Introduction

*Susanne Durst**, *Serdal Temel†*, and
Helio Aisenberg Ferenhof‡

**University of Skövde, Höskolevägen 1, 541 28, Skövde, Sweden
and Universidad del Pacífico, Lima, Peru*

*†Ege University, Erzene Mahallesi, Gençlik Caddesi,
35040 Boronova, İzmir, Turkey*

*‡Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Campus Reitor,
João David Ferreira Lima, Florianópolis, SC 88040-900, Brazil*

1. Outline

This book aims to shed light on the interplay between open innovation (OI) and knowledge management (KM) issues in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). With the proliferation of the OI paradigm and against the backdrop of the increasing number of external knowledge-transfer activities, the management of knowledge is more important than ever for innovation and firm performance, a situation that holds for any type of organization. In fact, KM is no longer a pure intra-organizational activity but constitutes a vital interface function between the organization and its external partners/stakeholders.

You may say this sounds nice, but what makes the present book one that should definitely be read? Well, because even though the

fields of OI and KM have been extensively studied both on general levels and with regard to large companies, when SMEs are considered, this is not the case: Our understanding is still underdeveloped. This is reinforced when the interplay between OI and KM is addressed: Our understanding is even more limited. Therefore, we, the editors, believe that our book is timely and will hopefully contribute to raising awareness regarding this promising and relevant topic.

2. Structure of the Book

Throughout the book, readers will obtain both a broad overview of the two main concepts, namely, OI and KM and its interplay. In addition, research will be presented by leading international researchers in the field, which will help the readers develop and/or expand their understanding of this phenomenon. This broad approach can also support in broadening the mindset regarding the topic under investigation and its application. Thereby, this book will primarily focus on SMEs and their approach with respect to the interplay in question.

In order to achieve our aim, the book consists of 10 chapters that are divided into three parts. The idea behind Part 1 is to introduce the main concepts, namely, SMEs, OI, KM and the interplay between OI and KM in SMEs. This is followed by Part 2, which provides empirical research insights into the phenomenon of interest. The book concludes with Part 3, which addresses promising future avenues regarding the study of OI and KM in SMEs.

In the following, we will briefly highlight the content of the individual chapters.

In Chapter 1, “Small and Medium-sized Enterprises”, Thomas Henschel and Ilka Heinze introduce the readers to smaller firms, their specific characteristics, and their management. Ilker Murat Ar continues with Chapter 2, “The Concept of Open Innovation”, in which the author presents OI as a way for organizations to become more collaborative and competitive. The chapter also highlights the need for paying attention to the risks of OI. Helio Aisenberg Ferenhof

gives in Chapter 3, “Knowledge Management”, an introduction to the term. Thus, this chapter covers types of knowledge, the definition of KM, as well an overview of knowledge processes. Based on the preceding chapters, Serdal Temel and Susanne Durst present in Chapter 4, “The Interplay between Open Innovation and Knowledge Management in SMEs”, the core topic of the present book.

Having provided the book’s theoretical background, in Part 2 — Research insights — empirical work is presented that shows the interplay in action.

The part commences with Chapter 5, “Knowledge Creation and Open Innovation in High-Technology SMEs”, by Elsa Grimsdottir and Ingi Runar Edvardsson. The study shows how SMEs from Iceland deal with knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and storage. Additionally, the study provides insights into how customers and other external stakeholders are involved in the innovation process. Different from other chapters, Chapter 6, “Knowledge Sharing and Open Innovation”, by Ardalan Haghghi Talab, Victor Scholten, and Cees van Beers focuses more on the theoretical side of knowledge, the role of knowledge for firms in developing new ideas, and how knowledge plays a role in enhancing the competitiveness of companies. Chapter 7, “Comparing Open Innovation of Innovative Food SMEs with SMEs in the Seed and High-Tech Industries — An Analysis of 15 SMEs in the Netherlands”, by Onno Omta, Frances Fortuin, and Niels Dijkman focuses on successful OI projects in three different sectors, namely food, plant breeding, and high tech. The authors highlight the important factors needed to successfully implement OI in different sectors. In Chapter 8, “ALITE: Open Innovation and Experimentation in a Small Learning Organization”, by Joaquín Alegre, Francisco Romera, Ana García-Granero, and Anabel Fernández-Mesa, it is shown how OI and KM are undertaken in a successful, innovative, and small firm. It connects findings with OI and KM literature and highlights several implications for smaller companies. Haley Wing Chi Tsang and Rongbin W. B. Lee, in Chapter 9, “Mitigation of Knowledge Risks in Open Innovation”, draw attention to four types of knowledge risk, namely knowledge

loss, knowledge leakage, knowledge obsolescence, and knowledge shortage. Also, the authors present a case of knowledge risk assessment in a small firm using the four knowledge risks.

In Chapter 10, “Open Innovation and Knowledge Management in SMEs: What Comes Next?”, Susanne Durst and Serdal Temel synthesize the evidence presented before and, based on this, list and discuss several promising research topics to further deepen our understanding of the interplay between OI and KM in SMEs.

3. Conclusion

We are very proud of having produced a book that targets readers from different levels, students to professors and staff to managers. We are convinced that all of them will find this book a useful aid during their daily work dedicated to enhancing the long-term success of small businesses. Finally, and yet importantly, we hope that this book will also encourage researchers to enter into more international collaborations to execute future academic projects.