The Medium as an Innovation in International Negotiation: An Introduction

JAN M. ULIIN*
Department of Organization Science and Marketing, Eindhoven University of Technology, 5600 MB Eindhoven, the Netherlands (E-mail: J.M.Ulijn@tm.tue.nl)

GREGORY KERSTEN**
Decision Sciences and MIS, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Boulevard West, Montreal, Canada (E-mail: Gregory@mercato.concordia.ca)

This issue of International Negotiation addresses a new research perspective on cross-cultural and international negotiation processes – the effects of innovation. This research examines the process of negotiation in terms of the elemental human decision-making and communication acts that are mediated by, and/or supported with, information and computer technologies (ICTs). Electronic media are used by negotiators to communicate among themselves and with the computer systems. Support tools and aids are used, among others, in structuring and analyzing the negotiation problem, eliciting negotiator preferences, constructing their utility functions, visualizing the negotiation process, and assessing offers and counter-offers.

The initial impetus for this issue was a special session on technology at the International Association for Conflict Management (IACM) Conference in 2001, Towards a dialogue between conflict theories and practices across paradigms and cultures, organized by the Institute for Research and Education on Negotiation in Europe (IRENE) of the ESSEC Business School (Paris). Papers presented there, including a study on dyadic influence in organizations through computer-mediated channels (Barry and Fulmer, 2001), provided an up-to-date social-cognitive framework, supplementing an earlier synthetic study by Bordia (1996).

* Jan Ulijn holds an endowed Jean Monnet chair in Euromanagement at Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands.
** Gregory Kersten is a professor of decision and information systems in the Department of Decision Sciences and MIS at the John Molson School of Business, Concordia University in Canada. He also holds a Paul Desmarais/Power Corporation Professorship at the Faculty of Management, University of Ottawa, Canada.
Four Research Directions

The articles included in this issue discuss the effects that ICTs and electronic media have on the negotiation process and its outcomes, and the influence of culture that emerge in electronic negotiations. These articles build on four directions of negotiation research:

1. Studies of international negotiations;
2. The impact of technological innovations on negotiators and negotiations;
3. The role of ICT on the efficiency and effectiveness of decision making and conflict resolution through negotiation; and
4. Cultural issues in negotiations that use ICT.

These four directions are described in more detail below.

*International negotiation* is a complex exercise in human communication. Ulijn and Strother, (1995, Chapter 7) observe that in face-to-face (FTF) negotiations, the mere skill of listening explains as much as 75% of a positive outcome for all parties concerned. The communication process is increasingly influenced by the media used directly in the process and those which the parties access individually. Apart from the classic face-to-face, letter, fax or telephone, other communication media increasingly influence negotiations, including Internet technologies such as email and electronic negotiation systems (ENS) (Bichler, Kersten et al. 2003), and even television. Negotiation support systems (NSS) which, before the Internet revolution, were designed for local and wide area networks (Kersten 1987; Bui 1994; Rangaswamy and Shell 1997) have been ported to the web and, now, web-enabled NSSs have been deployed (Teich, Wallenius et al. 1998; Kersten and Noronha 1999; Yuan 2001).

Recent studies on the impact of technological innovations on negotiations include comparisons of the effects of "old" versus "new" negotiation media, for instance, by comparing FTF versus computer-mediated communication (CMC). A comprehensive synthesis of 18 experimental studies by Bordia (1996) sheds light on a possible double effect of innovation on negotiation: the innovation of the medium by which the negotiation process is carried out (this issue) and innovation as the content of international negotiation (the next issue of *International Negotiation* – Vol. 9, no. 2 – guest edited by Ulijn and Tjosvold, 2004 forthcoming).

FTF groups perform better in generating ideas and achieving mutual understanding than CMC groups. This is an important first step in innovation management (Ulijn and Weggeman 2001). It has also been shown that CMC is superior in equalizing participation and in reducing inhibition in the idea generation phase, which appears to be essential to create a favorable innovation