

Shared Platform Evolution

An Imbrication Analysis of Competition and Architecture

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Abstract

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Shared platforms are a stable foundation for the integration of digital components by heterogeneous actors. These platforms are an emergent organizational form whose members seek interoperability of their IT systems through technological architectures constituted of a modular core, a standardized interface, and complementary extensions. Although extant Information Systems (IS) research on such platforms primarily emphasizes the social aspects of platforms, e.g., the economic dimension of platform members' positions vis-à-vis competitors and complementors, there is a growing literature that also takes their material aspects into account. In this dissertation, my objective is to contribute to this trend in sociomaterial theorizing of platforms by undertaking an imbrication analysis of a twelve-year shared platform initiative in the Swedish Road Haulage industry. Hence, I attempt to answer the following research question: "How do the participants' coopetitive behavior and the platform's technology architecture reciprocally shape the evolution of a shared platform?" My dissertation identifies three organizational forms that are likely to emerge in the evolution of a shared platform and assesses their respective implications for platform innovation. I conclude by articulating the contributions of my study to IS research and practice.