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Rediscovering local roots and interactions in management

Conference Proceedings

Short papers

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Rediscovering local roots and interactions in management

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Short Papers

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To the reader,

this volume contains the short papers of the Sinergie-SIMA 2023 Management Conference, hosted by the LUM University and University of Bari at Mercure Villa Romanazzi Carducci (Bari) on June 29th and 30th 2023.

Theory and practice in the field of management have been challenged by the emergence of deep transitions such as those driven by globalization, the rise of social and environmental issues, and the diffusion of digital technologies. Events such as the ensuing geopolitical crises and the pandemic further contribute to spur management scholars to feel the call to produce impactful research with theoretical and managerial implications on the relationship between location and strategy (Bathelt and Li, 2022).

As a consequence, scholars and practitioners have been asked to design new business models and rethink value chains in a twofold direction (Mazutis et al., 2021). First, the relevance of local roots sheds light on the way people create and shape places, as much as places shape people and their organizations, suggesting a need to rethink how all lives ‘take place’ in places, as well as how all business happens in places (Sternad et al., 2017). Second, a need for new interactions emerges, suggesting that businesses are deeply connected to their roots, that are their homes, from which they draw inspiration, identity, and sources of competitive advantage (Soderstrom and Weber, 2020).

Rediscovering local roots and specific assets, as well as developing new ways of interaction among the economic actors and their stakeholders, can help firms to design effective and innovative strategies to create and share values (Mair et al., 2016), with positive economic, social, and environmental impacts (Attig and Brockman, 2017).

Several research questions stimulate an interdisciplinary debate in the field of management. These questions relate to the ability of firms and managers to move, among the others, between global and local relations, near/physical and far/digital interactions, reshoring and offshoring activities, omnichannel competition and retail interactions, market transactions and system operating structures, traditional and innovative approaches, social/local benefits and financial/global performances, business ethics and ethics in business.

In the same way, different theories, methodological approaches, and units of analysis are required to generate scientific research that has an impact not only in terms of theoretical contribution but also on the real business world.

The Sinergie-SIMA 2023 Management Conference was a great occasion to discuss about the research efforts of our research community on thematic tracks related to the Conference theme (the function of territorial or cultural roots and of operational interactions in management) and the SIMA thematic groups (Entrepreneurship, Innovation & technology management, International business, Marketing, Retailing & Service management, Small & family business, Strategic communication, Strategy & Governance, Supply chain management, logistics & operations, Sustainability, and Tourism and culture management).

The Conference call for papers gave the opportunity to submit either short or long papers. Overall, the editorial staff received 215 short papers and 63 long papers.

For the *short and long papers*, the evaluation followed the peer review process, with a double-blind review performed by two referees - university lecturers, expert about the topic - selected among SIMA and the community of Sinergie members.

In detail, the referees applied the following criteria to evaluate the submissions:

- clarity of the research aims,
- accuracy of the methodological approach,
- contribution in terms of originality/innovativeness,

- theoretical and practical contribution,
- clarity of communication,
- significance of the bibliographical basis.

The *peer review* process resulted in full acceptance or rejection of the submissions. In the case of disagreement among reviewers' evaluations, the decision was taken by the Chairs of the SIMA thematic groups or conference track. Each work was then sent back to the Authors together with the referees' reports. The suggestions received by the referees were used by the Authors during the presentation of their research works at the Conference.

The evaluation process ended with the acceptance of 215 short papers and 62 long papers, which were published in two distinct volumes.

All the short papers published in this volume were presented and discussed during the Conference and published online on the web portal of Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference (<https://www.sijmsima.it/>).

While thanking all the Authors, Chairs and participants, we hope that this volume will contribute to advance knowledge about the rediscovering local roots and interactions in management.

The Conference Chairs

Angelantonio Russo, Savino Santovito, Arabella Mocciaro Li Destri and Marta Ugolini

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Consortia's performance in public procurement contracts: Preliminary evidence from road works

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Framing of the research. Governments procure goods, services, and works from private firms for their daily operations. In OECD countries, public procurement accounts for a relevant share of GDP, about 13% on average (OECD, 2021), and it is pivotal in implementing public expenditure in key economic sectors (e.g., infrastructures, health, and education). To balance an efficient and effective use of public resources with transparent and fair procedures, governments have long-established regulations concerning any aspect of the procurement process - from the publication of the call for tender to the bidding stage, the awarding, execution, and delivery phases.

To reduce - or possibly eliminate - adverse selection of private suppliers entering the bidding stage, public procurement procedures usually adopt a qualification stage to attract sound firms and increase the probability of establishing smooth public-private interactions. Only qualified firms can enter tenders in the Italian procurement of public works for roads and constructions. In particular, the public buyer must state in the call for tender all the tasks involved in the project. These tasks are classified according to categories and economic value. One task is indicated as the main category, and all the others, if any, as secondary categories. To enter the tender, a bidder must have the qualification for the main category, while qualifications for secondary tasks can be outsourced to other firms. Acquiring a qualification is costly, and it lasts three to five years and is awarded by private companies that serve as certification offices, called the "Società Organismo di Attestazione" (SOA).

As a result of this system, when suppliers are not qualified, they cannot participate in auctions unless they are organized in partnerships. These partnerships enable firms to pool their expertise and resources for meeting qualification requirements which, in turn, vary depending on contract conditions. We can distinguish between short-term and long-term partnerships. We define short-term partnerships as those interactions between firms that require coordination for a specific activity - i.e., a single public contract - and later dissolve. Long-term partnerships rely on established interactions between firms for different activities arising over time.

The first form of short-term partnership is subcontracting. In fact, without the required qualifications to perform the secondary tasks of the tendered public contract, a firm can participate conditionally on subcontracting these tasks to suitable qualified firms. Moretti and Valbonesi (2015), on a database on procurement for public works in Valle D'Aosta, found that fully qualified firms (which have the option to subcontract or not) offer a lower price than partially qualified firms (which are required to subcontract). This evidence suggests that when firms are forced by the regulation to deal with subcontractors, they face a higher risk of being held up by such partners, and they consider this risk on their bids (see, among others, Lafontaine and Slade 2007 for a discussion of voluntary versus imposed arrangements and firms' boundaries).

Another form of short-term partnership in Italian public procurement is the so-called "Associazione temporanea d'impresa" (ATI). In this case, firms coordinate to participate as joint bidders to a single tendered contract and jointly execute the public contract. On the same dataset investigated by Moretti and Valbonesi (2015), Camboni et al. (2021) found that ATIs are associated with more competitive bidding prices than firms required to outsource the task they are not qualified for. For ATIs, as for subcontracting, the collaboration is dissolved at the end of contract execution.

In this paper, we do not consider these short-term partnerships (i.e., subcontracting and ATIs), but we focus on a long-term partnership a group of companies can take - i.e., the consortium - and other independent firms. Consortia differ from other companies as they are legally established partnerships between two or more firms to participate in common activities - i.e., multiple public procurement contracts - over a period of at least some years. The other companies¹ can instead be classified into two groups, according to their legal and organizational form: limited liabilities and mutual companies, respectively. SRL (Società a responsabilità limitata) and SPA (Società per azioni) are

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¹ Note that firms holding all the required qualifications do not need to enter partnerships to bid for public contracts.

part of the first group, and these are characterized by issuing either quotes (SRL) or shares (SPA) and by a generally limited responsibility over companies' liabilities. Also, these legal forms are supposed to generate dividends for their quotes and shareholders. Società cooperative instead belongs to the second group, and they are supposed to provide convenient goods and services for their members.

Purpose of the paper. This paper complements previous literature on how companies' legal forms and partnerships can drive public procurement performance. Specifically, we exploit a sizeable Italian dataset on public procurement of works to study differences in performance between consortia, on the one hand, and other independent companies (i.e., without long-term established partnerships), on the other hand. Our analysis adds to the role of coordination costs that companies might face when participating with and without structured, long-term partnerships in the public procurement process.

Regarding the performance in the execution of public contracts, we consider an *ex-post* measure (i.e., measured at the end of the execution of the contract, as opposed to an *ex-ante* measure at the bidding stage): delivery delays, defined as the difference, in days, between the actual end date of the awarded work and the contractual one. This is a typical measure previously employed in the public procurement literature (see, among others, Lewis and Bajari, 2011; Buccioli et al., 2013; Coviello et al., 2018a; Coviello et al., 2018b; Decarolis and Palumbo, 2015; Coviello and Mariniello, 2014; Decarolis, 2014; D'Alpaos et al., 2013). Excessive delays are even regulated with penalties in the Italian procurement context as these can lead to social and political costs for the public buyers and reflect coordination problems or, in any case, the need for flexibility of private suppliers.

Methodology. We aim to test whether there is an association between different types of companies and the *ex-post* performance of public procurement contracts. We do so by running a series of preliminary regression analyses. The dependent variable is the delay in the execution of public procurement contracts, and the key independent variables are dummy variables representing the legal nature of contract-awarded companies. To this end, we collect information from Italian National Anti-Corruption Authority (ANAC) about public procurement contracts awarded during the period 2012-2021. This data source allows us to have a large set of harmonized information at the contract level (e.g., auction procedures, contract characteristics, public buyer type, winning firms' identities, and the timing of contract execution). We focus on a sample of contracts awarded by one type of public buyers (i.e., the municipal governments) and with a common main task (i.e., road works). These choices are inspired by considerations that emerged from previous literature (see, among others, Coviello et al., 2018a).

The public buyer plays a crucial role in the procurement process as its design, financial and overall managerial capacities can severely affect the efficiency of the overall procurement process (see, among others, Chiappinelli, 2020; Buccioli et al., 2020). Public buyer's (in-)efficiency can directly reflect on our outcome variable (contract's delivery delay). Also, firms observe public buyers' characteristics and (in-)efficiency; accordingly, they can decide whether to participate in the auctions. This poses a potential problem of firms' selection in the analyzed sample. Therefore, we believe that focusing on contracts awarded by a single type of public buyer (municipal governments) can reduce heterogeneity in terms of procurement skills. Parallely, this identification strategy allows us to maintain a large sample size and extended geographical coverage, strengthening our results' potential external validity. However, municipal governments are also heterogeneous among themselves in terms of efficiency. Small municipal governments may not have a level of know-how comparable to larger municipalities or have very different workloads. Moreover, there may be geographical differences in public officials' skills and local politicians' governing capacity. Thus, to further account for the heterogeneity among municipal administrations in any model specification, we control for population size and province-fixed or municipality-fixed effects.

We consider just road works to reduce unobserved heterogeneity in contract characteristics. Indeed, among the many different types of public works, road works are those that somehow have a more standard technology and unit costs (consider, for instance, how buildings can be much more heterogenous than road works; for papers focusing on procured road works, see, among others, Bajari et al., 2014; Lewis and Bajari, 2014; Buccioli et al., 2013; Marion, 2007). To control for the remaining heterogeneity in road works, besides the use of municipality-fixed effects (which can also take into account the accessibility and roughness of the local area), we include the size of the works, proxied by both the value of the contract (reserve price) and the expected duration of the works, as well as dummy variables for the specific sub-sector of the road works (for discussion on the reserve price, see, among others, Decarolis, 2014; Coviello and Mariniello, 2014).

To capture both seasonal effects and time-varying macroeconomic changes, which can affect both the private construction industry (where some of the winning firms in our sample can also operate) and the budget constraints of municipal governments, we include quarter-year-fixed effects. This set of fixed effects allows us to focus on the within-quarter-year variability and limit the role of common, time-varying confounding factors.²

Lastly, as a robustness check, we also re-estimate all our model specifications using a sample restricted to municipalities in which a public contract was awarded to at least a consortium for road works during our period of analysis. Using this subsample allows us to further control for omitted variables and potential selection problems affecting consortia and other firms in the sample in a heterogeneous way.

² For what concerns inference, we consider possible heteroskedasticity by estimating robust standard errors, also clustered at the municipality level in some specifications as to account for error correlations within groups.

Tab. 1: Descriptive statistics

	Full sample	Sample restricted to municipal governments that awarded at least one contract to a consortium
Delay D (dummy)	0.589 (0.492)	0.523 (0.500)
Ln Delay	2.578 (2.325)	2.290 (2.352)
Consortium	0.009 (0.092)	0.050 (0.218)
General partnership	0.127 (0.333)	0.100 (0.300)
Mutual company	0.025 (0.156)	0.030 (0.171)
Limited liability	0.840 (0.367)	0.820 (0.384)
Ln Reserve Price	11.92 (0.778)	12.23 (0.869)
Ln Contract duration	5.325 (0.704)	5.611 (0.755)
Open Procedure	0.150 (0.357)	0.296 (0.457)
Ln Population	9.780 (1.900)	12.26 (1.653)
Observations	13,885	2,367

Sample means and, between brackets, standard deviations.

Results. *It is worth first describing the characteristics of the sample of contracts we analyze (see also Table 1). The estimated sample has 13,885 contracts for road works awarded by 3,392 Italian municipal governments (located in 107 different provinces) between 2012 and 2021. In this sample, about 59% of the works are delivered with some delay concerning the contractual deadline (median non-negative delays are 23 days). About 1% of the contracts were awarded to consortia, 2.5% to mutual companies, about 13% to general partnerships, and the remaining 84% to limited liability companies. About 15% of these contracts were awarded with open procedures, while the rest were negotiations (in the former, all firms can participate in the tender while, in the latter, the public buyer can set limitations on firms' entry). The road works in our sample have a median value (before auction rebates) of about 132,000 euros and a median expected duration of 213 days. Nevertheless, these statistics do not dramatically differ once we restrict the sample to contracts awarded by municipal governments which have interacted at least once with consortia to realize road works (tough, as expected, in this subsample, the share of contracts awarded to consortia increase to 5%).*

The preliminary estimation results are reported in Table 2. In Columns 1 to 4, the dependent variable is a dummy equal to 1 if road works were executed with a delay with respect to the expected deadline. An OLS estimation of a regression model with a dummy as a dependent variable implies the reliance on a linear probability model. In Column 1, we control for province-fixed effects. The estimated coefficients associated with the dummy variables representing the different legal forms of the contract-winning companies are not statically significant but for the consortia. Therefore, general partnerships and mutual companies do not have a significant different probability of incurring execution delays with respect to the excluded category of firms (i.e., limited liability firms). Instead, consortia have a positive and statistically significant coefficient of about 0.09. This implies that a consortium has an estimated probability of 9 percentage points higher than limited liability companies executing road works with some delays. The value is economically meaningful, representing 15 percent of the average probability of delays observed in the sample. The signs, statistical significance, and magnitude of these coefficients are very stable when we restrict the sample to those municipalities which have awarded a consortium at least once (column 2) and when we replace province-fixed effects with municipality-fixed effects (Columns 3 and 4).

In Columns 5 to 8, we present the intensive margins and use as a dependent variable the size of the delays in works execution. This variable is equal to 0 if works were executed on time, and a positive value corresponds to the difference, in days, between the actual delivery and the contractual deadline date. We rely on the log transformation of (1+ days of delay), so to interpret the estimated effects as semi-elasticities. Similar to the previous results, estimated coefficients for general partnerships and mutual companies are not statistically significant, but the coefficient for consortia is positive and statistically significant. This result suggests how consortia executed works with more days of delay than limited liability companies. Specifically, on average, consortia make about 50% days of delays more than limited liability companies. Also, estimates for these intensive margins are robust to the restriction of the sample to municipalities with some experience working with consortia (Column 6), and to the inclusion of the larger set of municipality-fixed effects (Columns 7 and 8).

In general, these results suggest that, in the execution of road works, consortia have significantly higher probability of incurring delays and display even longer delays than other forms of companies. A possible interpretation of these results has to do with the fact that consortia, by their nature, deal with long-term established partners (i.e., other firms which are members of the consortium), while the other considered companies as well as our baseline companies (limited liability firms) operate individually. This difference in the organizational structure could potentially produce two opposing effects. On the one hand, consortia might have some advantages as firms in this partnership have experienced previous interactions and are linked to future common interests (which can improve cooperative attitudes). On the other hand, the long-term and somehow fixed nature of the partnerships within a consortium might not be flexible enough as opposed to the operational organization of other firm's types that do not operate in partnerships. This latter mechanism seems to prevail in our data, as consortia need more time in works executions.

Among the other control variables, the estimated coefficients of the reserve price and the dummy variable for open procedures are statistically significant and stable across specifications and outcome variables. It is somehow reassuring that both of them show the expected positive signs: larger auction reserve prices are associated with larger projects, which can indeed be characterized by more unexpected events and display larger delivery delays; open procedures have a higher degree of competition among bidders, and winning firms might then recover some of the benefits through additional time in the execution of the works.

Tab. 2: Multivariate regression analyses

Variables	(1) Delay D	(2) Delay D	(3) Delay D	(4) Delay D	(5) Ln Delay	(6) Ln Delay	(7) Ln Delay	(8) Ln Delay
Consortium	0.091** (0.039)	0.084* (0.045)	0.090** (0.043)	0.082* (0.045)	0.421** (0.197)	0.409** (0.203)	0.408* (0.214)	0.378* (0.204)
General partnership	0.019 (0.014)	-0.006 (0.033)	0.013 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.033)	0.112* (0.064)	-0.015 (0.150)	0.074 (0.073)	-0.021 (0.149)
Mutual company	0.022 (0.028)	0.047 (0.055)	0.038 (0.030)	0.044 (0.055)	0.150 (0.133)	0.149 (0.234)	0.155 (0.142)	0.126 (0.234)
Ln Reserve Price	0.159*** (0.009)	0.146*** (0.012)	0.161*** (0.010)	0.144*** (0.013)	0.881*** (0.044)	0.769*** (0.059)	0.885*** (0.046)	0.759*** (0.060)
Ln Population	-0.040*** (0.004)	-0.055*** (0.014)	0.146 (0.144)	0.111 (0.403)	-0.214*** (0.022)	-0.267*** (0.067)	0.870 (0.692)	-0.560 (1.938)
Ln Contract duration	-0.033*** (0.010)	-0.025 (0.015)	-0.031*** (0.011)	-0.019 (0.016)	-0.076* (0.043)	-0.055 (0.068)	-0.084* (0.047)	-0.039 (0.069)
Open Procedure	0.084*** (0.017)	0.109*** (0.027)	0.080*** (0.018)	0.112*** (0.027)	0.422*** (0.088)	0.580*** (0.124)	0.398*** (0.093)	0.607*** (0.125)
Constant	-0.755*** (0.102)	-0.479** (0.217)	-2.645* (1.447)	-2.528 (4.950)	-5.508*** (0.520)	-3.719*** (1.059)	-16.299** (6.951)	-0.105 (23.782)
Observations	13,885	2,364	12,556	2,361	13,885	2,364	12,556	2,361
R-squared	0.113	0.230	0.310	0.243	0.148	0.265	0.348	0.283
Road subsector FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Quarter Year FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Municipality FE	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
Province FE	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO

Standard errors (clustered at the municipal level in columns 1,2,5,6 and robust in columns 3,4,7,8) are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. The dependent variable in columns 1 to 4, "Delay D", is a dummy variable equal to 1 in case, for each contract, the actual end date exceeds the contractual end date. The dependent variable in columns 5 to 8, "Ln Delay" is log (1 + "days of delay"), where "days of delay" is the difference, in days, between the actual and the contractual end date, in case this difference is positive, and zero otherwise. The sample in columns 2, 4, 6, and 8 is restricted to those contracts managed by municipal governments that have awarded at least one contract (in our dataset) to a consortium.

Research limitations. *We believe this preliminary and "work in progress" research has at least two main limitations. First, although we condition the relationship between firms' legal forms and delays to a series of control variables and fixed effects, the estimates cannot be interpreted as a causal effect of consortia on delays. Omitted variables and selection mechanisms may still be at work and bias the estimated coefficients. Second, we interpret the larger delays displayed by consortia as arising from the coordination costs of the firms operating within them. However, we do not have micro-level data to directly test whether the channel linking consortia to delays is based on coordination costs. These limitations, together with other refinements concerning the execution of the empirical analyses as well as the framing and interpretation of the results, are expected to be addressed in future and revised versions of this study.*

Managerial implications. *From a managerial perspective, there are implications for different issues. First, it would be important to understand whether the probability of incurring delays depends either on the quality of the corporate governance of consortia or on the types of procurements works. Second, the delays seem to be associated with the types of organizational structure between consortia and other legal forms. Here the crucial question is*

understanding how the coordination mechanisms within consortia can operate differently compared with other legal forms. Lastly, assessing whether delays in the procurement of works depending on the remuneration systems among the different levels in consortia remains an open question.

Originality of the paper. *The paper presents a preliminary empirical test to understand whether a conditional correlation occurs between winning firms organized in the form of long-term, established partnerships among firms (i.e., the consortia) and delays in the execution of public works. This test contributes to the discussion about the effects of firms' interactions in the public procurement market by looking at long-term partnerships (as opposed to temporary partnerships based on a single contract) as well as by looking at ex-post performance in the form of time delays in the delivery of the works (as opposed to bidding prices).*

Keywords: *consortia; partnerships; public contracts; interactions and coordination*

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