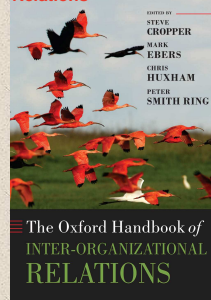


Can IOR Research Gain Collaborative Advantage ?

Steve Cropper – Keele University
 Mark Ebers – Cologne University
 Chris Huxham – University of Strathclyde
 Peter Smith Ring – Loyola Marymount University

Introducing Inter-organizational Relations



- Empirical Manifestations**
- Industry networks
 - Business networks
 - Alliances and joint ventures
 - Policy and implementation networks
 - Public sector service partnerships
 - Community and voluntary sector partnerships
 - Local and regional development partnerships
 - Project organizations
- Perspectives**
- Social networks
 - Evolutionary
 - Transaction cost
 - Critical
 - Managing
 - Psychological
 - Political
 - Economic geographical
- Key Themes**
- Trust
 - Power
 - Conflict, mediation, and development interventions
 - Social capital
 - Knowledge, learning, and innovation
 - Temporality and change
 - Technology and IT
 - Evaluation

The Field of Inter-organizational Relations: A Jungle or an Italian Garden?

Introducing Inter-organizational Relations



Moving on ...

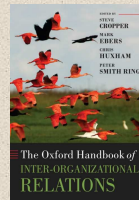
(with difficulty!)

The Field of Inter-organizational Relations: A Jungle or an Italian Garden?

Evan (1965) – “widespread neglect of problems of Inter-organizational relations”
 Us (2009) – “plenty of IOR research but it ‘punches below its weight’”

Barringer and Harrison (2000)

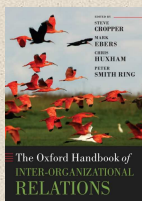
“... fragmentation (of IOR research) has prevented the rapid advancement of knowledge”



Handbook Chapters	Common Citations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector service provision 	2 from 262
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary and community sector partnerships Business alliances and joint ventures 	2 from 238

Knowledge synergy is not being harvested

There is no collaborative advantage in IOR Research !



Handbook Chapters	Common Citations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector service provision 	2 from 262
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary and community sector partnerships Business alliances and joint ventures 	2 from 238

To what extent does - or could - IOR research, collectively, meet two aims:

1. provide participants with insight and guidance that is relevant to their practice?

2. create theory that frames and explains IOR in ways that both encapsulate existing knowledge and generate questions for future research that are seen widely as important and fruitful?

- Review of the nature of IOR research
- Examples of fragmentation
- Conclusions about the field of IOR.
- What can we do to harness the potential collaborative advantage?

The nature of IOR research

Some definitions

IOR	Inter-organizational Relations – the area of
IORs	Inter-organizational relationships – the relationships between organizations
IOEs	Inter-organizational entities – forms such as partnerships, strategic alliances, networks etc

IOR research involves the study of relationships between organizations

Relationships are treated both as dependent and independent variables



The nature of IOR research - 7 examples of prominent focal perspectives

1. The pattern of inter-related organizations – e.g. Dyads or triads; the nature of “ties”
2. A focus on relationship content – e.g. knowledge exchange; “resources”
3. Governance mechanisms – e.g. forms of contract; trust and power
4. Macro-level processes – e.g. phases and lifecycles; development of learning
5. Effect of organizational attributes – e.g. experience of collaboration; manager characteristics
6. Micro-level processes – e.g. unfolding trust; leadership activities

Examples of fragmentation – co-ordination of I-O projects

Approaches to researching these include focuses on:

- Project management tools – such as Gantt charts
- Structuring of social relations among participants – such as networks and social capital
- Relational content – such as frequency of communication or degree of interdependence
- Micro-processes – such as formalization of partners' relationships
- Macro-context variables – such as the role of supportive institutions in the environment
- Attributes of the projects pursued – such as uniqueness of a product or service
- Governance mechanisms – such as I-O career progression

Examples of fragmentation – the significance of trust in IOEs

Approaches to researching this includes focuses on:

- Its role as a governance mechanism (a substitute for hierarchy)
- Micro processes facilitating the development of trust
- Macro-contexts – such as institutional sources of trust
- Effects of trust on different structures, attributes, contents and governance forms
- Significance of trust in contrasting macro-contexts - such as UK vs Germany
- Different levels of analysis – such as interpersonal trust; inter-organizational trust

In addition, researchers:

- ❖ Use different conceptualizations or definitions of trust
- ❖ Start from bases in rational choice, social embeddedness, new

Conclusions – and questions - about the field of IOR

- While some research looks across e.g. levels of analysis, topics, contexts, theories and forms of IOE, most remains bound by a single theory, level of analysis, form of IOE and context.
- Consequently, it only captures a fraction of the complexity of real world IOEs and is of limited value to participants. We are missing a trick!
- Does heterogeneity signal fragmentation or healthy scientific (Kuhnian) competition and struggle for understanding?
- Is there still more dialogue within than between research streams?
- Are the boundaries of some streams (e.g. topic-oriented streams) more permeable than others (e.g. manifestation-oriented streams)?
- IOR does not have an unchallenged set of core assumptions, propositions and research exemplars to guide IOR research.
- IOR *does* have some field-like institutional features – MOPAN! (since 1994), SIGIOR (since 1999), EGOS networks subtheme (since 1994).
- But is IOR *merely* a sub-area of organization studies?

What can we do to harness the potential collaborative advantage?

Individual level agenda

Adjust our own agendas – deliberately access literature from streams outside our own

Field level agenda

Value eclecticism – use meta analysis to pull together research output that is ostensibly non commensurate

Methods level agenda

Develop methods or research questions that facilitate cross stream research or dialogue

Exemplifying collaborative advantage?

NIHR Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) Programme

Archived projects: Studying health care organisations

[Relationships between health care organisations: A critical overview of the literature and a research agenda. SDO/55/2003 - Position paper](#)

[Literature review on managing across diverse networks of health care providers: Lessons from other sectors. SDO/39/2002](#)

<http://www.sdo.nhr.ac.uk/sdoresearchprojects.html>

Basic conceptual frame:
eg management within, management of and governance of networks

Perspectives – value of theories as applied to management of networks

Synthesis by theme – 'trust'

Manifestations - evidence from biotech & defense

Exemplifying collaborative advantage: lines of inquiry

Current projects: Studying health care organisations

[Networks in health care: A comparative study of their management impact and performance. 08/1518/102 \(SDO/102/2005\)](#)

[Delivering health care through managed clinical networks \(MCNs\): Lessons from the north. 08/1518/103 \(SDO/103/2005\)](#)

[The management and effectiveness of professional and clinical networks. 08/1518/104 \(SDO/104/2005\)](#)

[Understanding professional partnerships and non-hierarchical organisations. 08/1518/105 \(SDO/105/2005\)](#)

[Contractual governance in a system with mixed modes of regulation. 08/1618/127 \(SDO/127/2006\)](#)

