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Guest editorial

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## The 21st International EurOMA Conference

The 21st International EurOMA (EurOMA, 2014) Conference was hosted by Università degli Studi di Palermo. The conference theme was *Operations Management in an Innovation Economy*. According to innovation economists what primarily drives economic growth in today's knowledge-based economy is not capital accumulation but innovative capacity spurred by appropriable knowledge and technological externalities. Economics growth in innovation economics is the end-product of knowledge, R&D expenditures, licenses, technological spillovers, and externalities between collaborative firms, i.e. supply chains and networks of innovation. When firms do not explicitly acknowledge and manage their operations as a concurrent activity to the management of innovation, they often encounter problems late in product development, or with manufacturing launch, logistical support, quality control, and production costs. As such, innovation process and operations management should be coordinated, rather than being viewed as separate sets of decisions and activities.

We received 592 abstracts and used a doubled-blind review process, involving 127 members of the Scientific Committee, to review 586 abstracts (six abstracts were desk rejected) and provide feedback to the authors. Of these, 513 were accepted and 73 rejected. The accepted abstracts resulted in 405 full papers in the Scientific Programme. With three papers subsequently withdrawn, there were 402 paper presentations in prospect.

The most recurrent OM themes were: sustainability in operations and logistics (42 papers); supply chain management (35 papers); innovation, product and service development (32 papers); managing inter-firm relationships in supply chains (30 papers); healthcare OM (21 papers); lean and agile operations (21 papers).

The Scientific Programme incorporated 134 parallel sessions and was enriched by two keynote speakers: Professor Robert Handfield (Bank of America University Distinguished Professor of Supply Chain Management, North Carolina State University) and the Chief Operations Officer of Luxottica, Massimo Vian, who provided insightful reflections on the conference theme from their academic and industry perspectives, respectively. In addition there were six special sessions providing unique opportunities for engagement and insights on teaching in OM, crowdsourcing and open innovation in OM, OM as practice, OM research in the fashion industry, new supply chains, and the role of social media in OM and EurOMA. Also, besides this interesting topic-specific special sessions, the conference hosted a "Meet the Editors" session with editors and co-editors from eight OM journals.

The authors would like to thank the EurOMA 2014 Scientific Committee that kindly helped the authors in the initial long-abstract evaluation and the reviewers of this special issue for their efforts to constructively comment on papers submitted and for their support to the authors to improve the paper and get the manuscripts published. Finally, the authors sincerely thank (in alphabetical order) Amy Barson, Steve Brown, Patti Davis, Andrea Watson Lee and Kay Wilkinson, and all the Emerald staff for the continuous support during the review process. The authors hope that this special issue is useful and inspiring.

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**The special issue**

This special issue includes a selection of papers from the EurOMA 2014 Conference. Invitations were sent to the winners and runners-up of the Chris Voss Best Paper Awards and Harry Boer Best Student Paper awards. Furthermore, we selected the most promising papers that received the best scores in the initial long-abstract evaluation process from the conference Scientific Committee. Finally, we invited some panellists of special sessions to submit viewpoints or research papers built upon the constructive discussion held in their special sessions. In total, 24 invitations were issued and 16 papers were submitted for review. Seven papers were accepted and six of these are published in this special issue; one paper will be included in a regular issue of this journal.

The special issue is opened by a stimulating viewpoint paper by Harry Boer, Paul Coughlan, Domien Draaijer, and Janet Godsell who, based upon the contributions and the resulting discussions of the 6th EurOMA Young Scholars Workshop, address the very challenging questions: how do we, as O&SCM scholars, increase the accessibility of our research? How do we increase the usefulness and relevance of O&SCM research? The authors discuss the interplay between O&SCM theory, research and practice and present a number of examples of collaborative research projects involving researchers and practitioners.

The authors of the second paper are the panellists of the EurOMA 2014 Special Session “New supply chains – research opportunities and challenges”: Bart MacCarthy, Constantine Blome, Jan Olhager, Jaqjit Singh Srari, and Xiande Zhao. Supply chains evolve and change in size, shape, configuration, and in the way they are coordinated, controlled, and managed. The authors argue that a new science is needed to study and understand supply chain lifecycle and propose a framework for investigating supply chain evolution, commenting on how some key factors can affect a supply chain’s characteristics over its lifecycle.

In the third paper, Annachiara Longoni and Raffaella Cagliano investigate the relevant but under-studied relationship between social/green sustainable operations and the firm’s competitive advantage. By analysing data from a survey to 107 Italian firms in the food industry the authors find that green operations practices directly impact customer benefits, while social operations practices directly influence human resource benefits and indirectly customer benefits.

The fourth paper introduces the concept of manufacturing network embeddedness and provides guidance in setting the level of autonomy of plants in a network to enhance operational performance. Ruggero Golini, Patricia Deflorin, and Maike Scherrer analyse data from 441 manufacturing plants and find that while a higher level of autonomy is related to a higher performance, a lower autonomy can lead to higher levels of integration in the manufacturing network and supply chain. The authors highlight the importance of considering external supply chain and internal manufacturing network integration in the same framework when studying the consequences of a firm’s network embeddedness.

In the fifth paper, Patrik Jonsson and Paulina Myrelid conceptualise the supply chain information utilisation and explore its antecedents. By adopting an exploratory case-based theory-building approach, the authors propose a number of propositions which explain how information sharing, information quality, and intended information usage are antecedents of actual usage of information shared in a supply chain. Starting from this, the authors explain the performance effect of information sharing in supply chains.

In the last paper of this issue, Ana B. Escrig and Lilian M. de Menezes propose a contingency approach to examine the differences in the level of adoption of EFQM, its antecedents and consequences. By analysing 216 Spanish organisations, the authors contribute to the still open debate on the universal adoption vs the contingent use of best practices in QM. One of the most important contingency factor found is company size. Therefore, the conclusion is that when using the EFQM model for benchmarking managers should consider benchmarks that share similar contextual factors.

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#### **Further reading**

- Coughlan, P., Draaijer, D., Godsell, J. and Boer, H. (2016), "Operations and supply chain management – the role of academics and practitioners in the development of research and practice", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 36 No. 12, pp. 1673-1695.
- Escrig, A.B. and de Menezes, L.M. (2016), "What is the effect of size on the use of the EFQM excellence model?", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 36 No. 12, pp. 1800-1820.
- Golini, R., Deflorin, P. and Scherrer, M. (2016), "Exploiting the potential of manufacturing network embeddedness: an OM perspective", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 36 No. 12, pp. 1741-1768.
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- Longoni, A. and Cagliano, R. (2016), "Human resource and customer benefits through sustainable operations", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 36 No. 12, pp. 1719-1740.
- MacCarthy, B., Blome, C., Olhager, J., Srari, J.S. and Zhao, X. (2016), "Supply chain evolution – theory, concepts and science", *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, Vol. 36 No. 12, pp. 1696-1718.