Abstract

The most valuable and complex technologies are increasingly innovated by networks that self-organize. Networks are those linked organizations (e.g., firms, universities, government agencies) that create, acquire, and integrate the diverse knowledge and skills required to create and bring to the market complex technologies (e.g., aircraft, telecommunications equipment). In other words, innovation networks are organized around constant learning. Self-organization refers to the capacity these networks have for combining and recombining these learning capabilities without centralized, detailed managerial guidance. The proliferation of self-organizing innovation networks may be linked to many factors, but a key one seems to be increasing globalization. Indeed, globalization and self-organizing innovation networks may be coevolving. Changes in the organization of the innovation process appear to have facilitated the broadening geographical linkages of products, processes, and markets. At the same time,
globalization seems to induce cooperation among innovative organizations.

Research on innovation networks is used to illustrate these ideas. The evolution of the automotive industry provides a test case.

Keywords
Network; Globalization; Innovation; Automotive industry

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