

# **PREFACE AND DEDICATION: THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL ORGANIZING – A TRIBUTE TO ALAN RUGMAN**



Late Professor Alan Rugman

This volume of the *Progress in International Business* series accompanies the 40th anniversary of the European International Business Academy (EIBA). It is also the 10th volume in the PIBR series. Rather than looking back at achievements and insights of times past, we instead look at the future and discuss the challenges of global organizing for the multinational enterprises (MNEs) of today and tomorrow. Both the scholarly literature and managerial practice suggest increasingly complex and diverse models of organizing. Rapidly changing and volatile institutional environments, within which MNEs must operate, have prompted these developments. In this context, a key question is whether the organizational responses the MNEs have developed to the mixed pressures of globalization and

regionalism are adequate. Possible organizational responses can vary substantially: redefining the respective roles of headquarters and subsidiaries; changing the roles of teams inside the MNE; repositioning the MNE in supply chains; crafting entirely new MNE business models. The introductory chapter of this volume presents an overview of the types of organizational challenges that have been covered by the scientific discourse in International Business (IB). This discourse has arguably been relatively fragmented and in many areas is still in its infancy. This situation legitimizes the more exploratory approach adopted in this volume. The authors of the various chapters explore and extend the present boundaries of our knowledge on global organizing. They do this in a variety of ways: (1) through mainstream academic papers – in those areas that have already received substantive attention, such as the area of headquarters-subsidiary relationships; (2) through accounts of panel discussions covering critical knowledge gaps, for example, in the realm of team-based organizing; (3) and through a number of case studies. The mixed approach adopted makes the volume both research and teaching oriented.

The mixed research approach characterizing this volume, as well as its focus on the organizational challenges facing MNEs, provides an excellent backdrop for dedicating this book to Alan Rugman, a distinguished thought leader, organizer, and educator in the field of IB. Alan unexpectedly and suddenly passed away in the summer of 2014. His passion for the field and his engaging personality will be remembered by many in the present IB community. His intellectual legacy will hopefully be long-lasting. Alan adopted a distinct approach when addressing two important trade-offs faced by all IB scholars: (1) the importance attached to theory vis-à-vis empirics and (2) a focus on research versus teaching. How did Alan deal with these two trade-offs?

*First*, Alan dedicated himself to rigorous, theory driven research, but with ample attention devoted to the difficult task of primary data collection. He did not get discouraged by the absence – in many cases – of useful company-level empirical data, needed to support the type of research he undertook. He created novel databases himself in order to get the “descriptives” right. In this context, he collected comparative data on large numbers of MNEs to test – and often refute or even discredit – unqualified claims regarding a large number of key questions in IB. Contemporary IB phenomena were placed front and center on his own, rich research agenda. These included, inter alia: “globalization” versus “regionalism,” “locational advantages” versus “ownership advantages,” “country-specific advantages” versus “firm specific advantages.” In many instances, he argued against the

need for “new” IB theory (for example, to explain the behavior and success of emerging market multinationals), and instead favored a renewed focus on better data collection. Reliable primary data on MNEs are still hard to collect. Most contemporary PhD projects are not geared toward making this type of resource-intensive investment, whether in terms of time or effort. In this sense, Alan’s scholarly record is not one that could easily be emulated: how to manage many parallel projects at the same time, without losing focus? How to manage large quantities of data, without losing track of the goal to develop meaningful theory? How to escape from group-think, and stimulate debate and critical reflection, rather than foster the development of “yes-men”? How to take into account context, at the local, regional and global levels?

*Second*, Alan Rugman systematically aimed to link theory and practice, as well as research and teaching. His efforts to achieve intellectual synergies with a large number of authors from different academic disciplines are testimony to this ambition. Again, interdisciplinary thinking is difficult to organize in the present academic climate of narrow specialization, but Alan managed to complete an impressive number of collaborative projects in which he linked his own critical thinking with that of others. The tension between fundamental research and teaching presents another contemporary organizational challenge for most academics active in research-intensive business schools. In order to foster a “successful” academic career, it is clearly more rewarding to publish and to conduct low-risk, narrow (specialized) research, rather than to engage in teaching and writing case studies. Alan Rugman crafted his own solution to manage the above tension by working both on sole-authored projects and multi-authored ones, with the latter including his IB textbooks, including his last textbook (*International Business*, 6th edition, published by Pearson), which has become one of the most widely adopted textbooks in business schools around the world.

Two “tribute papers” in the first part of this volume, written by Alain Verbeke and Simon Collinson respectively, will give a further personal account of the above two dimensions of Alan’s scholarly and personal endeavors. *First*, Alan was an explorer of new (rigorous) ideas, engaged in a quest for truth on the roles and impacts of MNEs in society. *Second*, he was a dedicated teacher and textbook writer, aiming to convey his intellectual insight in the clearest possible way. Alan Rugman should not only be remembered for his intellectual legacy in the broad field of IB thinking, but also for the ways in which he addressed the organizational challenges facing IB scholars.