ERP Research at ECIS and ICIS: a fashion wave calming down?

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Abstract

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) and enterprise systems (ES) have been in information systems (IS) researchers’ and practitioners’ focus for more than ten years. Yet problems with ERP implementation projects get exposed to the public eye constantly. This makes one marvel why so. In this paper, we will take a retrospective look at ERP research and identify the ERP research themes from two main information systems conferences, ECIS and ICIS, in this millennium. The analysis shows not only the prominence of ERP implementation research, but that other themes have been studied only sporadically and unsystematically. This urges for more ERP research with a broader focus. We then compare these findings with the conference tracks and discuss the role of tracks and gatekeepers in this phenomenon.

Keyword: ERP, enterprise resource planning, enterprise systems, literature review, gatekeeper
1. Introduction

In this paper we take a retrospective look at what have been the streams of enterprise resource planning (ERP) research within the main information systems (IS) conferences during this millennium. We believe that time is ripe for this kind of analysis.

“Enterprise systems [ES] are complex software packages that offer the potential of integrating data and processes across functions in an enterprise. Examples include ERP systems (integrating back-office functions such as materials management, order entry, distribution logistics, and financials), CRM (integrating marketing, sales, and customer service interactions with customers), and SCM (integrating processes among firms in a supply chain).” (Brown and Vessey 2003). They then continue that “[ES] give management, and others, an enterprise view, often for the first time. They create a new IT foundation for competing. Yet the first wave, the ERP systems, has proven very difficult to implement successfully.”

Regardless of these challenges noted already in 2003, similar difficulties still seem to be an enormous concern. For example, on November 14th, 2012 US Air Force terminated their ERP project after spending USD 1,03 billion. Unfortunately, other examples are not difficult to find. This suggests that despite the numerous studies focusing on ERP (or ES in general) the researchers’ contribution to practice seems to have been limited. This is surprising given that both ERP and ES are significant for the companies and their operations. For example, mid-size companies (annual revenue USD 100-1000 million) spend USD 1,24 million every year just to keep their ERP up and running. With these examples and figures, the companies should be eagerly asking for assistance from the academia. If they are not, should we do something about it? If they are, are we giving them right answers?

To resolve this conundrum, we used Google Scholar to find studies on ES and ERP. The results were to large extent studies about ERP implementation and integration. However, as Brown and Vessey (2003) note, ES “integrates data and processes across functions in an enterprise”. This suggests that the root causes for the problematic ES and ERP initiatives might be deeper than in technologies and their implementations. Studies of organizational implementation challenges demonstrate this well (Mattila et al. 2012; Marabelli and Newell 2009).

This observation led us to a working hypothesis: most of ERP research focuses on ERP implementation or integration. Are there other possible approaches? Also, if the working hypothesis is proven right, what are the reasons for this state of affairs?

To study the phenomena, we conducted a systematic literature survey of two major IS conferences: International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) and European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS). We selected the papers from year 2000 to the latest conference (ECIS 2012, ICIS 2011). We decided to focus on conferences instead of major journals because of two reasons: first, the conferences have quicker turn-round time so they represent the latest, up-to-date information (Ebeling et al. 2012; Galliers and Whitley 2002), and second, major IS journals tend to value theory development over contributions to practice (Constantinides et al. 2012). Also, by choosing the two major conferences, we were able to gain the most rigorous research results and to see whether there are any patterns to be found.

The analysis revealed interesting issues. First, the working hypothesis is correct and other ERP research themes (than implementation and integration) appear up to large extent sporadically and unsystematically. Second, as an explanation for the working hypothesis, all kinds of gatekeepers have a

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1. http://www.cio.com/article/721628/Air_Force_scraps_massive_ERP_project_after_racking_up_1_billion_in_costs
4. for the sake of clarity, we will use the term ES when we refer to organizational information systems such as ERP, CRM or SCM, and those when we particularly discuss them.
significant impact on the themes of ERP papers. Consequently we make suggestions in three areas. First, we ask for broader focus on the ERP/ES research, second, we challenge the “track-based approach” in major conferences as they tend to direct the research into siloes, and third, we ask for more methods and means to increase ERP researchers’ influence to the practitioners.

The paper is organized as follows. First, different ERP reviews and their findings are reviewed. Second, our research methods and settings are described. Third, our findings are illustrated. Fourth, the results are discussed in relation to the working hypothesis and its corollaries. Finally, some suggestions are made.

2. Related ERP reviews

At the end of the 1990’s the amount of ERP related publications increased significantly in the IS conferences (Esteves and Pastor 2001). At that time, many organizations invested in an enterprise wide ERP as they wanted to improve existing enterprise architecture, streamline the business processes, and get rid of the legacy systems that were incompatible with the requirements of the new millennium (Jacobs and Weston 2007). The scope of ERP research changed in 2003-2004. Research themes started to widen to the post-implementation phase of the ERP projects, customization of ERP systems, financial or social aspects, and the implementation or interoperability of the ERP with other systems. (Botta-Genoulaz et al. 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SUB-THEME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of ERP</td>
<td>Business process alignment</td>
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<td>Case study</td>
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<td>Change management</td>
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<td>Critical success factors</td>
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<td>Cultural (national) issues</td>
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<td>Focused stage in the implementation process</td>
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<td>Implementation and socio-cultural factors</td>
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<td>The ERP tool/ the ERP software</td>
<td>System architecture</td>
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<td>Language, systems and integration norms</td>
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<td>Data modelling and data processing</td>
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<td>Customization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complements to ERP systems</td>
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<td>Using ERP</td>
<td>Decision support</td>
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<td>Education/training</td>
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<td>Effective and efficient use of the system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focused function in ERP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus on post-implementation</td>
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<td>Management and ERP</td>
<td>Management issues of the implementation</td>
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<td>Impact on organization</td>
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<td>ERP and best practices in management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>ERP integration with other information technologies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ERP contribution to cooperation in supply chains</td>
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Table 1. Typical research themes in ERP field between 2000 and 2010.
Lately, several ERP literature reviews have been conducted, identifying many different research themes. We thus consolidated the studies by Botta-Genoulaz et al. (2005), Moon (2007) and Addo-Tenkorang & Helo (2011) into Table 1. These reviews cover the years 2003-2004, 2000-2006 and 2005-2010, respectively.

The literature reviews show that the majority (54%) of the latest ERP publications focus on the ‘Implementation of ERP systems’. (Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011). ERP implementation influences all stakeholders across the organizational units, so for example top management support has been identified as one of the critical success factors of ERP implementation (Sun et al. 2005; Ifinedo 2008). The ERP project also engages domain experts, inner organizational IT specialists, ERP consultants and software specialists (Dittrich et al. 2009; Ifinedo 2008). Despite the fact many people are involved in the ERP implementation, very few studies actually focus on knowledge management and communication between the stakeholders (e.g. Pawlowski and Robey 2004; Sathish et al. 2004; Dittrich et al. 2009; Zakaria and Sedera 2010). Most articles discuss only one or two stakeholder roles to provide a different perspective on the ERP implementation. (Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011). ERP researchers have also been interested in different processes such as the selection, customization and configuration of the ERP system, determining the hosting service for the ERP system, and cultural issues (Baki and Çakar 2005; Cadili and Whitley 2005; Verville et al. 2005; Dittrich et al. 2009).

In addition to implementation issues, another significant research area is the technological issues surrounding ERP. These studies show interest toward software engineering aspects, such as software architecture, software design, data modeling, web services and enterprise application integration. (Moon 2007; Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011)

The studies on ERP usage, usefulness and maintenance shift the focus from implementation to post implementation stage. These studies focus on issues such as learning and training, and efficiency and effectiveness of ERP (Moon 2007 and Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011). Yet these issues have gained much less attention than implementation. For example, even though the participation and content of the ERP training during the ERP implementation have been proposed (Wang and Chen 2006; Choi et al. 2007) there is only a relatively small amount of research on it (Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011). In addition, ERP maintenance and optimization (Botta-Genoulaz et al. 2005) take their respective approaches to ERP post-implementation stage. Methods for measuring the value of ERP, understanding the relationships between different measures, and investigating the performance of the organization with an ERP system, have been on considered (Moon 2007; Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011).

Management issues in relation to ERP have also been studied. They approach ERP’s from the organizational viewpoint. There benefits and the value of ERP and its organizational impacts are considered (Ragowosky et al. 2005; Jones et al. 2008; Mathrani et al. 2009).

Finally, the expansions of traditional ERP systems or broader ES have been studied. For example, supply chain management, business intelligence, and reporting, have been in focus (Ceccagnoli et al. 2012). Although the enterprise application integration, service oriented architectures, and other integration technologies have been known with their benefits and challenges, more extension models need to be studied in the future (Esteves and Bohórqués 2007; Moon 2007; Addo-Tenkorang and Helo 2011).

These viewpoints are not sufficient. Organizations have to be prepared for all kinds of changes, such as a business process model change, a supply chain partnership and/or in business logic change, throughout the ERP implementation project, and throughout the whole ERP lifecycle. As the changes in the ERP system itself are initiated by the changes in the business environment (Frick and Shubert 2009; Trinh-Phuong et al. 2010), understanding on the relationship between technical ERP and social business environment and developing different models to further develop ERP system are certainly needed. As Addo-Tenkorang and Helo (2011) conclude “organizations need to convert their industries into responsive, demand-driven, profit-making enterprises by optimizing the operations”. This necessitates broad understanding not only on ERP system, but also all kinds of related issues, ranging from business strategies and ROI to social, cultural and contextual issues. Particularly, as ERP is often seen
to provide ways of electronically connecting with other organizations (Ash and Burn 2002; Hsu 2009), and their development usually takes place in networks of organizations (Devadoss and Pan 2007; Dittrich et al. 2009), such complexity introduces fruitful topics for further research. However, as the literature reviews show, these topics have not been thoroughly addressed.

3. Research methods and settings

Literature reviews indicate that ERP research has largely focused on implementation and integration. However, as both European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS) and International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) publish high quality research on ERP, we wanted to see whether any other themes appear. We decided to focus on these conferences for two reasons: their turn-out times are relatively short (7-8 months) (e.g. Galliers and Whitley 2002) and practical contributions are valued. For these reasons, the conferences reflect the state-of-the-art research with high practical value. In other words, the papers reflect issues that are practically relevant but which have not yet been “camouflaged with theories”. This approach would thus provide understanding on how we, IS researchers, address the practical problems of ERP implementation and attempt to make contributions to different ERP practices.

We chose ECIS and ICIS papers from the year 2000 to the latest conference (2012 and 2011) as research material. We accessed them from AIS digital library6, and conducted a keyword search on “ERP”, “enterprise resource planning”, “ES”, and “enterprise system(s)” on title, keywords, and abstract. By so doing, we were able to capture the papers that are about ERP or ES, and not only mention them as an example, for instance. Then, for each identified paper, two researchers categorized it according to the sub-themes so that different topics and trends can be detected. The sub-themes, derived from the earlier literature reviews and our practical experiences, were: architecture, communication, culture, data governance, data issues, data management, data quality, development, implementation, integration, knowledge management, master data, networks, and organizational items. In addition, when a new sub-theme appeared, an appropriate class was added. Several new themes were identified. Third, if the article covered two or more themes, it was classified accordingly.

For each article, we recorded its bibliographical information and themes into an excel-sheet. This allowed us to do simple cross referencing between the conferences, years, and themes to see whether e.g. a theme was trendy or topical at some point of the past decade. The analysis was done in two phases: first with the implementation papers, then without them. This was perceived crucial as the vast number of implementation papers was hiding and understating other themes.

As the number of ERP implementation papers turned out to be significant, we also started to search for an explanation. To do that, we analyzed the conference tracks to see whether there were ERP/ES tracks or whether any other track had explicitly mentioned ERP/ES as the topic of interests. Unfortunately, information about all tracks from 2000-2007 is not accessible anymore, so we had to limit the analysis to years 2008-2011/12. Also, information about on which tracks each ERP/ES paper was actually published is not available anymore.

4. Findings

Our findings confirm the working hypothesis: implementation has been the most commonly studied ERP theme also at ECIS and ICIS (see Figure 1). Yet it is surprising how few of the conference papers actually focus on ERP/ES. For example in ECIS, about 3% of the all papers have focused on ERP/ES (Table 2). The analysis of ICIS is even more eye-opening: the number of ERP/ES papers has steadily decreased from 8% to 1%.

6 aiselaisnet.org
Figure 1. ERP and ES papers at ECIS (left) and ICIS (right) in 2000-2012: Number of papers (total vs. implementation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>303</td>
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Table 2. Proportion of ERP/ES papers in ECIS and ICIS.

From the comparison point of view, the popularity between the terms ERP and ES (as being broader than ERP) varies between the conferences, as depicted in Figure 2. While the terms are roughly equally common at ICIS (with annual variations), at ECIS ES has received much less attention in contrast to ERP, with one notable exception being ECIS’06. When comparing the conferences, it seems that slightly more ERP/ES papers have been published at ECIS than at ICIS.

Figure 2. Variation of ERP/ES between the conferences: per primary keyword (left) and total (right).

While these figures interestingly illustrate annual variations, they do not provide information about what are the themes of ERP/ES papers. ERP research themes, per annum and per conference, are listed in Table 3. It can be observed that roughly 2/3 of papers discuss either ERP/ES implementation or ERP/ES integration (ECIS: 62.6%, ICIS 65.5%). Other topics receive much less attention as lone papers are published every now and then on e.g. communication, knowledge management and networks. It is thus impossible to say if some trends are emerging or diminishing. Note that in Table 3 one paper could cover several themes, so the numbers do not add up.

Table 3. ERP research themes per conference, per annum.
Table 3. ERP related themes at ECIS and ICIS.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ECIS</th>
<th>ICIS</th>
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</table>
| 2008 | Track: Human Computer Interaction  
Enterprise Systems  
Track: Information Systems for Innovative  
ERP-based e-business applications | No ERP or ES tracks |
| 2009 | Track-based approach was not in use. | Track: Doing IT Research That Matters  
Large-scale system implementations (e.g., CRM and ERP)  
Track: Services Computing and Process Management  
"...the way enterprise systems are developed and managed." |
Cross-cultural IS Applications (ERP) |
| 2011 | Track: Accounting Information Systems and ERP  
Enterprise systems, Enterprise Resource Planning, Business Reengineering  
Track: Human Computer Interaction (HCI)  
Enterprise systems | Track Global, International, and Cultural Issues in IS  
Cross-cultural IS Applications (ERP) |
| 2012 | Track: Accounting Information Systems and ERP  
Enterprise systems, Enterprise Resource Planning, Business Reengineering  
Track: IT-Enabled Supply Chain Management  
Track: IT Global Services and Cloud Computing  
Track: Cloud Computing lifecycle  
Integrating Cloud services with ERP and legacy systems  
Track: IT for Global Welfare & Sustainability  
Cloud computing including OS-ERP, Cloud OS-ERP and Cloud P-ERP | - |

Table 4. ECIS and ICIS tracks from 2008 to the latest.
To summarize the findings for our first and second research questions, it can be said that ERP/ES implementation and integration are the most common research themes. Other topics have been touched, but by no means thoroughly or systematically. At least in ECIS and ICIS in the last years, those issues have received only sporadic attention. Can there be any explanation for this?

We can speculate that conference themes and popular topics, or fads, affect heavily on how research is framed (Baskerville and Myers 2009). It seems that the track-based approach, that is prominent both at ECIS and ICIS, has an impact on the topics of the ERP/ES papers but not so much on their quantity. Despite our limited sample, some insights for the correlation between the track, the topics of interests in that track, and the number of ERP/ES papers published at that conference can be observed (see Table 4). Take for example ICIS 2009. There were two tracks where ERP was explicitly mentioned. At ICIS 2010 and 2011, there was one track with ERP focus. On 2009 there were seven papers (3.4% of all papers) dealing with eight themes, while 2010 and 2010 the number of papers reduced to 3 (1.1%) and 4 (1.3%), and the number of themes to 6 and 5, respectively. Similarly, the most popular ECIS year, in terms of number of ERP/ES publications, was 2009. Then there were no tracks, even though those 20 papers cover only 5 research themes. On the other hand, at ECIS 2012 there were five tracks that touched ERP/ES even remotely. Although the number of papers was lower (8), the themes were broadly divided. These observations point out that the track-based conference organization directs the research themes significantly, but has unclear impact on the overall number of ERP/ES papers. ERP/ES papers might disappear without an appropriate track (as in ICIS), or they get accepted to other tracks as they are tailored accordingly (as in ECIS).

5. Discussion

The findings from ECIS and ICIS conferences are in line with earlier literature reviews. ERP/ES implementation seems to play a dominant role in IS research on ES. This verifies our working hypothesis. What is slightly surprising is that the proportion of ERP/ES implementation research at ICIS and ECIS is slightly more prominent than shown in the literature reviews. This can simply be explained by different categorizations.

Other ERP/ES related research topics seem to be numerous. In the previous literature reviews and IS conferences, a wide spectrum of different themes has flourished. However, apart from implementation, only integration and development themes seem to gain constant, repetitive and notable attention. Other themes are studied every now and then, but only sporadically and unsystematically. This is an interesting observation from two viewpoints. First, the number of different tracks in both conferences is large. Yet ERP has been explicitly mentioned seldom. Second, the practical importance of ES is noteworthy as modern organizations are highly dependent on functional and operable enterprise systems for their businesses. This seems to be mirrored neither on tracks or papers. These observations make one marvel whether ERP/ES research has become “business as usual” without excessive attention from the IS researchers at large, whether other research trends have emerged at the cost of ERP/ES research, or whether the ECIS and ICIS present somehow narrow view on the topic. We will look at each of these explanations next.

First, ERP/ES research has not become “business as usual” even though the decline in the number of ERP papers in ICIS is remarkable. The literature reviews show a significant number of publications on the topic, even though, in the words of Esteves and Bohórques (2007), “the number of publications in (2001-2005) did not evolve. Publications within the information systems community on ERP systems are scant compared to the business that they have generated” (ibid. p. 13). Our review on ECIS and ICIS parallels this. ERP research is scant but is tackling different facets of ES as new research themes emerge regularly. They just do not gain constant attention at the conferences. Particularly this might become problematic in ICIS where ERP/ES papers have almost vanished.

On the second point, more fashionable trends have emerged (see e.g. Whitley and Galliers 2007; Galliers et al. 2012). ES research papers thus have to compete with other papers to get accepted for publication at ECIS and ICIS. This is evident in ICIS where the proportion of ERP/ES papers has been sig-
nificantly dropped. At the same time in ECIS, the portion has remained about the same throughout the millennium. Yet just the focus on the number of ERP papers is misleading. As illustrated in Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4, the number of tracks seems to have a direct connection with the number of themes. This argues for the third explanation for narrow-minded ES research.

ECIS and ICIS seem to present somehow narrow view on the ES research in general. For example, since year 2008, ICIS has had only one or two ERP related tracks each year, with a regular number of ES papers (3-7 per year). This indicates some constant research activity as 3% of all ICIS papers are about ERP/ES. During the same period, ECIS has had more diverse approach even the proportion of papers is about the same. In year 2009, there were no tracks. Yet the number of ERP/ES papers was doubled to previous and subsequent years even though the papers represented only five themes. In year 2012, when there were 5 tracks, the number of ERP/ES papers was typical (8 i.e 3.3%) while they tackled eight different themes. This emphasizes the impact of tracks as theme settlers and of gatekeepers as fashion setters (c.f. Baskerville and Myers 2009). Once there are tracks, they guide the authors to address appropriate topics – that is the point of track-based approach. If those topics are related to e.g. ES, it has an obvious impact on the number of papers getting accepted. If the tracks represent a broad spectrum of IS research landscape, the topics are correspondingly distributed. The selection of tracks or their topics emphasizes the role of gatekeepers which have the power to define what topics are relevant and what are not.

The role of gatekeepers is worth investigating further. Gatekeepers define the theme for the outlet (conference, journal), and define what is appropriate research within that theme both quality-wise and topic-wise. For example, in ECIS and ICIS research paper chairs, in cooperation with other chairs, define the conference theme and select the tracks. Track chairs propose their tracks according to their interpretations of appropriate and relevant research themes. If they get them accepted, they make decisions about associate editors (AE). Then AEs invite appropriate reviewers, and make similar kind of interpretations of the relevance. The authors write their best work, and send it to the conferences where the reviewers, AEs, track chairs, and research paper chairs rely on each other and on their interpretations of the appropriate topics and themes. This kind of chain of gatekeepers ultimately leads to the situation where established topics remain established – it is easier to propose acceptance of ERP implementation paper which has been built on a solid literature base of ERP implementation research than, for example, argue for the importance of culture in ERP context, because the ERP/ES culture research literature base consists of a single ECIS paper.

By all means we are not criticizing the past years ECIS and ICIS organizers, chairs, editors, or reviewers and saying that they have done a bad job. They all have accepted and rejected papers for different reasons – and the conferences have been successful with rigor and relevant papers. Yet it is evident that this kind of track-based organization mode has its impacts on the variety of topics of accepted papers. If the tracks are poorly designed or the tracks or their selection is narrow in relation to the broadness of IS discipline (c.f. Taylor et al. 2010), the papers would then mirror those points of view. As a result, this argues for a carefully assembled call for papers where different themes and topics are present. Also, it might be fruitful to establish a track, which encourages inter-thematically pollinized papers. Under the circumstances also less established topics would receive well-earned attention without criticisms that such papers are thematically “on the edge”.

6. Conclusions and contributions

In this paper, we have studied how enterprise recourse planning is approached in two major IS conferences ECIS and ICIS. Our findings confirm that the most prominent theme is ERP implementation,

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7 This is a bit exaggerating statement as there is a lot of IS research on culture. Yet culture in the ERP/ES context is rarely studied in ECIS or ICIS.
8 In fact, we have taken these roles ourselves during past years.
followed by ERP integration and development. Other themes seem to have gained much less attention from the researchers.

Moreover, this narrow-mindedness is problematic. As Brown and Vessey (2003) argued ten years ago, the ERP/ES implementation is still difficult as illustrated by recent examples of ERP and ES failures. This makes one wonder whether “right” topics have been studied, or whether the knowledge transition from ERP/ES researchers is successful. One may even wonder whether ERP/ES research is lacking relevance to practice (see also paralleling debate in IS context (Dennis 2001; Robey & Markus 1998; Rosemann & Vessey 2008)). This points out our first suggestion: there is still a need for new methods and practices for aforementioned knowledge transfer as the current means (such as engaged scholarship (Mathiassen and Nielsen 2008), action (design) research (Baskerville and Wood-Harper 1998; Sein et al. 2011), or practitioner-based PhD education (Klein and Rowe 2008)) are not yet successful, or have not been successfully implemented yet.

Researchers aim at publishing their results in scientific forums. Yet, as our analysis of ECIS and ICIS shows, only a few themes are regularly published. This might be due to two issues: first, thematically broader papers are not submitted to the conferences, or they do not get accepted there because of strict gatekeepers. This leads to our second and third suggestions: researchers should broaden their ERP/ES research scopes beyond the ERP/ES implementation to other areas, as proposed in the literature reviews, and the conference organizers should carefully compose their call for papers and programs so that such broadness is guaranteed. Currently it seems that both major IS conferences follow a certain tradition with established topics and themes.

Naturally also this research has its limitations. First, we were looking for the terms ERP and ES only. This means that if the paper focused, for example, on CRM without mentioning those terms in the abstract, we did not capture the paper even though it evidently belongs to the broad category of enterprise systems. Yet, according to our 15 years of experiences in ECIS and ICIS, such papers would not have had a significant impact on the results as they are much rarer than ERP papers, and as we explicitly focused on ERP. Also, our findings parallel earlier literature reviews. Second, we focused only on two conferences. Even though they are the main conferences of IS discipline, ERP/ES papers are also published elsewhere. A broader collection of themes might be provided there. However, that should not be an issue as our findings parallel with the literature reviews, and, following Ebeling et al. (2012), “conferences offer a broader range of topics than journals”. Third, our analysis of conference tracks covers only the years 2008-2011/12. We will not thus claim that our argument of the gatekeepers’ roles goes beyond those years. However, the findings provide an interesting snapshot of the phenomenon, particularly from the years when the total number of submissions went rapidly up (Galliers et al. 2012).

What should be done to remedy the narrow scope of ES research? The title of our paper questions whether ERP research in ECIS and ICIS is fashionable? Our empirical research shows that ERP research is not fashionable anymore, not at least in ICIS where the proportion of ERP/ES papers has diminished. Despite this, ERP research topics seem to be relevant for practitioners year after year. This calls for more multi-faceted research on ERP/ES in the future.

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