



Special Session (SS12) on:

SMEs/Family Businesses and Regional Development

Organizers:

Lech Suwala - Technische Universität Berlin, Germany. E-mail: lech.suwala@tu-berlin.de

Rodrigo Basco - American University of Sharjah, UAE.

Stefano Amato - IMT School for Advanced Studies, Italy.

The aim and scope:

Despite the importance of today's big businesses, big data, and big transitions, there is still room to further investigate small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the geographical spaces in which they dwell. Most SMEs and family firms -or so-called "hidden champions"- are the backbones of most local and regional economies and social development. SMEs and family firms comprise diverse types of businesses, from traditional century-old Japanese dynasties, American family farms, and German Mittelstand to novel Shanghai and Silicon Valley elites. At the same time, these businesses represent geographically uneven phenomena with regard to their distribution across, their impact on, and their interactions with the local, regional, and (inter-)national levels and beyond. While certain types of firms (e.g., startups, multi-national corporations) and processes (e.g., innovation, entrepreneurship) have attracted much attention in regional science in the last decades, SMEs and family firms have mostly been neglected in the fields of regional science and regional economics. Against this background, the session "SMEs/Family Businesses and Regional Development" aims to open up a profound debate on this often-neglected topic. We invite scholars from manifold disciplines, such as regional science, regional economics, economic geography, family business, management, organization studies, and international business as well as practitioners from diverse backgrounds to share their interest and to submit their research on SMEs/family firms and regional development in the widest sense.

Our rationale is to continue with this debate—independent of methodological approach (quantitative or qualitative)—on SMEs and/or family businesses in different spaces and on different scales. Conceptual, empirical, and methodological papers might address, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conceptual and theoretical debates about the nature of SMEs/family firms and space (i.e., regional familiness, spaces of familiness, family relatedness in cities and peripheries)
- SMEs/family firms and agglomeration (dis-)economies, proximities, externalities, and regional self-reinforcing mechanisms
- The contributions (e.g., regional competitiveness) and impacts (e.g., productivity) of SMEs/family firms in agglomerations and peripheries

- SMEs/family firms and regional contexts (e.g., social embeddedness, local networks)
- The regional expansion and internationalization of SMEs/family firms
- Peculiarities in the evolution and trajectories of SMEs/family firms (e.g., family/regional path dependence, family/regional (un-)related variety, family/regional lock-in)
- SMEs/family firms and territorial innovation models (e.g., industrial districts, innovative milieus, business clusters, territorial innovation systems [e.g., RIS, NIS], entrepreneurial ecosystems, etc.)
- SMEs/family firms and local/regional/national development policies and university-industry cooperation
- Issues of sustainable regional development, digitalization, green growth, and SMEs/family firms
- Place leadership or corporate urban/regional responsibility by SMEs/family firms
- SME-/family firm-specific issues (e.g., succession, governance, reputation, professionalization, etc.) from a regional science perspective
- The role of SMEs/family firms in digitalization, smart regions, Industry 4.0 technologies, and platform-based economies and the impact of spaces and scale
- The role of SMEs/family firms in value, commodity, and production chain approaches at the local (LVC, LCC, LPN) and global levels (GVC, GCC, GPN)
- SMEs'/family firms' contributions to regional resilience, vulnerability, and/or sovereignty.

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