

Mergers, acquisitions and network change

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Mergers and acquisitions (M&As) construct an opportunity to study change in pre-/post-hoc settings as M&As demark distinct events in time. M&As take place in different forms (from becoming a majority shareholder to two firms being unified into one) and have rendered research interests from scholars across disciplines. M&As are frequently appearing in many of those case studies produced by IMP researchers and beyond, and are also used as critical events to study network change (Havila & Salmi, 2000). Being a distinct event in time, M&As offer several opportunities for understanding the dynamic of interactions.

In contrast to the more narrow, company centric lenses on M&As often underpinning research in strategic management, accounting, finance and HRM studies (e.g., Dezi, Battisti, Ferraris, & Papa, 2018; Haleblan, Devers, McNamara, Carpenter, & Davison, 2009; Kiessling, Vlacic, & Dabic, 2021), IMP research has contributed to the view on M&As as a strategic mode to change firm resources or offerings. IMP researchers have among other aspects highlighted: 1) the importance of considering business parties in M&A studies (Anderson, Havila, & Salmi, 2001; Holtström & Anderson, 2021); 2) M&As as a critical event triggering radical change both at the dyadic and network level (Havila & Salmi, 2000), and 3) patterns between M&As, integration and customer reactions (Öberg, 2008). Studies have furthermore focused on network effects related to specific types of firms (e.g., family firms, small-sized firm and innovative firms) and cross-border M&As (Andersson & Mattsson, 2006; Bocconcelli, Snehota, & Tunisini, 2006; Mattsson, 2000; Öberg, Grundström, & Jönsson, 2011). Studies have focused on management cognition to structural network analyses (Gebert Persson, Lundberg, & Elbe, 2014; Öberg, Henneberg, & Mouzas, 2007).

Although IMP research has been done in relation to network effects of M&As, much remains not the least as the business landscape changes to include platform-based operations, servitisation, climate change and as business models are intensively debated (e.g., Raja, Basner, Chakkol, & Frandsen, 2017; Öberg, 2021). We therefore invite papers focusing on M&As related to business relationships and networks in the contemporary business and political context to further expand knowledge related to M&As in a network setting and M&As as a methodological opportunity to capture change in business relationships and networks. The track invites papers including M&As in business network studies, departing from M&As to capture stability and change of business relationships, or using M&As methodologically. Rather than providing a list of suggested themes, we provide some inspirational questions and look forward to your contributions:

- How are business relationships valued in a due diligence preceding an M&A?
- How would suppliers evaluate and act when learning that their largest customers merge?
- How would customers' perceptions of their suppliers change due to an M&A and how would they act or react on that?
- How do roles and positions change as a result of an M&A within the network?
- How can causal claims between M&As and network-level change be understood?
- How do recent trends of M&As affect business networks?

- What business network reactions follow from the emerging orientation of business model M&As?
- How do climate mitigating innovations affect M&A processes?
- How does the evolution of the platform economy affect M&A processes?
- How does the dynamics of servitisation affect M&A processes?

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