



Article

The Stony Path of Management Geography

Lech Suwala (Technical University, Berlin)

Rolf D. Schlunze (Ritsumeikan University)

Given their central role in economic decision-making at the firm-level, one might be inclined to assume that the role of Managers and of Management, would occupy a central place in the field of Economic Geography. In existing literature from the field, however, the ‘Manager’ remains a ‘lonesome or, more precisely, a fragmented maverick’. Although a number of labels can be assigned to the various research strands that deal with the nexus between ‘the Manager and Space’, *Management Geography* (Abo 2000, 2002, Schlunze 2004, Schlunze / Plattner 2007, Schlunze et al. 2012, Suwala / Oinas 2012), *Managerial Geography* (Laulajainen, 1998) or *Economic Geographies of Management* (Jones 2018) became the prominent ones. There are manifold definitions that tackle the rationale of Management Geography. In what follows, two of these definitions will be introduced to provide a workable description of this emerging sub-discipline.

"Management geography is a subfield of corporate / business / enterprise geography which focuses on the nexus of decision making in the corporate world – the manager and the managerial team – in a geographical perspective. The objective is the analysis of the management of economic, social and cognitive spatial realms in multi-scalar configurations influencing the corporate performance through concentration, interaction and/or perception" (Suwala / Oinas 2012; <http://www.siemrg.org/images/PDF/4-Oinas-Suwala.pdf>).

“Management geography is a new avenue of economic geography which focuses on the nexus of managerial practices in a globalizing world from a geographical perspective. The research objective is the analysis of the socio-economic and cognitive spatial behavior of managerial subjects influencing organizational performance through preferences, interactions and perceptions” (Schlunze 2017, See URL: <http://www.siemrg.org/report-of-16th-meeting.html>). Both definitions encompass similar ideas; however, whereas the latter emphasizes spatial ‘managerial practices’ (Jones / Murphy 2010), spatial managerial ‘decision making’ is the focus of the first.

Regardless of label and definition, there exist a “growing number of contributions [that] have sought to frame themselves (albeit loosely) as part of a ‘new management geography’ developing firmly at the overlap of debates between economic geography and management studies” (Jones 2018, 277). The timeline sketched out in Figure 1 is showing that researchers from different backgrounds and schools have actively contributed to generating knowledge in this loose field. Management Geography has its origins in the traditions of corporate / business/ enterprise or firm geography (Krumme 1969, Taylor 1975, Dicken 1976, Hayter / Watts 1983, Laujainen/ Stafford 1984, Malecki 1985) and can be traced back to as early as Robert B. McNee’s 1958 account of “Functional Geography of the Firm” (McNee 1958)



within the field of Economic Geography. At the same time, International Business scholars have made their own imprint on the subject: research dealing both with FDI in general (Kojima 1989, Buckley 1991) and with internationalisation or overseas operation of enterprises in particular has been instrumental in laying a foundation for thinking about ‘managers in spaces’ (Hymer 1960 (1976), Kindleberger 1970, Buckley / Casson 1976, Johanson / Vahlne 1977,

Dunning 1980). The first systematic account in the subfield of what we call Management Geography today was probably undertaken by Korean born, Japanese-educated Professor Tetsuo Abo and his ‘Japanese Multinational Enterprises Study Group’ from the mid-1980’s, whose research focused on Japanese hybrid overseas factories and managerial strategies (Abo 1989, 1992, 1994, 2004, 2012, 2015) (see Figure 1).

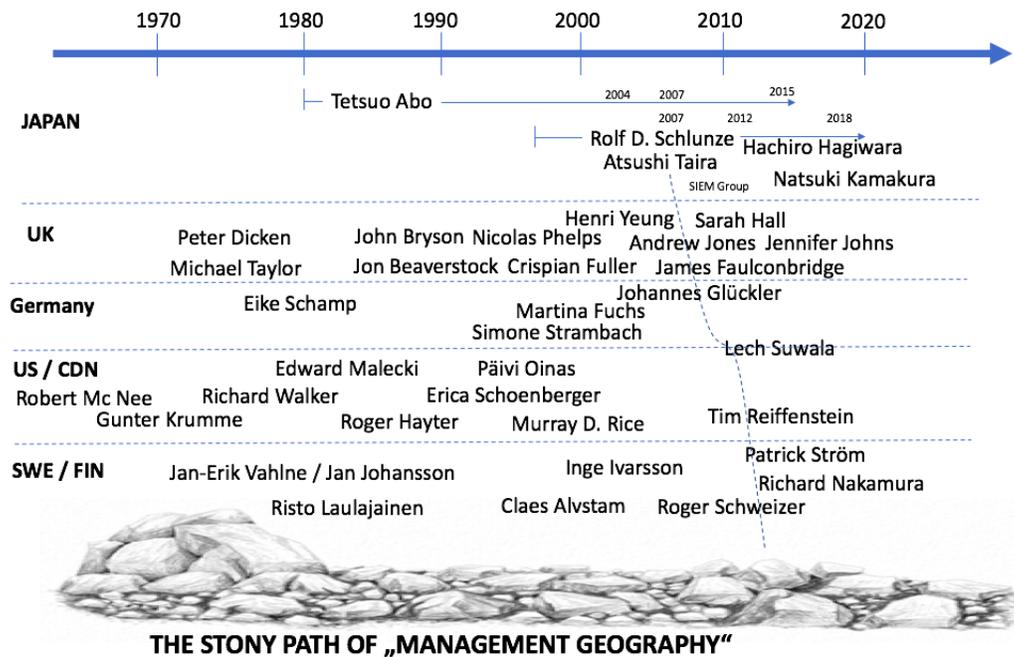


Fig. 1 “The Different Schools of Management Geography” within Economic Geography (own elaboration)

The research of Abo’s group brought about enlightening insights to the subject (for an overview and summary, see Abo 2015) but was naturally limited by the group’s narrow focus on Japanese overseas management, as well as by the exclusiveness of the group within the University of Tokyo. Inspired by Abo’s work, a group of 18 interdisciplinary

researchers led by Schlunze and Taira initiated an international and multidisciplinary research group called SIEM (Spaces of International Economy and Management, in Japanese: 国際経済経営地理学研究グループ, see: siemrg.org) in 2007. One important achievement of Schlunze and Taira’s on behalf of SIEM has been to bring



both key thinkers together to discuss relevant topics (e.g. through recurring, multi-year appearances at meetings and conferences: 2011: Yeung; 2013, 2015: Jones; 2011: Laulajainen; and 2011, 2012: Oinas), and to introduce young scholars from different schools of thoughts and disciplines to the field (e.g. 2015: Ström; 2014, 2018: Reiffenstein; 2011, 2012, 2015: Suwala, 2015: Kamakura). Despite their great efforts in the last 12 years, and despite the excellent work published in recent years by scholars working either independently (e.g. Kamakura 2014, Schlunze 2016, Jones 2018, Reiffenstein 2018, Yeung 2018, Suwala 2019, Basco / Suwala 2020, Suwala 2020 among many others) or in independent groups working both within and outside of the research group (Faulconbrige / Jones 2012, Nakamura / Ström 2014, Beaverstock/ Faulconbridge/ Hall 2015, Phelps / Wood 2018), only few overarching publication initiatives have been realized to-date. A

common challenge of this work has been to systematically locate the topic of ‘managers in space’ between the fields of Economic Geography and IB (Schlunze et al. 2012). Figure 1 provides an overview of how we currently place and perceive different scholars and working groups, their origins and native school backgrounds, within the broader field. Again, the presence of different working groups, each with their own native school backgrounds and with different theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and empirical approaches, complicates the formation of a ‘mutual journey’ for the development of a sub-field called ‘Management Geography’. The double session in Cologne provided repeated evidence for this fact (see Tab. 1). Notwithstanding, we believe that their shared interest in managerial issues still might unite these diverse researchers under the label or umbrella of ‘Management Geography’ or ‘(New) Geographies of Management’.

	Content	Background	Method	Relation to Management Geography
Atsushi Taira	Geographical patterns of “global-niche” firms / glocal pipelines	Industrial Geography/ IB	Qualitative: Case study method	Transfer of practices
Tim Reiffenstein	Managerial features of Japanese ramen industry	Economic Geography/ IB	Qualitative plus network analysis	Community of practice: networks of training and mentorship
Kenji Tsutsumi	Regional Management of Depopulated and Aged Community	Social Geography/ Economy	Case study of rural community	Sustainability Management
Hachiro Hagiwara	Enterprises’ Performance in Brazil	Economic Geography / IB	Evolutionary approach	Entrepreneurship; Leadership style
Rolf D. Schlunze	Managers and their network practices	Industrial Geography / IB	Mixed method approach	Transfers managerial knowhow; network practices

Tab. 1 Presenters at the special sessions at the fifth Global Conference on Economic Geography in Cologne with backgrounds, methods and relations to Management Geography (own elaboration)



SIEMs' answers for future development are straightforward but require theoretical, methodological work, and opportunities for framing. "A dedicated academic journal or regular space in a pertinent magazine would raise the profile, and college classes going straight into practical corporate matters" might be one way to bring this 'motley crew' of researchers together, as Risto Laulajainen put it 20 years ago (1998, 6). SIEM's road map also proposes other published forms, including "mutual edited collections" and "special issues" in journals. We believe that these will provide platforms from which to further disseminate the concept of Management Geography among economic geographers, international business scholars (IB) and adjacent disciplines. As a first step,

we have created this SIEM Bulletin, offering associated researchers a voice; by disseminating this bulletin to interested researchers and publishing it at the group's homepage, www.siemrg.org, we are attempting to open a forum for interdisciplinary initiatives with an interest in space- or scale-based approaches to management. This brief description of the field and literature is neither exhaustive nor representative but rather represents a current, biased and subjective snapshot – emphasizing presenters at SIEM meetings and their work in the field (for an advanced literature overview on Management Geography, see Suwala 2019).

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2018 GCEG - SIEM Session: Management Geography -An Asian Perspective

Rolf Schlunze -Ritsumeikan University | Taira Atsushi - Kagawa University

Management geography is a new avenue of economic geography which focuses on the nexus of managerial practices in a globalizing world from a geographical perspective. The research objective is the analysis of the socio-economic and cognitive spatial behavior of managerial subjects influencing organizational performance through preferences, interactions and perceptions. The nexus of managerial practices is created in the overlapping areas of location, workplace and mindscape. In real space the location matters. Concentration of managerial elements and resources define the locational capacity available to the economic actor in space. In the relative space distance is important to managerial mobility and intercultural interactions. In the relational space the workplace matters most. Here managerial subjects relate to each other and embed various managerial processes. The degree of embeddedness matters with the issue of interaction within and among connected workplaces. In the topical space the mindscape of the managerial subjects is important. Issues of perception are important to grasp the managerial capacity of individual and organizational subjects.

SIEM welcomed submissions in the following issues in relation to International Business (IB):

- i. Theorizing on management practices in geographic space using approaches related to leadership, international human resource management (IHRM), managerial and/or innovative practices, and networking of boundary spanners.
- ii. Proposing new methodologies for investigating managerial practices, preferences, networking and decision-making in private and governmental organizations

transforming spaces of international economy and management.

iii. Providing empirical evidence on all kind of management issues including localizing and globalizing practices. In particular, studies that focus on managerial embeddedness, Community of Practices (COPs), GPNs and strategic coupling of transnational firms.

iv. Developing implications how to build international social capital in corporate entities and global city locations.

Management Geography -An Asian Perspective I

When Multinational Enterprise's HRM Practices Meet Dual Labor Market: The Case of IKEA Korea and Japan

Ji-Won Song - Stockholm School of Economics

While most works in the International Business (IB) field focus on the impact of national institutional environment on multinational enterprises (MNEs), this paper explores the opposite relationship, that is, the impact of MNE subsidiaries as agents on host countries' institutional environment. In particular, this paper examines how MNE subsidiaries strategically respond to institutional distance when transferring their human resource management (HRM) practices by bringing the case of IKEA's two subsidiaries, IKEA Korea and Japan. Since both Korea and Japan currently have unique labor market institution, 'dual labor market', which can be a barrier for IKEA to transfer their own HRM practices, the case of this research could provide a particular kind of institutional distance between IKEA and two



host countries. In the analysis, we found that these subsidiaries not only adapt the pressures from institutional distance, and but also play an important role to influence on the institutional environment of host countries by introducing new practices. These findings contribute to the IB field by highlighting the potential of MNE subsidiaries as institutional entrepreneurs. Further, this research have some implications on institutional analysis in the field by linking institutional engagement and entrepreneurship of MNEs to understandings of institutional logics. Since the subsidiaries of this research as institutional entrepreneurs add new logics onto extant dominant logics of host countries, we also could shed new light on the discussion around internal diversity within national economy that has not been frequently covered in the comparative capitalism (CC) literature.

Increasing trend of segmentation phenomenon in Korean manufacturing industry; Evidence from industrial network analysis

Changmin Jeong - KAIST | Duk Hee Lee - KAIST

This paper explores segmentation of Korean manufacturing industry through network methodology. The industrial structure is networked under the assumption that there is the 'node(industry)' and 'link(relationship among industries)'. SIC 3-digit manufacturing industries at 13 Korean regions during 1999-2011 are used. Relatedness among industries were measured based on Hidalgo(2007)'s method; it calculates conditional probability that both industries have comparative advantage at the same time. MST and Disparity Filter are used to leave important links. In 2000, the inter-node links were intricately intertwined, but as time passed, they have split into two large

groups. The industries located in one community are industries with small industrial GDP, while those located in other community are industries with large industrial GDP, it is inferred that there is polarization between industries. Community analysis and modularity Q measurement are used to numerically represent the degree of segmentation of industrial clusters. The Q value is higher than 0.3. It is understood as well-partitioned community. The Q value increases with time. This means as time goes on, industrial clustering has been segmented. Next finding is clustering coefficient is larger than random network and shortest path length is longer than random network. This indicates the Korean industry network tends to be connected to adjacent nodes, but the links that connecting the groups are few. This result suggests the inter-group segregation phenomenon. Local externality between industries is measured. When an industry has high degree of proximity to comparative advantage industries, it is measured whether it affects the industry positively. Local externality does not exist or is negligible. This suggests that Korean manufacturing industry has little influence on each other. This is partly due to the fact that the Korean government implemented policies in top-down way, focusing on fostering of small number of industries, without considering the industrial characteristics of regions

Location Transfers of Geography-related IT Industries - a case study in China since 1990

Takehiko, Fujii-The University of Tokyo

This study focuses on geography as an industry especially in the information technology (IT) entrepreneurship field, and has observed the history of its location transfers in China mainly since 1990' when the commercialization of its national



economy has rapidly introduced and developed. Geography-related IT industries contain not only geographical information systems (GIS) and other spatial fields but also wide range of value chains related map. The upstream consists of raw materials such as satellite imageries, aerial photos and surveyed data including global positioning systems (GPS). The midstream is as a manufacturing function to make maps from the raw materials. The downstream are services to make use of maps such as GIS and car navigation systems (CNS) as well as other online mapping services including the Google Maps.

Small and medium-sized "global-niche" firms in Japan and their glocal pipelines

Atsushi Taira - Kagawa University

This study argues the geographical patterns of "global-niche" firms in Japan and characteristics of the glocal pipelines of these firms. The global-niche firms have a significant share in the relevant world market for their highest quality of products based on the state-of-art expertise and technology. Pipelines are defined as personal connections between intra- and inter-firms and relevant agencies. Although the argument about pipelines has been active recently such as Bathelt et al. (2004), empirical case studies are limited. This study tries to fill its gap. While Japan has recently seen its economic recovery, many local areas are suffering from a long-term stagnation. In this situation, small and medium-sized "global niche" firms in these local areas have attracted attention of researchers and local governments for rejuvenating the local economy. In 2013 the Japanese government made an economic recovery plan including a measure to assist global niche firms and it announced 100 global-niche-top firms to promote the plan. Interestingly, in Japan, many of them are located outside the major metropolitan areas,

such as Tokyo and Osaka. Shikoku is a representative region in the country to house these "global niche" firms. Nippura in Kagawa, Nitride Semiconductors in Tokushima and others are good examples. This study shows how these firms expand and balance their glocal pipelines in the competitive world market.

From the shop entrance curtain to the international business group: The institutional geographies of the noren wake system in the Japanese ramen industry

Tim Reiffenstein - Mount Allison University

Noren are the dyed canvas curtains hung on bamboo poles at a ramen shop's entry to signal that it is open for business. Noren wake, a verb that means the splitting of the shop curtain, symbolically describes the enduring relationship between master and apprentice that occurs when the latter establish an independent business. In the world of ramen, masters pass on cookery and business skills to their protégé who gain a reputational benefit from the pedigree of their training. They may also benefit from ongoing mentorship and a degree of preferential access to suppliers and other network linkages. In a competitive business characterized by high rates of entry and exit, these associations confer important advantages in survival. This paper investigates the managerial geographies of noren wake through a case study of the Menya Kouji Group which is comprised of hundreds of affiliated ramen shops throughout Japan as well as a growing network of operations in the ASEAN region, and North America. Through analysis of Japanese ramen media and interviews with key informants the paper traces Menya Kouji's evolution to its present multi-nodal configuration. In turn it asks whether it is time to update our conceptual models of Japanese business groups and their



internationalization. To this point the literature posits keiretsu business groups as one of the key institutional and managerial features of the Japanese economy. With expansion rooted in networks of training and mentorship, rather than the interlocking equity that defines keiretsu, this paper posits business groupings that follow noren wake as a distinctive form of organization. Specifically, patterns of decentralized expansion based on noren wake encourage variety and innovation rather than replication and this particular ecological advantage is leveraged internationally to allow Japanese businesses to better glocalize their operations via the training and mentorship of local talent.

Regional Management of Depopulated and Aged Community in Japan -A Case of Okinoshima Island

KenjiTsutsumi - Osaka University

Since the 1960's, some rural regions in Japan have been lost their population and regional functions. But up to around 2030 through 2040, even the metropolitan areas in this country would experience drastic depopulation and severe ageing of the population. Then soon after the 2050, the national economic power of Japan will decay rapidly, down to that of semi-developed country. Just in front of the scenario, the present situation of already-depopulated region can offer useful examples to think about depopulated and aged society soon we will encounter. Here I refer to sustainable conditions of daily life, education, child and aged care, medical care, main industry, preservation of nature and so on, about an depopulated island Okinoshima, where our research team has been studied for five years, with thinking of regional management of the day.

Japanese Enterprises' Performance in Brazil

Hachiro Hagiwara - Shikoku University

Japanese people started to immigrate to Brazil in 1908, and Japanese immigrants have been playing a very important role in the agricultural field of the Brazilian society, since then. Today, Brazilian of Japanese origin play an important role in business and the other fields, too. Investment from Japan to Brazil had its first boom in the mid-1950s, when important national projects emerged in the field of energy and steel, etc. The second boom occurred in the period called the "Brazilian miracle," from 1968 to 1973, when many Japanese enterprises rushed to Brazil. However, Brazil experienced a "lost decade" in the 1980s followed by Japan in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Bubble Economy. Investment from Japan was minimal during these periods. Since 1994, when the Real Plan started to stabilize the Brazilian economy, investment by Japanese enterprises has been returning to Brazil, which is creating a third boom. According to a recent questionnaire to Japanese enterprises in Brazil, most wish to localize as much as possible. Though managerial posts are held by Japanese, many administrative posts can be filled locally. There is so-called master-servant (employer-employee) relationship in the case of most Japanese enterprises in Brazil. This conservative scheme has not seemed to change, although human flow has increased a lot due to the Dekasegi phenomenon which began in the 1990s. The presenter will mention Japanese enterprises' tendency in Brazil and typical philosophy of Japanese-Brazilian enterprise managers.



Boundary spanning role of Japanese expatriates and their network practices in the EU

Rolf Dieter Schlunze - Ritsumeikan University

This research seeks to identify the importance of geographically boundary spanning activities in studies of managerial responses to institutional complexity and change within the EU. Expatriates play the role of boundary spanners, gathering market information and bridging internal and external organizational contexts. How do global managers address managerial embeddedness and what kind of network strategy do they follow in purpose to succeed in workplaces overseas? Previous research showed that cultural synergy can be created by the boundary spanner when cooperation and harmony in the workplace is achieved. It was assumed that Japanese managers with a high network density tend to have more supporters in workplaces important to manage the global value chain. Interactions with various supporters provide access to knowledge about the market

enabling a successful sales performance. Following a confirmatory sampling method thick evidence for the existence of four different types of managing networks could be provided: The manager with a preference for globalizing practices transfers managerial knowhow; meanwhile the one focusing on localizing practices makes incremental improvements to existing products and services. The manager engaging in networking on a global scale facilitates the corporate network to expand sales in the EU market; meanwhile the one who focuses on embedding creates an integrative atmosphere in the workplace taking care of compliance. Pinpointing on different networking strategies but similar outcomes I conclude that expatriated managers having a boundary spanner role enabling the global firm to manage geographically distributed workplaces and markets successfully. Case study research should outline the importance of developing our understanding of relational and topical spaces highlighting how the 'receptivity' of a location may affect synergy creation of actors with different cultural backgrounds.



Presentations at SIEM Research Group meeting Association of Japanese Geographers (AJG)

1) Autumn AJG meeting at Wakayama University, 23. September 2018

The factors for enterprises development in inland regions of Fujian Province, China

Lin CHEN (Hiroshima University)

The researches focusing on the enterprise development in China mainly targeted the suburban areas of Eastern Coastal China. Up to date, there are a few types of researches to consider the enterprises' developmental dynamics in the inland regions of Eastern Coastal China. Therefore, in this study, the author attempts to clarify the manner in which enterprises have developed in the inland regions of Fujian Province, China and to identify the features of labor employment by analyzing data on a rapidly developing town in the inland areas. The main research methods used were face-to-face interviews with plant managers and town offices, and a questionnaire survey administered to workers.

Since the mid-1990s, enterprises in inland regions of Fujian Province have developed rapidly. Analysis of the case study indicated

that large-scale factories that were originally township and village enterprises are now playing an important role in the enterprise development of the inland regions. These factories process local agricultural products and successfully approach external consumer markets with the help of partner enterprises in coastal urban areas. Such factories obtain most of their workforce from nearby rural areas and also draw workers from relatively distant areas both inside and outside Fujian Province. The age of workers ranges from 20 years to 50- a wide range- because they perform various roles such as managers, technical workers, office workers, and producing processing workers. These factors were considered to play a crucial role in supporting the continuous enterprises' development in inland regions in recent years

2) Symposium at the General Meeting of the Association of Japanese Geographers at Senshu University, 21. March 2019

Theme of the symposium:

Current situations of non-metropolitan local economies and urban to rural migration

The Research group of international economy and management of the Association of Japanese Geographers held a symposium titled "Current situation of non-metropolitan local economies and urban to rural migration" at the General Meeting of the Association of Japanese Geographers with the initiative of the Research group of geography of industrial economy at Senshu University in Kanagawa on March, 21, 2019. The symposium attracted many members of the association to join, and

the speakers and the audience enjoyed fruitful discussion on the theme of the symposium and presentations. The titles of each presentation are as follows:

Presentations:

Hironobu Oda (Seikei Univ.): Introduction

Makoto Hirai (Kanagawa Univ.): Migration to small municipalities in non-metropolitan areas, Japan



Takashi Nakazawa (Meiji Univ.): Internal and external networks that support local startups: a case study in Ueda city, Nagano

Jo Komuro et al. (Univ. of Tsukuba): The geographical factors of migrants' new local businesses in the downtown area of Ina city

Tetsuji Ishimaru (Univ. of Teacher Education Fukuoka): Social business market and startup environment in rural area

Atsushi Taira (Kagawa Univ.): Assisting programs for local small and medium-sized firms and volunteer study groups by firms: a case study in Kagawa

Hironobu Oda (Seikei Univ.): Policy to attract satellite offices and community invigoration in Tokushima Prefecture (1): circumstance and some implications

Kimiko Endo (Keiai Univ.): Policy to attract satellite offices and community invigoration in Tokushima Prefecture (2): a case study of Minami Town

Kazufumi Fujita (Wakayama Univ.): Policy to attract satellite offices and community invigoration in Tokushima Prefecture (3): the role of university's satellite offices

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