



## Guest Editors' Introduction

Wojciech Czakon, Giovanni Battista Dagnino & Frédéric Le Roy

To cite this article: Wojciech Czakon, Giovanni Battista Dagnino & Frédéric Le Roy (2016) Guest Editors' Introduction, *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 46:2-3, 75-79, DOI: [10.1080/00208825.2015.1093788](https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2015.1093788)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.2015.1093788>



Published online: 06 Feb 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 222



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

## Guest Editors' Introduction

Wojciech Czakon,<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Battista Dagnino,<sup>2</sup> and Frédéric Le Roy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Management Theory Department, University of Economics in Katowice, Katowice, Poland*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Economics and Business of the University of Catania, Italy*

<sup>3</sup>*University of Montpellier and Montpellier Business School, France*

*Abstract:* We adopt the view of cooptation as a research program, way more than just a stream of literature. A growing community of researchers investigates cooptation's nature, process, impact on strategies and subsequent performance. This special issue marks a step in the research program development. By identifying the four levels of analysis i.e. macro, meso, micro and microfundamental we frame the questions that guide cooptation theorizing. Three papers have been selected to illuminate current progress, focused on value creation. First, a study on common value creation offers insights into how firms are able to generate benefits available to cooptitors. Secondly, conceptual insights into the cooptation strategy process are developed. Thirdly, an in-depth study of value creation in cooptation settings offers a multilevel typology of seven cooptation forms.

### COOPTATION AS A RESEARCH PROGRAM

Research on cooptation displays a steady growth in terms of published work in the last decade (Yami et al. 2010; Czakon, Mucha-Kuś, and Sołtysik 2016). The mid-nineties inaugurated the cooptation story in academia. At this time, Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) essentially launched cooptation within the game-theory rooted value net framework, introducing the concept of complementor as the supplier of complementary products or services. Subsequently, Bengtsson and Kock (1999) trimmed the scope of the phenomena falling within cooptation boundaries to embrace inter-firm relationships of cooperation in certain domain activities and simultaneous competition in others.

Since these pioneering contributions, several studies have been published on cooptation in academic journals. For this reason, we are confident that cooptation has now turned into a fully fledged research program and research area. A growing community of researchers, which regularly gathers in various relevant venues in Europe and the United States, shows continuous commitment and consistent dedication to study cooptation. This convergence is a clear sign that cooptation may be considered as an emerging and specific research area within the management field (Yami et al. 2010; Czakon, Fernandez, and Mina 2014). The cooptation research area is rapidly growing, and like all academic research areas that gain momentum, it is able to deal with a range of key questions that have both conceptual and managerial implications.

---

Address correspondence to Wojciech Czakon, Management Theory Department, University of Economics in Katowice, ul. Bogucicka 14, Katowice 40-226, Poland. E-mail: [wojciech.czakon@ue.katowice.pl](mailto:wojciech.czakon@ue.katowice.pl)

## COOPETITION DEFINITION AND THE “COOPETITION STRAITJACKET”

The initial problem that any scholar would face when approaching coopetition is, understandably, how to define it. Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996) initially adopted a rather broad definition, including all the actors of the value network. Then, Bengtsson and Kock (1999) presented a more narrow definition in which coopetition indicated cooperation between market competitors. The two definitions essentially relate to interorganizational relationships between and among firms. Later on, Luo, Slotegraaf, and Pan (2006) questioned this initial interorganizational boundary line by extending the application of coopetition to the relationships between and among strategic business units (SBUs) of a multinational or a large multi-divisional national enterprise (intraorganizational coopetition). As a consequence, we surmise that today coopetition research looks at relationships that are simultaneously competitive and cooperative regardless of the context in which coopetition appears (Gnyawali and Park 2011).

While coopetition was born as a branch of game theory (as interpreted by Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996), we acknowledge that today this may be regarded as the “coopetition straitjacket.” In fact, by looking at other management theories, such as transaction costs economics, the resource-based view of the firm, and social networks, the coopetition realm has exceeded its original game-theory cradle. Looking beyond the original game-theory understanding of coopetition allows for an expansion of the range of coopetition relationships and theoretical reach. Consequently, coopetition may be able to capture various interorganizational phenomena, such as alliances between competitors, as well as intraorganizational phenomena, such as SBU coopetition (Luo, Slotegraaf, and Pan 2006), and eventually the continuous strategic interaction between and among competing actors (i.e., cooperative dynamics).

## COOPETITION LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

If we scrutinize the idea of coopetition, it turns into a much more encompassing construct than strategic alliances between competitors that consist of a limited portion of its space of reach.

On this ground, we are able to identify four key levels of coopetition: the macrolevel, the mesolevel, the microlevel, and the microfoundational level (Bengtsson, Eriksson, and Wincent 2010). At the macrolevel, coopetition includes cooperation and competition between networks, market platforms, and ecosystems. At the mesolevel, multiparty coopetition consists of alliances between and among rivals. At the microlevel, coopetition projects a structure of competition between SBUs within a firm. Finally, at the microfoundational level, coopetition involves the scrutiny of individuals and teams competing while cooperating at the same time.

Somewhat in the footsteps of Tidström (2008), we find it important to appreciate the contributions advanced by various studies performed at each of the four analytical levels or—although heretofore more infrequently—across them. This appreciation should be followed by efforts to integrate the four analytical levels into a theoretical framework.

## COOPETITION THEORIZING

Indeed, the actual rapid development of the coopetition research area calls for the evaluation of its theoretical strength. Do we already have a sound coopetition theory? Or is it, instead, a more

developmental theory-building process (also called “theorizing,” in Weick’s terms)? As scholars posited (Park, Srivastava, and Gnyawali 2014), it seems that, while a variety of efforts have been exerted in this direction, coopetition theory is on its way to maturity and refinement. We recognize that choices of theoretical lenses have been used to study coopetition: game theory (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996), the resource-based view of the firm (Bengtsson and Kock 1999), the knowledge-based view of the firm (Baglieri et al. 2008), and social network theory (Gnyawali and Madhavan 2001). Within this theoretical plurality, authors have advanced a few interpretive frameworks, such as the value net (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996), the syncretic rents approach (Lado, Boyd, and Hanlon 1997), the coopetition paradox view (Chen 2008), and so on. While potentially inspirational, the current theoretical pluralism related to coopetition turns out to be quite challenging when it comes to amalgamating findings and developing a set of thorough and logical conceptual arguments.

A key question, which is usually addressed to growing fields and communities, concerns the course of actual and future directions. In our instance, we ask, where are coopetition studies going? Is it more advisable to stay within the theoretical approaches already used in coopetition and find ways of bridging them so as to gather a coherent body of knowledge? Or, conversely, would it be better to look for other theoretical frameworks? For instance, should the paradox view and related chaos and complexity theories be leveraged and exploited deeper to appreciate the very nature of coopetition? Similarly, do knowledge-based views bear the potential to turn into one of the cornerstones of coopetition inquiry? Probably, some links to the influential dynamic capabilities approach (Teece 2007) may also provide valuable insight. Moreover, as usually occurs in strategic management, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies, including: law, political science, economic and social geography, and business history, are certainly welcome to improve our understanding of coopetition issues.

Coopetition, as any other emerging field of research, needs to probe and validate its epistemic distinctiveness and worthiness (Hambrick and Chen 2008). Since its onset, coopetition has fundamentally been defined as a paradoxical relationship that encompasses the two opposing forces of competition and cooperation (Clarke-Hill, Li, and Davies 2003). This view is in clear opposition to the Aristotelian binomial view that has dominated the Western scientific world for several centuries (Dagnino 2012). Extant studies on coopetition have very seldom dealt with this fundamental ontological problem. Following Chen (2008), we also expect to reconsider the philosophical foundations of coopetition. Is coopetition potentially bringing a new philosophical approach to refresh the old-fashioned business world? Could the philosophical approach that coopetition embeds carry the seeds of revolution for the mindset of Western management practices? Actually, in this vein, conceptual studies of coopetition, such as the ones presented in this issue, are definitely desired. In addition, novel and fresh methodological perspectives are required if we want to understand more deeply and explain more clearly the dynamics of coopetition strategies.

## COOPETITION EMPIRICAL FRONTIERS

Empirical research on coopetition has initially adopted the case study methodology, and one of the articles in this issue follows the same process-oriented line. Along with the development of a coopetition research body, case studies have been complemented by empirical quantitative studies, based on statistical databases and by formal models that are also represented here. Other

methods, complementary to the ones above, seem welcome to further coopetition scrutiny. For instance, the use of experimental methods holds the promise to complement our understanding by better explaining individual and collective processes that are critical to coocompetitive dynamics. Similarly, an exciting perspective opens up when it comes to neuroscientific approaches to exploit cognitive processes engaged in coocompetitive settings, as well as to agent-based modeling of coocompetitive dynamics. Finally, we also encourage students and scholars of coopetition to take a big step forward by performing multilevel, multistage, multicase (such as the ones included here), and multimethod studies.

In sum, the development of empirical studies on coopetition, performed by mobilizing orthodox methodologies as well as more innovative and integrative approaches, appears as an essential requisite for coopetition research to move forward in a thorough and impactful fashion. In fact, since no specific database has been specifically developed for studying coopetition—compared to other significant phenomena, such as firm creation, network emergence, and industry evolution—the development of dedicated coopetition databases appears highly desirable if we want to establish coopetition as a firmly grounded and rigorous research domain. Likewise, to our knowledge, there is no specific investigation project that studies coopetition at the national and international levels, such as occurs for innovation by means, for instance, of the Community Innovation Survey (2013). We believe that it is through the formation and deployment of such databases, as well as by conceiving and performing large scale international projects, that additional clarification of the impact and implications of coopetition will be made possible in a truly community-based and cumulative fashion.

### COOPETITION STRATEGIES: THE ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

The three articles in this issue offer stepping stones for building a deeper understanding of the role and impact of coopetition in strategic management research. The concept of coopetition is analyzed in detail, a coopetition typology is provided, and the benefits available to practitioners are scrutinized in depth.

The first article in this volume, by Czakon, Mucha-Kuś, and Sołtysik (2016), provides insights into the value for all actors, regardless of the share they will be able to appropriate. Another challenge taken by this study is to better understand how coopetition strategies come to existence. The second article, by Dahl, Kock, and Lundgren-Henriksson (2016), examines how a coopetition strategy is developed. By adopting a strategy-as-process perspective, this article investigates the various levels of coopetition development. Through a multilevel empirical study of the airline industry, the third article by Chiambaretto and Dumez (2016), tackles the intriguing issue of the value-creating processes of coopetition.

We have reason to believe that this collection is valuable because it carries the potential to push the contours of the coopetition field and to have an impact on both coopetition theory and practice. We, therefore, hope that it will be taken as such by scholars and the management community at large.

### REFERENCES

- Baglieri, D., G. B. Dagnino, M. S. Giarratana, and I. Gutierrez. 2008. "Guest Editors' Introduction: Coopetition Strategy—Stretching the Boundaries of Coopetition." *Management Research* 6(3):157–64. doi:10.2753/jmr1536-5433060300

- Bengtsson, M., J. Eriksson, and J. Wincent. 2010. "Co-opetition Dynamics: An Outline for Further Inquiry." *Competitiveness Review* 20(2):194–214. doi:10.1108/10595421011029893
- Bengtsson, M., and S. Kock. 1999. "Cooperation and Competition in Relationships between Competitors in Business Networks." *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 14(3):178–90. doi:10.1108/08858629910272184
- Brandenburger, A., and B. Nalebuff. 1996. *Co-opetition: A Revolution Mindset that Combines Competition and Cooperation*. New York: Currency Doubleday.
- Chen, M.-J. 2008. "Reconceptualizing the Competition-Cooperation Relationship: A Transparadox Perspective." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 17(4):288–304. doi:10.1177/1056492607312577
- Chiambaretto, P., and H. Dumez. 2016. "Towards a Typology of Coopetition: A Multilevel Approach." *International Studies of Management and Organization*. This issue.
- Clarke-Hill, C., H. Li, and B. Davies. 2003. "The Paradox of Co-operation and Competition in Strategic Alliances: Towards a Multi-Paradigm Approach." *Management Research News* 26(1):1–21. doi:10.1108/01409170310783376
- Community Innovation Survey. 2013. "Eurostat and European Commission." Accessed on November 23, 2013. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/cis>
- Czakon, W., A. S. Fernandez, and A. Mina. 2014. "Editorial – From Paradox to Practice: The Rise of Coopetition Strategies." *International Journal of Business Environment* 6(1):1–10. doi:10.1504/ijbe.2014.058040
- Czakon, W., K. Mucha-Kuś, and M. Sołtysik. 2016. "Coopetition Strategy: What Is in It for All? A Study of Common Benefits on the Polish Energy Balancing Market." *International Studies of Management and Organization*. This issue.
- Dagnino, G. B. 2012. "Introduction: Why a Handbook of Research on Competitive Strategy?" In *Elgar Handbook of Research on Competitive Strategy*, edited by G. B. Dagnino, 1–18. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Dahl, J., S. Kock, and E. L. Lundgren. 2016. "Conceptualizing Coopetition Strategy as Practice: A Multilevel Interpretative Framework." *International Studies of Management and Organization*. This issue.
- Gnyawali, D. R., and R. Madhavan. 2001. "Cooperative Networks and Competitive Dynamics: A Structural Embeddedness Perspective." *Academy of Management Review* 26(3):431–45. doi:10.5465/amr.2001.4845820
- Gnyawali, D. R. and B. J. Park. 2011. "Co-opetition between Giants: Collaboration with Competitors for Technological Innovation." *Research Policy* 40(5):650–63. doi:10.1016/j.respol.2011.01.009
- Hambrick, D. C., and M.-J. Chen. 2008. "New Academic Fields as Admittance-Seeking Social Movements: The Case of Strategic Management." *Academy of Management Review* 33(1):32–54. doi:10.5465/amr.2008.27745027
- Lado, A., N. G. Boyd, and S. C. Hanlon. 1997. "Competition, Cooperation, and the Search for Economic Rents: A Syncretic Model." *Academy of Management Review* 22(1):110–41. doi:10.5465/amr.1997.9707180261
- Luo, X., R. J. Slotegraaf, and X. Pan. 2006. "Cross-Functional Co-opetition: The Simultaneous Role of Cooperation and Competition within Firms." *Journal of Marketing* 4(1):67–80. doi:10.1509/jmkg.70.2.67
- Park, B. J., M. K. Srivastava, and D. R. Gnyawali. 2014. "Walking the Tight Rope of Coopetition: Impact of Competition and Cooperation Intensities and Balance on Firm Innovation Performance." *Industrial Marketing Management* 43(2):210–221.
- Teece, D. L. 2007. "Explicating Dynamic Capabilities: The Nature and Microfoundations of (Sustainable) Enterprise Performance." *Strategic Management Journal* 28(13):1319–50. doi:10.1002/smj.640
- Tidström, A. 2008. "Perspectives on Coopetition on an Actor and Operational Level." *Management Research* 6(3): 207–17. doi:10.2753/jmri1536-5433060304
- Yami, S., S. Castaldo, G. B. Dagnino, and F. Le Roy. 2010. *Coopetition: Winning Strategies for the 21st Century*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.