

The 24th International Annual Conference: Inspiring Operations Management

The 24th International Annual Conference of the European Operations Management Association was hosted in Scotland, from 1 to 6 July 2017, by Heriot-Watt University. Proceedings began with the Doctoral Seminar and Publishing Workshop at Heriot-Watt's Edinburgh Campus, with the main conference held across three historic city venues namely the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, The Royal College of Surgeons and the National Museum of Scotland. The conference attracted 560 delegates from the global academic operations management (OM) community. From a record number of 802 abstracts originally submitted to the conference, 530 abstracts were accepted, resulting in a 64 per cent acceptance rate. From the 530 abstracts invited to submit a full paper, 412 resulted in full papers being presented (a conversation rate of 78 per cent), spread across 48 simultaneous tracks.

The theme for EurOMA 2017 was "Inspiring Operations Management". This theme challenged the OM community to engage with OM as maximising opportunities rather than minimising opportunism, by addressing the following questions: what does inspiring OM look like on the shop floor, on-line or in a boardroom? How does theory contribute to inspiring OM? What are inspiring OM practices? And how can OM teaching be inspiring? The intention of the conference theme was to widen discussions on OM to include positive, humanistic concepts like inclusivity, social welfare, equality, personal growth and fulfilment. Traditional OM models often include people only in terms of surveillance, command and control, whereas current and future models need to draw on more diverse perspectives that create positive change in people and practices. Our aim was to celebrate OM as a source of inspiration and optimism – to view OM as a force for inspiration, for creativity, encouragement, vision, inventiveness and occasional brilliance.

A wide variety of topics were presented within the conference theme. In recent years, supply chain management, as a broad topic, typically dominates proceedings by volume of papers. However, at EurOMA 2017, the number of SCM papers was matched by the number of papers on the theme of sustainability in operations and logistics (both 12 per cent), thereby demonstrating the rise in the importance of the environmental impact of OM. These were followed by innovation, product and service development (5 per cent), managing inter-firm relations in supply chains (4 per cent) and empirical research in operations management (4 per cent). There was also prominent representation for healthcare OM (4 per cent) and humanitarian, operations and crises (2 per cent), responding to the theme of the conference.

EurOMA 2017 also welcomed 12 Special Tracks that play a significant role in inspiring operations management. These included right shoring: making correct offshoring and reshoring decisions (3 per cent), operations and supply chain management in engineer-to-order industries (3 per cent). The conference also particularly welcomed a special track in project management: meeting the challenges of managing temporary (multi) organisations (3 per cent), sponsored by the association for project management.

In addition to the main conference, delegates had the opportunity of attending various workshops and networking events, including the gala conference dinner at the uniquely Scottish venue of Dynamic Earth. In celebration of Heriot-Watt University's Scottish Heritage, a site visit was arranged to Glenkinchie Whisky Distillery with afternoon tea in Winton Castle.

About the papers in this issue

Papers were considered for this special issue regardless of theme. We invited 17 papers to submit to the Chris Voss Best Paper Award. From these invites, we received ten full paper



submissions; many papers withdrew from the process having already been accepted by other journals. Following the *IJOPM* double-blind review and revision process, four papers were accepted for publication. We believe the final papers forming this special issue, represent the high quality and wide variety of topics within the theme of inspiring operations management.

Our first paper reflects the interest at EurOMA 2017 in supply chain management. It is written by Sangho Chae, Benn Lawson, Thomas Kull and Thomas Choi, and is titled “To insource or outsource the sourcing? A behavioural investigation of the multi-tier sourcing decision”. This paper investigates the behavioural tendencies of supply managers when faced with uncertainty in making multi-tier sourcing decisions. The methodology is unusual as it employs an experimental vignette methodology that collects responses from over 250 supply managers. The impetus behind the paper is the practical problem of how much lower tier work should a focal firm allow first tier suppliers to control? The authors conclude that where a firm proposes using multi-tier sourcing practices, it is critical that relevant supply chain personnel have sufficient exposure to, and familiarity with, potential tier-2 and further upstream suppliers. However keeping to the behavioural theme, these authors caution that whilst interpersonal trust may give supply managers confidence to delegate greater responsibility to tier-1 suppliers, it is high risk to rely on interpersonal level findings; individual supply managers may overestimate trustworthiness at the expense of maintaining governance mechanisms.

George Onofri, Jasna Prester, Brian Fynes, Paul Humphreys and Frank Wiengarten contribute a paper on “Contextualising the impact of operational intellectual capital on lean practices and operational performance”. The purpose of this study is to investigate how synergies between operational intellectual capital (OIC), as a knowledge based resource and lean practices emerge. The paper draws on data used for the fifth round of the Global Manufacturing Research Group survey project (987 manufacturing plants). The hypotheses are empirically tested using three ordinary least square models. It is possibly a first to see the application of intellectual capital theory in the lean literature. Practically, the research offers managers’ insights into the advantages of managing knowledge assets for improved operational performance, and highlights how the OIC can be leveraged to enhance and sustain operational performance generated through lean practices.

Linda Henry, Mark Stevenson, Jillian MacBryde, Peter Ball, Maysara Sayed and Lingxuan Liu contribute an extremely topical paper on “Local food supply chain resilience to constitutional change: the Brexit effect”. The paper sets out to investigate how local supply chains prepare for and respond to the threats and opportunities presented by constitutional change, thereby building resilience. The paper creates a holistic perspective through multiple case study analysis of 14 firms in the food sector, presented in the context of the UK’s impending exit from the European Union (Brexit). Organisations studied include farmers, processors, retailers and non-government organisations. The theoretical lens of dynamic capabilities is adopted to understand how resilience can be built by sensing and seizing opportunities and threats, and transforming or reconfiguring business models, operations and supply chains. Threats and risks to supply chains are not new but Linda’s team has taken a very different approach adopting constitutional change, with wide ranging implications for food security in any chain or country.

Our final paper by Rui Sousa and Giovani da Silveira addresses “The relationship between servitization and customization strategies”. The methodology is based on structural equation modelling using data from the Sixth International Manufacturing Strategy Survey (IMSS-VI), involving 931 manufacturers in 22 countries. Perhaps unexpectedly, Rui’s findings suggest that customization intensity could be positively associated with servitization, and that servitization did not adversely impact the alignment of customization strategies. These results have significant implications for the study and

practice of servitization. They indicate that product customization strategies can facilitate the adoption of servitization strategies. The paper adds to both the servitization and customisation literatures.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues who joined us in the conference organising in Edinburgh, in particular Pratyush Dadhich for his IT skills, Jessica Doyle for her social media skills and Christine Rutherford who ensured conference materials were available on time, on budget. Major thanks also to our (then) PhD candidate helpers Samer Hamadneh, Yujia Han and Berna Torpak who all made significant individual contributions, and to our many student helpers, whose enthusiasm made the conference a success. On behalf of EurOMA, we would also like to thank Pär Ahlstrom, Juliana Hsuan, Cristina Gimenez, Cipriano Forza, Chris Voss and Harry Boer for their hard work and long hours in organising and managing the workshops that develop the future leaders of OM research. Finally, we would also like to thank all the reviewers for their help in supporting and compiling this special issue.

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About the Guest Editors

Amos Haniff is Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Heriot-Watt University, where also received a PhD Degree from the School of EGIS and is currently Pan-Dean of the University. He publishes research on project success and the strategic alignment of projects, in particular, the strategic behaviour of temporary multi-organisations, project leadership and governance. He is also author of a text book on project management and is regularly invited to make key-note presentations on project management, project strategy and higher education.

Nigel Caldwell is Reader in the School of Social Sciences and Director of the Logistics Research Centre, Heriot-Watt University. After a “practical career” in the automotive industry, he became an OM academic, first at Plymouth University, then Bath, before joining Heriot-Watt. He was a co-founder of the British Academy of Management’s SI Group in Inter Organisational Relations, a committee member of IPSERA and now active in the board of EurOMA (currently Events chair). He sits on the Editorial Review Board for *IJOPM* and publishes mainly on complex buyer–supplier relationships.