

Lean Research: 30th Anniversary and Mid-life Crisis

Time: Monday June 29 12:45-14:15 UK time.

Panelists



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Pamela Danese
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Desirée van Dun
University of
Twente,
The Netherlands

Moderators

Introduction

Lean, or more broadly Operational Excellence, remains a popular topic in the Operations Management journals and one of the most visited tracks at EurOMA. Thirty years after the publication of *The Machine that Changed the World*, lean research is thriving. Figure 1 shows the accumulated number of lean articles in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) database. Although lean started in manufacturing, it has since long been adopted by other industries, such as healthcare, construction, education, and others.

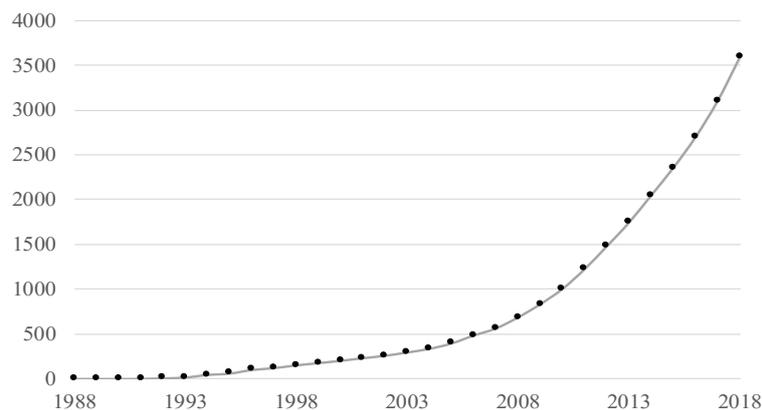


Figure 1. Accumulated number of lean articles in the SSCI database 1988-2018 (Source: ETH Zurich, 2020)

Yet, as lean celebrates its 30th anniversary, it faces a mid-life crisis. Lean risks being ‘old hat’ because new, high-tech trends such as digitization and Industry 4.0 are seen as the next big thing for Operational Excellence. Other trends such as the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals challenge the limited understanding of waste in lean thinking and call for a broader stakeholder perspective on operations. On top comes the global COVID-19 pandemic, challenging the rationale of just-in-time and low-stock policies. What does this mean for research on lean? This special session aims to discuss this and provide concrete advice for young and more senior researchers interested in lean, operational excellence, and digitization.

Objectives

This session focuses on *conducting research* on lean, which is innovative and groundbreaking (we will not discuss the mere content and definitions of lean). We will start with an analysis of the field over the last 30 years by presenting results from a bibliometric study on lean. We will summarize where lean research stands today and how it is challenged by emerging trends. Then, five leading researchers will engage in a deep discussion around three challenging statements:

1. Lean is dead!
2. Lean is a mistake!
3. Lean is forever young!

Panelists

Prof. Rachna Shah

Full professor, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, USA



Rachna is a world-leading scholar in the area of lean. She has 8,811 citations on Google Scholar (Dec 2019). Her papers “Lean manufacturing: context, practice bundles, and performance” (*JOM*, 2003) and “Defining and developing measures of lean production” (*JOM*, 2007) with Peter Ward have attracted 2,848 and 2,289 citations respectively. She is the recipient of a Shingo Publication Award.

Prof. Pär Åhlström

Full Professor in Business Administration at Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden



Pär has 4,650 citations at Google Scholar. He has co-authored the bestselling book *This is Lean: Resolving the Efficiency Paradox* (2012) with Niklas Modig. He has been a leading authority in the lean production and service research since the beginning. His most cited paper is “Assessing changes towards lean production” (with Karlsson) (*IJOPM*, 1996) with 847 citations.

Prof. Pamela Danese

Associate Professor, Department of Management and Engineering, University of Padova, Italy



Pamela has 2,762 citations on Google Scholar. In 2018, she published an excellent literature review on lean in the *International Journal of Management Reviews* with Valeria Manfè and Pietro Romani. Her most cited paper is on “Successful lean implementation: Organizational culture and soft lean practices” (*IJPE*, 2015) with Thomas Bortolotti and Stefania Boscari and has 364 citations.

Dr. Daryl Powell

Research Manager, SINTEF Manufacturing, Norway



Daryl has 808 citations on Google Scholar. He has over 15 years of experience from working with Lean Production as both a practitioner in industry and as an academic researcher. He has an M.Sc. in Lean Manufacturing from the University of Wales (UK) and a Ph.D. in Lean Production Planning and Control from NTNU (Norway). Daryl has won the prestigious Shingo Research Award as co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Lean Management* (with Netland).

Prof. Peter Hines

Founder S A Partners, Visiting Professor at Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland



Peter is a recognized thought-leader in the area of lean management. His paper “Learning to evolve: A review of contemporary lean thinking” (*IJOPM*, 2004) with Matthias Holweg and Nick Rich has 2,216 citations on Google Scholar. His paper “The seven value stream mapping tools” with Nick Rich (*IJOPM*, 1997) has 1,382 citations. He is a multiple winner of the prestigious Shingo Publication Award.