Special session proposal EurOMA 2020
Lean Research: 30th Anniversary and Mid-life Crisis

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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* (Womack, Jones, and Roos, 1990), lean research is thriving (Danese, Manfè, and Romano, 2018; Samuel, Found, and Williams, 2015). 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 (Netland and Powell, 2016).
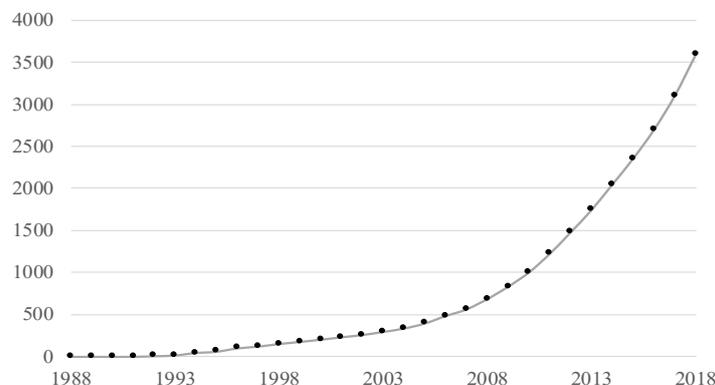

Figure 1. Accumulated number of lean articles in the SSCI database 1988-2018

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. 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.

Main goals

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 be introduced and we will moderate a deep discussion.

We have set the following learning goals for this session:

Participants will…

- learn about the historical development and position of lean research,
- learn about the successes and failures of lean research,
- understand the effect of digitization on lean research,
- have the opportunity to meet leading lean scholars,
- have the opportunity to ask leading lean scholars about the development of the field, and
- ***co-create a research agenda for lean in the next decade.***

<u>Outcome goals:</u>

1. One brilliant panel session with new research inspiration for all participants
2. New connections among established and emerging scholars in the area of lean
3. One conceptual paper or white paper:

After the session, all panel members (and exceptionally interested participants) will be invited to co-author a conceptual research paper for a journal (e.g., *IJOPM*, similar to MacCarthy, Lewis, Voss, and Narasimhan, 2013, and Brennan, Ferdows, Godsell, Golini, Keegan, Kinkel, Srai and Taylor, 2015) or a white paper for a suitable outlet (e.g., World Economic Forum's *Agenda* platform) to disseminate the knowledge outside the community, or both.

Why a special session?
The goals above are not likely to be met with a regular paper session. Also, the EurOMA conference provides the perfect occasion to address this topic in a panel debate as key scholars gather here annually, while co-creating an agenda for our lean community towards the next decade.

Quality
The panel will consist of world-leading scholars in the era of lean and moderated by Torbjörn and Desirée. We have excellent connections in this field and plan to invite (short bios attached):

- Prof. Rachna Shah, Carlson School of Management, USA,
- Prof. Matthias Holweg, Oxford University, UK,
- Prof. Pamela Danese, University of Padova, Italy, and
- Prof. Peter Hines, Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland, and
- Pär Åhlström, Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden.

In case some of these are not available, we can draw on the following list of excellent back-ups: Andrea Furlan, Pauline Found, Arnaldo Camuffo, Daniel Jones, Barbara Flynn, Daryll Powell, Thomas Bortolotti, or Zoe Radnor (among others).

Thank you for considering this proposal
We believe this special session will be extremely well attended (30+ participants). We are also confident the audience as well as the panelists will appreciate it.

We hope the committee also sees the value in our proposal.

Best regards,

Torbjörn and Desirée

References

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Planned 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. Matthias Holweg

American Standard Companies Professor of Operations Management, University of Oxford, UK

Matthias is a world-leading scholar in the area of lean with 13,218 citations on Google Scholar. His paper "Learning to evolve: A review of contemporary lean thinking" (*IJOPM*, 2004) with Peter Hines and Nick Rich has 2,216 citations. His book "The lean toolbox: A handbook for lean transformation" with John Bicheno has 1,729 citations. His sole-authored article "The genealogy of lean production" (*JOM*, 2007) has 1,690 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.

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. Peter Hines

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

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