

Preface

The idea for this edited volume was developed in 2010 and 2011 during empirical investigations in one of our collaborative research projects in China. During our usual late-night discussions about our experiences in investigating Chinese firms and regional economies, we realized that trade fairs had received little academic attention within the context of Asian economic development, at least from the perspective of economic geography and political economy, as well as other disciplines. The consequence of our discussions was a plan to draft a targeted conference with a workshop character that brings together key individuals and members of research groups that specialize on trade fair research and can provide important insights into the rise, development and implications of trade fair activity in the Asia-Pacific region. While the focus of our enquiry was on the development in East and Southeast Asia, we also included Australia in our comparative framework due to the manifold linkages that unfold between Asian economies and Australia.

We decided to organize this event in Shanghai and scheduled a program of topics to be discussed and contributors to be invited to it. East China Normal University viewed this as an ambitious academic endeavor and was willing to sponsor the conference. With financial support in place, we approached about 15 leading researchers from different countries and invited them to participate in the event. Finally, on 25–26 May 2012, the ‘Asia-Pacific Conference on Trade Fair Ecologies’ took place in Shanghai at the Jin Sha Hotel in the vicinity of East China Normal University (see <http://iurp.ecnu.edu.cn/APCTFE/>; accessed 2 September 2014). This two-day event and the days immediately before and after the conference provided a unique opportunity to discuss the latest trends in trade fair development, learn from expert experiences and try to apply new concepts to Asia-Pacific trade fairs. Because of the shortcomings in existing research, the idea was developed to generate a consistent edited volume on the rise and development of trade fair activities in the Asia-Pacific region based on the joint experiences during the conference.

The intention of this edited book is to attract a broad readership from the fields of economic geography, economics, management/marketing, political science and sociology, as the analyses and implications presented

in this book directly address contemporary debates in these disciplines about the role of trade fairs in supporting and enabling local industrial development and globalization processes. The book is directed to researchers and students, as well as to policy makers, regional planners and operating/organizing firms (operators/organizers) in the trade fair industry. The book chapters present conceptual and empirical findings that are relevant for disciplinary and trans-disciplinary debates in the social sciences about economic development, the function of the state, drivers and consequences of trade fair development, the role of the Asia-Pacific region in the globalizing knowledge economy, and the diverse development paths of political economies in the region. While we do not aim to present a complete overview of the entire region, our book fills substantial gaps in the existing literature. By arguing and demonstrating how trade shows become important building blocks for understanding globalization, innovation and national/local economic development processes, the edited volume intersects with different disciplines in the social sciences.

It is clear that such an endeavor is based on the help of and collaboration with many individuals that provided crucial support throughout all stages of this project. We would like to point out a few individuals who brought much dedication and passion to this project. In particular, we would like to thank Rachael Gibson, Michael Kunz, Li-Ang Liu, Ye Liu, Rui-Yi Mao, Tang-Wei Teng, Xiao-Rui Xin and Yi-Wen Zhu for excellent research support. The organization of the 2012 Shanghai conference would not have been possible without crucial support by Xiao-Wen Bao and Qi Tang, for which we are very grateful. We are especially indebted to Sufyan Katariwala and David Adams for thoroughly and efficiently copy-editing the book manuscript and to the anonymous Reviewers for providing manifold suggestions for improvements of the individual chapters. Furthermore, we wish to thank Alex O'Connell and Alex Pettifer from Edward Elgar Publishing for their confidence in and support of this book project. Financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China, East China Normal University and the Canada Research Chair in Innovation and Governance at the University of Toronto is greatly appreciated. Last, but not least, we wish to emphasize that this has become a truly joint adventure that would have not been possible without the commitment and engagement of every single contributor to this book, in generating a consistent manuscript and carrying this research agenda further. In the end, this book is also a reflection of the deep friendship and partnership between both editors that has developed over more than 25 years.

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