

Drivers and Barriers for the Operations Management Researcher as a Facilitator of Coopetition Towards new Sustainable Eco-systems

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Abstract:

The importance of industrial and operations management for a more sustainable future is evident. Emerging innovations and technologies can assist this change but achieving a sustainable future require collaboration. To really make an impact and increase industrial sustainability (IS) (Riesener et al., 2019) new types of networks and collaborations must thus be formed. Entire business ecosystems (Peltoniemi and Vuori, 2004), also including universities and researchers, must actively work towards IS in supply chains to reduce energy and material consumption.

Given the nature of industrial supply chains, new processes and solutions must therefore be developed and implemented across several organizations and often across competitors. Collaboration between competing organizations to reach shared goals has been studied through the concept of coopetition Nalebuff et al. (1996). The dynamic process of coopetition is when “*economic actors jointly create value through cooperative interaction, while they simultaneously compete to capture part of that value*” as defined by Bouncken et al. (2015).

Previous research has demonstrated how coopetition can both mitigate and improve the efforts in IS (Mirzabeiki et al., 2021) whilst also mitigate the success of business ecosystems (Hannah and Eisenhardt, 2018). It is however highlighted by Mirzabeiki et al. (2021) and Wilhelm (2011) that for successful coopetition, a neutral 3rd party facilitator is an enabler for successful value creation and learning. These findings have led to the development of the conceptual framework for increased IS whilst also raising the question of: *How can and should the OM researcher engage in research projects for new sustainable business eco-systems where coopetition is involved?*

To investigate the researcher role in this regard, a workshop with 24 participants was hosted at the ScAIEM 2022 conference in Uppsala, to capture the viewpoints and reflections from the research community. First, the participants received an introduction to the key concepts and an outline of the remaining workshop. Second, the workshop participants were divided randomly into four discussion groups. Third, each group were asked to discuss four predefined key questions pertaining to the main research question. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analysed through descriptive text coding (Miles et al., 2018).

Several themes were identified across the four groups. The themes were grouped as drivers and barriers for researchers in the industrial and operations management field for engaging in research projects with multiple organizations where coopetition is involved. The findings led to the development of a full framework for OM researchers as a 3rd party facilitator for new sustainable business ecosystems.

Our findings clearly identify a wide variance of experiences and approaches to engaging in multi-organizational research projects, while different beliefs of how to engage as a researcher were discussed. Furthermore, it was found that the role of the researcher was viewed very differently between participants.

The authors would like the opportunity to present and elaborate on the findings of this study with the ScAIEM community and collect reflections, comments, and further viewpoints to develop this study further.

Presentation type: Research presentation/workshop

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