

ENVISIONING POTENTIAL VALUE CREATION THROUGH MANAGING RESOURCE BECOMING

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Abstract

Within a research context of resuming business, the purpose of this paper is to elaborate on the issue of potentiality of dormant resources for actor to actor (A2A) value creation following business closure, also developing a discussion on resource becoming. On the issue of identifying and acknowledging potential resources when resuming business, we see resource becoming as contingent on acknowledging potential resources, using previous experience of combining resources, and envisioning future resource integration for value creation. Equally we argue that re-configuring resources is essential to resource becoming. As an illustration for our discussion we use a case study of a re-opened Swedish iron-ore mine after twenty years of closure.

Acknowledging Dormant Resources

During a complete business closure, relationships and activities linked to the business are terminated, and all kinds of resources tied to the business are either left unused or reconfigured and/or removed for use in a new type of business. Hence, remains of the past are seen as potential but dormant resources in the form of personal relationships and knowledge, physical artefacts and other residues that may again become useful.

Envisioning potential value is an inseparable feature of doing business. Taking a resource perspective to service innovation and value creation, integrating and combining resources is not only a matter of seeing the potential in and integrating readily discernable resources, but just as much to identify and acknowledge resource potentiality also in entities not evidently seen as resources, i.e., dormant resources (cf. Read et al., 2009). This is not the least relevant considering resource spatiality, as in connections to a particular place. Furthermore, interacting and integrating with actors as, or linked to, potential resources from the very onset opens for multi-beneficial value creation.

Integration of resources within a network of actors is a prominent feature of the service-dominant (S-D) logic, manifested in the service ecosystem framework (e.g. Vargo; Lusch, 2016). Resources are in general most often discussed as being already actualized; resources “are”, and acknowledged as such by the focal actor (cf. Schumpeter, 1934). However, the key resource underlying all other resources considers the ability of an individual to perceive and enact the resource potential of any means available to a firm (Litz, 1996). Such a dynamic perspective is encapsulated in the view that “resources are not; they become” (Zimmermann, 1951). That is, managing resource becoming is vital, as is realizing that potential resources are only acknowledged and put into use given the ability to perceive them.

Within a research context of resuming business, the purpose of this paper is to elaborate on the issue of potentiality of dormant resources for actor to actor (A2A) value creation following business closure, also developing a discussion on resource becoming. Building on the A2A orientation of S-D logic (e.g. Vargo;Lusch, 2011), value creation in a particular business context, at a particular place, is seen as facilitated by the integration of resources by actors inter-related in a complex service ecosystem.

There has been some research interest in what happens after business closure to unused resources, such as, for example, the buildings and roads remaining at an old industrial site (Colaton; Bartsch, 1996). Also, reactivation of ended business relationships that are seen as important potential resources has been acknowledged (Gidhagen; Havila, 2016). However, what remains to be explored is the issue of how previously used resources in a former place of business are available to be vitalized for the same or a new type of use. This longitudinal view brings a dynamic perspective to resources.

Methods

To explore the potential of dormant resources for A2A value creation in resuming business, the research is based on a single case study; a useful exploratory approach for theory building (Yin, 2009). The case considers a Swedish iron ore mine that was closed in 1992 and reopened in 2012. The chosen research design combines primary and secondary data, considering both the focal company and other relevant actors of the service ecosystem. Apart from studying official company information and newspaper articles, primary data was gathered through twelve interviews with individuals considered to be key informants (Marshall, 1996). The interviews were made with one of the founders of the mining company, three consecutive CEOs and other managers and key employees of the company; as well as with adjacent suppliers in the service ecosystem and representatives of the local municipality.

Main Contributions

One main contribution to service research is the focus on the resource-integrating role when resuming business, essential to value creation in A2A service ecosystems, and resource becoming, especially considering the potentiality in dormant resources. The presented framework of resource becoming and configuring provides a conceptual tool for an enhanced un-

derstanding of factors affecting the value creation process in any particular place and context, from a service ecosystems perspective.

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