



The Power of Ideas and International Business
July 5-8, 2003 - Hyatt Regency Monterey - Monterey, California, USA

Call for Papers

Holding our AIB 2003 meeting in Monterey suggests a conference theme that focuses on the interaction of powerful ideas and international business. We focus not only on ideas in the realm of business, but all kinds of powerful human ideas that have an impact on the practice of international business.

Monterey is part of California where many potent recent ideas have emerged, been tolerated, nurtured, and prospered. Ensuing values and lifestyles have spread across the world and changed the landscape of business internationally. This is part of a larger historical pattern where the whims of individuals, groups, and nations often against all odds, have kept changing the human condition. When Monterey was the capital of California, the constitution was written in both English and Spanish. California has existed under four different flags: Spain, Mexico, the Republic of California and the U.S. Let us also recall that The United Nations was a creation of the so-called San Francisco Conference right after World-War II. The international academic community itself builds on an old idea about the freedom of thought and speech, which is manifested in the many great universities along the Californian coast.

The Monterey Peninsula is very much concerned with another quite recent idea - the preservation of the natural environment. In effect, the area is considered a sort of natural sanctuary, well known worldwide for preserving species of the ocean, the soil, and the environment at large. In parallel to the idea of sustainable development, the dream of the so-called "new economy" developed slightly north of Monterey in the former prune orchards of Silicon Valley. After 150 years a second "gold rush" to California was a fact. Internationally famous rock bands have summarized the powerful forces at play as a "dream of Californication". Arguably, the credo from the area surrounding Monterey has affected the way in which multinational companies around the world are organized and how their employees go about their daily work.

The simple fact is that the business world cannot live in isolation from human ideas. In the following, please find an incomplete and tentative list of major ideas that have affected international managers and their firms in recent history. Contributions to research related to these or related ideas are especially welcomed.

- The idea of globalization, or interpreted differently "re-internationalization", of business is having tremendous effect on both policies and action. Influential politicians, business leaders, and academics repeat the term as a mantra. The Internet rapidly was seen as an enabler of this idea, providing virtually unbound communication between people around the globe and thereby speeding up the inevitable changes.
- Corporate citizenship is not a new concept, but has recently become the talk of the town. Increasingly, scholars and international managers have become interested in issues that question the uncomplicated pursuit of profitability by multinational companies. The idea that humans as consumers and employees want to associate a multinational company with social responsibility has become powerful. Companies across the world are working on ways to make people put both their brains and hearts into a venture. Interestingly the new economy idea of "give to gain" is closely related.
- The supremacy of democracy and in a wider sense the power and responsibility of individuals as consumers and employees is sweeping the world. Concepts like "ethically correct" consumption or investment as well as "empowering" of employees have become hard to ignore for people involved in or studying international business. According to this idea, humans are condemned to choose from a variety of international offers of products, services and jobs, and will do so willingly and with an attitude. Strong reactions to organizations like the WTO are connected to this set of ideas.
- An increasingly popular idea is that our current societal development is not sustainable, meaning that the social and ecological conditions for overall life-quality and prosperity of human civilization are systematically being undermined. According to its believers ever-larger parts of nature are manipulated leading to destructive impacts accompanying the exchange of material and waste between society and ecosystem. Problems are seen as existing on the global level, affecting the reputation, decisions and actions of multinational companies.
- Powerful ideas from the natural sciences like emergence, relativity, quantum mechanics, chaos theory, complex adaptive systems, self-organization, holism, and non-determinism are making inroads into the social sciences. Their influence is apparent in recent management literature and recipes for how multinational companies should be run.
- The uncurbed interest of scholars and practitioners in innovations and their role in the development of global society of course relates to the conference theme of powerful ideas.
- The dream of a hypermodern, rational society has spawned numerous projects where emotions and sentimentality for good and for bad have been stopped from interfering. Studies of "ordinary life" in international companies find that the borders between work and family are disappearing. More and more things are managed, including family members, and technological solutions are sought for almost everything. The effects of long working hours, career pressure at young age, extreme levels of communication and an obsession with scheduling are increasingly the focus of debate.