

FOREWORD

The «Rivista internazionale di Scienze sociali» is publishing the proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Economics of Innovation, which took place on June 11 and 12, 1993 at the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Piacenza.

This year's first session of the Conference focused on the relationship between innovation and market structure: which market form gives more incentives technological change? Are oligopolistic market structures more innovative than competitive environments?

Some traditional theories underline the importance of innovation by new entrepreneurs. They enter a competitive industrial sector and start enterprises with new ideas, processes and products, thus changing the existing production, organisation and distribution schemes.

According to other models, innovation is due to large and well established, oligopolistic or monopolistic firms, with large R&D laboratories and high entry barriers to small and medium sized enterprises. If this is the actual dynamic of innovation, small and medium sized enterprises are exposed to opportunities and risks, because they can be active and successful, through the complementarity of roles and synergic relationships with larger companies, but they risk being left to develop only marginal innovative activities.

The seven papers presented at the Conference on this subject have all tried to provide a deeper insight into some particular aspects of the main problem, with a common conclusion: innovation is one of the main competitive weapons for an enterprise, whatever the market structure may be.

A clear example, from this point of view, is high speed railway, which has a special character: it is not the result of a single revolutionary innovation, but of the massive and coordinated application of a large number of smaller innovations in the railway technology, and especially its operating system, production, construction and maintenance. At the same time, the reorganization of railway management is most important for the development of an innovative service.

This has been carried out in some countries, such as France, Japan and Germany, while Italy is certainly late as far as high speed is concerned.

This collection of papers also includes the contributions of the round table on cost, management and efficiency of high speed railway, with international experts from the main industrialized countries.

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