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# **Economic Geography and Business Networks: Creating a Dialogue between Disciplines An Introduction to the Special Issue**

**John Nicholson, Eli Gimmon & Christian Felzensztein**

## **Abstract**

This introductory article presents an outline of the papers accepted for this special issue. The Guest Editors provide an overview of the work within industrial marketing where synthesis between economic geography and industrial marketing literature has occurred. A discussion of the most synthesised areas of economic geography is advanced and each article is then discussed, compared and contrasted with other articles in the special issue and with articles within industrial marketing that have previously synthesized concepts drawn from economic geography. Within this narrative, the Guest Editor's propose an agenda for future interdisciplinary research at what they refer to as the 'nexus of interest' between the disciplines.

## **1.0: Introduction**

The motivation for this special issue (SI) derives from the Guest Editors' shared interest in geographic and economic space as a relational phenomenon. In its conception, this special issue of *Industrial Marketing Management* highlights the strides being made by the international business community to assimilate work drawn from economic geography and indeed take the work of international business into economic geography journals. A special session at the 2013 Academy of International Business (AIB) Conference in 2013 chaired by Ram Mudambi focused on the potential of the collaboration between international business and economic geography brought the potential of assimilation between economic geography

and industrial marketing into sharp focus. The session at the AIB conference in 2013 was chaired by Ram Mudambi and it is our pleasure to have Ram Mudambi as an invited a guest author in this special issue.

Our stated aim for this issue is to *create a dialogue between disciplines*, and we hope to achieve that in several ways. First, we have included papers that draw on concepts from both disciplines and from the core economic geography journals. Second, is the inclusion of contributions from author teams representing both industrial marketing and economic geography scholars. Third, we attempted to have at least one economic geographer as a reviewer in each review team. There were some ‘interesting’ theoretical debates between reviewers and as well as between authors and reviewers in these exchanges. Clashes on underlying assumptions were evident in a number of papers.

The possibility of the special issue was first voiced at the IMP conference in Atlanta 2013. It was apparent at that time that a small group of industrial marketing scholars had begun to engage with economic geography concepts and from journals such as *Economic Geography*, the *Journal of Economic Geography*, *Environment and Planning A*, *Local Economy*, *Papers in Regional Studies*, the *Annals of Regional Science*, *Regional Studies* and *European Planning Studies*. When considering this proposition, we looked at the extent to which industrial marketing scholars were explicitly drawing on economic geography literature. Using search criteria based on the names of key economic journals, or interdisciplinary journals in which economic geography scholars regularly publish, we identified only a small amount of literature synthesis taking place. This seemed to be odd as there appeared to us to be overwhelming similarities between the conceptual areas being examined. For instance, network concepts appear strongly in all three literatures, (economic geography, international business, and industrial marketing) as do discussions on regional innovation, multinational

firms, internationalization and emerging markets. Indeed, these areas seem to form a nexus of common interests and we resolved to launch a call targeted at this nexus.

Our introduction to the special issue is structured as follows: firstly, we outline for industrial marketing scholars, the areas within economic geography that have so far drawn attention from industrial marketing scholars over recent years and more specifically within this special issue. We provide a brief review of these areas and then present an outline of each of the nine papers in this special issue; we attempt to compare and contrast these papers whilst also identifying what we feel are future areas of synthesis at the nexus of interest.

## **2.0: Industrial Marketing and Economic Geography: A dialogue between disciplines?**

At the time that the call was raised for this special issue, only a small number of papers in industrial marketing had made explicit reference to the economic geography literature when making contributions within the core industrial marketing journals. We were able to identify only 12 papers pre-2013 where there had been cross-citation. For instance, Cantù (2010), had drawn on economic geography concepts of proximity when studying the role of different proximity patterns on regional innovation patterns. Similarly, Eklinder-Frick et al. (2011; 2014) drew on notions of proximity from the economic geography literature to explore regional strategic networks and particular examine the role of bridging and bonding social capital. Felzensztein, Huemer and Gimmon (2010) had drawn on these concepts to examine cluster formation and functioning. There seemed therefore to be a focus for industrial marketing scholars at that time on studying co-location. However, Tunisini, Bocconcelli and Pagano (2011) had also drawn on some economic geography work when beginning to explore the global-local connections between places as linked to other distant places. Equally Ellis, Davies and Wong (2011) also drew on economic geography concepts when studying

export intensity of emerging market exporters. These works therefore seemed to look at the local dimension of geography in conjunction with the international dimension.

Some of the discussion in an AIB special session in Istanbul in 2013 mirrored the comments of a lead to a special issue of which Ram Mudambi was a Co-Editor in 2010 (Beugelsdijk, McCann & Mudambi, 2010:488). In drawing up the call for papers, we were encouraged at that time by the following passage in that lead article.

“It is still fair to say, however, that when it comes to location behaviour, one of the major remaining weaknesses of the convergence of the economics, geography, regional science, strategy and IB literatures, is that none of these streams of research explicitly focuses on how the firm’s organizational characteristics relate to the firm’s fundamental geographical characteristics, both within and between countries, because the role of the firm in space is rarely the main object of study [...]. Notwithstanding the important contributions that NEG [New Economic Geography] and firm heterogeneity studies have made to our understanding of multinational activity, MNEs are still basically portrayed in geographical space as independent units agglomerating in certain locations, leaving the nature of the interaction between places and space as a black box” (Beugelsdijk, McCann & Mudambi, 2010:488)

Much of the work by industrial marketing researchers and particularly within the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP) has had a profound interest in micro-level interaction – that we propose may aid the more meso- and macro-level insights available at EG/IB nexus. Equally, the focus on interdependencies in the actors-resources-activities (ARA) model within the IMP tradition would seem to have much to offer in penetrating this ‘black

box' of interaction between places and space, given that individual actors are the facilitators of this interaction. In their seminal outline of the principles of *relational* economic geography in the *Journal of Economic Geography*, Bathelt and Glückler (2003:123) suggest that “this approach emphasizes that the economic actors themselves produce their own regional environments.” Therefore, there seems much that the toolbox of industrial marketing scholars can add to the confluence of ideas between disciplines considering the interaction between place and space. In 2013, an observable assimilation was the particular strand of relational economic geography (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003; Boggs & Rantisi, 2003; Capello & Faggian, 2005) being drawn on to compliment relational perspectives within industrial marketing traditions (Eklinder-Frick, Eriksson & Hallén, 2014; Nicholson, Tsagdis & Brennan, 2013). ‘Relational’ in the context of relational economic geography can be understood as a:

“...specific mode of economic coordination that is based on strong ties and long-term reciprocal relationships”. Typically, these relationships are described as informal, face-to-face, collaborative and cooperative and are characterized by the exchange of knowledge and high degrees of mutual trust” (Sunley, 2008:4).

We note the continuing influence of citations in this issue between concepts drawn from the relational economic geography paradigm. We are privileged to have Harald Bathelt as a contributing author in one of the papers in this issue.

A second school of thought from economic geography that has influenced authors in this special issue is that of Evolutionary Economic Geography (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2010). Evolutionary Economic Geography draws inspiration from breakthroughs in the parent discipline of Evolutionary Economics (Nelson & Winter, 1982).

“Evolutionary Economic Geography aims to understand the spatial distribution of routines over time. It is especially interested in analysing the creation and diffusion of new routines in space, and the mechanisms through which the diffusion of ‘fitter’ routines occurs” (Boschma & Frenken, 2006:278).

They propose that a further ‘turn’ in economic geography was needed which has been turned Evolutionary Economic Geography. Ron Boschma’s work has influenced a number of papers in this special issue. Boschma has highlighted (2005b:62) a strong need to “isolate analytically, the effect of geographical proximity from other forms of proximity” and suggest four additional non-mutually exclusive dimensions of proximity and distance; cognitive, social, organizational and institutional. The underlying meanings in these conceptualisations should be very familiar to industrial marketing scholars and we found it at the time of writing the call for papers to be surprising, that there had historically been so limited assimilation between the bodies of work. There seems much more that can be achieved in respect of the dynamics of actors in time and space by combining the micro-level perspectives and mature insights into time and process drawn from industrial marketing scholarship with work from evolutionary economic geography. The papers in the special issue are significant contributions in themselves and also mark a step towards defining an ‘agenda’ for future research in IM. We note that the two natural areas for synthesis identified by contributing scholars are within the relational and evolutionary ‘turns’ in economic geography.

The value of assimilation between economic geography and industrial marketing concepts and ideas would seem to be several fold. First, is the intellectual stimulation available by working with new concepts and frameworks. Very recently, the outgoing Editor in Chief of this journal, Peter LaPlaca, at the IMP conference in Poznan Poland, made a call for a broad

extension of the boundaries of both the IMP body of thought and ideas and the boundaries of industrial marketing scholarship. Secondly, and more pragmatically, economic geography is represented by several very highly ranked journals covering topics, as we argue, of very similar concern to economic geography scholars. This offers the potential for a number of unutilized outlets for industrial marketing thoughts and ideas. A third potential benefit is the cross-citation of industrial marketing work and economic geography work which enhances the rankings of journals. There has been much discussion of the work of the marketing discipline to suggest concerns about the lack of impact that our ideas have outside the boundaries of the discipline and increased attempts at interdisciplinary synthesis may be fruitful in gaining an increased audience for ideas originating in the field of industrial marketing.

We next present a short review of each of the nine papers in this special issue and we compare on contrast their approaches and conclusions with a view to also presenting a research agenda going forward.

### **3.0: The papers selected for this special issue**

We are pleased to have a first *competitive* paper from Jan-Åke Törnroos, Aino Halinen and Chris Medlin (2017). These authors have made some of the most important contributions to the discussion of time is process theory within the management disciplines (Halinen, 1998; Halinen, Medlin & Tornroos, 2012; Halinen & Tornroos, 1995; Halinen, Tornroos & Elo, 2013; Medlin, 2004; Medlin & Törnroos, 2014). It is from this vantage point that we feel their perspective on time is an important contribution to conceptualisations of time *and* space

in industrial marketing research. Returning the call made in the evolutionary economic geography literature (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2010) for the need to consider history of place, we feel that the contributions of this group of contributors has much to offer to the understanding of micro-level interactions between place and space. Törnroos, Halinen and Medlin propose an integrative framework to unite a perspective of space with their work on time in business networks and interaction. Their perspective looks at the work of the IMP and they note similar views to those of the Guest Editors that notions of space have been *implicitly* used for some time in IMP research, but have been *explicitly* undertheorized. Their contribution includes the conceptualization of four dimensions of space, a *structural* network dimension, a *mental* network dimension, a *relative* network dimension and a *relational* network dimension. Although not related explicitly in the paper, this conceptualization seems to us to neatly encompass Boschma's (2005a, 2005b) five alternative dimensions of proximity, geographic, cognitive, institutional, organization and social. We feel that further empirical investigation could usefully compare and contrast the two taxonomies. Törnroos, Halinen and Medlin also make the point as to the importance of considering three spatial terms; distance, location and space, which we propose are distinctive but non-mutually exclusive in which their four dimensions of network space can be applied. Their implications suggest that strategizing in networks relates to how companies act on and perceive their network boundaries and the overarching connected business landscape when coping with the firm's position and role in and across space. In making strategic decisions, the four dimensions of network space all indicate important spatial issues to address in future industrial marketing research, and potentially evolutionary economic geography research. For instance, being able to analyse the consequences of decisions when locating or starting to develop relationships in different parts of the world is strategically significant. How firms

exploit the potential of the multitude of locations connected to the network is another issue of importance for networking.

Given the influence of Ram Mudambi's work on this special issue and on the work of the three Guest Editor's, it a pleasure to include the second *invited* paper from Ram with his co-authors Susan Mudambi, Debmalya Mukherjee and Vittoria Scalera (2017). This paper is a comprehensive study based on a 30-year patent dataset associated with an industrial cluster in Northeast Ohio. The results also show that innovation in the cluster has survived in spite of a long-term decline in manufacturing activity and employment. The survival of innovation in the cluster is driven by increasing specialization at the local level with an emphasis on technologies rather than products and growing connectedness to global innovation systems. A key implication of their study is the importance of anchor tenant multinational enterprises and research institutions in ensuring the persistence of local innovation through two key processes (a) orchestrating knowledge networks; and (b) spawning start-up activity. Mudambi and colleagues' paper offers relevant implications for managers and policy makers. First, healthy clusters leverage core institutions, which may be both private and public organizations. The survival of the Akron cluster is an illustration of the critical role played by collaboration between anchor private companies and universities in determining and fostering the technical evolution of the cluster. The creation of these linkages generated the technical breadth to support and facilitate the progression from an older to a newer technology. Second, managers of companies located in a cluster should invest in creating knowledge networks that are locally anchored but with strong international linkages. International connectivity enables the access to global hubs of specialized and complementary knowledge, which should be coupled to the critical mass of competencies embedded within the cluster's boundaries. The Akron cluster provides an example of the necessity for companies to redeploy their technical

competences to move from laboratory-science-based innovation toward more design-driven processes.

Also concerned with interaction between co-located actors is the third competitive paper in this issue by Chiara Cantù (2017). She asks interesting research questions related to what kind of knowledge spill-overs can influence the development of a start-up from an exogenous perspective; what ways can knowledge be transferred and what kind of spatial filter can influence the travel of knowledge. In analysing the knowledge spill-overs that sustain the growth of the start-up with a collaborative approach, her case study concerns the main dyadic relationships developed by an Italian start-up thanks to its relationship with an Incubator. Her findings demonstrate, network entrepreneurial knowledge spill-overs are activated by "generating relationships" between the incubator and its main business partners, which then are used in the "recipient relationships". In contrast to some studies that consider the discovery of business opportunity as constrained in a local area characterized by geographic proximity, relationships in Cantù's research are developed in different geographical spaces, but they are based on relational proximity as characterized by the networking attitude and meta-goals configuration. From a practical point of view, Cantù's paper suggests that new entrepreneurial opportunities can be founded by start-ups that consider a network landscape that involves a high number of actors as characterized by heterogeneity. Start-ups could improve the strength of those relationships that depend on interaction, commitment, and trust. These dimensions are essential for a relationship that is characterized both by geographic distance and geographic proximity.

The fourth paper in this issue is by Linda Peters, Andrew Pressey and Wesley Johnston (2017). Their research is related to knowledge learning at the level of an inter-firm network and it is focussed on the transmission of knowledge sharing of resources, and facilitation of learning through contagion. Their study helps to understand how the contagion of knowledge,

ideas and the co-ordination of activities within a network takes place. Specifically, they focus on two types of contagion: contagion by cohesion and contagion by structural equivalence. They identify two key mechanisms that act as barriers to such contagion: isolation and immunity. Their study is interesting for both industrial marketing and economic geography researchers as it offers implications for practitioners regarding network learning through actors' exposure to information, attitudes and behaviour; as well as the configuration and management of networks to ensure actors are not 'immune' to network learning opportunities. It also relates to structural equivalence, where the patterns and nature of relationships are significant in order that networks are open to 'message infection' This can be facilitated in part through face-to-face negotiation, the importance of utilising friendship networks, as well as the level of social influence at play within a network. Their findings recognise the key aspects of contagion in organisational networks.

The fifth paper co-authored by Christian Geldes, Christian Felzensztein and Javier Palacios (2017) seeks to spread out the understanding of the interrelationships of technological and non-technological innovations in the firm's innovative performance and its propensity to innovate across diverse industries in a South American context; Chile. The study contributes to an understanding of how to improve business performance. First, identifying which innovations the firms have to perform to be more competitive and second, determining what innovations contribute to perform different types of future solutions and in the generation of business strategies to develop enhanced performance. Their results show that only product innovations as opposed to process innovations significantly affect innovative performance across industries. However, different types of propensities to innovate are affected differently by technological and non-technological innovations. The paper discusses implications for managers and policy makers in emerging economies (an area in which data tends to be

scarce) with the aim of developing new policies, models and to increase the effect of non-technological innovation on innovative performance in emerging economies.

What emerges from these first papers is that our call for papers may have been too-narrowly focussed in specifying 'co-location' as a possible focus of assimilation between economic geography and industrial marketing concepts. What occurs through these papers is the integration in these studies between place, location and distance. The links between global and local locations separated by distance, has been the focus of, or mentioned in, several of the papers in this special issue and therefore seems to be an area where further industrial marketing scholarship can make progress. However, we are also pleased to have a diversity in the papers we received for this special issue, and the next paper moves to a very different context where economic geography and industrial marketing synthesis has proved fruitful.

In the sixth paper by Katy Mason and Ronika Chakrabati (2017) attention is focussed on proximity in business model design, specifically for those working in so called 'bottom of the pyramid' (BOP) locations. Business models form a significant area of interest to industrial marketing scholars and yet have not received significant attention from economic geography scholars. An interesting point of assimilation proposed in this article is that business models are an important form of 'organizing', or in Boschma's, terms 'organizational' proximity. There seems to us to be much more than can be said about proximities in business model evolution in all contexts. In this paper however, Mason and Chakrabati present a specific exposition of three 'BOP' business models; Dabbawallas, Kachile and One Laptop per Child – showing how different proximities affect the development of BOP business models over time. Therefore, this paper addresses matters of social exclusion and global equality in access to opportunities. We also feel there is much more that can be said by industrial marketing scholars about matters of relational exclusion, isolation and transience in business networks, implications that have both strategic and ethical importance for industrial marketing practice

and indeed scholarship. An interesting further possible avenue of investigation are the notions of voids or absences that have been explored in the IB literature, primarily as institutional voids (see for instance Chakrabarty & Bass, 2013; Stephan, Uhlaner & Stride, 2015; Tan & Meyer, 2011). The paper by Mason and Chakrabati offers helpful suggestions for firms who wish to develop/adapt business models for BOP locations and they demonstrate how consideration of different proximities can aid this process.

The next paper co-authored by Jens Eklinder-Frick and Lars-Johan Åge (2017) problematizes the New Economic Geography terminology used in policy and, more specifically, the way that the key concepts of "industrial agglomeration," "social capital," "knowledge," and "innovation" are conceptualized. Their ideas contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how to facilitate innovation within regional policy. They propose that regional policy should pay more attention to the socio-material resource interaction between the actors involved in spatially bounded policy initiatives. This would shift the focus away from creating spill-over effects of knowledge toward viewing knowledge as a performative construct that is inseparable from the specific resource interaction in which it is embedded. Also, the definition of innovation within policy could benefit from being reconceptualised as the processual use within producer-user relationships. The managerial conclusions are summarized as a shift in focus away from analysing the individual agent, the region's industrial heritage, and its innovation system, towards a focus on the socio-material resources being exchanged within the specific relationships. This means focusing on the actual exchange between the actors. Therefore, instead of focusing on achieving information exchange, managers should encourage knowledge to be put into practice through joint projects. This, they propose, will embed knowledge in its practical implementation and the knowledge used would become context-specific and not "in the air" or reliant on abstraction through "buzz" effects. Eklinder-Frick's work with his colleagues published previously in

this journal (Eklinder-Frick, Eriksson & Hallén, 2011, 2012, 2014) has focussed on regional strategic networks and inculcates the policy environment into studies of actor-level activities. The discussion of more macro-level policy frameworks such as constructing regional advantage, regional innovation systems (Asheim, 2007; Asheim & Gertler, 2005; Asheim & Isaksen, 2002; Asheim, Moodysson & Todtling, 2011; Asheim, Smith & Oughton, 2011; Isaksen, 2001) and smart specialization (Boschma, 2013; McCann & Ortega-Argiles, 2015; McCann & Ortega-Argilis, 2015) has not yet featured in industrial marketing discourse. There seems to be further potential to integrate these insights into conceptualizations of regional strategic networks.

Taking the work of Eklinder-Frick and Åge further, the issues of globalization versus de-globalization (Holden, 2016:51) can be related to the localization and de-localization of economic activities, co-location and knowledge. Disenfranchisement and nationalism can be observed in the rhetoric of the recent BREXIT campaign in the UK and in the 2016 American presidential election campaign. Debates in the UK about perceived ‘have’ spaces and perceived ‘have not’ spaces seem to include in their rhetorical underpinnings a narrative about the availability and absencing of economic, and indeed industrial opportunity. The work by Peters and colleagues in this special issue is also useful in considering the way ideas permeate and indeed, how networks may become immune to learning, and therefore also may be deployed to understand how messages and ideas about industry permeate in society. We note the call from leading IMP scholars for researchers to engage with broader issue of the contribution of industrial marketing to the more macro-level issues of economic development, regeneration and community cohesion (Hakansson & Waluszewski, 2013:444).

“Thus, how supplier customer interfaces are organised is not only of great importance for the direct and indirect involved counterparts, but also for society at large. The space dynamic is important to society or at least two

reasons. If the dynamics are expressed in terms of development of new products, processes and/or services, followed by increased investments and employment, this is certainly beneficial for the communities involved in these processes. If the dynamics are expressed in terms of outsourcing outside earlier community borders, the outcome will be beneficial for some communities and detrimental for others, both within or outside national borders.”

We feel that the contributions of Eklinder-Frick and Åge (2017) and that of Mason and Chakrabarti (2017) are in our view significant responses to this appeal by Hakansson and Waluszewski (2013) to inculcate a more societally aware agenda into the work industrial marketing scholarship. A potential step forward would be to include implications for policy and society as a part of the closing paragraphs within industrial marketing research papers, as is more prevalent in current economic geography scholarship. An important thread that can be discerned by these three papers is the distinction between core and peripheral areas and the way that spatial interaction may be constrained and enabled differently by different spatial conditions. The Guest Editors have had a long-term interest in the conditions of peripheral regions (Amoros, Felzensztein & Gimmon, 2013; Felzensztein & Deans, 2013; Felzensztein, Gimmon & Aqueveque, 2013; Felzensztein, Huemer & Gimmon, 2010; Nicholson, Tsagdis & Brennan, 2013), and these can equally be peripheral regions in core countries and peripheral of emerging economies in the global landscape. There seems much more scope for fruitful synthesis between industrial marketing and economic geography scholarship, and we propose that micro-level insight is something that industrial marketing scholars can particularly bring to bear of the nexus of common interest to enrich understanding.

The eighth and ninth papers in this issue focus on the subject of proximity from the perspective of being a temporary phenomenon. The paper by Törnroos, Halinen and Medlin

refers to relational network space as one of four dimensions (the others being structural, mental and relative dimensions). They note the work in economic geography discussion space as relational (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003) and it is within this notion of relational network space that the work done by Diego Rinallo, Harald Bathelt and Fransesca Golfetto (2017) would seem to be grounded. They critically review literature on trade shows developed in industrial marketing and economic geography, aiming to contribute to the ongoing conversation between these disciplines. They extend the notion of relational network space as being a temporary phenomenon. They argue that in industrial marketing, trade shows are conceived as promotional instruments, whereas in the economic geography literature these events are seen as temporary clusters through which firms can escape the liabilities of embeddedness and interact with, and learn from, distant influences. They propose research directions that can benefit individual exhibitors as well as geographically-based business networks. The analysis of Rinallo and colleagues addresses the boundaries and limitations of disciplinary analyses and strongly suggests transdisciplinary encounters and engagements in industrial marketing and economic geography research. For a practical perspective, building on these premises, the authors suggest that economic geography literature could enrich the significant amount of IM scholarship examining trade show and particularly enhance learning about resource interaction at trade shows, exhibitor performance, and trade shows as collective marketing instruments, which sometimes are referred in the literature as examples of inter-firm marketing cooperation (Felzensztein, Gimmon & Carter, 2010).

Also addressing the theme of temporary spatial clusters, is our ninth and final competitive paper by Mark Palmer, Dominic Medway and Gary Warnaby, (2017). These authors focus on the subject of boundary work. Perhaps taking further the taxonomy of place, distance and location offered by Tornroos and colleagues, they also discuss enclosure, positioning and

ranking. This resonates with our interest in the core-periphery dialectic, and again with the ideas of Peters and colleagues (in this issue) regarding contagion. Palmer, Medway and Warnaby focus on the issue of *temporariness*, challenging an underlying assumption they perceive in IMP work of spatial *fixity* using flat spatial ontologies. They propose a valuable model for the further consideration of relational space offering dimensions of tall and flat spatial ontologies and between spatial-mobility and fixity. We suggest that this dimension could be useful in examining for instance, migrant entrepreneurship (the subject of an upcoming *Industrial Marketing Management* special issue). They further propose that concepts such as network common in industrial marketing discourse are examples of flat spatial ontologies, whereas more macro-level concepts like society, and we suggest global and region are examples of tall spatial ontologies. As with Rinallo and colleagues in this issue, they also point out the potential for greater consideration of the global-local connection in industrial marketing studies. The Editors concur strongly with this insight and point to the potential of the regional buzz and global pipeline literature (Bathelt, Malmberg & Maskell, 2004; Bathelt & Schuldt, 2008; Lorenzen & Mudambi, 2012; Maskell, Bathelt & Malmberg, 2006; Storper & Venables, 2004). Interesting in their discussion is the notion of boundary work and particularly their exposition of the roles of boundary marching and gate-keeping, noting the forces of inclusion and exclusion. Whilst they relate this discussion specifically to the context of temporary spatial clusters, we feel that these concepts could also be explored in more permanent spaces, such as in emerging markets and peripheral spaces, as discussed above.

#### **4.0: Conclusions**

This special issue is expected to enhance synthesis in concepts drawn from the disciplines of Economic Geography and Industrial Marketing. We feel that the substantive content of the nine articles, and the literature sources cited will be a lead to further industrial marketers in

their exploration of Economic Geography literature. Through examination of the special issue and papers before and after the call was released provides us some evidence now for the conceptual areas which scholars see the potential of synthesis at the nexus of interest between the disciplines. Scholars have been drawn to two particular turns within Economic Geography, the ‘relational’ turn and the ‘evolutionary’ turn, and have synthesised these ideas substantially with the network traditions of research within Industrial Marketing. However, we note that in its inception, we perhaps defined the call for papers (“exploring co-location”) too narrowly and in retrospect, a call to examine, distance, location and space would have better framed the potential for synthesis. For instance a number of contributing scholars have looked at distance under its antonym, ‘proximity’ using Boschma’s five notions of proximity; organizational, institutional, social, cognitive and geographic. When considered as proximity, this taxonomy can be used to explore co-location within a given geographic location (such as a cluster) or can examine distance between ‘places’ linked for instance by global pipelines (Mudambi et al., 2017). Further contributions that discuss spatial fixity and spatial mobility introduce notions of temporariness and permanence in space and notions of boundaries (Palmer, Medway & Warnaby, 2017; Rinallo, Bathelt & Golfetto, 2017), also highlight issues of ethical concern for industrial marketing such as inclusion and exclusion adding to earlier conceptualisations of relational isolation in geographic space (Nicholson, Tzagdis & Brennan, 2013) within *Industrial Marketing Management*. Equally Peters, Pressey and Johnston (2017) have discussed barriers to contagion in space, which brings together a clear agenda for examining boundaries between actors and activities in space. The potential for a greater contribution to economic development called for by leading IMP scholars (Hakansson & Waluszewski, 2013) has been particularly addressed in the papers by Eklinder-Frick and Åge (2017) and Mason and Chakrabarti (2017) and we feel that there is much more industrial marketers can say about contribution to place, such as peripheral spaces, and to economic

development through further examination of regional strategic networks beyond purely business-to-business interaction. In further observation of the call was the appeal to synthesis work from economy geography also drew scholars to draw in literature from international business and innovation disciplines, therefore we have identified here a greater nexus of interdisciplinary interest in distance, location and space for industrial marketing scholars to further engage with. The advanced frameworks found within economic geography discourse we propose could greatly facilitate enhanced understand at the nexus of interest. The micro-level insight of industrial marketing scholars would seem to of great value in shining a light into black box of interaction between place and space (Beugelsdijk, McCann & Mudambi, 2010). We further feel that the frameworks suggested by Törnroos, Halinen and Medlin (2017) to integrate notions of time and space, and the framework suggested by Palmer, Medway and Warnaby (2017) to inculcate notions of spatial fixity and spatial transference are significant contributions that allow for further research to be grounded within their assumptions and may have analytical generalizability beyond industrial marketing scholarship. Indeed, we hope to see more industrial marketing scholarship cited in economic geography journals going forward.

We are indebted to the group of reviewers that worked on this special with backgrounds from the economic geography, international business, innovation and industrial marketing areas that have added to the dialogue between disciplines. The Guest Editor's invite this review team, the contributing authors, and we hope the authors who submitted work to the special issue but were not ultimately successful (we acknowledge and thank them for their important contribution to the special issue), to offer suggestions as how this special issue can form the beginning of a trajectory. Further, the leading industrial marketing conferences could look to integrate this interdisciplinary thrust within its programmes and tracks. We would also note hear the call of the outgoing Editor in Chief of *Industrial Marketing Management*, Peter

LaPlaca and the IMP conference in Poznan Poland in 2016 as to the need for new lines of inquiry for both the IMP group and broader industrial marketing academe. Based on the evidence of this special issue, we see a significant natural potential for synthesis between the IMP School of thought and those within the relational economic geography school of thought. Indeed, we make a subjective observation that many problems stated with the economic geography literature are problems of actor level nature, exactly where we would propose the IMP scholarship is strongest. However, we do not wish to limit our avocation of the potential for synthesis between economic geography and industrial marketing scholarship to IMP traditions, or indeed to qualitative approaches. There seems much scope for pluralistic view of both the concepts and some challenging work yet to do to synthesize and work sometimes within apparently conflicting underlying assumptions.

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