

## The 23rd International EurOMA Conference: interactions

The 23rd International EurOMA Conference was hosted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway, from 19 June to 23 June 2016. The theme for the conference was “Interactions”. This theme emphasised that operations management research does not appear in a vacuum and is dependent on empirical insight, relevance and impact, hence interactions with practice. Interactions are indispensable to operations and supply chain management practice. Without communication and connections between people and companies, there would be no operations or supply chain management. The theme also suggests that without interactions between researchers – like what we create during conferences – our domain would be much less progressive and our occupations much less interesting. We must openly work together to build and share knowledge for the efficient advancement of our discipline.

Of the 643 submitted abstracts, we rejected 141 abstracts and invited 502 abstracts to submit a full paper. Hence, there was a 78 per cent success rate for the abstracts. We finally received 395 full papers that were included in the conference programme. The research presented at EurOMA 2016 was truly international; the 559 participants who attended the conference represented 37 countries from six continents.

The conference introduced a number of innovations to the annual EurOMA conference. One appreciated innovation was the electronic conference programme, the Guidebook app, which was downloaded 476 times. Twitter was actively used with 653 posts reaching almost a quarter million people. A word cloud analysis of the topic-related hashtags returned the following top-five keywords of the conference: “lean”, “redistributed manufacturing”, “servitization”, “reshoring” and “industry 4.0”. Conference participants could also enjoy a rich cultural programme.

In addition to the main conference and two industrial tours, we hosted the usual EurOMA pre-conference events. In its 15-year anniversary, the Doctoral Seminar led by Pär Åhlström attracted 50 participants. Juliana Hsuan and Cristina Gimenez led the Publishing Workshop with 21 delegates. Harry Boer organised the Young Scholar Workshop that had 19 participants. The academic keynote speaker for the main conference was Kasra Ferdows (2018), a Fellow of EurOMA, who addressed the challenges and opportunities of doing research on global operations (his keynote talk was recently published in *IJOPM*). The industrial keynote, Kristine Gramstad Wedler from Marine Harvest ASA, addressed the same topic from a practical perspective. As usual, the conference offered a set of special tracks. Five of the special tracks covered classic EurOMA topics (i.e. lean, operations in ETO industries, sustainable operations, production system development and managing industry-academic collaboration), while the following four tracks were new: food supply chains, redistributed manufacturing, interface operations–finance and circular economy.

## The special issue

This special issue contains an excellent set of papers that represents the breadth and depth of the research presented at EurOMA in 2016. We invited 17 papers from the top papers of



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the conference to submit a complete paper to the special issue. The following sources were used to identify the papers: the finalists for the Chris Voss Best Paper Award, the Harry Boer Best Student Paper Award and the Nigel Slack Teaching Innovation Award, in addition to the ratings of the abstracts and the feedback schemes collected from the sessions. The authors of 15 papers accepted the invitation and submitted their manuscripts. The papers with a successful first round of review went through one to three additional review cycles before we finally accepted six papers to be included in the special issue.

We are pleased to include all three of the main award-winning papers from the conference, two other best paper finalists, and one opinion piece summarizing the discussion from the EurOMA Young Scholars Workshop. We described the six successful papers in light of the conference theme, “Interactions”.

The first paper entitled “Governing embedded partner networks: Certification and partner communities in the IT sector” written by Chris Storey *et al.* (2018) is the winner of the Chris Voss Best Paper Award 2016. The paper highlights the importance of interactions in supplier–partner networks, which is a usual business model in the IT sector. This is among the first papers to examine the effect of certifying partners and establishing partner communities in supplier–partner networks. The authors conclude that IT companies can create high-performing networks if using a combination of interaction mechanisms such as certification programmes and partner communities.

The second paper, “Examining the anatomy of last-mile distribution in e-commerce omnichannel retailing: A supply network configuration approach”, written by Stanley Lim and Jag Srai (2018) is the winner of the Harry Boer Best Student Paper Award 2016. This study explores interactions in retail omnichannels. The authors focus on the configuration of last-mile supply networks by analysing how dimensions such as network structure, network flow, relationship governance and service architecture affect performance. They conclude that configurations that build intrinsic capabilities show the best performance. The authors also offer a useful taxonomy of last-mile supply networks.

The third paper is the winner of the Nigel Slack Teaching Innovation Award 2016. Max Finne (2018) is the author of “Improving university teaching: a professional service operation perspective”. By definition, teaching OM is about interactions between students and teachers. The paper discusses and re-conceptualises the pedagogic dilemma of teaching large classes and – at the same time – offers customised teaching. The author studied the use of a flipped classroom technique introduced in an undergraduate OM course taught at a UK-based global top-50 business school. The study concludes that the redesign seemed to provide benefits to students without increasing labour intensity.

The fourth paper, “Natural disasters, PC supply chain and corporate performance” by Saileshsingh Gunesssee *et al.* (2018), investigates resiliency in supply chains. In an unfortunate and extreme manner, natural disasters illustrate companies’ need to interact and (re)activate their supply chain. This paper examines the impact of natural disasters on company performance. It uses quasi-experimental data from two natural disasters (the 2011 Japanese earthquake tsunami and the 2011 Thai flood) that affected PC supply chains. The authors report contrasting results in the two cases and discuss how supply chains can create resiliency through dynamic capability building.

The fifth paper, “Inclusive environmental disclosure practices and firm performance: The role of green supply chain management” by Annachiara Longoni and Raffaella Cagliano (2018), represents the area of sustainable operations. The authors study the effect of inclusive environmental disclosure and green supply chain management practices on company performance. As such, the study addresses interactions between stakeholders and companies. The authors conclude that inclusive environmental disclosure practices show a positive effect on financial performance, but seem to have no real impact on environmental performance, which is worrisome.

Finally, we invited an opinion paper that summarises the discussion at the Young Scholars Workshop. The paper, “Designing and developing OM research – from concept to publication”, is authored by Federico Caniato *et al.* (2018). The authors address interactions from a publication perspective. The conceptual paper provides advice regarding how authors can successfully design and publish research. This paper aims to be particularly useful to young scholars.

It is our hope that these six excellent papers will be frequently read and cited in the years to come. Each of them offers a unique and solid perspective on their respective themes. It is also our hope that all the delegates who visited the conference in Trondheim during June 2016 will remember the conference and its interactions when reading these papers.

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