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The dynamics of after-sales managers strategizing work

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1. Introduction

After-sales activities are for many firms the most profitable of all performed business activities (Alexander et al., 2002; Cavalieri et al., 2007; Wise and Baumgartner, 1999). This situation is especially apparent when an organization is facing shrinking profit margins whereby after sales services generate a very attractive and necessary source of low-risk, but high-margin business (Subramoniam et al., 2009). This suggests that the development of an after-sales strategy is of considerable importance for firms in many sectors (Cohen and Lee, 1990; González, 2015; Hines et al., 2002; Zackariasson and Wilson, 2004). Specifically, such after-sales strategy concern "the set of activities taking place after the purchase of the product, devoted to supporting customers in the usage and disposal of goods." (Saccani et al., 2007; 54)

Considering the impact after-sales strategy have on firms' financial performance, one might expect that the subject would be researched at depth. However, this is not the case. Studies focusing explicitly on after-sales strategy development are surprisingly few (cf. Clark and

Armistead, 1991; Lele, 1997; Cavalieri et al., 2007). Indeed researchers have expressed a need for further studies of after-sales strategizing activities (Goffin and New, 2001, Baines et al., 2009). Strategy can be developed in different ways, top-down or bottom-up (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Deken et al., 2018). Indeed, it is common that strategy is developed by cross-functional teams working in projects (Grundy, 1998, 2000; Dietrich and Lehtonen, 2005; De Luca and Atuahene-Gima, 2007; Paroutis and Pettigrew; 2007; Lin et al., 2008; Troy et al., 2008) where values are supposed to be co-created (Barravecchia et al., 2018, Guenzi and Troilo, 2007). It is proposed that after-sales managers' participation is crucial for development success (cf. Ernst et al., 2010). Nevertheless, in most cases, after-sales managers do not participate in early phases of development (Gonzalez and Claro, 2019), and their influence becomes very limited. This raises the question of how after-sales strategies actually come about in early phases of product development (Goffin and New, 2001).

Using a qualitative method, this study therefore concentrates on the strategizing work performed by after-sales managers in a radical inter-organizational vehicle platform project. Such projects are known for demanding strategic changes (Sköld and Karlsson, 2013). We pay attention to how after-sales managers engage in strategizing activities, how they integrate with other project stakeholders, what decisions they can make, the duration of time that it takes to develop after-sales strategy, and the challenges that they experience. Such knowledge contributes to understandings of how strategy emerges (cf. Tsoukas, 2010).

In developing knowledge in this domain, our study attempts to provide four major contributions. First, this paper penetrates the "black box" of activities that after-sales managers must avail themselves (cf. Lundin and Söderholm, 1998) and the strategy work that after-sales managers perform in practice. This is important for a conceptualization of after-sales strategizing, which has largely been overlooked by previous research. Second, we develop a process model capturing the activities of the after-sales strategizing process. This

has the advantage to outline how after-sales strategizing is executed and what we also will show in the paper, why it is neglected. This offers an emergent theoretical explanation for the concept after sales strategy. Third, we introduce a time and role perspective on after-sales strategizing activities, explaining the need to take a longitudinal view on strategy creation. Four, after-sales has been given a marginal role in strategy and strategizing. This paper contributes to the strategy-as-practice research stream (cf. Vaara and Whittington, 2012) where we show and elaborate upon the mechanisms in the dynamics of strategy work.

2. Theory

This section discusses four relevant complementary areas which we used to develop our emergent view of after-sales strategizing; (1) Dynamic strategy theory and strategy as practice, (2) Platform literature, (3) After-sales management literature (4) and the strategic development through projects literature. This content assist the development of the context in which our emergent process model of after-sales strategizing takes place. As evident in this review, there is a lack of studies studying after-sales managers in a cross-functional project setting and in the very early stages of product and after-sales strategy creation. We found it surprising that the after-sales function in general has received so little attention although being a significant source of organizational revenues. No studies have been performed about after-sales in relation to radical platform development.

2.1 Dynamic strategy theory

This paper is based upon the strategy-as-practice approach (Whittington, 1996) where the inner workings of organizations are of importance to study for understanding how strategy

emerges (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Regnér, 2008). Vaara and Whittington (2012) explains that studies of inner workings practices allows for creating understandings of how micro activities link with macro-level organizational phenomena. This is the case where what is thought to be "future after-sales practices" is executed and communicated to a larger set of strategic initiatives in an organization in a strategic planning process. This means that individual's sensemaking processes is at the center of study. Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) emphasize that such sensemaking studies can reveal new aspects of strategizing work.

Researchers explain that strategic planning is a dynamically evolving practice (Ocasio and Joseph's, 2008), and that individual's interpretation of corporate change shapes units change responses, and organization-level interpretations of what is important and what is to be executed in the future (Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007). Thus, in the Strategy-as-practice approach (SaP), human agency is key in strategizing work (Vaara and Whittington, 2012).

Researchers have studied how strategy come about. Deken et al. (2018) propose that the belief that strategic planning always precedes and determine strategic action is outdated. Indeed, researchers claim that strategy comes about in the interface between action and planning (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Deken et al., 2018). Following this line of argumentation, researchers (Regnér, 2003; Liu and Maitlis, 2014) propose that not all strategizing processes are the same; rather, they are associated with various dynamics and that the strategizing processes for certain organizational units are different than certain others. For after-sales, previous research has not specifically investigated this issue. Obviously, the knowledge of such dynamics is limited. Tsoukas (2010) therefore proposes that the concept of how strategies emerge should be further studied. In this paper, we therefore study the creation of after-sales strategy during radical platform development. A rarely studied topic.

2.2 Platform development

This subsection serves the purpose of introducing the concept of platforms to the reader. We believe that the platform context is special, and that the basics of platform theory should be explained so that the reader can understand the studied context. Firms tend to search for ways to leverage investments in new product development and product platforms have become essential in this strive for leverage (Halman et al., 2003; Sköld, and Karlsson, 2007). A platform is defined as "a set of stable components that supports variety and evolvability in a system by constraining the linkages among the other components" (Baldwin and Woodard, 2009, p. 19). This imply that the after-sales processes are increasingly, if not always, linked to platform thinking, whether it is on a larger scale, or in a smaller scale, such in a closed product family.

Indeed, the vehicle industry is of a special kind (Wang and Tanaka, 2011), and studies of inter-organizational vehicle platform development offers extraordinary possibilities to investigate complex strategic development activities (Li et al., 2017). This paper therefore studies the development of a radically new interorganizational platform in the vehicle industry where two organizations try to use a shared vehicle architecture and technology. Such projects are known for being vital for the firm strategy, though being complex to organize since a huge amount of stakeholders need to be organized around the project (Burström and Jacobsson, 2012; Burström, 2011; Li et al., 2017; Sköld and Karlsson, 2007, Burström and Wilson, 2018).

Platform projects are not like any other type of projects, because they per definition are the formation of future strategies. Development of multi-branded vehicle platforms has distinctive effects on strategy work throughout organizations. Firms creating a shared vehicle architecture need to understand how to create product differentiation (cf. Tierney et al., 2016), and there has to be a particular corporate responsibility in transforming single-branded platforms to multi-branded platforms (Sköld and Karlsson, 2007).

Sköld and Karlsson (2013, 72) identify four types of platform development. One of them is radical platform development "It represents the most difficult development type because both architecture and components change, e.g., due to radical shifts in technology, when totally new platforms are developed for new generation products, or when the production processes change radically. The result is far-reaching changes in the existing knowledge about components and about architecture, requiring extensive resources from cross-functional teams. Radical platform development projects are lengthy and need high levels of integration within and between functional technology areas because of the discontinuous patterns with prevailing projects". In addition, creating a shared platform not only demand technological changes, but it also call for advanced organizational structural/behavioral changes (Burström, 2011). It is within this type of context that this study follows the strategic work of after-sales managers.

2.3 After-sales management

In this paper we draw on literature related to both after-sales management and after-market studies since researchers in these two very closely related fields at large discuss the same issues. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will only use the term "after-sales" (AS) although some literature may be related to "after-market" studies.

There are multiple definitions of after-sales services. This paper draws on Saccani et al. (2007; 54) who defines after-sales service as "[...] after-sales services for manufactured goods encompass the set of activities taking place after the purchase of the product, devoted to supporting customers in the usage and disposal of goods." Goffin (1990) additionally describes that, in practice, after-sales service usually concerns seven support elements; installation, user training, documentation, maintenance and repair, on-line support, warranty and upgrades.

Haas (1995, 397) describes why after-sales services have become important, "When making purchases, business customers often believe they are buying more than the physical item itself; they also have expectations about the level of post-purchase support the product carries with it. Product support can help maximize the customer's after-sale satisfaction and includes such things as … service contracts, warranty programs, replacement parts, technical assistance and location of service facilities close to the customer". The importance of taking a customer focus has been reinforced due to later market/research development. Market stakeholders are increasingly showing a demand for integrated solutions rather than pure manufactured products (Davies, 2004). This trend is by researchers labeled "servicizing" or servitization" (Zhang and Banerji (2017). This servicizing trend is by Baines et al. (2009; 555) defined as 'innovation of manufacturers' capabilities and processes to transform from selling products to selling integrated solutions that deliver value in use for customers'. Due to this late trend, the importance of after-sales management is increasing (Baines et al., 2009).

In the spirit of servitization, companies try to see AS as a strategic opportunity (cf. Clark and Armistead, 1991; Lele, 1997; Cavalieri et al., 2007). Companies are striving to make

distribution channels more flexible and adaptive (Narus and Anderson, 1996; Cohen et al., 2000; Zackariasson and Wilson, 2004; Kim et al., 2007; Gaiardelli et al., 2007) with customer needs in focus (Levit, 1983: Cohen and Lee, 1990; Narus and Anderson, 1996). It is further proposed that AS-activities increases company profitability (Herbig and Palumbo, 1993), customer satisfaction and loyalty (Smith, 1998; Rigopoulou et al., 2008) and affects customer re-purchasing behavior (González, 2015). Contemporary research also propose that AS-managers should take in concern the possibilities to create lock-in situations (Kaserman, 2007; Lei and Slocum, 2009; Pereira et al., 2019). That is, in order to retain customers, service providers can make it difficult and costly for customers to change service providers, as when a customer admits to be serviced by special service provider, then being forced to purchase high-priced replacement parts and repair services from that provider (Frow et al., 2011). Still, Goffin and New (2001) concludes that after-sales requirements only gain minimal attention in early phases of product development and should be further studied.

Finally, researchers also communicate that strategy making is built over time (Regnér, 2008; 582), or as phrased by Vaara and Whittington (2012); in episodes over time. Still, very little is known about such episodes and about potential time spans. Indeed, in relation to after sales managers strategizing work, such knowledge is obsolete.

2.4 After-sales managers strategizing environment

The question of who actually creates strategy is under debate. However, one stream of researchers maintain that strategic agency can take place in a web of practices (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Abrahamsen et al., 2016; Luedicke et al., 2017; van der Steen, 2017) where middle managers may play a central role (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Fauré

and Rouleau, 2011). In this paper, we focus on after-sales managers being part of strategy creation in a radical interorganizational platform project.

Researchers typically point out that strategic work is performed in cross-functional teams (Grundy, 1998, 2000; Dietrich and Lehtonen, 2005; De Luca and Atuahene-Gima, 2007; Paroutis and Pettigrew; 2007; Lin et al., 2008; Troy et al., 2008). Working in such teams can be a turbulent experience "Whilst strategy formulation is clearly of some emotional and territorial sensitivity, this is likely to be greatly magnified during strategy implementation. For during strategic action, strategy creates turbulence in the everyday fabric of the organization. Frequently the main vehicle for that strategic action is the strategic project" Grundy (2000; 94). The experience of after-sales managers working in such teams is still unknown.

In cross-functional teams, values are supposed to be co-created (Barravecchia et al., 2018, Guenzi and Troilo, 2007) and cross-functional team members play complementary roles (Bechky, 2006; 5) due to their various competencies (cf. Burström and Jacobsson, 2013; Burström and Wilson, 2014). Roles and activities are fine-tuned through this inter-functional interplay (*cf*. Pinto and Pinto, 1990; Pinto et al., 1993), and the quality of the interplay is decisive for development success (Meyerson et al., 1996). Nonetheless, little is known about after-sales managers' part in such interplay.

Researchers make some recommendations underpinning cross-functional project success. It is proposed that collaborative activities characterized by negotiations and compromises are key for project and strategizing success (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009). It is also suggested that project management activities should be formalized (Teller et al., 2012) and that there should be strategy and project alignment and harmonization

(Srivannaboon and Milosevic, 2006; Jacobsson et al, 2013; Kaiser et al., 2015; Hermano et al., 2016) based on formal procedures (Dietrich and Lehtonen, 2005).

It is further recommended that firms should engage customers in the new product development processes (c.f. von Hippel, 1978) and that sales function participation is critical during early phases of product development (Ernst et al., 2010). Such integrative action is needed since the business case need to be specified in the early stages of development (Cooper, 2019). Business case specification is dependent on customer profitability analysis, such analysis is performed in collaboration between sales personnel and other team members, and enables up-selling (Guenzi et al. 2016). Up-selling plays an important role in improving the performance of the firm since up-selling represents the explorative part of selling where customers can be offered innovative (more expensive) solutions (Asif, 2017). Still, studies are lacking taking a process view on such strategy creation (Matthews et al., 2018).

Despite recommendations as above, in practice, cross-functional collaboration prove to have some general difficulties (cf. Dooley and O´Sullivan, 2007; Salter et al., 2014), and it is not uncommon that collaboration attempts fail (Park and Ungson, 2001; Bader, 2008). For example, it is far from given who is in or out of working with strategy development, and how people are included or excluded (Vaara and Whittington (2012, p.309). Task conflicts can be common (Weingart et al., 2010), especially in radical projects (cf. Majchrzak et al., 2012; Dougherty and Dunne, 2012). There might also be severe conflicting goals and interests (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2002), diverse values and practices (Levina, 2005; Bjerregaard, 2010), and several uncoordinated chains of command (Mandell and Steelman, 2003). Traditional project management techniques may be outdated (Lee and Veloso, 2008), there might be task

uncertainty (Burström and Wilson, 2015; Tatikonda and Rosenthal, 2000), and difficulties in foreseeing and planning the process (Loch et al., 2008).

Teams may also experience difficulties in sharing knowledge (Huang and Newell, 2003) and for sales representatives knowledge integration mechanisms change during different phases of the development process (Eslami et al., 2018). It is actually far from given what influence a team member will have on team activities and project outcomes (Atuahene-Gima and Evangelista, 2000). Influence is especially prone to sales representatives since they typically not interact with other functional representatives during product development processes (Gonzalez and Claro, 2019).

Additionally, customer collaboration have some specific challenges. For example, in the case where the customer expects extraordinary benefits, there is a need to manage integrative relationships (Ford et al., 1998, Lagrosen, 2005). However, managers seem to be unaware of how to engage customers (Lagrosen, 2005). It is also acknowledged that suppliers and customers may have significantly different practices in how they actually go about to create new products, making shared product development difficult to approach (Payne et al., 2008). The outcome of a shared process is also depending on customer commitment, stakeholders' capabilities of managing relationships and the character of interdependencies (Zhang and Zhu, 2019). Indeed, in the case of high process interdependence in complex projects, customer involvement may even delay speed to market (Fang, 2008). In this paper, participating organizations play a role as each other's customers, while after-sales managers play a critical role in expressing the voice of the end customer.

In this paper, we also recognize that co-creation of after-sales strategy arrives with high risk. As after-sales activities generate an attractive income for firms, this strategy is also one of the more sensitive strategies for firms to co-develop (Bouncken et al., 2018) and therefore may increase the risk for opportunistic behavior (Paswan et al., 2017). Failure in developing a successful after-sales strategy could bring a severe cut in revenue.

To conclude, this paper finds it essential to study the development of after-sales strategy in practice. Such approach provides the research community with contemporary theories and updated images of how work is organized (Barley and Kunda, 2001). By studying an intriguing context (interorganizational radical platform project) and the activities of after-sales managers, this paper uncovers dynamics that are essential for understanding strategy development (cf. Blindenbach-Driessen, 2015). This type of study not only give a more profound understanding of the creation of after-sales strategy, it also brings knowledge about the relationship between strategy creation and project work.

3. Method

3.1 Overall Approach

This paper finds an interest and fascination of practitioners' daily activities. That is, the saying and doing of after-sales managers. Consequently, the study was performed in ways that is aligned with organization studies that have an interest of going at depth when studying managers' practice based activities (*cf*. Galbraith, 1973; Mintzberg, 1980, 1983). Since this paper analyzes daily activities and practices of after-sales managers (*cf.* Barley and Kunda, 2001), it can be described as if this paper used a "work-based-approach" (*cf*. Bechky, 2006). Primarily, however, this study is defined as a case study taking an abductive approach (*cf.* Dubois and Gadde, 2014). In alignment with Simon (1996, 215) we propose that substitution

of a process description for a state description plays a role in the development of science. Put another way, if we understand *how* something is done, we take a major step toward understanding *why* something was done, a basic step in the attempt to generalize from in-depth case studies.

The empirical setting consisted of an umbrella platform project. The goal was to develop a shared inter-organizational vehicle platform. Although this study only concern the work of people working directly in the project, it is important to understand that creation of the platform indirectly involved and affected the work of thousands of people. The changes for the participating organizations were substantial, impacting corporate strategies on both short and long term.

The project was studied on site during a period of three months. Drawing on Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin 1994) data collection was performed through a multi-methodology triangulation. Triangulation was achieved by using in-depth, semi-structured interviews (totally 68), participant observation of meetings, and document collection (prerequisites, requirement specifications, and technological specifications).

3.2 Data and material

Three after-sales managers and 65 other stakeholders were interviewed. Other examples of stakeholders being interviewed were; three chief project managers, one department manager, three time managers, three quality managers, two marketing managers, two design managers, three IT managers, two cab managers, three purchasing managers, two project controllers, and one engine manager. Respondents were identified through formal project plans but also by recommendations when starting to do interviews.

An interview script with 14 themes was created and used as a lead for creating an interview structure. We, for example, asked questions related to roles (what do you do, are you engaged

in multiple projects, have you experienced critical incidents), responsibilities (what are your formal responsibilities, do you have any informal responsibilities, have you experienced conflicts), innovation (what type of innovation are you working with, which are your challenges, how do you go about to create the innovation, with whom do you collaborate, what is the working climate). Other examples of themes were knowledge to solve the task, network, communication, resources, group composition, objects, systems and work culture. All questions were asked to all managers and stakeholders.

During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to describe both formal roles and daily activities. Thus, it was possible to gain understanding of what they formally were expected to do, but also to understand what they actually did. All respondents were also asked to draw a sketch explaining their personal interaction network. That is, illustrating (defining) with whom they met, how often they met and why they met. Respondents were encouraged to describe the network and explain why and how activities were performed with certain other stakeholders. This interview technique enabled us to gain detailed knowledge on for example re-organizing processes, collaboration processes, decision making processes, conflicts, routines and success stories. It was early observed that respondents holding other positions than after-sales positions never mentioned after-sales collaboration as a natural part of their network. When asked about collaboration activities with after-sales, respondents typically said that after-sales sometime were part of project meetings, but that there was no other collaboration.

The use of observation as a data collection method turned out to be vital for understanding ongoing processes. In total, 32 formal meeting of different kind was observed. Most of these meetings were project team meetings, but there were also examples of other meetings as, for example, finance control meetings, coordination meetings and concept decision meetings. There were of course other multiple smaller informal meetings. Making observations of such

daily activities enabled to gain deeper knowledge of what was actually going on in the project setting. Through this approach, it was thus possible to identify when, where and how after-sales managers interacted with other cross-functional managers.

It was also valuable to study various forms of documents. There were multiple documents to study, some examples; project plans, global development instructions, development processes, requirement specifications, prerequisites, and technological specifications. Making these complementary studies of documents made it possible to understand how different stakeholders made various interpretations of what was being communicated in the documents. Translation of development targets was typically a subject for long and heated discussions. For after-sales managers such translations were of most importance since they tried creating a new inter-organizational after-sales strategy. No such strategy had existed before. It was of significant importance for participants that they agreed with other stakeholders on for example product specifications since they had to make predictions of future need of for example spare parts. However, not only was the after-sales strategy in creation, after-sales managers were also trying to define their own role during the process. The demand for inter-organizational collaboration brought a need for role interpretation and change of work processes.

3.3 Data analysis

The analysis thereafter at large followed an abductive approach, where we in particular identified 13 empirical observations. Additionally, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) advice on making thematic analysis, this study looked further than the surface meaning of the interviews, allowing empirical findings to impact on conceptualizations. That is, after-sales managers and other cross-functional stakeholders very openly discussed experiences,

opportunities, obstacles and challenges in their line of work. Therefore, we initially studied commonalities across the responses from after-sales managers. After identifying commonalities we compared these commonalities with observations made about after-sales management practices. Thereafter we compared the answers from after-sales managers with the answers from other project stakeholders. Thus, we could confirm certain characteristics about the after-sales strategy work. We then compared our results with findings from previous studies. From the comments themselves, the nature of problems with which they dealt and the literature, some typical activities were generated to describe the field situation that had been encountered.[1] As such, we followed best practise in developing theory, which involve understanding the context as good as possible, and allowing the phenomenon to direct our interpretation. Moreover, we engaged in constant comparison to generate conceptual categories in the data. We present our findings guided by Gioia et al (2013), which imply that we follow this template to outline ordered categories in order to illustrate our empirical story and connect it to our subsequent theorizing about after-sales strategizing. We started with analysing the quotes and observations, we selected quotes that captured the essence of the current work situation. We thereafter coded them into categories, and subsequently abstracted them into more theoretical dimensions, which ultimately helped to understand the dynamics of the after-sales strategizing in our data.

[1] We realize that it might have been of interest for the readers to know about the details of project prerequisites and requirements (for example: faster customer response time, faster repair time, more efficient value chains, software solutions). Such details of the after-sales strategy would of course enrich the analysis. However, we are bound by non-disclosure agreements and cannot reveal such information.

4. Empirics

The project was the first of its kind in corporate history. It was bigger and more challenging than any project previously performed. Two brands in the same corporation were supposed to create a shared vehicle platform. The project affected all parts of the participating organizations, from strategy to practice. It followed that new strategies, new units, new processes, new routines, new vehicle ranges, new financial logics and new work practices were created. Thus, novelty and complexity was at its peak.

This narrative will illustrate how the after-sales process emerged as after-sales managers tried to manage a strategic development process, which integrated and separated brand boundaries through ongoing discussions. Note here that in the method section of this paper we described that all respondents made a sketch of their network. An observation from that activity was that none of the other cross-functional representatives included after-sales managers in the network sketch (all other functions were included at some point of time). When asked about why this was the case, the common answer was that, by tradition, after-sales were not part of early phases of product development. Thus, to our surprise, other respondents had not much to tell about the after-sales/project interface. Therefore, the storyline below builds mainly on the narratives told by after-sales managers.

4.1 Resource coping

Staffing was a problem; there were only three after-sales managers. While following the progress of platform development, two of the after-sales managers were also supposed to perform their regular daily duties who concerned strategic after-sales management on a global and local scale. This meant that they had very limited time to participate in project meetings and project development discussions. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

“We are only three after-sales managers that are supposed to cover all development issues”

In order to manage, the after-sales managers created a priority list of a few “must do” project activities where all of them participated, then, all other platform development activities had to be monitored by only one after-sales manager. It was a difficult, nearly impossible job to perform since platform development activities took place in parallel in two different countries. Consequently, they used digital media such as Skype in order to follow meetings from a distance, but such participation was described as insufficient.

4.2 Overcoming marginality

The platform project produced parallel, ongoing changes in each of the participating organizations. In effect, it required changes on local, regional and global scales. After-sales managers felt these changes most of all. Due to the scale of these changes, the consequences were difficult to identify, map and manage. As can be understood, as the organizations changed, the practice of after-sales managers also had to change. The traditional way of working for after-sales managers in product development projects was described as checking that project targets were aligned with after-sales targets, also that it was possible to reach targets and that targets could be reached in time. Additionally, after-sales managers also needed to assure market re-organization and training of after-sales service personnel. After-sales managers therefore decided to engage more than usual in the very early phase of platform development, then they would almost let go of the project during the following design phase. Then, they would engage heavily in the platform project again as the product would go to market.

"We have by tradition not been involved in early phases of product development, but due to this platform project we had to reconsider our work process. However, we will basically leave the project after the concept phase. Then, when we get closer to market introduction, we will engage again."

4.3 Fighting the sense of a given outcome

The high level of novelty related to the project demanded that all project stakeholders make interpretations related to the outcome of the project. Such interpretations were, for example, based on the discussions from project meetings. During such meetings, project members typically the final product (-s) or technological items, and although there was an uncertainty of the exact details of various items, the sense of the outcome was tangible and relatively given. It was noted, of all observed meetings, only one meeting concerned significant after-sales considerations and it was a short discussion. Therefore, compared to other project considerations, for after-sales managers the outcome was intangible and far from given. They knew that services would have to be developed, but they had to wait for a long time until such services found shape. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

"People don't want to talk about spare parts. When manufacturing asks for something from the project, everyone is aware of what they ask; it is never the same when after-sales is asking".

4.4 Clarifying the financial logic

There was also a difference in focus between after-sales managers and the rest of the project teams in terms of how to make money. The majority of stakeholders in the project teams focused on product margin. That is, the profit from each sold vehicle. Instead, although recognizing the importance of *product* margin, after-sales managers focused on *after-sales* profits. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

“To sell our vehicles is not the best way to make money, after-sales is the best way”.

Indeed, history showed after-sales managers to be right. The high value of after-sales activities in terms of revenue was well-established in the rest of the organization. Top management had recognized the importance of improving the after-sales strategy. They had identified opportunities to create more service offers; they could also be delivered more efficiently and they could be made more cost-efficient. If successful, it would have large effect on brand revenues. Thus, also for top management, after-sales had become a central strategic issue requiring management in both a short and long term perspective. Still, that did not mean that after-sales activities were accepted as a central issue in the project teams. The major part of the project teams focused on the hard offering, i.e., the components, modules and the complete vehicle.

4.5 Crossing organizational boundaries

As described previously, a decision had been made to improve the after-sales services. Nevertheless, this decision was made on a strategic level in the corporation. Then, the decision was communicated to the rest of the organization, but without providing any knowledge about *how* to reach the target. One of the after-sales managers described this situation:

“It is very challenging to follow up on global after-sales and local after-sales. There is a decision, but no one knows how to do it. We have to invent how to do it in the projects”.

That is, after-sales managers found themselves being in a situation where they had to invent a new way of working. Such invention had to be performed by working inter-organizational, cross-functional and cross-hierarchies. For example, one suggested solution in achieving the target would be to re-organize the whole after-sales organization, integrating parts of the organizations. These issues were mulled over during the relative withdrawal from the project.

There were plans to set up a “one voice” project. In such case the two brands would speak with one voice in relation to all after-sales issues. The clear benefit would be inter-brand synchronization. Nevertheless, it would follow that the organization would have to re-organize in order to comply with the need of the two brands. This organization (and its after-sales managers) would function as facilitators between brands. Still, it was far from a fixed decision concerning this new organizational solution. In order to come to a solution, after-sales managers had to work across cross-functional boundaries, inter-organizational boundaries and company specific hierarchical boundaries.

4.6 Defining and clarifying goals

Due to its novelty, the platform project in practice brought strategic solutions to top management. In this early stage of product development, it also followed that development targets (prerequisites) and detailed plans (requirement specifications) of how to reach the targets were created during this point of time. After-sales managers described a sense of close collaboration with other after-sales managers when formulating the after-sales development goals related to the brands’ shared, support strategy. That is, they wrote their plans together. Nonetheless, their lack of experience of working with specified development goals hindered progress. As explained by one after-sales manager:

“We are not working with requirement specs. That is not our focus. It comes at a later stage. It does not help us right now”.

This statement turned out to be only partly true in practice. It was true that the need for working with specified goals in relation to branded support strategies was low. However, branded commercial strategies put demands for the development of such goals. Otherwise, the work of creating a strategy against future copying of strategic parts would be obstructed. Thus, when studying the total plan of specified goals it was observed that after-sales goals

were integrated in technological specifications. However, in most cases these after-sales specifications were few and vague. After-sales managers acknowledged this situation and described that they worked by a gut feeling and that there would be contra dictionary targets. Therefore, while the main part of project stakeholders could work with relatively tangible short-term targets, after-sales managers rather had to work with relatively intangible long-term targets.

4.7 Setting agendas and influencing decisions

As have been described above, there were few after-sales managers. That meant that they could not participate in, and follow up on, every development meeting performed throughout the organization. Consequently, they found it challenging to manage the decision making process. They described a situation where they had to react to elsewhere already made decisions. One after-sales manager explained:

"It came from the old project and was said to be an accepted concept. But it was not. We did not know this since we were not working in that old project. We only had statements from other persons. This was highlighted in the packaging meetings. We thought we could influence it that way, but it turned out to be impossible. Then, we had to bring it up higher in the organization. At the current stage the box cannot be repaired, it is not acceptable. We need to remove everything in the area; it is not acceptable. The requirement was that we were going to be able to fail trace components within a certain time unit at a specified percentage of the time. We did a study; we found it we were not even close to meeting our requirements"

All other stakeholders in the product development had developed practices in communicating targets related to various development efforts. However, this skill was lacking among after-sales managers. This meant that when trying to communicate the importance of making certain development decisions, after-sales managers found it difficult to have their voice

heard. That was the case when asking for resources to develop diagnosing and repair capabilities. The financial benefit (faster repair time) of such emphasis was uncertain.

4.8 Dual role influence and contextual dependency

Project teams' development work was by all project members described as highly influenced by end customer needs and wants. Project teams described that they had close collaboration with end customers in order to be able to create customer value. This type of collaboration had for example led to improvement of driver environment in the cab and burglary prevention. Such collaboration was characterized by engineers already having a solution in mind, or even in the form of prototypes. With these solutions in mind, they performed complementary discussions with customers. As such, the development process was customer oriented, engineers found that they were empowered to make decisions. In addition, when a solution had been brought to market it would typically not be changed unless there was some major failure in construction or design. This situation was different for after-sales managers. Indeed, in the early phase of product development after-sales managers were also customer oriented, however, their services were not yet in place, and would not be for many years. Therefore, after-sales managers instead described a situation where they would create after-market services highly dependent on immediate customer feedback. They described a situation where customers expected swift response to service needs. Thus, not only were after-sales strategies customer oriented, they were also more or less customer directed and had to be fine-tuned to fit with local needs. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

"We need to respond immediately to customer demands".

4.9 Predicting knowns and unknowns

After-sales managers also had to deal with prediction problems that were somewhat different from the problems of other project members. All project members shared the need of

predicting future customer needs. Nonetheless, for most project members, the solutions for satisfying these needs were of a technological character. For most project members it was also fairly easy to predict such needs through for example benchmarking with competitors and customers. For after-sales the situation was somewhat different. Indeed the product would be launched on the market within a 5-6 years period. Therefore, they had to predict the need for spare parts, maintenance and services in a future very difficult to estimate. As illustrated by one after-sales manager:

"We had to predict what our business will be like in six years".

In this matter, strategic issues had to be solved by after-sales managers. For example, there was a need to have a strategy for protecting spare parts from being copied and sold by competitors. In this case the competitor was not necessarily another vehicle manufacturer; it could instead be a firm specialized in vehicle spare parts. Such a firm could be established and running their business basically from any place in the world. Anticipating this competition was significant and yet very challenging.

Another main challenge for all stakeholders in the platform project was managing strategic differences, similarities and change. These were the issues mandated during the initial stage of the project. One special problem that after-sales managers had to deal with in the project setting was that other project members not seemed to comprehend the organizational complexity behind after-sales. As can be understood, the work of after-sales managers was characterized of dealing with many unknowns. Therefore, while most project members could focus on relatively short-term predictable action, after-sales managers instead had to focus on relatively long-term unpredictable action. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

"Processes are so complex they are difficult to study. Everybody thinks that after-sales is one thing, but there are a lot of organizations involved".

4.10 Managing knowledge artefacts

Typically, project meetings took place in war rooms. The walls of war rooms were dressed with various knowledge artefacts. Such artefacts represented most cross-functional disciplines. There were long-and short-term plans, pictures of various technological solutions, activity descriptions and other items. However, the representation of after-sales artefacts were almost non-existing. They only had a brief description of their short-term plan. The contributions made by after-sales managers as comments on technological items were integrated and "hidden" in the project plans. Of course, after-sales managers had their own functional plans to communicate. Nonetheless, due to the need of making long-term predictions, and the due to the difficulties in pinpointing activities and targets, these plans were for natural reasons incomplete. Hence, while other cross-functional members could show "hard facts", technological advancements or system creation, after-sales managers instead had to rely on using and illustrating few and incomplete knowledge artefacts. The long-term plans were therefore mainly only discussed in between the after-sales managers. As explained by an after-sales manager:

"We don't have much to display".

4.11 Framing the scene for after-sales

After-sales managers typically described a situation of feeling distant to other project members. One reason for this distance was that after-sales managers were inexperienced in creating their own roles and identity in the organizations/projects. There was an overall agreement among all stakeholders in the project setting that the general role of after-sales needed to be improved in the projects. After-sales managers had traditionally kept a distant role to product development projects. As expressed by one after-sales manager:

“We are in a change process; after-sales did not used to be part of the early phase of product development, we just delivered requirements”.

Nevertheless, although stakeholders agreeing on the need for change, there was still a cultural stigma to deal with. That is, the traditional way of working together had created a tradition of stakeholders not caring too much for after-sales activities or the interest of after-sales managers. One after-sales manager said:

“It is a people problem; they are not interested in what we do”.

The issue of after-sales managers being distant to other cross-functional team members also related to the number of people working as after-sales managers. Since there always had been very limited numbers, after-sales managers were not accustomed to working in projects. They usually worked on a strategic level in the organization. Thus, they did not participate in most project meetings. Being absent from meetings meant that the experienced relationship gap in relation to other project members remained big.

4.12 Matching strategic complexity

For after-sales managers, strategic complexity came about in a different way than for other stakeholders. As explained by on after-sales manager:

“We don’t develop one strategy, we develop two”

They created a commercialization strategy and a support strategy. It was described that the commercialization strategy was characterized by competition between brands, while the support strategy invited for close collaboration.

Creation of the commercialization strategy was more visual in the project. After-sales managers and other stakeholders tried to manage the issue of creating a satisfying balance of

commonality (shared parts) and differentiation (differentiated parts). A main agreement among stakeholders was that the brands needed to sell vehicles that customers experienced as being different. Failing in that mission would not help increasing the sales of vehicles for any of the brands involved in the project. As explained by one of the after-sales managers:

"Commercial strategies are not aligned. They need to be differentiated. In some areas they are the same".

Nonetheless, to make things more complex, there were also a relationship between the commercialization strategy and the support strategy, a relationship that was difficult to manage. It was described that they first needed to have a decision on sharing a part or not. Then, for every component they needed to estimate if there was a risk for an external manufacturer copying the component and selling it. Such decisions in turn had an impact on our after-sales services.

4.13 Addressing intra-functional relationship complexity

For after-sales managers, the relationship complexity also was persistent. For most other project members the project ended at the stage of market introduction. However, for after-sales managers' market introduction would only be the extension of a long-term intra-functional relationship. One after-sales manager said:

"We will compete and collaborate at the same time throughout the platform life-cycle"

Nevertheless, creating good branded after-sales strategies remained somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand there was a need to create shared technological and market strategies. On the other hand there was also a need to keep critical business knowledge secluded. This paradox was described by one after-sales manager:

"We need to have a good cooperation in order to understand how to compete".

Good cooperation did in this case also concern the problem of how to manage with ongoing and parallel intra- and inter-organizational change projects. Not only were they working with a radical platform project infusing organizational and technological changes, but the organizations were for example implementing a new cost-follow up process crucial for makings estimations for future product cost. A new organizational unit was also about to be implemented, the work of that unit would have implications for the decision making process.

Finally a few words about the strategic outcome from the collaborative work during the concept phase. There were several strategic achievements. There was implementation of after-sales demands on a new critical part (service box) who would speed up the service process. This might sound as a small achievement, but among the project members, it was seen as revolutionary. There was also identification of shared spare parts, this agreement allowed for creating economies of scale. There was a fine-tuning of the global supply chain which allowed for fewer suppliers and lower cost. There was also a rough estimation concerning the alignment of service processes and a rough estimation of shared training programs for service personnel. Finally, there was also identification of a few critical parts that should be protected from copying. This agreement could lead to significant future revenue.

The experience of after-sales managers' strategic work is summarized in table 1.

----- Table 1 about here -----

5. Discussion

Taking a strategy-as-practice approach (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), this research paper investigates how after-sales managers go about to create strategy. As a general observation, this paper supports earlier research findings claiming that the platform project is complex to organize (Burström and Jacobsson, 2012; Sköld and Karlsson, 2007). Indeed, the project aligns well with the description of a radical platform project as defined by Sköld and Karlsson

(2013). The findings in this study also point to the direction that the development of multi-branded vehicle platforms has distinctive effects on strategy work throughout the organization (Burström, 2011; Sköld and Karlsson, 2007). This study also indicates that situations of customer lock-in are created (Kaserman, 2007; Lei and Slocum, 2009; Pereira et al., 2019), through the development of special service-boxes (demanding unique software tools) and through attempts of protecting production of key spare parts.

5.1 After-sales strategizing – a framework

Stensaker and Falkenberg (2007) illustrate that individual's interpretation of corporate change shapes units change responses, and organization-level interpretations of what is important and what is to be executed in the future. However, the conditions for creating such response have so far been overlooked and research has paid limited attention to different types of strategizing. In this paper, it is observed that strategic work made by after-sales managers in early phases of platform development have some distinct characteristics. Thus, a novel strategy framework is developed. In order to explain the strategizing activities of after-sales managers in early phases of platform development, we define the dynamics of the after-sales process (Table 2). We define an emerging process where there are difficulties in applying normative praxis and practices for developing and planning after-sales strategy. In line with scholars taking a SaP approach (see Vaara and Whittington, 2012), we emphasize the need to understand the after-sales strategy as becoming rather than being. We use four boundary conditions and 13 boundary moderating variables to explain the dynamics of after-sales strategizing work (Table 2).

Cavalieri et al. (2007) emphasize that firms that have a vision for making success profitable based on after-sales should put an effort in fine-tuning every part of after-sales activities. Nonetheless, in line with Goffin and New (2001), this study also observes that after-sales

requirements do not gain much attention in early phases of product development. However, this study illustrates that after-sales managers try to gain attention for their specific needs, but tend to be unsuccessful in doing so.

The very idea of cross-functional teams (Pinto et al., 1993) indicates a somewhat ideal situation where team-members share power and decision mandates in a spirit of equality. Indeed, project research literature and strategy literature usually pay little or no attention to the background of members in cross-functional teams. Rather, a "taken for granted" approach is often used when analyzing project teams. To put it simply, cross-functional team members work in a line-organization but also spend their time working in projects, described as a generally uncomplicated boundary condition. However, this study shows that boundary conditions for after-sales managers participating in radical platform projects are far from uncomplicated. Indeed, drawing on Liu and Maitlis (2014) we propose that the after-sales strategizing process is of a special kind.

We propose that boundary conditions are affected by 13 boundary moderators (column 3, Table 2) and defined by structural, knowledge, action driving and relational conditions. These conditions are illustrated in Table 2:

Structural boundary conditions are defined by resource coping and crossing of organizational boundaries. When after-sales managers are understaffed, and need to work across multiple boundaries in parallel, it naturally follows that they cannot perform deep, probing development work as needed. Consequently, they initially manage with identified critical issues, but leave less critical issues for being managed later in the process.

Knowledge based boundary conditions refer to fighting the sense of a given outcome, clarifying the financial logic, predicting knowns and unknowns and managing knowledge

artefacts. As after-sales managers are highly dependent on other experts finalizing their development work (technology), they need to manage in a situation where it is difficult to define the given outcome of development work. They also need to manage in a situation where other project stakeholders not necessarily share their given logic of making profit on after-sales activities. Also, due to difficulties in making market predictions, the amount of unknowns are high, and it is difficult to produce knowledge artefacts that can have the same impact as technology artefacts produced by other stakeholders in the project. Regnér (2003) propose that some strategic processes are characterized by exploitation, while other strategic processes are characterized by exploration. Nevertheless, this study instead shows that after-sales managers try to maneuver in a context characterized by both exploitation and exploration.

Action driving boundary conditions are constituted by overcoming marginality, setting agendas and influencing decisions, and dual role influence and contextual dependency. As after-sales managers have few possibilities to engage heavily in the early stages in the project, it also follows that the development of goals, and participation in decision making are limited. As a radical platform project also bring large levels of novelty in the after-sales process, it is also difficult for after-sales managers to know about customers' reaction before having the platform on the market.

Relationship boundary conditions relates to issues of matching strategic complexity, inter-functional complexity and intra-functional complexity. After-sales managers not only manage one strategic process, they manage two strategies; a commercialization strategy and a support strategy. By separating these strategies, after-sales managers can manage the problem with opportunistic behavior (cf. Paswan et al., 2017). These strategies are also interdependent. Thus, after-sales managers need to analyze and understand how any change or development of one strategy affects the other. Such work is additionally complex due to the inherent

distance that after-sales managers in general have in relation to other cross-functional stakeholders. It is not with ease that after-sales managers can perform and uphold a creative dialogue with all related stakeholders. Finally, the intra-functional relationship between after-sales managers also bring complexity since they are supposed to collaborate and compete at the same time. This challenge is extraordinary since business secrets are supposed to be withheld and collaborative areas are to be developed in a strategic work situation where there is a high degree of uncertain interdependencies.

In combination, boundary conditions as explained above create an environment regarded as highly complex, uncertain and equivocal. Hence, after-sales managers' strategizing process also must be understood as highly dynamic.

----- Table 2 about here -----

5.2 After-sales strategizing – a time and role perspective

Since this paper focuses on a radical platform project, it also reveals other dimensions of after-sales strategizing activities compared to the lion's part of previous after-sales studies, which largely reported on ongoing after-sales activities in single organizations or in incremental innovation projects. This paper aligns with Cohen et al. (2000) who point to the need of understanding dynamics in after-sales development. Their point is that supply-chains need to be innovated. In this paper, we also stress the dynamic nature of after-sales strategy creation. Indeed, our observations indicate that after-sales managers engage with platform development in very different ways compared to their platform partners during a platform lifecycle.

Researchers have illustrated that strategy making is built over time (Regnér, 2008; 582), or as phrased by Vaara and Whittington (2012); in episodes over time. Indeed, similar observations have been made by Eslami et al. (2018) in relation to after-sales strategizing activities. Nonetheless, these illustrations are vague and lack precision. In this study we complement these earlier findings.

Actually, in this paper we propose the strategizing behavior is phase dependent, and that after-sales managers play phase related roles. We base this proposition on the statement made by after-sales managers in this study. They describe that "…we will basically leave the project after the concept phase. Then, when we get closer to market introduction, we will engage again."

The solid line in Figure 1 illustrates the experienced level of engagement for of after-sales managers in the platform project. The dotted curve represent project progress. The vertical scale represents a subjective scale of engagement and goes from low to high. The horizontal scale illustrates a simplified process model with three phases. A platform development project might of course have additional and different types of phases than illustrated here, we made a simplification of the phase description used by after-sales managers in practice. In this particular case, the phases initially stretches over a period of seven years and then continues throughout the platform lifetime. First, during the concept phase, after-sales managers engage in order to insure stakeholder interests. Here, they primarily engage in affecting a very limited number of critical development areas/issues that they know will impact after-sales performance. Thereafter, the level of engagement will decrease remarkably during the design phase. In this phase, they will basically just monitor development to ascertain if some critical matter would appear. Finally, the level of engagement increases significantly again when the

product approaches market entry. During this latter phase, we propose that after-sales managers informally take on a role of project ownership since other project stakeholders move on to new development projects. That ownership lasts throughout the platform lifetime. These insights of phase dependent after-sales engagement complement earlier findings by Goffin and New (2001) and contribute to previous studies of after-sales theory where the process of after-sales strategizing largely has been ignored.

Finally, Cavalieri et al. (2007) propose that strategic profiles should be aligned with operational metrics. Indeed, we find that this is also the case in this study. However, this study also shows that such alignment is performed with various intensity during the lifetime of the platform, and after-sales managers play different roles during this strategizing work.

----- Figure 1 about here -----

We have so far explained the nature of a dynamic after-sales strategy process and the reasons behind such dynamics within the framework of a radical platform project. We continue and present a strategizing process model in the next section.

5.3 After-sales strategizing dynamics – a process model

While previous studies of after-sales management have focused on implementation and/or incremental change of after-sales strategies (e.g. Cavalieri et al., 2007; Clark and Armistead, 1991; Lele, 1997; Zackariasson and Wilson, 2004), this study instead focus on the creation of after-sales strategy. We have previously in our discussion described that the intensity of after-sales strategizing activities is phase-related and that strategizing activities are influenced by four different types of interdependent boundary conditions; (1) Structural Boundary Conditions, (2) Knowledge Based Boundary Conditions, (3) Action Driving Boundary Conditions and (4) Relationship Boundary Conditions. We have also explained that various

boundary mediators (column three in Table 2) affect each type of boundary condition (in total 13 boundary mediators). In this part of the analysis we bring these findings together and present at process model capturing the essence of After-sales strategizing dynamics (see Figure 2).

When top management in a corporation decides to make a significant strategic change (in this case the creation of an interorganizational vehicle platform), and launch a radical project, they can simply not know what the final product will be like. The magnitude of the change is too big to foresee and forecast. It is impossible to overlook all upcoming changes. Top management therefore express a strategic intention, to which other units of the organization need to respond. That combined response will define the final product.

In this paper, the response concerns the creation of After-sales strategy. This study shows that the response from After-sales manager is created over long period of time, the response is actually created from the very early stages of the project (the concept phase) until the end of the platform lifecycle.

The after-sales strategy emerges dynamically through both inter- and intra-organizational, and inter- and intra-functional collaboration. In this web of practices, the strategic work of after-sales managers is conditioned by the quality of the boundaries between them and other functions/units. In this paper, we propose that the quality of boundaries are defined by four interdependent boundary conditions (Figure 2). That is, changes in one type of boundary condition will affect other boundary conditions. For example, if the after-sales managers, as in this study, are insufficiently resourced it will also lead to limited possibilities of learning with and from others (knowledge boundaries). They will also have limited possibilities of engaging in the project (action driving boundaries), and they will have limited possibilities to develop relationships with other cross-functional members (relationship boundaries). Consequently,

they will only be able to create a very limited response during the first phase of platform development. The full response will be created through iterations developed during the platform lifecycle. The dynamics of after-sales managers strategizing work is illustrated in Figure 2.

------ Figure 2 about here ------

Previous studies touching on the subject of after-sales strategy have implied that there is an (as in one) after-sales strategy. However, earlier studies have traditionally concerned after-sales implementation in a single organization. Instead, in this paper, the focus was on the strategizing activities in a radical interorganizational project. A crucial conclusion in this study is that after-sales managers develop a double-barreled after-sales strategy, consisting of a commercialization strategy and a support strategy. These sub-strategies have a significantly different character. The commercialization strategy adhere to a competitive logic, while the support strategy invites for collaboration. This way of organizing strategic work seems to be a way for after-sales managers to balance simultaneous and ongoing strategic competition and collaboration.

As there is a lack of deep probing after-sales studies, we do not know whether this conclusion applies to other firms that perform interorganizational strategic collaboration. Nonetheless, it seems logical that other firms might/should/would act in the same way when developing an interorganizational after-sales strategy. More studies of this kind are needed in order to establish more solid conclusions around this subject.

6. Overall study remarks and implications

This paper study after-sales managers and their strategizing activities. Extending the findings of Regnér, 2008 (p.582) and Vaara and Whittington, 2012, we find several insights about after-sales managers' strategizing work. For example, in alignment with Eslami et al. (2018)

we propose that after-sales strategizing work is phase dependent and continues along the platform lifecyle. Moreover, inspired by Schriber and Löwstedt (2018) who claims the need to understand functional strategic reconfiguration, this paper contributes to previous strategy and project literature by proposing a framework defining the strategic work of after-sales managers as a dynamic process. We find the strategic process to be related to certain boundary conditions that appear in radical platform projects; s*tructural boundary conditions, knowledge based boundary conditions, action-driving boundary conditions* and *relationship boundary conditions*. These boundary conditions are in turn builds on 13 boundary moderators, which we present in a model capturing the essence of after-sales strategizing process. One critical finding is that, in a radical inter-organizational platform project, after-sales cannot been considered to be one single strategy, it is actually constituted by the creation of two interdependent strategies; a commercialization strategy and a support strategy where after-sales managers try to find a balance between fierce competition and close collaboration.

We also concur with the suggestion that strategizing can take place in a web of practices (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Abrahamsen et al., 2016; Luedicke et al., 2017). Nonetheless, this paper also takes a critical approach to previous strategy/project literature (cf. 2006, Meyerson et al., 1996; Pinto et al., 1993) where it often is described as if cross-functional project work is characterized by stakeholders acting like a big family, everyone being equally close, and everyone being equally experienced in participating in cross-functional teams. In line with Vaara and Whittington (2012, p.309) we find that participation in strategizing activities is decided on subtle premises, but also that after-sales managers struggle to legitimize their participation.

This paper has several managerial implications. Researchers have for a substantial amount of time acknowledged the value of after-sales activities due to their impact on firm revenue. Still, to our surprise, we can conclude that after-sales managers in practice seem to play a marginalized role in interorganizational radical platform development projects, and that they have substantial problems in anchoring after-sales strategy with firm main business strategy. Although we realize that our approach has general implications, what seems to be the case here is that with a radical platform project follows substantial organizational transformation. Even for experienced managers it is difficult to understand and overview the consequences of such a transformation. We make some recommendations:

- Acknowledge that after sales strategy demands a managerial holistic view. Taking a narrow product/technology approach can be devastating for firm performance. The general business strategy must be transformed in harmony with functional strategies, including after-sales strategy.
- Acknowledge that strategic managers should also ask themselves what current impact after-sales activities have on firm revenue. They should also thoroughly analyze after-sales activities and ask what potential impact after-sales activities potentially could have on firm performance.
- Acknowledge that the business case is built from the very beginning of product/platform development. It will affect CRM-systems, and concern issues of customer lock-in and protection from copying. After sales managers possess knowledge about such issues, but they also have unique customer and competition knowledge, they must therefore be included in the early process of development. Otherwise significant strategic business opportunities may go lost.
- Acknowledge that staffing of a radical interorganizational platform project with after-sales representatives is critical. A large sized radical platform project takes

complexities to such level that if being understaffed, opportunities for financial success based on after-sales activities might go lost.

- Acknowledge that most incumbent firms, as in this study, are likely to move from a situation of internal incremental product development to a situation of inter-organizational radical platform development. High levels of complexities follows with the introduction of a radical inter-organizational platform project. These complexities are interdependent and relates to for example; strategic inter-organizational complexity, inter-functional complexity and intra-functional complexity. After-sales managers participating in radical interorganizational product development projects are therefore recommended identifying and mapping the collaborative/competitive landscape that defines the possibilities of parallel collaboration and competition.
- Acknowledge the need to establish if the firm is organized in such way so that the potential of after-sales activities is optimized. Managers need to answer:
    - Has the firm developed an after-sales strategy based on inter-functional collaboration?
    - Does the innovation culture of the firm acknowledge the value of after-sales activities?
    - Has the firm developed a competence in understanding how to collaborate and compete at the same time in relation to after-sales activities?
- Acknowledge that after-managers work in developing after sales-strategy will continue long after that the formal platform project has been terminated. Additional resources will be needed for continued after sales-strategy development activities.

This paper comes with some limitations. The study is based on only one inter-organizational radical platform project in the vehicle industry. Thus, it is difficult to generalize the

knowledge created in this paper. The study was also performed over a limited three-month period during the concept phase. It would have been beneficial to study other project phases as well in order to capture changes in work practices that take place during other conditions. The study was also limited in such sense that only three after-sales managers were part of the study. However, that limitation also capture the challenging reality that after-sales managers are facing.

As for future studies this paper proposes longitudinal comparative studies of managers as for example after-sales managers. First, it would be of value to study in what way the strategic work of after-sales managers (or other managers) changes as the project matures. Second, it would also be of value to study how boundary moderators (as suggested in this study) come in play in different types of development projects (incremental, architectural, disruptive, radical). There would reasonably be a difference in strategizing dynamics between more simple incremental projects (a minor project being part of strategic change) and radical projects. Third, this study shows that after-sales managers create a double barreled after-sales strategy, consisting of a commercialization strategy (competitive logic) and a support strategy (collaborative logic), enabling simultaneous competition and collaboration. This is an advanced form of interorganizational alignment. It would be of value to perform longitudinal studies of how after-sales managers create alignment between brand strategies during the platform lifecycle. Finally, researchers have recently observed the relationship between freemium services and other types of platforms than digital platforms (Constantiou et al., 2017). It would be of value to study how such services can be developed in B2B relationships in the vehicle industry.

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