

Preface

On the surface, the activities of small or entrepreneurial businesses and those of multinational enterprises seem highly divergent. Until recently, they have in fact operated in largely separate realms, each in its own competitive space, and each with characteristics markedly different from those of the other. However, globalization has begun to dismantle the barriers that traditionally segregated local business opportunities and local firms from their international counterparts. Local markets are becoming integral parts of broader, global markets. Consequently, internationally oriented entrepreneurs can now view a much broader range of opportunities and competitive modes, unrestricted by national boundaries. In this integrating global environment, entrepreneurs and emerging businesses face both new opportunities, and formidable new challenges.

One result of the breakdown of the lines of demarcation, that formerly segregated these disparate fields of management, is the emergence of a new subfield of research – *international entrepreneurship*. To explore and develop this emerging area of research, a pioneering, three-day conference was held in September 2000 at McGill University, in Montreal, Canada, under the joint auspices of McGill's Business and Management Research Centre, and the Dobson Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies. The conference brought together leading scholars from international business, and from small business/entrepreneurship, to stimulate integration of research in what had previously been widely divergent fields.

Selected papers were subjected to a rigorous process of peer review and comments. Each was revised extensively to incorporate and to reflect the perspectives of other disciplines. The final product is a series of leading-edge research papers presented in this volume, as well as in two other publications.¹

The authors acknowledge with special gratitude McGill's Dobson Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies and its director, Peter Johnson, for their sustained support of these pioneering conferences, especially the inaugural one in September 1998, which have generated these and other leading-edge contributions to the emerging field of international entrepreneurship. We thank the many contributing authors, both for their helpful feedback to other authors, and for their patience in revising – sometimes repeatedly – their own contributions. Finally, we commend the foresight of Edward

Elgar Publishing and its Acquisition Editor, Alan M. Sturmer, for recognizing the importance of international entrepreneurship by its prominent publication of research in this emerging field. *The McGill International Entrepreneurship series* from Edward Elgar, which includes this book, is a culmination of that foresight.²

It is clear that as globalization proceeds apace, entrepreneurs and small businesses will play a more prominent role in the global business arena. In this increasingly interconnected world, it is ever more important that we learn from each other – both across cultures and across academic disciplines. The works in this collection provide a wealth of new insights on both traditional and emerging aspects of SME internationalization, from a variety of national perspectives and from a variety of disciplines. We hope that they will provide valuable insights for business leaders, policy formulator, and academics alike in understanding and coping with our rapidly changing world.

Hamid Etemad
Richard Wright

Montreal, December 2001

NOTES

1. Other papers emanating from the 2000 McGill conference have appeared in special issues of *Journal of International Management*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Fall 2001); and in *Small Business Economics* (2002, forthcoming). Both collections are under the guest editorship of Hamid Etemad and Richard W. Wright.
2. A companion volume in the Elgar series, entitled *International Entrepreneurship in Small and Medium Size Enterprises: Orientation, Environment and Strategy* (forthcoming), edited by Hamid Etemad, will also house a collection of papers from the conference.