



SIG 13 - SM - Strategic Management

With our theme **Exploring the Future of Management: Facts, Fashion and Fado**, we invite you to participate in the debate about how to explore the future of management. We look forward to receiving your submissions.

ST13_08 - The inner life of business ecosystems

Proponents:

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Short description:

The study of business ecosystem (BE) research has gained increased interest during the last decade. A BE is defined as an economic community in which a variety of inter-related stakeholders co-evolve. However, the main bulk of studies have focused on well-known BE ecosystems (as in the telecom industry) and ecosystem leaders. Through such research we have learned about structures and orchestration of BE. However, there is a lack of research describing the inner life of BE. We therefore encourage researchers to contribute with studies on the dynamics of BE where novel understandings of roles and self-organizing mechanisms can be uncovered.

Long description:

There is a need to study the inner life of Business Ecosystems. The study of business ecosystem (BE) research has gained increased interest during the last decade. A BE is defined as an economic community in which a variety of inter-related stakeholders co-evolve. With its roots in systems theory and biological evolution, BE theory has developed various theoretical cross-disciplinary concepts that stretch far beyond an ecological metaphor for strategy thinking. However, the main bulk of studies have focused on well-known BE ecosystems (as in the telecom industry) and ecosystem leaders. Through such research we have learned about structures and orchestration of BE. However, there is a lack of research studying novel forms of BE, and what is really going on inside various business ecosystems. More precisely, there is a lack of studies explaining stakeholder dynamics and stakeholder embeddedness.

A business ecosystem contains a large amount of various interdependent stakeholders. These stakeholders may be involved in managing different value chains, or value networks. Still, we know very little about the interdependencies between value chains, value networks



and platforms. We lack understandings of how governance and coordination is performed in the micro level of business processes connecting value chains, value networks and platforms.

BE research more than often also explain business activities going on in a single BE. However, it seems logic that stakeholders, as niched firms, can perform an act of multi-homing. That is, position themselves in between different business ecosystems, drawing benefits from more than one business ecosystem. For example, game providers would probably see a value in supplying more than one BE with their games. We are lacking such studies.

There are also few research contributions describing how stakeholders perform different roles in business ecosystems. Most researchers seem to take for granted that firms mainly play four different types of roles: commodity, niche, keystone or physical dominator. Nonetheless, although such approach to role descriptions can bring some understandings of dynamics in the BE playing field, it seems reasonable to believe that more novel role descriptions could bring additional understandings to the dynamics and embeddedness of firms in BE.

Without excluding the possibility of contributing with other types of BE studies, we encourage researchers to make contributions where they study the inner life of BE. We encourage researchers to move away from the traditionally studied BE areas, and to create novel understandings of roles and self-organizing mechanisms.

Keywords:

Business ecosystems
Dynamics
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Roles
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self-organizing

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European Management Review

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