (including construction of meaning, professional and self identity)
- High quality relationships, career trajectories within and between organizations and diversity management
- Organizational, professional and relational commitment
- Interpersonal coordination in organizations
- Relationships and human agency
- Change management and strategic innovation
- Knowledge-sharing culture, knowledge management and the learning organization

3. The competitiveness of new Member-States in the enlarged EU: strategies and policies:

Track chairs: Ruth Rama, National Research Council of Spain, George Anastassopoulos, University of Patras, Greece

- Policies for increased competitiveness in new member-countries

- FDI in new member and candidate countries
- MNEs and domestic firms' business strategies
- Business development and company restructuring
- Geographical and product diversification

4. Inter-firm networks: Between competition and cooperation:

Track chairs: Nathalie Guibert, University of Avignon, Yorgos Rizopoulos, University of Picardie, Leonidas Maroudas, University of the Aegean

- Building Networks: institutional framework, interactions and entrepreneurship
- Coordination mechanisms in networks
- Dynamics and performance of interfirm collaborations
- Organizational networks and governance
- International comparisons of interfirm relations

During the two days of the conference, more than 70 delegates representing major universities from more than eight countries in Europe, Middle East and Australia had the opportunity to network and exchange research findings and ideas. Such a diversified participation warranted live discussions and debates on the issues on hand. Indeed, in their opening speeches, the Rector of the University of the Aegean, Prof Sokratis Katsikas, the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs and Personnel, Prof Nikolaos Litinas, and the President of the Department of Business Administration, Associate Professor Odysseas Sakellaridis, warmly welcomed all delegates and expressed their contentment and congratulations to the whole conference organisation committee for being able to gather such a large international and multidisciplinary conference audience in a somewhat remote geographically area.

Without doubt, this conference proved to be a big, varied and excellently organised and administered three days event that has offered delegates great opportunities for networking and exchange of ideas. The conference consisted of 55 presentations of academic papers followed by discussions as well as of two greatly delivered keynote speeches. The first keynote speech was given by Prof Luiz Moutinho, University of Glasgow, UK. In his speech titled *'Not a heresy or heterodoxy in academe ... but ... an ideas agenda and futurecast research (without voyeyrism) on the enacted reality is required!'*, Prof Moutinho (University of Glasgow, UK) provided a general overview and effectively explored the major challenges that economies and organisations are facing such as customer involvement in production, personalisation

issues, networks and interfirm constellations and networks, competition and supply chain management issues. The second day, Mr Emmanuel Gobillot (HeyGroup London, UK), gave the second keynote speech titled ‘21st Century Leadership – How to Lead so Others Follow’. In his highly motivational and interactive speech, Mr Gobillot used several real life examples for analysing the meaning, power and role of *connected leadership* in creating and building influential leaders in today’s economy and environment. The conference proceedings were closed by the representatives of the four conference tracks who provided summaries of the major topics and questions addressed in their respective tracks. The last day of the conference included a field tour to the major sightseeing spots of the island of Chios, whereby conference delegates had the opportunity to experience and learn more about the cultural, historical and heritage treasures of Chios.

For more information about the conference as well as of its proceedings, please contact Dr. Marianna Sigala (m.sigala@aegean.gr) or Dr. Olivia Kyriakidou (o.kyriakidou@aegean.gr) or visit the conference website www.ba.aegean.gr/20years.

Marianna Sigala

University of the Aegean

Vassilis Aggelis

University of the Aegean

Marianna Sigala (m.sigala) is Lecturer at the University of the Aegean, Department of Business Administration, 8 Michalon Str., GR-82100, Chios, Greece.

Vassilis Aggelis (vaggel@aegean.gr) is Professor at the University of the Aegean, Department of Business Administration, 8 Michalon Str., GR-82100, Chios, Greece.