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Call for Papers for Special Issue on: “Professionalization and Managerialization of Family SMEs; Bohemian vs. Wagnerian Approaches; Managing People, Systems, Mechanisms and Business; Bridging the Gap and Calling for an Interdisciplinary Approach”

Guest Editors

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Family SMEs significantly contribute to the competitiveness and value creation of national economies. Family SMEs represent the dominant archetype of small business, covering 95% of western business activity. This percentage increases even further when considering Asia, South-America and Africa, in which it approaches 100% of business activity. Nevertheless, research still only limitedly echoes their socio-economical relevance and their peculiar managerial approaches. Frequently limited to the fields of entrepreneurship, governance and strategic management, family SMEs research has only recently come into its own right as a potential field of study. In comparison to large enterprises, family SMEs feature bivalent (positive and negative) characteristics, mainly due to their innate informal, mostly norm-rather-than-rule and procedure-based, unstructured decision making processes, and to their less formal approaches to management. Scholars and practitioners often consider managerial informality as an implicit assumption and a peculiar feature of family SMEs. They often see “professional management” and “family management” as mutually exclusive concepts. Nevertheless, when grievance, cognitive conflicts or business concerns emerge, family SMEs may perceive informal managerial systems as an obstacle for exploiting successful behaviours. Therefore, facing these tensions, balancing both formal and informal systems becomes one of the greater challenges for family SMEs. Skills to exploit the positive dimensions of efficient decision-making processes with the professionalization of owners, managers and other managerial actors, along with the managerialization of structures and mechanisms, become critical for the survival and success of family SMEs.

This special issue aims at contributing to the debate on professionalization and managerialization of family SMEs. Family SMEs’ professionalization and managerialization have become increasingly relevant, both in the world of academic research with increasing journal space devoted to the topic each year, and in the world of practitioners with a rising amount of seminars and all sorts of “how to” books and manuals. We understand managerialization as the diffusion of formal managerial systems, including strategic planning (SP), managerial control systems (MCS), managerial accounting systems (MAS) and information systems (IS), as well as human resource management (HRM) systems. This may go together with the professionalization of the firm, i.e. the making up of the asset, and its

improvement of human skills, knowledge and experiences, and the diligent application of specialized competencies for the firm's value creation. Professionalization of family SMEs passes through hiring and involving family and non-family professional managers. Family SMEs are submissive to well-known organizational development models, such as the life cycle model, which typically defines a set of predetermined stages or phases through which an organization evolves. These transitions can be contingent on time, on the size of the organization or on other organizational variables. This unique transition from an entrepreneurial firm, often owner-managed, to a more formalized, structured and institutionalized one defines the professionalization and managerialization process of family SMEs.

Family SMEs feature a narrow adoption of formal managerial systems and show few professional competencies. They seem to follow a configurational approach in adopting specific multidimensional bundles of managerial mechanisms to achieve dynamic internal consistent configurations with the environmental and the organizational variables. Clan and social control systems are more effective than bureaucratic and administrative ones when, in organizations, a small group of people sharing common values and highly coordinated through personal ties manage strategy, decision-making, and power. That being so, distinctive features of family SMEs, as family influence and involvement and the presence of blood ties or kinships, may be supportive to a reduced emphasis on formal systems and on professional competencies. Whereas the influence and the involvement of the family reduces the need of bureaucratic controls, social interactions among family members allow the adoption of informal mechanisms that substitute or complement the former ones, including traditional SP, MAS, MCS, IS, and HRM systems (Mayson and Barrett, 2006; Marlow et al., 2010; Gnan et al., 2013; Rohlfert, Muñoz and Slocum, 2016). A complementarity can generate important synergies between different systems and, thereby, generate far more positive effects than substitution (Poppo and Zenger 2002).

Nevertheless, formal mechanisms and professional competencies could help to cope with interests and concerns of both the realms of the firm and of the family (Rue and Ibrahim, 1995; Songini, Gnan, and Malmi, 2013; Della Torre and Solari, 2013; Songini and Gnan, 2015). Literature on family firms recognizes the importance of managerialization and professionalization in smoothing succession issues. Although intensive managerial systems can influence the financial health of small firms both positively and negatively (Sels et al., 2006), the development of such unique tools and human resources may contribute to their survival (Mayson and Barret, 2006), preserving socio-emotional non-financial goals. By reviewing the relevant family firm literature, we can conclude that there is not a uniform definition about the concepts of professionalization and managerialization of family SMEs. What is even more worrying is that we can identify a tendency of equating professionalization and managerialization of family SMEs exclusively with some simplistic dimensions. This special issue aims to grasp this variety in definitions that exists in the literature, ranging from very narrow to more broadened viewpoints.

The purpose of the special issue is twofold:

- Firstly, to deliver answers for how, why and what questions on both
 - the design, adoption, use and (non-)change of managerial systems within family SMEs, and
 - the acquiring, nurturing and fostering of skills, knowledge and experiences matching the requirements of implementing and adopting those managerial systems.
- Secondly, to engage in the cross-disciplinary debate on the conceptual relationships and frameworks that these fields (family SMEs, managerial systems and professional competencies) might share and benefit from,

wherein the first goal intends to leverage one field with the other, and the second objective aims at a reciprocal benefit from an exchange between both fields.

The special issue seeks process-oriented research of an internal managerial nature that makes functional or theoretical contributions, and is a heartfelt call to bring into the debate new communities of scholars and to investigate how to help family SMEs in coping with the challenges of their professionalization and managerialization issues. The special issue welcomes papers that make theoretical and/or empirical contributions to these issues. International and comparative papers are particularly welcome.

Subject Coverage

Suitable topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What is the content of the professionalization construct within a family SME context?
- What is the content of the managerialization construct within a family SME context?
- How and why do family SMEs professionalize and/or managerialize?
- How can we distinguish family SMEs based on the professionalization and managerialization constructs?
- To what extent does professionalization and managerialization affect family SME performance?
- How and why do owner/managers' approaches to professionalization and managerialization differ?
- Which are the technological instances, the national and international environmental dimensions and internal organizational factors that influence the intensity and speed of the adoption decision, on the one hand, and the implementation process, on the other hand of managerial systems in family SMEs?
- How do managerial systems affect family SMEs' processes of professionalization, succession, 'familiness' or 'socioemotional wealth'?
- How do ownership and governance changes in family SMEs draw on managerial systems?
- How are professionalization and managerialization processes involved in developing a family SMEs' identity, reputation and/or legitimacy?
- How is the relationship between governance, strategy and professionalization and managerialization processes in family SMEs articulated?
- How do generational transitions, involving top-management teams and other corporate governance structures, play out within managerial systems in family SMEs?

Notes for Prospective Authors

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. (N.B. Conference papers may only be submitted if the paper has been completely re-written and if appropriate written permissions have been obtained from any copyright holders of the original paper).

All papers are refereed through a peer review process.

All papers must be submitted online. Please read our [Submitting articles](#) page.

Important Dates

Manuscripts due by: *30 September, 2018*

Notification to authors: *30 November, 2018*

Final versions due by: *30 January, 2019*