

Theoretical Paradigms between Business Economics and Industrial Organization

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Paradigmi teorici fra economia d'impresa e economia

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This paper analyses the theoretical relationship between business economics and industrial organization. It focuses on the paradigmatic approaches (neoclassical, structuralist, strategic, institutional and evolutionary) that have influenced the cultural division and contamination between these two different branches of economic and firm analysis. The reciprocal influence is particularly evident in the development of strategic and institutional paradigms, with their attention to the firm behaviour and organizational settings, although with important and persistent methodological differences (for instance, game theory vs. business strategic history). With the evolutionary paradigm, the possible theoretical integration between business economics and industrial organization is growing, both in international and national literature. It contributes to a renewal in the theory of the firm and to explore new possible research agenda between industrial and business economists.

1. INTRODUCTION

The debate on the relationship between business economics and the industrial economy, for some years now, it has been very lively - even in our country - by addressing issues concerning the object of analysis and the respective research methodologies. Interpretations different from a mutual and absolute distinction of competences to others based on their intersection, up to one of them interpenetration, follow each other in the theoretical debate, with scientific contributions coming from both disciplinary components.

A position, however, very common both in the business economy that in the industrial economy concerns the crisis of dominant theoretical paradigms (corporate and micro-economic neoclassical) from which, separately, these two disciplinary fields have derived their cultural origin.

On the business economy front, in recent years, some authors they noted a deep dissatisfaction with certain lines of demarcation disciplinary unable to read and interpret the phenomena in an appropriate manner economic and business 1. Compared to traditional second cultural settings which the objects of analysis of the business economy and the industrial economy are considered distinct, we tend to emphasize the usefulness of a variety of theoretical approaches to the study of the same economic reality 2. Other authors

1 "It always makes less sense to emphasize individual and specific disciplinary areas and to draw rigid

boundaries between the general economy and the business economy. This not so much to reaffirm yet once the need to enhance the interdisciplinary approach or the essentiality of the comparison critical between different disciplines, but because the understanding and interpretation of some fundamental themes, which cut horizontally macro and microeconomics, require now a high interaction between the way of producing knowledge of the business economist and that of the general economist "(Vaccà, 1985).

2 «We believe in the scientific utility of the coexistence of a plurality of approaches to

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they expressed themselves on the need for a theoretical revision, even radical, of the economy

3, due to its inherent inability to interpret

today's business reality 4 and to prescribe valid rules for acting in favor

of entrepreneurs and managers 5. This leads to the desire for contamination

cultural with other disciplines, in order to enrich the theoretical heritage of the economy

6, while avoiding easy, mechanical and uncritical assimilations

passive from other cultural areas 7. In this logic, the invitation

renewal through research and implementation of new perspectives

methodologies and new tools of analysis, even very distant from the economy

of companies, have often been underlined 8.

In our opinion, this cultural debate lends itself to better analysis

if contextualised within the different dominant theoretical paradigms

that have occurred over time in the context of the analysis respectively

economic and business. The merit of such an approach allows,

in fact, a historical and epistemologically correct reconstruction of the genesis

and of the theoretical development of these two disciplinary fields, disavowing the value

and the meaning of their differences, their contaminations and the

possible convergences in the light of the theoretical paradigms taken as reference.

study of the same economic reality: only by putting, from time to time, more "slow" observation,

with the awareness of their partiality, but with the serenity of their potential complementarity,

it is possible to set up a study aimed at understanding the complexity of the systems

of reference "(Sicca, 1994).

3 Moreover, there are also prudent positions with respect to renewal: "If we were sure

that the whole landscape of the inherited paradigms offered nothing to work on and continue

[...] but it seems to us that perhaps a few principles of a general nature are not overcome

from the new realities "(Ceccanti, 1994).

4 «The research activity carried out to date is based on the widespread conviction that the doctrine

it is no longer suitable for interpreting today's business reality "(Silvestrelli, 1994).

5 The economic-business theories show "not only inevitable gaps and deep voids: they focus on realities that have often radically changed their connotations; modeled, they explained, they brought to uniformity phenomena and circumstances that today would be difficult for us to recognize. The result is rules that, at least in part, have neither meaning nor meaning utility "(Podestà, 1993).

6 «Until we have the courage to change [...] our theories, there will be no other alternative that of closing ourselves in the maintenance of our tradition or waiting for others more vital academic communities provide us with solutions that we have not wanted or known to look for, as too often we have done in these latest years "(Vicari, 1993).

7 «The pluralism of methods of analysis, provided they are scientifically founded, analytically developed and centered on the problems of corporate governance, it becomes a condition of vitality of the our studies, of which the potentialities and risks to the plan have to be evaluated serenely scientific "(Cozzi, Silvestrelli 1991).

8 "The need for a new and effective dialogue between people is increasingly felt different disciplines and the importance of using the most suitable analysis tools to penetrate the greater and iridescent complexity of the company systems and in bringing out anomalies and variations within the conceptual schemes of orthodoxy "(Varaldo, 1992).

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In light of these premises, the work develops and analyzes three theoretical phases clearly distinct in the evolution of these two disciplinary fields, noting their similarities and differences in the object of analysis and research methodologies.

2. THE PHASE OF DIFFERENT SCIENTIFIC DOMINATES: THE COMPANY PARADIGM E THE NEOCLASSIC MICROECONOMIC

The business economy and the industrial economy developed, originally, theoretical paradigms deeply divergent between them.

The economic-business theory of our country, with its Zapien origins, he tended to affirm a paradigm where the company is seen as an entity profoundly different from that assumed in the industrial economy, through the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm.

The conceptual autonomy of the business economy derives from the fact that microeconomics does not deal with problems related to the detection of company facts, nor does it deal with business management and organization. It is in antithesis with the part of the neoclassical microeconomics that deals with business theory since i

concepts of cost, revenue, income, etc., used by neoclassical microeconomics have nature that is profoundly different from those used by the economy company. It follows that business economics and political economy deal with things different, and thus constitute disjointed scientific domains (Biggiero, Laise 1998).

On the other hand, both the business paradigm and the microeconomic one neoclassical are characterized by their claim to theoretical generalization, with their application to any type of company, regardless of sectoral, spatial and historical context of reference 9. These are paradigms theorists who aim to identify the universal laws of existence and functioning of the company, even starting from deeply divergent assumptions and incompatible with each other.

However, while the business paradigm tends to assert a theory company, the neoclassical microeconomic one tends to elaborate above all a theory of the markets from which only a business theory derives indirectly. The analytical objective of neoclassical microeconomics is, in fact, that of determining the aggregate equilibrium conditions in a given the market, in terms of quantity and prices, as they appear well structured in the model of perfect competition. The company does not exist in the

9 «The reductionist approach of the economy, insisting on the implications of a logical nature, he often neglected the historical and institutional contexts "(Gambardella, 1995).

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its individuality but is only an automatic and indistinct derivative of the market structure, given by the exogenous conditions of technology and question 10. The company can not modify these structural arrangements and can take over only a passive behavior with respect to these exogenous constraints; it limits itself to pursuing an optimizing behavior, which consists in fixing a consistent price, given these constraints, with the attainment of the maximum profit 11:

the company has only a productive function, it does not exist as an organization and it is completely passive compared to the market. [...] This company has the same characteristics that of Walras: it is price-taker and can only define how much to produce, given the optimal technique that competition imposes on it; the world in which it moves is certain and the his goal is maximum profit, but in balance there is no profit; business and entrepreneur identify themselves, there are no organizational problems and the good produced is unique (Silva, 1991).

So, in this paradigm, the absence of a business project is yes
it also reflects in an absence of the concept and the related analytical elaborations
to competitive strategies: «advertising, undercutting, and improving ("differentiating")
the goods and services are all excluded by definition - "perfect"
competition means the absence of all competitive activities »(Hayek,
1948).

On the contrary, the economic-business theory, from the beginning, is not founded
on a unicriterial maximizing logic, where profit is the only one
a factor capable of guaranteeing and conditioning operation and development
firm. Cultural contributions on
this theme is seen as survival
of companies is strongly dependent on the satisfaction of one
plurality of subjects (stakeholders), rather than just the shareholders. Consequently,
corporate choices are multicriteria, having to take these into account
different entities having expectations and roles that are not necessarily convergent
which are reflected in satisfactory and non-optimizing solutions.

10 In this logic, the enterprise is "an indivisible and dimensionless unity of decision,
completely unrecognizable even to the most superficial observer of real enterprises that
operate in a normal industrial context "(Hay, Morris 1994).

11 In other words, neoclassical microeconomists have preferred to construct "models of forms
market, or models that make explicit, albeit in an abstract and simplified, schemes
details of price formation from which the characteristics could derive indirectly
fundamentals of the companies that operated in those forms "(Podestà, 1988).

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3. THE PHASE OF CULTURAL CONTAMINATION: THE AFFIRMATION OF THE PARADIGM STRATEGIC AND OF THE INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL

Since the 1960s, important international events have occurred
theoretical discontinuities in both the business and the industrial economy
for the emergence of two different theoretical paradigms: the strategic one e
the institutional and organizational one. They, despite their differences, involve
important critical revisits of previous theoretical approaches
firm.

The logical consequence of the emergence of these two different paradigms
consists in a rapprochement between the business economy and the industrial economy,
with a process of mutual cultural contamination regarding

concepts, objects of analysis, languages and research methodologies. A contribution fundamental in our country towards this cross-fertilization between the two cultural areas derives, between the sixties and the seventies, from two authors, namely Pasquale Saraceno (for business economists) and Franco Momigliano (for industrial economists), thanks to the cultural stimuli of the their scientific production.

3.1. The emergence of the strategic paradigm

The neoclassical microeconomic theory had modeled a behavior of companies far removed from reality. Also in the subsequent revision structuralist of Bain and, more generally, of the Harvard School, the strategic conduct of the company remained strongly determined by one exogenously defined structure. This theoretical approach, in its formulation orthodox, therefore suffered from excessive determinism and rigidity causal that limited the scope of application and the realism of the hypotheses. The result was a difficulty in explaining the design and behavioral variety, empirically detectable, of companies on the basis of conditioning only exogenous data from the industry structure. In summary, the vision structuralist - despite progress with the microeconomic paradigm neoclassical - remained anchored to a scheme of business theory yet strongly borrowing from external circumstances, factors and variables. There true black-box of this setting therefore still remained the enterprise: in fact, there was no general and coherent theory of nature and behavior of companies. In other words, it is as if this approach of industrial economy remained in the middle of the ford: on the one hand, he tried to disengage from excessive dogmatism of the neoclassical theory, on the other, in the absence of valid alternative theoretical references, he was forced not to give up to a certain degree (actually very high) of theoretical dependence

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of the company from external circumstances (included, for methodological opportunities, in the structure of the sector) 12.

At the same time, the economic-business theory of our country, in the course of the sixties and seventies, he had developed a theoretical corpus predominantly focused on the company structure and its general aims, but little space had been given to the interpretation of his conduct. In others terms, there was a sort of theoretical connection between the structure of the company and

the general criterion of economy, but the explanation of behavioral links (strategy) capable of linking these two conceptual dimensions remained rather inadequate. For the principle of equifinality, in fact, it is not enough to observe that the company must respect the universal rule of economic efficiency, worth its survival; it is instead important to understand how this general purpose is can be concretely pursued and, among the various strategic options available, which constitutes the preferable one in the light of the competitive context in which the company is located (Rullani, 1989).

As a result, the enterprise had remained an abstract entity, far removed from real context in which it was placed, and devoid of theoretical explanations on the modalities of the

or behavior. Here, therefore, emerge the centrality of the strategy of the company, a topic that has remained largely unexplored for both economists neoclassical industries rather than company ones.

The strategic paradigm therefore constitutes a trajectory of study and very fruitful research for both scholars:

the company assumes a specific role, being endowed (at least hypothetically) discretionality and therefore the possibility of choosing behavior in some differentiated from that of competitors. As a consequence, the enterprise becomes itself an object of theory while gradually losing importance

the sector understood as a group, more or less restricted, of producing companies goods to some extent substitutes for each other (Podestà, 1988).

Theoretical treatment of the theme of strategic business conduct presents at least three different strands in the economic-managerial literature.

First of all, that linked to a review of the structuralist paradigm

in an evolved key that focuses on the business strategy. Porter

(1985) identifies, in a framework defined ex ante of the competitive system, the competitive strategies of companies and sources of their relative advantage competitive. In other words, with this contribution we tend to «explore»

12 «If the behavior derives from the structure and the performance derives from the behavior, there are no spaces neither for an active behavior of the enterprise nor does it have margins of discretion.

The paradigm in other terms binds behavior and performance to

structure in the same way that the competitive model and that of the monopoly determine rigid behavior and results of the company: in both cases the real enterprise is absent "(Podestà, 1988).

specifically the contents of the concept of competitive strategy within a given sector, identifying the various possible strategic options.

The originality of this line of studies also consists in highlighting the different ones possible theoretical formulations related to the competitive sphere of a company.

If, on the one hand, there are contributions aimed at widening the interpretation of the competition, introducing in a unitary vision traditionally competitive forces

considered separately¹³, other theoretical developments elaborate business visions much more focused, often intra-sectoral, formulating concepts such as strategic groupings (Hunt, 1972, Caves, Porter 1977).

In particular, Abell (1980) introduces the notion of strategic areas into the debate business, understood as a relatively homogeneous portion of the market

overall in terms of technologies used, product use functions and of satisfied market segments¹⁴. The common denominator of this approach

overall theoretical is, therefore, even with its own internal differentiations, to analyze the competitive framework in which the company is located and, consequently, to propose appropriate development strategies. The analysis

the competitive position of a company within its business leads,

however, to observe the existence of a matrix of interrelations with other subjects entrepreneurship on which its competitiveness depends, ultimately

the final. Theoretical developments on productive complementarities between companies, based inter alia on the contribution of numerous business and industrial economists

in our country, starting from the pioneering debate on decentralization production and industrial restructuring of 1974 (Caselli, 1974; Rullani,

1974; Guerici, 1974), generate a vast series of new studies and research on the collaboration strategies between companies and related organizational models a network (Antonelli, 1984; Gambardella, Rullani 1999; Pilotti, 1990).

The second strand applied to strategic analysis is linked to new theories economic-industrial, based on specific models of game theory and built

on the characteristics of the oligopolistic markets, where the concept of strategy takes the meaning of "complete specification of what a player

rational must do in every contingent situation, taking into account the probable behavior of rivals "(Mansfield, 1968). In this sense

imagine that every player $K = 1, 2, \dots, n$ reflects at the beginning on all eventualities

¹³ «Competitive strategy must come from a thorough knowledge of the rules of

market which determine the attractiveness of a sector. The final purpose is to be in tune with these rules and ideally get to change them in favor of the company. In any the competition rules can be summarized in five competitive forces: the entry of new competitors, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of customers, the bargaining power suppliers and the threat between competing companies ". (Porter, 1988).

14 Further specifications

of this concept, such as that of a competitive arena, they find themselves in Day (1990).

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conceivable, ie that the player k begins to play according to a complete plan: a plan that determines the choice that he will make in every possible situation and for every information at that time taking into account the information standards

that the rules of the game provide in that case for each player. We call a similar strategy plan (Neumann, Morgenstern 1947).

With these models based on game theory there is a re-examination - but not radical - of the assumptions regarding the neoclassical theory of the enterprise; in fact, maximizing logics remain in contexts of decisional interdependence aimed at determining equilibrium conditions (Vickers,

1985; Schmalensee, 1988). In any case, over the years, the modeling of the game theory is perfected and finds application in the situations in which they are established relationships between contenders who have different objectives and use tools different, such as product differentiation, technological innovation,

the leverage of advertising, R & D expenses or patenting activities (Shaked, Sutton 1982; Schmalensee, 1978; Dasgupta, Stiglitz 1980). Development of game theory was such that it has come to assert its character

totalizing with respect to the problems of business strategy: «game theory provides the only coherent way of logically analyzing strategic behavior »(Shapiro,

1989). The advantage of this approach is to admit that companies do not they are homogeneous. In fact, they differ in their initial endowment of resources tangible and intangible (for example, their reputation). In these models,

moreover, the nature of certain resources, such as the sunk costs, which they present, is specified a central role in deterrence strategies and, more generally,

of credible threats and of commitments. The limits are due to the fact that competition is not seen as a process linked to unexpected discovery new opportunities, but every factor and element of the game (for example,

the allocation of company resources) is given and defined at the beginning. Businesses therefore they can not create new opportunities but must optimize, within the structural scheme of the game, their results up to arrive to a position of equilibrium. These assumptions, typical of these models theorists have raised doubts in certain business economists: the progressive affirmation of game theory as the basic nucleus of economic theory [...] it does nothing but make this epistemological choice clearer [...] If yes observes the current behavior of companies and the way they are formulated strategies, it is immediate to verify that there is no place for game theory [...] Literature managerial applied to the field of strategies (Abell, Ansoff, Porter, etc.) he does not even mention the theory of games. The reason for this state of affairs is simple: game theory is not applied simply because it is not applicable to corporate strategies (Biggiero, Laise 1998) 15.

15 However, there is also an important trend in use in the business economy of game theory aimed at explaining management decisions (Zaninotto, 1992).

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Finally, the last theory applied to strategic analysis is that of business economics, based on strategic management theories, starting from pioneering work in the 1960s by Ansoff. He tries to propose a theoretical model of a regulatory nature aimed at rationalizing the process through which top management reaches the formulation of the strategic choices. Moreover, it affirms the subjective character of the choices made from every single company: the decision-making rules for setting strategies "They are not the same for all companies" and "vary from company to company and, in the context of this, from one period to another "(Ansoff, 1965). This setting theoretical tends to focus on the definition of behavioral patterns and general solutions to managerial problems, absolutely valid, focusing mainly on the procedural and finalistic aspects of the strategy company (Hax, 1990; Rumelt, 1980). Thus, several authors have centered their attention to the set of decisions that must be taken for adopt a strategy, often coming to confuse the strategic process with the planning one (Koontz, O 'Donnel 1959). In reality, as can be in many companies, especially small ones, the strategy exists even regardless of the existence of a formalized planning process e procedurally defined (Di Bernardo, Rullani 1985) 16. It is above all with the

failure of business planning processes for the purpose of defining a strategy, starting from the seventies, that this theoretical approach or undergoes a radical revision. Cultural skepticism about planning processes company derives mainly from two sets of factors (Rullani, 1989): from one side, the emergence of an environmental complexity in technologies, in markets and in the other factors of the competitive scenario of the company, which, in fact, has made it impossible to consider the environment as perfectly predictable and below the control of the company; on the other hand, the acquired theoretical awareness of existence both of a limited rationality of the individual decision maker and of the consequent objective difficulty in evaluating all the parameters of analysis of the environment competitive environment, both of a systemic rationality of the enterprise (understood as an organization of individuals, among them heterogeneous in terms of expectations, requests and objectives) which involves procedural and cognitive problems in the definition of the strategic path (Mason, Mitroff 1981). Here because, with the theoretical crisis of business planning, the strategy is conceived as the expression of an effective behavioral dynamic (and not

16 In effect, "carrying out this formalized (planning) process within a company it does not in itself constitute a guarantee of the effectiveness of strategic decisions, of their own optimality: there are companies that identify and implement very good strategies, at least for one some time, even without a procedural support, while there are others that fail to generate and implement valid strategies despite the support of refined and updated procedures planning "(Rispoli, 1989).

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merely procedural) of two types: the deliberate and explicit, codified ex ante within the business organization, and the emerging one, considered in itinere and based on unforeseen factors, both internal and external, occurred in pursuit of the first (Mintzberg, Waters 1985).

Overall, even with its internal articulations, the strategic paradigm therefore presents several factors of theoretical and applicative originality. It contributes to a contamination between the business economy and the economy industrial on an object of analysis (the strategy), although through the use of assumptions, languages and very different methodologies.

3.2. The emergence of the institutional and organizational paradigm

The strategic paradigm leads to economic-managerial thinking

significant theoretical progress, focusing the analysis on actual behavior of companies. However, this approach is only limited to explain the endogenous determinants of behavioral diversity of companies. In other words, it does not adequately endogenous factors that push businesses, even within the same competitive system, to pursue structurally differentiated strategic behaviors.

This is why the need to investigate one emerges in the theoretical analysis new black box, that is the structure of the company, from which they in turn depend the different strategic behaviors. Thus a new tendency is affirmed paradigm characterized by primary attention to institutional aspects and organization of companies, as a determinant of its behavioral processes. In this way, the strategic variety of companies does not derive solely from the structural differences of the sector, but rather from their intrinsic institutional and organizational differences.

The main theoretical strands that can be traced back to this paradigm, even with their own relevant differences, they are essentially three.

The first strand tends to consider the contextualization of the company in the context of a particular institutional reference system, composed of their own rules of behavior, from their own history, from peculiar forms regulating business activities and so on. Differential characteristics of the behavior of companies therefore depend on the fact that they they are historically modeled by the social and institutional system in which they are localized and rooted 17. From this point of view there is no market

17 «The action of the actor is conditioned - in the sense of influenced, addressed, enabled - from the context in which it takes place and of which the actor experiences, often together with other actors. The

context, precisely because it can be shared among many people who work together experience or face the same problem, it works as a re427 structure competitive with the neoclassical economic notions, but al

on the contrary each market has its own peculiarities due to the effect of a different one institutional system to which it refers; in fact, many speak of a construction institutional (Hodgson, 1988) and social market (Bagnasco, 1988). One particularly fruitful development of this theoretical vein has been had with the analysis of the variety of capitalist systems. It starts from the affirmation of unrepeatability of

historical routes of industrialization of the various countries (Saraceno, 1979) to arrive at enunciating a variety of mechanisms and logics of functioning of advanced capitalist systems. In these different models, institutional interactions between financial, trade union and business entities of public policy, as well as the rules of corporate governance, change significantly, to the point of being able to identify a specific model in function of the national capitalist context in which the company is located (Bianchi, 1997; Porter, 1991; Albert, 1993). It follows that every capitalist system plasma and model, with its own rules, the nature and dynamics of the enterprises established there (Guatri, Vicari 1994; Whitley, 1999; Dematté, 1992). On a territorial scale lower than the national capitalist system is possible to frame another line of analysis, connected to the localization and to the rooting of businesses in the various local industrialization systems, in particular in industrial districts (Varaldo, Ferrucci 1993; Becattini, 1989). In other terms, it is believed that the specificities of the various local models of industrialization be such as to model the companies located in these areas (Balloni, 2000; Storper, 1998).

All this leads to a genetic diversity of companies based on localization and belonging to the various national or different capitalist systems local industrialization systems. It seems, therefore, difficult to sustain, consistently with the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm, which, in a structure oligopolistic, all companies pursue similar competitive behavior; in reverse, the specific way in which non-price competition is realized depends on nature and from the history of the industrial branch, from the type of goods that are produced, from the legal provisions in force, from the general state in which the economic system is located. In other words, the understanding of the specific form that the fight takes between rival companies in oligopolistic markets can not disregard the consideration explicit reference to the institutional context of reference (Zamagni, 1990).

The second line of analysis deriving from the institutional and organizational paradigm it concerns the enterprise understood as institutions, that is composed of different ones the action that connects individual action to meanings and resources that are social "(Rullani, 1996).

mid-twentieth century, the emergence of big business in the mainstream industrialized countries brings new conceptual challenges, bringing out the need to penetrate the fund of the company organization, its schemes decision-making and its strategic objectives. The company, in this new approach theoretically, there is no longer a technical combination of productive factors, from which derives a specific structure of the average production costs; in reverse, the need for a theory based on presuppositions emerges organizational and institutional In this regard, he enters the theoretical corpus of the economic-managerial literature the concept of organizational efficiency (the so-called x-efficiency; Liebnestein, 1966), supplementing - but sometimes in opposition - of the technique formulated by the microeconomic paradigm neoclassical (Egidi, 1989).

Many industrial and business economists observe, especially in the large companies, the lack of connection between the owner and management. This circumstance leads to the definition of a multiplicity of objectives, sometimes conflicting, which do not coincide with that of maximization of profits (Berle, Means 1966; Marris, 1972; Baumol, 1959; Williamson, 1964). Consequently, the study of big business abandons the traditional research address based on maximizing logic to follow others, in which managerial behavior is dictated more by the need for self-preservation than from objectives of neoclassical efficiency.

Other scholars, moreover, reveal that the model of the managerial enterprise, founded on the dualism manager-owners, it is not the only one present inside of capitalist systems. In fact, there is a variety of institutional models of a business which, in a certain way, is independent of size and which belongs to the relationship between the various stakeholders of the company (workers, financiers, owners, customers, etc.). In particular, it is emphasized that, alongside the company classical capitalism (based on the figure of the entrepreneurial subject) and the company managerial capitalist (based on the split between owners and manager), there are other institutional forms that present titular subjects of the company, the logic of governance, organizational models and strategic behavior different, such as production and labor cooperatives, consumer cooperatives or non-profit organizations. They, according to good part literature (Fiorentini, Scarpa 1998, Granaglia, Sacconi

1992), do not tend to maximize profits, present structures more horizontal hierarchies (due to the higher level of workers' commitment) and have higher levels of undercapitalization financing with respect to capitalist firms (Hansmann, 1996; Rose Ackerman, 1986; Zamagni, 1993; Pilotti, 1991; Ferrucci, 1995). This makes it not shareable the affirmation, typical of the orthodox microeconomic paradigm, according to which in a competitive economy it does not matter if the work takes place

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capital or if capital employs labor 18: on the contrary, in perspective institutional, the rights to the organization go to the owners of those factors that make it possible to resolve in the most efficient way the problem which is the very reason of the existence of the enterprise [...] This implies that the ownership of the companies goes to the owners of those factors that are more specific to the company itself and more difficult to control (Pagano, 1993).

The third theoretical thread related to this paradigm, finally, derives from studies of an organizational matrix from which behaviorist theories originate business. The company is intended as an organization, with its procedures decision-making and its models of interaction between subjects.

The origins of these contributions derive from criticisms of the setting neoclassical marginalist and the logic of profit maximization, formulated based on empirical research published since the end of the years Thirty, in which it was highlighted that the companies determined their prices, not on the basis of marginal optimization considerations, but on the basis mere logic of mark up. These pricing procedures, empirically detected, they put in crisis all the neoclassical theoretical apparatus. Here, then, is the key question of approaches based on behaviorist theory business: how a company undertakes a specific business decision?

This line of organizational studies develops a very radical criticism of the approach neoclassical emphasizing that, in reality, the hypothesis of maximization of profits comes less due to limitations of the rationality of the processes decision-making within the company and its members. In fact, the economic agents are "rational in intentions, but in fact limited such "(Simon, 1961).

The enterprise is made up of subjects, constituted in coalitions, each of them which pursues its own objectives. It can not therefore be admitted that the only one the goal of the company is to maximize profits, but realistically it is necessary to recognize the existence of organizational conflicts due to objectives non-convergent, expressed by the different coalitions, which give rise to phenomena of bargaining between the different parts. An attempt, although partial, to resize this organizational destabilization consists in formulating subobiettivi partial and specific, referring to individual fields of activity (for example, a given market, a specific product, a particular customer, a single establishment, ecc.) and expression of the decisional balance achieved following the 18 «In a perfectly competitive market it does not really matter who hires whom» (Samuelson, 1975).

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different bargaining between the coalitions. In this way, in fact, the organization of the company moves towards their achievement, shared by all the subjects, although this does not guarantee the maximization of profits or the definitive resolution of organizational conflict and related bargaining (March, Simon 1958).

In this logic, the enterprise is an organizational reality devoid of its own ends specific, but with its own constraints generated by the current negotiation process among the different subjects. Decision-making situations of satisfactory balance (e non-maximization) shared at company level, over time generate, a their turn, empirical rules of behavior aimed at determining a quasi automation in further decision-making and organizational micro-processes (Cyert, March 1970). Furthermore, always within the framework of this behaviorist theory of a company, it is assumed not only that there is an information asymmetry between the different subjects but, even, that they operate in a context of limited rationality, such as to make the objective assessment of the various alternatives impossible strategies 19.

On the economic-industrial front, an interpretation of the company derives from it seen as nexus of contracts, according to the theoretical approach based on theory principal-agent, which provides new conceptual tools for analysis motivation and incentives for entities operating in companies (Alchian, Demsetz 1972; Hart, 1983; Holmstroem, 1979; Jensen, Meckling 1976; Vickers, 1985) 20. Game theory finds application also in this schematization

of the theory of the enterprise that sees the latter as a game
interattivo

between agents with different purposes (Hart, Holmstroem 1987).

4. THE EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM: THE CENTRALITY OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION IN THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

The recent origins of the development of the evolutionary paradigm are there
very different theoretical contributions that recover and enhance the best tradition
of the two previous paradigms (the strategic one and the institutional one)
and organizational).

First of all, within the strategic paradigm, we are refining

19 It follows that "the uncertainty that characterizes the outside world and the limits of managers
in their decision-making processes in terms of time and personal capacity, it prevents behavior
as that postulated by the hypothesis of global rationality and, in fact, makes it impossible
any maximizing behavior, whatever the type of objective the company pursues.

Because the rationality allowed by uncertainty and constraints is limited, behaviors are possible
satisfactory but not maximizing behavior "(Podestà, 1988).

20 For a critical analysis of this theoretical approach cf. Pilotti (1993).

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and research that highlights the need for businesses to adapt to
changes in the competitive environment. The strategy therefore becomes
increasingly interpreted in terms of specific and intentional adaptations
of the enterprise to the external environment (Hofer, Schendel 1978), with reciprocal relations
conditioning in terms of resources (Pfeffer, Salancik 1978). In
contexts of high variability of the competitive system, businesses can
adapt to environmental or technological contingencies, showing different degrees
of reactivity and organizational plasticity (Lawrence, Lorsch 1967). As part
of the institutional and organizational paradigm, the projected theoretical guidelines
to develop an evolutionary vision are - too - very different. fundamental
some elements for the development of an evolutionary approach are some researches
that place primary attention on the indispensable role of
institutions, business learning processes and their conditions
of growth in relation to different historical and social contexts. The isomorphism
institutional is explained, according to Meyer and Rowan (1977), by the ability of the
individual organizations to achieve social legitimacy in various contexts
in which they are placed, activating their specific conditions of appropriateness.

Simon (1981) identifies internal decision-making processes for the companies they lead, similarly to "going up some hills", to identify local highs and not absolute maximums ²¹. It follows that the companies - unlike the Efficient canons of neoclassical rationality - pursue "local" solutions »Consistent with their initial endowment of knowledge and skills.

The convergence between the strategic paradigm and the institutional and organizational one finds a fruitful area of interest in the business history. Indeed, the history of the strategic path accomplished by the enterprise becomes essential respect to the understanding of its organizational structure (Chandler, 1962; 1981). In this context the variety of competitive strategies of companies it is born according to their different internal structures, both of an institutional type that organizational, and their relationships historically sedimented with the environment institutional setting in which they are located (Smith, Steadman 1981). Here, therefore, that, on the methodological level, for business economists, the study competitive strategies inevitably intersect with an approach theory of historical enterprise as considered the only one possible an approach capable of "unveiling" the rationality of the company, starting from decisions taken historically ²². It is opposed to the traditional one, ²¹ «The adaptation of both companies and biological species are examples of heuristic research, and consequently similar to the "climb hills" or, better, to "satisfy" and seek excellent premises "(Simon, 1981). ²² From this point of view, "the strategy achieved can be defined as the path taken from a historically determined enterprise, then identified ex post by the sequence of decisions and of actions actually implemented as well as results gradually achieved; all this, seen both in re432 of a logical type, typical of the formulation of the neoclassical industrial economy ²³.

This theoretical and methodological perspective underlines, therefore, the centrality of the learning processes of the company, such as to be able to condition them the same organizational structure and its initial stock of knowledge and skills held ²⁴.

Here, therefore, that becomes central to interpret the company - as any another organization - like a cognitive system, able to explore new knowledge and use the pre-existing one, according to behavioral directions original and innovative, both incremental and radical is that

can, over time, generate real organizational metamorphoses.

In this new conceptual framework, the competitive strategy of companies it can involve new inter-organizational models based on cooperative areas and relationships with other actors, aimed at encouraging the learning of new solutions technological or market. This constitutes a significant change in the economic and managerial disciplines since, until now, no approach theoretically envisaged collaboration between companies, if not in the oligopolistic field collusive type (based on the well known structuralist paradigm).

In this evolutionary perspective, it is clear that the company realizes the own decision-making process within a context of uncertainty. His behavior is characterized by a long path of trial and error, in the which the concrete experiences and experiments play a central role experienced over time. The sedimented settling stock to the evolution of the internal aspects of the company, both in relation to the evolution of the environment and the individual actors that operate there, relevant to the company itself: that's what we will call strategic path "(Rispoli, 1989).

23 The historical approach helps to unveil «the inertia present within certain systems. Systems and organizations exist not as a result of a logical explanation to their training. The enterprise exists as a result of a historical process, regardless of logical and efficient explanations. In other words, businesses and institutions can exist and having certain characteristics simply because situations have accumulated historically and conditions that have characterized the organization. Once those conditions have been fulfilled and once companies with certain characteristics have formed, it is difficult to transform the organization and modify its salient features. The historical approach therefore explains the permanence of inefficient companies from the economic point of view or of companies that are born and develop as a result of conditions or opportunities not related to economic efficiency (for example, power relations) "(Gambardella, 1993).

24 «Learning that becomes cumulative and social moves the system away from equilibrium e it translates into evolution, because it gradually changes the cognitive and operational structures from which economic behavior starts "(Di Bernardo, Rullani 1994).

25 Within the evolutionary paradigm centered on the enterprise, therefore, the theoretical focus is projected to investigate the dynamics of factors and choices (and not the static), decision-making processes

(and not the results of the same), innovation and change (and not the status quo e

skills, skills and abilities of the company is therefore the unrepeatable result of its history and therefore conditions its design and strategic capabilities (Di Bernardo, Rullani 1994). In this evolutionary paradigm, therefore, the specificity of the company (both in terms of structure and behavior) it does not derive only from the influence of purely objective variables (for example, the institutional model) and perhaps exogenous, but above all by specific skills and abilities sedimented throughout its history, from which they derive specific behavioral routines (Nelson, Winter 1982; Dosi et al., 2000).

However, all this should not lead us to believe that the strategic path is strictly path dependence 26. On the contrary, an adequate business theory it must also leave spaces for creative choices and innovative projects apparently heterodox with respect to the historical path pursued (Ohmae, 1982; Smircich, Stubbart 1985). Here, then, emerge a new theoretical perspective evolutionary type applied to strategic studies: alongside changes exogenous incrementals in the technology and in the markets they generate inside of the business models of management of competitive strategy and organizational schemes routines, radical discontinuities and framebreaking are also considered changes, which involve different organizational models of learning and innovative schemes to reformulate the competitive strategy (Tushman et al., 1986; Senge, 1990; Strebel, 1994).

From this theoretical approach, a new one obviously follows approach connected to the theory of the enterprise and based on the resource based theory. The main source of achievement of competitive advantage comes equilibrium), non-deterministic processes (rather than neoclassical adjustment mechanisms) and, finally, the variety of actors, determined by differentiated learning models and related design choices.

26 "It is true that evolution consists of an ex post explanation, because the final result a to which it leads is not the necessary and sufficient effect of the initial situation from which it emerged: it is only one of the possible outcomes. Between the causes and the effects is the diaphragm of that uncertainty that just evolutionary learning channels and structures at the end towards a result emerging. However, if one abandons the deterministic pattern of causal "explanation" [...] the evolutionary scheme can be precious not only to obtain rationalizations ex post of what happened, but also to identify the forces that are at work in generating and

direct change. This is the best that can be asked of an economic theory of the cognitive processes, which can not pretend to make learning deterministic, but it must rather identify the conditions that activate it, the factors that favor it, the regulators that influence the direction of travel ». (Rullani, Vicari 1999). And, again, «in economics, and in social interaction in general, amplifiers and synchronizers exist that systematically they generate this kind of passage relatively quickly (Arthur, 1988). In this way, the economic value generated by learning increases by many orders of size; but at the same time an intrinsic element of indeterminacy is introduced into the dynamic observable at the macro level "(Rullani, Vicari 1999).

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identified in the company's possession of specific skills and abilities (Stalk et al., 1992) 27. The process of accumulating these resources specifications becomes the expression of the historical learning path of the company 28. This change of perspective derives, in particular, from removal of two basic assumptions, typically neoclassical, on the topic specific resources of the company. The first assumption states that businesses within a sector (or a strategic grouping) are similar in terms of the allocation of strategically relevant resources and strategies pursued. The second assumption, on the other hand, underlines another character of these resources; where there are substantial differences between companies in a sector (o of a strategic grouping), they are destined to quickly resize for the operation of adjustment mechanisms related to reproducibility, the imputability and mobility of resources originally specific to only one company.

In the new perspective of the resource based theory, on the other hand, it appears evident that these assumptions are not realistic. The competitive advantage of companies, in fact, is explained in terms of specific endowment of resources, not easily owned by competitors 29. The heterogeneity of the resources and their firm specific character form the basis of diversity and strategic business variety: firms within an industry may possess different strategically relevant skills and capabilities [...] Skills and capabilities that enable the organization to conceive, choose and implement strategies that exploit environmental opportunities "(Barney, 1994).

In this logic, the processes of imitation become difficult to pursue

27 The concept of skills is different from that of skills, although they are complementary

for the attainment of a competitive advantage. According to Hamel and Prahalad (1990), core competences are the combination of specific technologies and productive abilities that allow an enterprise to technically create a myriad of product lines; in reverse, the capacities are organizational expertise that belong and transversely characterize the whole of the value chain. Thus, while the core competences appear present only in technological and manufacturing expertise, capacities are traced in others activities such as product design or after-sales technical assistance. It is evident that the whole and the synergy between core competences and capabilities favors the achievement of a sustainable competitive advantage of the company and its possible entry into others business.

28 «The resource-based view of competitive advantage [...] asserts that not only are firms intrinsically historical and social entities, but their ability to acquire and exploit some resources in time and space ". Consequently, these theorists state «The importance of history as a determinant of firm performance and competitive advantage» (Barney, 1991).

29 For resources, Barney (1991) intends «all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a sign that enables that sign to conceive and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness ".

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because of the unique character of the enterprises (Dierickx, Cool 1989) 30. The problem central to the resource based theory thus becomes that of establishing the strategy for creating, maintaining and renewing competitive advantage in terms of resources of the company.

In this sense, the evolutionary theory of the company opens up new and interesting perspectives of contamination between the borders more innovative than the economy business and industrial 31.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The work highlighted that, over time, studies and research into economic and organizational field have undergone radical changes in terms paradigmatic.

Both business economics and industrial economics studies have the epistemological status of theirs is progressively questioned cultural origins that the methodological tools of analysis. They are derived new and original theoretical spaces in the dialectical relationship between these two disciplinary fields.

In particular, with the evolutionist paradigm, there were several cultural consequences between business economics and the industrial economy. First of all, an evolutionary theory of the enterprise has been affirmed different from the neoclassical microeconomic one and from the business one. Yes it therefore deals with a new "field" for both theoretical areas. Furthermore, the evolutionary theory of the company helps to recover and integrate the teachings and the intuitions of the strategic paradigm and of the institutional and organizational one, filling their conceptual gaps and providing new theoretical stimuli.

The result is a new way of reading and interpreting the role of institutions, competition, companies and their learning paths. The

30 As Lorenzoni (1992) states, "the results and success of companies depend on capacity, from the skills and resources put in place rather than from the conditions and from the context in which companies operate. In summary, the results are determined in particular by the skills and not from the sector or other contextual data ".

31 «The so-called" evolutionary theory of the enterprise "collects a vast and heterogeneous number of models. The element that unifies them, as opposed to the neoclassical theory, is the study of organizational and technological change, a business dimension neglected by Neoclassical. This theory, not yet well codified, underlines the fundamental role of innovation and learning in the life of the company, insists on the importance of institutions and of history in individual and collective choices [...]. It gathers contributions not only from economists, but also of historians and business economists. The "evolutionary theory of the enterprise" opens new perspectives on an extremely important aspect of the industrial organization, development and the transformation of companies and sectors "(Silva, 1995).

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theoretical convergences between these two disciplinary areas, therefore, widen, making fruitful spaces of common research possible starting from languages and very different methods. Finally, the evolutionary paradigm poses new challenges concepts in both disciplinary fields, imposing new processes of theoretical convergence and methodological contamination also with disciplines very distant from a cultural point of view.

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