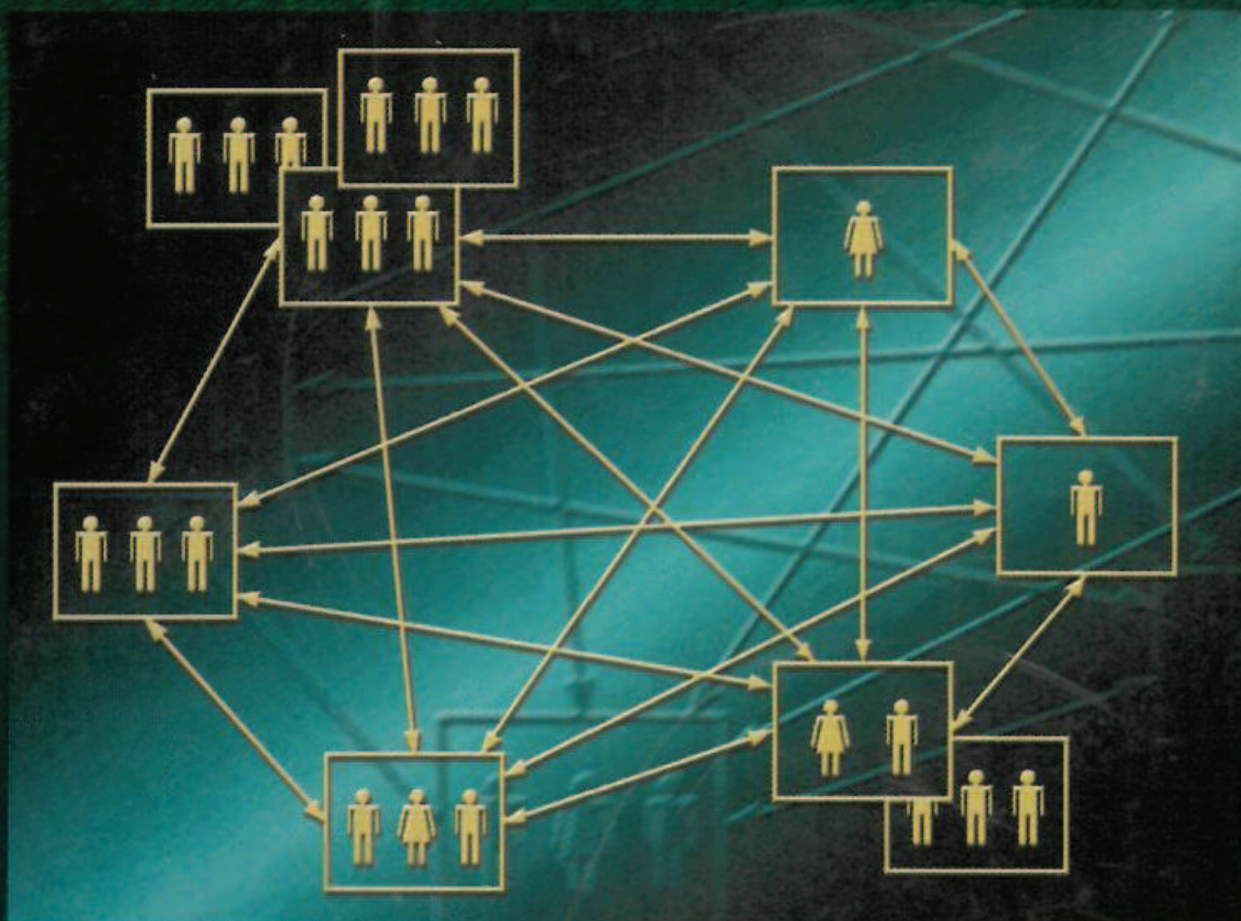


**SERIES ON TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT – VOL. 6**

# **SOCIAL INTERACTION AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE**

**ASTON PERSPECTIVES ON INNOVATION NETWORKS**



**Editors**

**OSWALD JONES, STEVE CONWAY & FRED STEWARD**

*Imperial College Press*

# **SOCIAL INTERACTION AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE**

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**Aston Perspectives on Innovation Networks**

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# Preface

It is widely acknowledged in the innovation literature that networks are central to the identification, acquisition and development of new technologies. This book follows work by those such as Granovetter who argue that all activity is embedded in complex networks of social relations including: family, state, educational and professional background, religion, gender and ethnicity. It is therefore important to acknowledge that managerial decision-making occurs within a context of personal and organisational networks. Such relationships are sometimes analysed in terms of what Williamson describes as the 'transaction costs' incurred in the purchase of materials, components or technologies. While others argue that *trust* between individual employees and a firm's customers and suppliers is an essential feature of business relationships.

In the book we bring together a number of authors associated with Aston Business School who are broadly researching the topic of innovation networks. Although there is no single *perspective*, contributors agree that networks are subjective structures that cannot be separated from their social context nor from the activities of social actors. Our objective is to illustrate the way in which innovation networks are formed and sustained in a variety of organisational

settings: the public sector, public-private collaboration, national policy level, the direct action movement as well as the more traditional focus on manufacturing firms. The strength of the network approach is that, on the one hand, it allows detailed analyses of the dyadic links mobilised in the innovation process while, on the other, it provides a framework for exploring the multiple sources and pluralistic patterns of communication typical of innovation activity. In contrast to much innovation network research undertaken in recent years, our interest is concerned as much with notions of 'network as method' as with 'network as a phenomenon'.

# The Contributors

At the time this book was conceived all contributors were either members of academic staff or, in other cases, completing their doctorates at Aston Business School. When the book was completed a number of the contributors had moved on to other institutions. However, the conception and execution was very much based on various 'Aston perspectives' as all authors had been attached to the organisation for some time and those that are now employed by other business schools remain part of the Aston 'network'.

**Martin Beckinsale** recently completed his PhD on the topic of 'Strategic Innovation Networks' in medium-sized manufacturing firms. He is now employed as a Researcher at Warwick Business School studying the adoption of internet technologies in SMEs.

**Stuart Cooper** is Lecturer in Finance and Accounting at Aston Business School. His interests include social and environmental accounting, stakeholder theory, performance management.

**Steve Conway** is Lecturer in Innovation at Aston Business School. Steve's interests include social and organisational networks in innovation, knowledge and learning, the graphical representation of networks, and the social shaping technology.



**David Crowther** is Reader in Marketing at The Business School, University of North London. His interests include the exploration of alternative communities, accountability, and social marketing.

**Tim Edwards** recently completed his PhD in which he examined collaborative alliances and innovation in small firms. Tim is currently employed as a Research Associate at Cardiff Business School working on an ERDF project considering the innovative behaviour of SMEs in industrial South Wales. His research interests include critical-realist perspectives on organisational reproduction and the sociology of innovation.

**Reiner Grundmann** is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Aston Business School. Reiner's interests include global environmental problems, science and society, the EU and the public sphere.

**Oswald Jones** recently left Aston to join Manchester Metropolitan University as Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. His research interests include innovation management in mature companies, intrapreneurship and 'green' startup companies.

**David Parker** is Professor of Business Economics and Strategy at Aston Business School. David's interests focus on privatisation and regulation of network industries from both an economic and management perspective.

**Kirit Vaidya** is Lecturer in Business Economics and Director of the Aston MSc in International Business. Kirit's research interests include technology transfer and economic and industrial development in China and East Asia.

**Jim Love** is Professor of Economics and International Business at Aston Business School. His research interests include the economic determinants of product innovation in manufacturing industry and the transaction-cost and resource-based theories of the firm.

**Stephen Osborne** is Professor in Public Management and Director of Aston Business School's doctoral programme. He is currently editor of the *Public Management: An International Journal of Research and Theory*. Stephen's research interests include innovation in the public and voluntary sectors.

**Fred Steward** is Reader in Innovation and Director of the Innovation Research Centre at Aston Business School. Fred's interests centre on innovation networks, discourse, strategy, and social shaping of innovation.

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