**Is Management Tension Always Negative? Coopetition Logics and (Un)Productive Tensions in New Marketplaces**

OR

**Coopetition Logics and (Un)Productive Tensions in New Marketplaces : Insights from the Contactless Payment Card Project**

OR

**Are New Market-Creating Tensions Always Negative? Coopetition Logics and (Un)Productive Tensions in the Contactless Payment Card Project**

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**Abstract**

Prior work on coopetition highlights the unproductive risks of misappropriation between firms that simultaneously cooperate and compete. This paper provides insights into both productive and unproductive coopetitor tensions in the creation of new marketplaces. We theoretically discuss the characteristics and complexity of of new marketplaces and how those spaces produce coopetitive tension. In addition, we conduct an in-depth case study of the contactless payment card project. In this, we describe the tensions related to this coopetitive project and identify three coopetition tension types – strategic, social and relational – which allow individuals to manage, transcend and integrate-bridge heterodoxlogics and their shifting salience within coopetition work. We then develop a two-dimensional coopetition tension framework explaining how coopetitor practice produces both productive and unproductive tension in relation to new marketplaces. The present study therefore represents a noteworthy academic contribution to theory and practice.

**Key words**: coopetition, tension, productive tension, unproductive tension, new industrial markets

# Introduction

The increase in the number of firms entering into coopetitive practice has attracted a growing body of research [ Gnyawali2011650 tee2009industry ]. In coopetitive practice, firms – often large rivals – straddle multiple social domains whose actors collaborate, yet also impose different and often incompatible rules and expectations(Dagnino & Rocco, 2009; J. & Brandenburger, 1997)(Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). For example, in the mobile payments industry, large rivals such as Visa and MasterCard cooperate to reduce fraudulent card transactions across the world, and develop standards together with financial institutions (e.g. HSBC and Barclaycards), As a result, firms leveraging coopetitive processes all confront the management challenge of incorporating, combining and managing contradictory and competing ‘logics’ to leverage the market opportunities. Here, logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101) are defined, as a set of “socially constructed” forms of implicit or explicit practices, “values, beliefs, and rules” that actors use to organise their existence, activities and social exchanges.” The management of coopetitive tensions is therefore a pervasive issue in coopetitive success and a theoretically important research area.

Reflecting this studies researching collaborations of competitors, studies have emphasized *instability* in relation to the *tension* associated withpractices such as value co-creation, cooperation and competitiveness (Das & Teng, 2000; Koza & Lewin, 1998). This stems from the assumption that coopetition practice increases the risks of misappropriation (B.-J. R. Park et al., 2014; Ritala, 2012).

Despite studies showing that coopetitive tensions are multidimensional, most, if not all, conceptualisations of tension relate to different organisational levels (Chiambaretto & Dumez, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014), and to normative solutions in terms of formal and informal control mechanisms to manage, for dealing with, and overcoming, tension (REFS). Therefore whenever coopetition tension is discussed in the literature, for the most part, the pejorative is negative and it is often associated with unproductive coopetition outcomes (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). However, this perspective ignores how coopetition tension might positively impact the management practices by encouraging creativity, technological innovation, business models and new market creation within simultaneous competitive and collaborative situations. Indeed, few, if any, studies demonstrate the conceptual multidimensionality of coopetition (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Perez-freije & Enkel, 2007). The present research aims to fill parts of this void.

Accordingly, the research question to guide this article is:how do market-creating tensions in enable and constrain the process of coopetition. Specific research questions are concerned with:

* the positive and negative nature of the tensions arising from coopetition logics;
* and what function those tensions perform in the creation of new marketplaces.

We first address these questions by drawing primarily from an analysis of coopetition logics and the dynamic tensions in new marketplaces - the mobile payments industry. The mobile payments industry offers a rich site for observing coopetition with high R&D costs, long term market ambiguities and technical uncertainties (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011). Importantly, in mobile payments industry, new logics have yet to be established while at the same time requiring strong standards and interoperability to succeed (Lee & Paruchuri, 2008). In this study we applied data triangulation through three data collection procedures (i) thirty in-depth interviews, (ii) forty-six online data post sources i.e. blogs in two countries and (iii) observations at three field business conference sites. Addressing the research aim and questions, we provide a multidimensional way of understanding how coopetition logics produce both productive and unproductive tensions.

This study makes three contributions to discussions of coopetition. First, this study identifies three coopetition tension types – strategic, social and relational – which allow individuals to manage competing logics and their shifting salience within coopetition work. In doing so, we provide a deeper understanding of the nature of coopetition tension and how that is experienced. Second, this study provides insights into how competing logics of tension coexist (Raza-Ullah et al., 2013). This analysis extends our understanding beyond the more visible signs of instability and conflict, which might cause the termination of cooperation or the exit of key players, towards an understanding of the ongoing discomfort resulting from active coopetition endeavour, whereby logics produce complex and multidimensional tensions. Therefore the study also builds on and extends the work on the strategic responses to competing logics, demonstrating how the management of tension enables the maintenance of coopetition logics with multiple social domains and referent audiences (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Purdy & Gray, 2009).

Third, this study develops a greater understanding of the significance and nuances of coopetition tension in new markets. In particular, we conceptualize a two-dimensional coopetition tensions logic: productive and unproductive. This builds on the recent work on tension within the coopetition field (Fang et al., 2011; Raza-Ullah et al., 2013), conflict in management studies [ coad2014two Gardet2011 ], and expands on the idea that tension allows firms to experiment and innovate (Levitt et al., 1999) by seeking and using both productive and unproductive tension affects. We extend the recent thinking on managing (Tidstrӧm, 2013), and balancing (B.-J. R. Park et al., 2014) coopetition tension providing insights into how coopetition tensions can be integrated to ensure that firms appropriate the ‘best of both worlds’ logics.

This article proceeds as follows. Theoretical insights are outlined on the logics of coopetition tensions and cooperations in new markets. Following an overview of the methodology adopted and the study findings, we discuss managerial implications to existing research. The article concludes with the limitations and future research suggestions.

# Literature Perspectives

Before we discuss the nature of competing logics in new markets and how tension is a property of coopetition, we begin by briefly reviewing the characteristics of coopetition. This provides a basis for understanding how such practices are an integral part of the new markets.

## Characteristics of Coopetition and New Markets

In recent work on coopetitive practice it has been shown that there are specific characteristics of this activity [ Gnyawali2011650 tee2009industry ]. Research shows how coopetitive practice is increasingly important for particular industrial contexts including; Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), which face numerous challenges such as rising R&D costs, high risk and uncertainty in technological development, as well as a lack of resources to pursue large-scale innovation projects (BarNir & Smith, 2002; Gnyawali & Park, 2011); information communication technologies, with challenges such as shortening of product development cycles, market standardization and enhanced technological products and services (Gnyawali & Park, 2011); and in transformative industry-wide market driving agendas, in which markets are driven by a cohort of driving firms (including giants), to challenge taken for granted logics for the whole industry, in order to bring about positive impacts including innovation, business models, industry standards as well as creating new markets (Chen et al., 2012; Doganova & Karnøe, 2015; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Reid et al., 2014; Tuominen et al., 2004). These industry characteristics enhance the need to cooperate with competitors in industrial markets.

This is particularly the case with new markets. New markets are characterised by technological diversity (risk mitigation), typically knowledge intensive (skill and capabilities), and cover global markets (economies of scale) (Anderson & Gatignon, 2005; Gnyawali & Park, 2009). New markets are the outcome of complex market adjustments and innovations that relate to creative activities that are directly related to intense communication and information flows (Ritala et al., 2014). These practices cannot happen in isolation, however, they require considerable adjustments towards leveraging diffused networked resources (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). Indeed, while the development of new markets may be driven by a single dominant firm, most often it entails a collective pursuit, wherein firms can jointly and collectively coordinate the changes they cause in a given market. As pointed out by Ritala et al. (2014), new markets require social offerings where positive network externalities, compatibility, and interoperability play a role.

Here, multiple upstream actors are empowered, informed and willing to build new market norms, develop new technologies and practices, particularly when dominant firms are involved. For example, several financial large financial institutions and technology firms formed the NFC Forum several years prior to any deployment and operationalisation of mobile payments technologies (Sanders, 2008). The organization of coopetition therefore requires a great variety of social work and accomplishments across time. Therefore, drastic market and technological transformation generate instability, producing tensions among actors, values, and actions of firms, groups and industries (Dagnino & Rocco, 2009; Fernandez et al., 2014). Studies show that half of coopetitive activities end in unplanned dissolution (Inkpen, 2000; Padula & Dagnino, 2007). Highlighting challenges, such as imbalanced expectations (Tarun Khanna, 1998), and instabilities caused by self-interest (Borys & Jemison, 1989).

The social nature of coopetition practice is also explored in management literature (Humphreys, 2010). That is, few firms can go it alone and therefore a broad group of firms must form and shape or influence the perceived value, nature, and techniques for carrying out a particular activity (e.g. standards, norms and established institutionalised practices). In coopetition practice, then, meaning is negotiated, produced and shared through participation in social practices (e.g. conferences, forums, workshops, meetings, site visits), as shared ways of thinking (e.g. best practice, new business models) and doing things to develop a new industrial market. Alongside shared meaning, however, new logics, vested interests, emotional states, values and power relations develop (Soekijad & de Joode, 2009, p. 152), constellating around particular market expectations, goals, motives and desires (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013). However, a firm’s competitive environment cannot be characterized as an ‘industry’ until new dominant logics emerge, comprising a range of rule-based, normative and cultural logics shaping the possible differential premises of coopetitive strategies.

## Logics of Coopetition

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To allow for a more nuanced approach to the way that coopetition strategies in new markets produce tension, this research draws inspiration from institutional theories addressing the logics governing interactions in institutional fields (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). That is, coopetition work in new markets encourages competitors to straddle multiple social domains – markets, communities, institutions, firms and management culture – whose actors impose different and often incompatible rules, expectations, templates, or competing ‘logics’. Logics are defined as a social domain’s ‘organizing principles’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248) or ‘rules of the game’ (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 112). Traditionally, scholars have been particularly attracted by the macro logic, as one of the corner stones of society (Thornton, 2004). However, in recent years, studies have shifted towards also addressing how logics are carried into micro-interactions by individual human actors, often in situation with co-existing, potentially contradictory logics (Thornton andOcasio, 2008). These logics are embedded in, for example, the value chain rules of exchange such as families (Jansson et al., 2007) or in guanxi traditions and systems in emerging markets (Zhuang et al., 2010). This work brings out logics as both explicit and implicit property of management practices. These studies also show that adherence to such logics is enforced by mechanisms that associate their violation with the social cost of legitimacy losses (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Ocasio & Thornton, 1999), failure and exit (Zhuang et al., 2010). When such interactions and strategies are shaped by different , potentially conflicting logics, they can be analyzed as being in a state of heterodoxy, according to Bourdieu (1990). This implies that the logics upon which market creating interaction is based become objects of reflection, negotiation and tension that may eventually lead to a breakdown of interaction and communication (Bourdieu, 1990). Whenever firms engage within and across a diverse array of industries, communities, institutions and firms in coopetition, play ‘in two or more games at the same time’. In those circumstances, firms may lose confidence with one referent audience as expectations of another are met (Purdy & Gray, 2009), or while attempting to combine incommensurable structures and practices (Tracey et al., 2011). Such apparent contradictions, incompatibilities and competing logics have largely been reported in the literatures as the determinant of *instability* and/or *conflict* (Gill & Butler, 2003; Krishnan et al., 2006), or as managers confronting higher levels of *tension* (Das & Teng, 2000; S. H. Park & Ungson, 2001).

Competing logics have been portrayed as particularly difficult to reconcile, because of their respective antithetical emphases. However, not all coopetition arrangements are characterized by conflict or overt ‘antagonisms in the organizational arrangements required by institutional referents’ (Pache & Santos, 2010, p. 457). Friedland & Alford (1991, p. 250) explained that coexisting logics can be ‘mutually dependent, yet also contradictory’. Studies have indicated that firms do try to manage and stabilize exchanges between actors through interaction of competing logics, thus forming more appropriate logics (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Fligstein & Sweet, 2002). Shared or complementary logics are likely to operate on the level of doxa. According to Bourdieu (1990), doxa can be defined as a situation in which logics are tacitly taken for granted thereby giving rise to mutual consent about the premises for social interaction (Bourdieu,1990). In this regard, the institutional cultural and normative conventions governing coopetition action are seldom discussed or constituted as an object of intense reflexive negotiation by co-opetitors. Rather than viewing the logics underlying co-opetition as merely constituting possible negative impediments to be resolved, the conception of doxa permits us to understand its multidimensionality and how collaboration in market creating activity can happen, without necessarily resolving possible competing norms, and without extensive negotiation or formalization in written agreements (Bourdieu, 1990). Although the theoretical distinction between contradictory heterodoxical and ‘negotiated’ logics and shared doxa of shared taken for granted knowledge logics, provides the means understanding the social basis on which an institution can be constructed, it does not however provide detailed models of how tension functions. This requires an understanding of tension is both discussed in the co-opetition literature and in management research more generally.

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## Coopetition Tension

Early researchers in the field of co-opetition focused on the drivers of coopetition (Doz et al., 2000; Koza & Lewin, 1999) and the motives underpinning coopetition (Hamel, 1991; T. Khanna et al., 1998). More recent work focuses on the dynamics and destabilizing nature of coopetitive relationships (Dagnino & Rocco, 2009; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). Over the last decade, however, there has been an increased attention to the dynamics of coopetition, in part focusing on the destabilizing nature of coopetition and related opportunistic behaviours, but also on incorporating more explicitly the role of tension. As Gnyawali & Park (2011, p. 652), note “coopetitive relationships are unstable which cause high level of tension for firms.” For instance, some studies show that tension is found to cause rivalry and opportunistic behaviours among coopetitive firms (Jones et al., 1998; Sakakibara, 1997). This research work builds on the co-opetition paradox. As Bengtsson and Kock (2014: 182) explain coopetition is, “a paradoxical relationship between two or more actors simultaneously involved in cooperative and competitive interactions, regardless of whether their relationship is horizontal or vertical”. In these works, tension has been highlighted as a particularly significant element of coopetitive relationship dynamics (Mudambi & Swift, 2009). This research shows that the combination of collaborative and competitive behaviors contributes to the emergence of tensions at various levels, including inter-organizational, intra-organizational and inter-individual levels (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Czakon, 2010; Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Luo, Slotegraaf, & Pan, 2006; Padula & Dagnino, 2007).

By and large, these studies investigate coopetitive tensions as a whole [ le2015managing mariani2007coopetition ], or examine the specific managerial each type of tension (REF), or ‘how to’ manage tensions in positing that separation (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000;Herzog, 2010; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989) – whether that be functional, temporal or spatial - and integration, encourages individuals to transcend paradoxes (Chen, 2008; Farjoun, 2010; Luo et al., 2006; Oliver, 2004).

What connects these studies of tension is that most, if not all, conceptualisations are multidimensional, although that is mainly seen in terms of different organisational levels (Chiambaretto & Dumez, 2016; Fernandez et al., 2014). In another way, conceptualisations offer normative solutions – whether that being formal and informal control mechanisms – to manage, for deal with, and overcome, tension (REFS). Therefore whenever coopetition tension is discussed in the literature, the pejorative is negative and it is often associated with unproductive coopetition outcomes (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). However, it is important to note that tension by its nature is not aimed at stabilities or instabilities and does not have any explicit or implicit purpose, as outlined by Rond & Bouchikhi (2004, p. 66): “… tensions that arise from the inter play of these forces are neither intrinsically functional nor dysfunctional nor naturally geared towards stability or instability...”. Indeed, not all coopetitions end in dissolutions; many prosper under the conditions of coopetition tensions.

In the broader management literature, a comparatively small but growing number of studies show that tension has productive and unproductive impacts on cooperations (Huxham & Beech, 2003; Raza-Ullah et al., 2013). For example, while Levitt et al. (1999) argue that productive tension stimulates innovation, Cameron (1986) notes the importance of tension and warns that without the tension between logics, organizations will fall into a dysfunctional state. Isaksen & Ekvall (2010) posit that firms need to release the productive coopetition tensions to facilitate innovative strategies, because productive coopetition tensions have direct impacts on coopetitive performance (Levitt et al., 1999). However, in the co-opetition field conceptions of tension suffer from a major limitation: they investigate coopetitive tensions in negative terms as a whole and ignore the positive. This assumption frequently underplays the positive impacts of coopetition tensions that foster creativity and success in cooperations (Raza-Ullah et al., 2013).

According to Fredrickson (2001), tension occurs in the affect climate where the key decisions on collaborative outcomes are negotiated. Affect climate forms the conditions that are related to the psychological and emotional environment in organisations Gisbert-López et al. (2013). At the affect level, tension becomes the natural product of coopetitive encounters (Hurst et al., 1989). Interestingly, Gisbert-López et al. (2013) argue that creativity, one of the main features of coopetitive innovation, occurs in the affect climate. In fact, in management practice, coopetitive tension is deliberately used to facilitate innovative thinking process by confronting actors [ andriessen2011socio ]. This confrontation often results in rationale thinking and hence innovation, such as brain storming sessions. Yet, for thension to facilitate innovation it has to be released during the cognitive confrontations. Taken together, this theoretical review poses interesting questions as to how coopetitive firms manage the competing logics and tensions to enhance their coopetition capability? What is the nature of the coopetition tensions, in which both productive and unproductive dynamic tension states emerge? The next section introduces the setting of the study – the contactless payment industry – and then provides a brief account of our methodology in order to address these questions.

# Methodology

This study investigates coopetition tension in the mobile payment industry. In this section we describe the research setting and sampling process, research design and data collection as well as the data analysis method.

## Research setting and sampling

Given our purpose to investigate the dynamic interaction between competing logics and coopetition tensions in a new industrial market, an exploratory study of the mobile payments industry was undertaken for two reasons. First, we followed (Yin, 1994 ’s) guidelines for ‘purposeful sampling’ in choosing the industrial sector. This practice relies on there being an example of the phenomenon under investigation to deepen our understanding with the accumulation of fresh observations. Since its origin in the early 2000s, the mobile payments industry has witness exponential growth both in the scale and scope of the importance of coopetition strategy (M’Chirgui, 2009; Ozcan & Eisenhardt, 2009). Mobile payments are distinguished from the non-mobile payments (conventional credit, debit or ATM cards) through a radio frequency communication protocol, which is activated when the card is in proximity of a transmitter. This new market penetrates to various markets including supermarkets, vending machines, public transportation, payroll remittance, parking, restaurants, and petrol stations, with different actors such as financial organisations, mobile phone manufacturers, software, hardware and Information Communication Technologies companies. Within this global industry, the UK and Turkey are two of the leading countries for mobile payments (Card Technology Today, 2007; Sanders, 2008). Second, this empirical setting reflects the characteristics of a coopetition setting, as outlined by Gnyawali & Park (2011), and the richness of data offered by this empirical setting provides a strong foundation for exploring coopetition logics and tensions. Unlike previous studies which use dyadic coopetition relations, we chose multi-party coopetition relationships to be able to investigate the complex coopetition tensions.

We began our search by including those firms defined by the European Payments Council (2010) as the actors of mobile payments industry. We also identified the main protagonist of the coopetition, and positioned them as central character of our exploratory qualitative study, while also employing a triangulated research design, as discussed below. Given the nascent stage of the mobile payments industry, purposeful and snowballing sampling and data collection involved attending business conferences and using the attendance lists, as recommended in the research of, Katz & Gartner (1988), Garud (2008) and Santos & Eisenhardt (2009) which is now discussed below in more detail.

**3.2 Research Design, Triangulation and Data Collection**

A qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyse the data. This research design is especially useful at the early stage of theory development, when key themes and categories are yet to be empirically isolated (Yin, 1994). We were inspired and adopted a set of grounded theory procedures that draw from both the ‘Straussian’ and ‘Glaserian’ grounded theory schools of thought, although admittedly, as the study progressed, we developed our own procedures which are consistent with Santos & Eisenhardt ’s (2009 ’s) methodology. This approach allows cycling between theory and the field data (Gebhardt et al., 2006), which enables refinement of the emergent themes and conceptualization of theories (Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011). In addition, it has been argued that the deficiencies of any one method can be overcome by using triangulation technique in the research design (Jack & Raturi, 2006). Therefore to address any potential concerns regarding dyadic nature of coopetition practice, we adopted data triangulation within the research design. This triangulation allowed us to unpack the different respondents’ interpretations, definitions and associated contested issues through social interaction (Yin, 1994), while also enabling cross-checking, confirmation and more ‘balance’ to understanding the dimensions of coopetition tensions (Jack & Raturi, 2006). This triangulation relied primarily on three data collection techniques: (i) business conference fieldwork observation, (ii) interviews, and (iii) online data sources. The overall research design is outlined in Figure 1 and each of the data collection are now discussed in turn.

Figure 1 Research Design, Triangulation and Data Collection



Modified from Spradley (1979) and Strauss & Corbin (1990).

## Sampling Considerations and Data Collection

**Business Conference Fieldwork Observations.** Business conferences are arenas where organizations interact and share experiences (sense making), declare agendas (sense giving) and offer opportunities for further coopetition arrangements (Garud, 2008). They also provide opportunities for fieldwork research observations on the actual interactions among the participants and their associated discourses (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). This field study approach has been well documented (e.g. Anand & Jones, 2008). We replied on an ‘etic’ or outsider view, with only one of the researchers (i.e. the lead author) being present in a non-participatory way at three industry conferences. The remaining researchers undertook ‘peer debriefing’ (Corley & Gioia, 2004) which entails the field researcher engaging other researchers not involved in the fieldwork to discuss emerging patterns in the data. The first set of field observations were elicited from an annual one day business conference in Manchester, UK. The second set of field observations were made at a three day business conference held in Brussels, with participants from around the European Union. The final set of field observations were undertaken at a three day world-wide conference held in Paris, France (see Table 1) below for an illustrative overview of the geographical and positional status of the delegates). It is accepted as one of the biggest events in the field (ref: conference web site and respondents’ acknowledgement). We used a moderate participation as advocated by DeWalt & DeWalt (2010). In marketing moderate field participation is suggested as this decreases the risk of researcher’s manipulation and bias.

Table 1 Field observations and delegates at mobile payments industry conference (conference 3)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Europe (France included) | 50.5% |
| **North America** | **15%** |
| Middle East / East | 10% |
| South America | 8.5% |
| Asia | 6.5% |
| Africa | 5.5% |
| Undetermined | 4% |
| Vice-President/ Director/ Head of Department | 37,4% |
| Project / Product Manager | 21,3% |
| CEO/ DG/ Gerant | 14,8% |
| Engineer / Executive | 12,5% |
| Technician/ Supervisory manager/ Employee | 7,7% |
| Consultant/ Trainer | 6,5% |

Source: http://www.cartes.com/The-conferences/Overview-2010/Conference-Delegates-in-2010

The observations included the content (discourse and the aesthetics) of the presentations, panels and discussions as well as the participants’ attitudes. The available materials were collected as evidence. The aim of these fieldwork observations was to observe the participants and their relations with each other, presentations and their behaviours while they were engaging with other members during the sessions and social breaks, such as lunch and coffee breaks. The field observations followed Wolcott (2005) suggestions on active observation.

**Interviews**. We conducted thirty in-depth interviews both in Turkey (18) and in the UK (12) and held with firms comprising coopetition between financial institutions such as banks, software, hardware companies, transportation companies, GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) operators, intermediary project managers (TSMs) and payment associations[[1]](#footnote-1). Interviewing began with convenience sampling. Informants were first contacted by telephone or email, informed of the nature and purpose of the study and invited to participate. We followed an interviewing method adopted in Palmer & Quinn (2005) study which suggests starting with unstructured interviews that are followed by semi-structured interviews, as more insights evolve during the data collection process. We first conducted eight pilot interviews with industry experts (e.g. the CEO of AKK credit and debit card processor). These eight interviews were used to develop the first set of questions which were designed as unstructured and open-ended questions. The questions asked during the interview include these examples: Tell us about your experiences of working in coopetitive relationships? What are the issues originating from a multi-party environment and how do you manage them? Tell us about your positive or negative outcome experiences? How do these issues affect the accomplishment of coopetitive practices?

Figure 3 Characteristics of the Respondent Coopetition Firms

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Market experience** | **Payment System experience** | **International Experience** | **Market Size** |
| **New** | **Established** | **Yes** | **No** | **Yes** | **No** | **Big** | **Small** |
| **Financial Institutions** | √ | √ | √ |  | √ |  | √ | √ |
| **Software/Hardware Companies** | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| **National Regulatory Cooperations** | √ | √ | √ |  | √ |  | √ |  |
| **International Regulatory Cooperations** | √ | √ | √ |  | √ |  | √ |  |
| **GSM Companies** | √ | √ | √ |  | √ |  | √ |  |
| **Transportation Companies** | √ | √ |  | √ |  | √ | √ |  |
| **TSMs** | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |  | √ |

Source: Field data

After these first interviews we started our data analysis and the initial themes. At this stage we also applied method of cycling between theory and data to develop these questions Santos & Eisenhardt ’s (2009 ’s). Themes investigated in the interviews included: (i) definitions of key terms (e.g. cooperation, competition, tension, cooperation, market making, and market creation), (ii) the dynamics of coopetitive arrangements that lead to tension, (iii) the outcomes of these coopetitive activities. We deliberately avoided using terms “coopetition” and “tension” to allow a natural narrative, at this stage. To maintain consistency, one author conducted and transcribed all the interviews both in Turkish and in English.

**Online Data Sources**. Using three of the most common search engines (Google, MSN-Bing and Yahoo) (McCown et al., 2006), a keyword search was conducted on sources dating from 2000 to 2012, as the subject industry goes back to early 2000s. The keywords used for the search included “mobile payments”, “contactless payments”, “NFC” and “tension”. The search was stopped when information started to repeat in multiple websites and no further new items were available. As the virtual databases have the potential of attracting participants from all around the world, it was possible to gather range of material with a global perspective. This helped to provide a broader coverage of the tensions applicable to marketplace creation activities in cooperations. Overall the search criteria were able to return 46 useful data sources1. Figure 4 provides an illustrative online data source example.

Figure 4 An illustrative example of an online data source



Source: Field Data

## Data Analysis Approach

With regards to the data analysis, first, we began by reading the transcripts and familiarising ourselves with the data searching for ideas, patterns, common ground and opposition within the respondents’ language and explanations (Prasad & Mir, 2002). In each step of the data analysis process, the reliance on multiple data sources facilitated triangulation of evidence. We then moved on to the five-step data analysis process as depicted in Table 2. We used NVivo version 8 and to create a series of categories and sub-themes through triangulating data from different sources (Martin & Eisenhardt, 2010). The totality of data was situated in its historical and social context (the part cannot be understood without the whole and vice-versa). We also used hand written field notes that were taken during interviews including settings, disruptions, and generic connections to the moment allowing the researcher to integrate on its own emic perspective. This inductive process (discussed among authors) identified the elements that comprised the collective cultural register in this field. This initial stage also allowed us to begin to describe overall features of the phenomenon under study. We then shifted these first order themes through recycling between the data and the literature (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). This process helped us to develop the second order themes – axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). At this stage, to uncover the real meanings beneath the expressions we applied a semiotics approach (Gudwin, 2005). According to Gudwin (2005), semioticians examine how meaning arises from a specific relationship within a group of signs (such as words) in particular texts. It is particularly insightful when considering unearthing the subtle and often invisible tensions around competing logics. We systematically indexed the data through selective coding to develop the thematic framework and allowed mismatch to be discussed as a new perspective. This process joined by the field observation data deconstructed the open meanings of the data into behavioral information regarding coopetition tension logics. The approach fully situated coopetition tensions in the everyday life of real individuals, thus making sense of a very complex, highly personal activity and experiences.

Table 2 Data Analysis Coding Process

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Phase | Explanation | Example |
| 1 | Initial coding for 1st order emergent themes | “Strategic focus”, “partner expectations”, “domination”, “active persuasion” |
| 2 | Shifting of 1st order themes and recycling between the data and the literature | “resistance”, “annoyance” 🡺frustration“using acquaintances” 🡺 lobbying |
| 3 | Development of 2nd order themes | Frustration 🡺 Relational tension conceptLobbying 🡺 Political tension concept |
| 4 | Semiotics | Signifier (original narrative): “Developing own standards to respond to the threat”Signified (real meaning): “To impose own model during the creation of marketplace to exploit the revenues in the future” |
| 5 | Typology development | Level of market place creation under the combined impacts of coopetition tensions |

Source: Field Data

By way of this process, we found three coopetition tension types – strategic, social and relational – which allow individuals to manage competing logics and their shifting salience within coopetition work. The symbolic identifiers also helped us to identify the productive and unproductive impacts of coopetition tensions on coopetition tasks. We then revisited the data to see how these productive and unproductive impacts of tensions affect the new industrial markets. To increase the validity and reliability of our study we discussed our themes with other academic researchers not involved in the project allowing us to justify and openly question our coding, and we reported and discussed our findings with industry experts (Corley & Gioia, 2004). All these steps formed the basis for our conceptualisation of competing coopetition tensions logic. After this stage, we turned to develop a typology to better explain these impacts on a new market. Typologies are classification of firm activity through theoretical concepts. We followed Doty & Glick (1994) approach and used the two proposed dimensions of coopetition tensions to develop a typology (see Figure 5). In addition we followed Langley ’s (1999 ’s) guidance of producing that balance between accuracy (comprehensiveness) with simplicity (parsimony).We theorised complex relations between the productive and unproductive coopetition tension logics and falsifiability through the retesting of theory.

# Findings

In this section we present research findings relating to the aim of our study. Our findings suggest that coopetition tensions have two competing logics: productive and unproductive tensions. The data also revealed that at the heart of these competing tension logics lie three coopetition tensions which are strategic, social and relational coopetition tensions (see Table 3).

## Competing Logics of Coopetition Tensions

Overall, our data revealed that coopetition tensions are at the centre of coopetitive relations in the new industrial market. The dynamism and the imperative to bring about transformative change resulted in simmering tensions between the various actors. Several respondents highlighted the complexity of the discomfort experienced with the incompatible templates regarding visions, goals, standards and ideas:

I24: “It is very difficult to find a business model, which offers win-win-win to everybody, as there are many parties. Therefore, I think, the number of the parties needs to be reduced, in this business.”

I06: “...it can delay. For example MC is doing a certification which needs to be followed (their standards), and this certification can last three months. However I need to go live immediately!

I09: “The key issue is that most of the biggest players in the space are the, banks, mobile operators, schemes (ie VISA and MC) and technology providers. As the commercials associated with contactless produce smaller profit/revenue opportunities this is causing the business case to fail and all involved in the delivery chain to put key initiatives on the 'back-burner'.”

At the same time, these competing logic tensions enabled social task accomplishment. The triangulated data suggests that when coopetition tensions facilitate or enable the achievement of coopetitive tasks, they are productive, and when they hamper or constrain them they are unproductive. That is, when faced with coopetition tensions, a dominant partners’ ‘thought leadership’ posturing, declarations and decisive efforts help to achieve rupture the status quo and ensures that the initial agenda building work is driven forward. These driving practices turns the coopetition tensions into productive tensions, as the following excerpt from an online data source explains:

W14: “DCM also recognized the challenge... it will seek to cooperate more closely with banks and card companies to further expand... In 2007..., *X* agreed to make their readers interoperable.”

On the other hand, our findings also suggest that coopetition tensions do not always produce productive impacts, generating unproductive practice that threatens the future of the coopetition. The data provided evidence of the resentment associated with the unproductive impacts of coopetition tensions, specifically when partners imposed or forced the ‘trading up’ of expectations and of the way things should be. As one interviewee highlighted:

I7:“...with continuous warnings... we told them “this is the way we work, if you adapt we can proceed. Otherwise, it means we stop here.” We notified them... well... regarding our working principles and expected them to obey...”

Now we turn to explain the three tension logics: Strategic, social and relational.

**Strategic tension focus** originates from the partners’ strategic practices. Partners focusing on market creating strategy engage in strategic activities such as persuasion, domination and partner elitism. The strategic missions of some partners were more demanding than other coopetition actors. This variance in ambition led to coopetition tensions between the more demanding, radical, expedient, active actors and those actors more ambivalent, reluctant, incremental, cautious and sanguine moving forward, as the excerpt from an online data source shows:

W41: “This grouping is not likely to last long, nor will it make much of an impact while the companies stick it out," says E. S. There are many obvious hurdles. Retailers will have to be convinced to play ball... Each participant in the new ecosystem will try to garner as much... value as possible, and that always means disagreement…”

While coopetition accentuates the interdependencies it also prepares the way for a strategic clash between the expectations associated with the vested interests of individual strategies. For instance, while some partners adopt more ‘elitist missions’ and aim to target niche innovation markets, others prefer to reach the larger mass market – ‘the big middle’ – and exploit economies of scale logics. This type of strategic coopetition tension, therefore, caused discomfort and impacted the industrial market. An excerpt from the interview with one coopetitor, providing input into mobile card accepting devices on public transportation vehicles, is an illustration of this:

I04: “In the NFC project, there were cards, mobiles, validators, three main parties, but during the promotions, they didn't mention our name. There are also such things. For a reason, they didn't even want to put our name, even, in miniscule characters. That business didn’t last and fell apart.”

Strategic tension can also be observed in cases when some coopetition partners choose with much optimism to impose “their own strategic models” as the industry standards and use several strategic techniques to convince other partners, to create the market and dominate it. This immanent ‘go it alone solo run’ can rupture plans and create pressures. For instance, when one partner announces a strategic mission as to “put an end to banknotes and small change” by 2023 (I15 Interview), this is often followed by expedient and premature actions, as summarised by the Mobile Products Manager:

I28: “At that time, actually, GB persuaded MC and started with an underdeveloped application and dominated the market. Therefore, consumed an innovative technology too early. But when observed, transactions lasted 17-18sec. for some customers (instead of 3-4 sec). This is bad for the product reputation, and not only for this bank, but for the industry. As a result, merchants and customers are reluctant to use the mobile payments system.”

Consequently, when the interdependencies intensify, the strategic tension among partners increases the cognitive reactions, emotional states, unmet expectations, with the reputation of the whole coopetition initiative questioned and open to social scrutiny.

**Social tension focus** arises from different social manipulations of and by the partners in order to achieve their expectations. Formal and informal relationships occur inside and outside the coopetition environment, such as industry events, meetings, conferences, trainings, and award ceremonies. Partners use these social gatherings as opportunities to manipulate decision processes through homophily or heterogeneity, such as, anti-leader positioning during market creation (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2009). Here the ‘social things’ – identities, ties, objects, artefacts and the like, of both material and non-material nature – are in a precarious state and bring out social “splits and schisms as well as cliques and cabals” with contrasting heterogenic features, as the following quotation demonstrates:

I03: “With my vote and with the votes of other small banks we chose A as the President. Y got furious and so on… “How could this be?” Such absurd words like “ON is still effective”. They took it from their side… They said that “we do... that... eee the ON… Banks united together...”

In addition to this, we found that coopetition involved a struggle for social authority when uncertainty clouds the future and there is a need to comprehend, control ideas and direct competing market possibilities. That required performative actions like talking, influencing, monitoring, persuading, manipulating and ‘getting to grips’ with relevant social dynamics, leveraging lobbyists and arbitraging social relations. For example, the data showed that actors use industry conferences as a social mechanism to ‘get together and get to grips’ with actors gathering together to discuss their issues (alongside that of the conference agenda). Several interviewees highlighted how the coopetition within the mobile payments environment could not be considered as a single grouping but rather as many voices with sometimes orchestrating social intervention used to impede the social dictator dominating. This can be seen from the following quotation:

I03: “They became really mad; he (Y) even left the meeting, because we were smaller, but got together and blown him off his safe place. At the end of the day, we may be smaller but we are more experienced in these types of manipulative tactics, and we know each other very well.”

The industrial market homophily logics can produce exclusive and privileged membership for some actors, even coopetition gerrymandering. Coopetition tensions can arise from the ‘othering’ exclusion and those who are not perceived as resembling the homophily. That produced in-group tensions “met with social manoeuvring, scepticism as well as enthusiasm.” While the organisers of such events strongly promote the possibility of ‘networking potentials’ (a term used by businesses to address social relations), the data also highlighted the discomfort and ‘social awkwardness’ of unorchestrated and non-routine social engagement, particularly amongst high status actors and heterogeneous groups (e.g. financial institutions, software/hardware companies, national regulatory cooperations, international regulatory cooperations, GSM Companies, transportation companies).

I17: “Sometimes they enter the market before they test the products properly (to be the first to market). We are in the finance business, and any defects can ruin the market. For this reason, informal directions are taking place using the personal networks. Solving the problems is tried through the “goodwill” process. Of course people have market effectiveness targets, and personal career plans. Networking behind the scenes is taking place. I don’t do such things and find it very in appropriate.”

Reflexively, partners assess other partners’ identities, social advancements; monitor one another through talk, work boundaries and the territorial formations of relational interaction. We noted that social activities produce relational tension which is now discussed.

**Relational tension focus** is produced when there are individual discrepancies and dissatisfactions among partners that are the result of social interactions whenever the rational attitudes are overlooked. The individual and collective expectations of partners represent opposite extremes of a spectrum. Partners use several methods to strike a balance between both coopetitive and individual expectations. An indicator of this is the enthusiasm of partners. In such cases, this enthusiasm needs to be reciprocated by the other partners in order for the cooperation to happen. However, this is not always the case, and unshared enthusiasm can harm the competition expectations:

I07: “We believe in our project. We know that if we convince them we will be successful. Therefore, even if they say that they are not interested in our project we insist. We take them to our other partnerships to demonstrate how we work. We don’t let go, easily, although sometimes they don’t like our methods. We try until we get the project done.”

Another cause of relational tension is the frustration among partners in coopetition. When each partner insists on his or her own expectation, frustration is unavoidable as the partner of a technology company explains:

I23: Some organizations have more power than others. Because of this usually whatever they say becomes the final decision. This creates frustration.

The expectation that businesses or individuals will strive to bring about the overall vision of the new industrial market suggests that a strong relational emphasis on *quid pro quo* practice (‘this for that’ in Latin), where one transfer is contingent upon the other. However, there was a wariness of those ‘taking’ rather than those that ‘give and take’, as several respondents noted:

I11: “There is a strange equilibrium in the management of this cooperation... the balance needs to be protected. They have the mission to drive the industry, to bring out new ideas, but also to intervene if any partner goes beyond the set goals. There is usually a common consensus on decisions in terms of market growth and innovation.”

Avoidance is also used as a mechanism to deal with dissatisfactions arising from the discrepancies regarding the coopetitive tasks. Avoidance is detrimental to coopetitive tasks and performance, because it hampers the achievement of the tasks as pointed out in the following quotation:

I06: “In the end, I am subject to the rules of MC and Visa, but to avoid them, I am trying to give the responsibility to another firm at the moment. But this is the core business of the banking industry. If I can’t succeed in convincing the bank to take over the responsibility, the project will be delayed”

Taken together, all these elements represented a tense functioning of coopetition, with each having productive and unproductive impacts in new industrial markets. Consequently, we developed a typology to shed light on the productive and unproductive dimensions.

Table 3 Coopetition Tensions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Focus of TensionLogics of Tension | StrategicStrategic tension focus originates from the partners’ strategic activities such as persuasion, active involvement in coopetitive tasks, and seeking the leadership in the cooperation. In other words, partners use various strategic practices to impose “their own strategic models” (speed in entering the market, target market activities and industry standards setting.  | SocialSocial tension focus is generated when partners try to manipulate the cooperation through their social ties. They use several social practices to achieve this, such as the homophily, influencing or persuasion. | RelationalRelational tension focus is the partners’ reactions to interpersonal satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the coopetitive experience. Relational tension is observed in personal preferences, approaches to processes as well as in coopetitive tasks. Relational tension can be observed through the differing expectations (individual vs. collective), Quid pro quo vs. merit/transactional or avoidance versus participation |
| Productive | W40: “The door is open for close cooperation with mobile operators (and banks) in European countries,” says L. J., contactless and payment services director at B. “Tension, it’s past history. We’ve a much more coopetitive situation than we used to have two years ago.” | I17: “These types of defects can ruin the market. For this reason, informal directions activities are taking place. For example, solving the problems through the goodwill process. | W17: “Telco and mobile industry executives… know the immense challenges they face on the revenue front. You might say the motivation of "greed" (financial upside) is a stronger motivator than "fear" (inevitable disruption of the existing business). I'd say fear always is the stronger motivator… powerful incentives…” |
|  | Signifier | Signified | Signifier | Signified | Signifier | Signified |
|  | “The door is open for close cooperation” | Strategic active involvement of partners | “informal activities” and solving problems through goodwill” | Manipulating the coopetitive activities through social ties. | “challenges they face” and greed is a stronger motivation than fear” as well as “fear is a stronger motivator” | The fear of losing customers and revenue streams enables partners to work in harmony. |
| Unproductive | W17: “There are many who will make light of the recent company set up by AT&T, Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile USA, with partners Barclays and Discover Financial Services, to create a "contactless payment" solution…"This grouping is not likely to last long, nor will it make much of an impact while the companies stick it out," says E. S., publisher of http://www.SSS.com. There are many obvious hurdles. Each participant in the new ecosystem will try to garner as much… and that always means disagreement…” | I17: “In the committees you see. Eee for example One eee... if there is a regulation to be made, if it is against banks X, Y, or Z eee... they do their best using “their exclusive relationships” to have the regulation to be decided. That makes me sick. Using their power in such a way and leaving the others out there in the cold.” | W40: “To keep control of their subscribers, such operators as V. are looking to the SIM card, which they issue, to store the NFC payment and other applications. They don’t like the option used in nearly all of the NFC pilots launched to date… Battles, however, are brewing over who will control downloads of the payment applications to the NFC phones and where those applications will reside.” |
|  | Signifier | Signified | Signifier | Signified | Signifier | Signified |
|  | Partnering with industry leaders | To acquire a bigger share from the new marketplace. | Exclusive relations used to achieve individual goals | Lobbying behind the backs of partners who do not agree with their expectations | Concerns over controlling the new products and services | Fear of losing control on the new products and services |

Source: Field data

## Typology of Competing Logics of Coopetition Tensions

By interpreting the coopetition tensions logics, it is possible to describe the productive and unproductive impacts of these logics in new industrial markets. We then developed a typology from the analysis of the data to help to explain the impacts of these logics on new industrial markets. We illustrated this typology in Figure 5, where unproductive tension is located on the X and productive tension is placed on the Y axis. Subsequently, the diagram explicates the level of marketplace creation based on the combination of coopetition tensions in four quadrants each of which will be discussed in turn.

Figure 5 Productive and Unproductive Impacts of Coopetition Tensions



Source: Conceptualised from the field data and findings

**Quadrant I** – **Strong creation activity**: this quadrant explains new industrial market development through the higher levels of productive over lower levels of unproductive tension. Here, coopetition actors creatively resolve the competing logics by generating higher-level resolutions and innovative ways. The following excerpt from the I15 interview explains this coopetition dimension:

I15: “First, we worked quite hard as for the technical part (of it), after rather long lasting working with MC, MC’s certifications, many of which we formed… MC was ready but we said to them “look we do it that way... We work very close also with G., with the card vendor, I., V., POS vendors. …we all sat down and determined... the standards together. The sentence I used may seem a little... ostentatious. If not, say “identified the standards”, we at least assisted all the parties in the sense of our experiences.”

The above quotation displays productive strategic (persuasion and leadership) tension by expressing how they revised the technical standards, and describing how these standards need to be developed further. At the same time, the relational tension is observed from the remark regarding the use of “ostentatious” and how the sought a way of appropriating the ‘best of both worlds’ logics. Consequently, the strong desire to create the market increases the productive tension which spills over the unproductive tension facilitated by the coopetition logics. This can be observed from another interview with a mobile network firm manager. He explains to us how strong their desire to create market, without realising the productive and unproductive tensions in this attitude:

I24: “We are designing and preparing the “dream infrastructure” for the ecosystem. Then, our aim is to make the ecosystem to start working on the business system. We are creating the sample models for the rest of the ecosystem to encourage them. They might not like our leadership (we hear such things), but this way the right models will emerge.”

This attitude usually comes from partner who have strong belief in creating the market and who are not acting timidly towards coopetition logics. Our data suggest that these partners are not necessarily the market leaders. Their strong will to be involved in the creation of the market is the major driver as the managing partner of this software company puts:

I27: “We became the first certified developer in the market. We don’t work only with banks. We work with municipalities. We know that we have a strong case for this product. It takes time, but we believe we will win in the end. This product benefits all parties.”

**Quadrant II – Disintegration**: based on the data, when coopetition actors insist on dominating the cooperation (social tension) and impose their own models or templates, the impacts of both tensions become excessive. While there are varying degrees of disagreement, here opinions diverge significantly on a number of critical points. At this stage, this rapidly brings out contrasting competitive positions with significant ‘deep plays’ – all or nothing – and the findings show that this ends in coopetition dissolution. An interview from I24 reflects this practice:

I24: “Our aim is to make them start working on the business models. We want to create the models for the industry. For that reason, we are not in a position to wait for the banks. Therefore, not all our NFC applications are bank dependent... they focus only to banking applications; they see the rest as extensions, like transportation, etc. But, we see them as market opportunities. Consequently, we do not have to wait for the banks there.”

In fact, the coopetition above dissolved shortly after this interview. The parties decided to end the coopetition and allied with other partners to continue their market creation activities. Similar approaches can be seen from other interviewees’ expressions:

I06: “Our mission is to be the opinion and practice leader. So we set the agenda for the industry. Thus, we don’t need to follow the other partners. They follow us or we choose new partners.”

I17: “They have set agendas. They try every possible way; you know what I mean when I say every possible way... to convince the cooperation to achieve these. If not they threaten to leave and cooperate with others. This is not helping the industry, if you see what I mean.”

Disintegration happens when partners have strong will to create the market and try to pull the cooperation towards their direction. According to the data, this desire is so strong that they are not reluctant to walk away from the cooperation.

**Quadrant III – No creation activity**: when the level of both tensions is high, the market creation activity is comparatively idle, sluggish and constrained. Therefore, despite the endeavours to preserve the market status quo or temper any threat, this leads to a failure to achieve coopetition tasks. Within the payment cards industry in the UK, for example, the move to chip enabled cards from magnetic stripe cards took over ten years (M’Chirgui, 2009). The passage from an interview (I11) provides an insight in the inertia coopetition dynamics:

I11: “...so, finally, this happened, this... under this formation six banks said yes we want to go on with this project through BBB... We carried some communications with TC on behalf of those banks... but this didn’t happen; with TC... a deal with TC was not possible…”

Despite the efforts of the six banks, together with the regulating authority in the card business, the project never ‘got off the ground’ because there was unproductive social tension (social relations) that constrained the attempt in the first place. Inertia is common when partners do not conform to coopetitive activities of some partners and stop working on the common tasks for a while as the marketing manager of a solution provider explains.

I19: “Therefore, when somebody thinks that he is the only solution provider for that area, this produces inertia. I mean, they making working together almost impossible. We can’t go on producing a new service. We need more solution providers to achieve and equilibrium.”

**Quadrant IV** –S**low creation activity**: this quadrant represents the low level industrial market creation due to the low levels of productive and unproductive tensions. The two contrasting positions are not easily dismissed and coopetition actors are challenged to incorporate the competing logics into a sophisticated synthesis or bridge. That integrative-bridging functions to slow down the creation practice, severely constraining its expansion and stimulation of getting coopetition practice to appropriate the ‘best of both worlds’ logics. The excerpt from an interview (I07) describes this situation:

I07: “...in 2008 the devices were ready, but we couldn’t manage to sign any contracts with the 70 local authorities visited over a three month period. None of them was convinced about the project! The reason for that was lack of any models running to prove the project...This didn’t stop us. Actually, it triggered our motivation. In the end we secured a pilot, for a limited number of service stations for three months. That was enough.”

The quotation first expresses the relational tension; resistance by refusing to enact the project, despite the cost waivers from the other party. The productive strategic and relational tensions can be seen in the persuasion techniques used by the actor, and in their enthusiasm for the project. This quotation also shows how unproductive tension slows down field creation activities (three-months and limited number of service stations). Another excerpt describes a similar situation.

I04: There are some institutional problems but because we are working very well, we overcame these. They first approach us with caution and we explain to them. They are good in what they are doing, but we are good in this business. We trained them. It took some time, but now we are working in harmony and things are a lot faster.

According to the data, coopetition that an actor faces shows that these types of constrains persist in the face of adversary and integrate the logics. Using the impacts of productive tension, they attempt to navigate and negotiate the contested issues.

# Discussion

In this paper we aimed to explore the dynamic interaction between competing logics and coopetition tensions in a new industrial market. We therefore sought to understand the *nature of tension* to enhance coopetition capabilities (Dagnino & Rocco, 2009; Fernandez et al., 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2011). The findings provide insights into the literature on managing (Tidstrӧm, 2013) and balancing (B.-J. R. Park et al., 2014) coopetition tension as well as transcending and integrating-bridging coopetition tension. Despite the productive impacts of coopetition tensions on new industrial markets (Lewis et al., 2002; Padula & Dagnino, 2007), these tensions can also be detrimental to coopetition (Das & Teng, 2000). Building on these opposing impacts of coopetition tensions, this study provides insights into how the competing logics between the productive and unproductive coopetition tensions have different levels of impact in new industrial markets.

## Convergence? Coopetition Logics of Productive and Unproductive Tensions

The findings reveal three coopetition tension types – strategic, social and relational – which allow individuals to manage competing logics and their shifting salience within coopetition work. The findings point to the discomfort associated with coping or dealing with two diametrically opposed or inconsistent templates when engaging in the practice of coopetition. This coopetition activity challenges those involved to search for a synthesis somewhere between the extremes where logics can co-exist. In this study, that requires in strategic terms, working on the coopetition tension logics which arise from the speed to market, marketplace positioning and varying degrees of adaptation-standardisation impositions. In social terms, that requires working on the shifting coopetition tensions from the relative homophily of the actors, the salience of social consensus and the relative scepticism and enthusiasm of the actors. In relational terms, that requires working on coopetition tensions regarding individualism and collectivism, relative *quid pro quo* norms and actor participation or avoidance. The findings highlight that coopetition logics are almost always present and not easily worked or managed. It demonstrates that in the management coopetition arrangements it is not always possible or appropriate to ‘jump to solutions’ and that the coopetition activity requires an understandings of its dilemmas, trade-offs and paradoxes. Indeed our findings show that the three coopetition tension-focuses can produce both productive or unproductive tension logics. That is, while one type of coopetition tension logic is productive in one situation, the same coopetition tension logic can be unproductive in another situation. Traditionally, the literature on tensions explored tension as a uni-dimensional concept (Raza-Ullah et al., 2013), or viewed as exclusively productive (Fang et al., 2011) or exclusively unproductive (Das & Teng, 2000; Hambrick et al., 2001; Hermens, 2001). Yet the findings builds on the these approaches, suggesting coopetition tension as a two-dimensional phenomenon for understanding of the dynamics of cooperation and competition (Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Raza-Ullah et al., 2013; see Tidstrӧm, 2013).

The productive and unproductive dynamics of coopetition tensions form the competing logics in new industrial markets (Raza-Ullah et al., 2013). The vocabularies of motive behind unproductive tension logic lie in the strong individual expectations and missions of partners. These unproductive effects have been well documented by the cooperation literature (Das & Teng, 2000; T. Khanna et al., 1998). Dagnino & Rocco (2009) explain this by the interdependence, cooperation and competition among partners that cause unproductive tensions. In effect, unproductive impacts of tension are generated by the trade-off between the coopetitive structure which requires pre-set interorganisational processes, and the competitive dynamics. Das & Teng (2000) link these unproductive impacts to the instabilities in cooperations and argue that if coopetition tensions are not balanced, the unexpected dissolution of the cooperation is inevitable. Tidstrӧm (2013) claims that preserving the productive logics of tension is crucial for coopetitive innovation, not least because productive tension enables effectiveness and momentum, both of which are important for collective action (Cameron, 1986; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Raza-Ullah et al., 2013). There is therefore a need to balance the unproductive impacts of coopetition tensions (Das & Teng, 2000; B.-J. R. Park et al., 2014; Tidstrӧm, 2013), but specifically to transcend or integrate-bridge the competing logics and these are discussed in more depth below.

## Managing the Impacts of Productive and Unproductive Coopetition Tensions

In the study we produced a typology of coopetition tensions (productive and unproductive) with new industrial market creating practice. Perez-freije & Enkel (2007) propose that in order to create industrial markets, cooperations need to emphasize the productive impacts of tension. We find that cooperations in Quadrant I are more willing to engage, navigate and negotiate shared meanings between the competing logics and gaining inputs from a diverse set of industries. Here, productive tension is a perquisite to shape industrial markets and this permits actors to transcend the incompatible rules, expectations and templates logics by generating higher-level resolution and innovative work. By contrast, firms which try to pursue or push their “own model”, fall into Quadrant II (disintegration zone) and this dominant logic imperative leads to significant points of contention. According to the findings, when both productive and unproductive tension levels are high, partners move into the “disintegration zone”. In the “disintegration zone”, firms either create new industrial markets on their own or branch out and set up an entirely different coopetition arrangement with new competitor partners. The third quadrant, or grouping of coopetition firms, illustrates an area where new industrial market creation does not happen due to the high levels of unproductive coopetition tensions. Significant here is the way that inertia resulting from unproductive coopetition tension. The last quadrant in our typology shows when the new industrial market creation is slow because of the integrative-bridging practice and the work of bridging the competing logics. In this quadrant, each tension logic is low and the integration function becomes very slow. Firms tend either to lose interest in the cooperation or become reluctant leaders in driving the coopetition practice. The typology findings therefore offer insights into the complexity and challenges associated with having to incorporate and align structures and practices with competing logics. As our findings demonstrate, not all firms are able to manage the discomfort of productive and unproductive tensions.

# Research Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

It is a long-acknowledged concept that the practice of creating, building and maintaining market order is not a single well-trodden route, marched along by identical firms (Gartner, 1985). Rather it is a dynamic social practice, requiring coopetitive business relations in business-to-business exchanges (Ford & Rosson, 1982; Tidstrӧm, 2013). One of the risks in presenting such a typology and an analysis of the competing logics of coopetition tensions is that this typology does not capture the social complexity of the competing logics. Neither does it provide a single answer or a set of answers to coopetition activity in new industrial markets. However, as is evident from our study, it is possible for firms to reframe the competing logics, transcending them in a way to harness getting the ‘best of both worlds’. Several implications of this research for industrial marketing practice thus follow. The findings of this study have suggested three different coopetition tensions – strategic, social and relational. This study helps organisations to understand differences between different tension logics when achieving their coopetitive tasks. By understanding these differences, managers can bring new awareness of the perspectives accordingly and develop their strategic actions based on their expectations. Another important implication of this study is the development of a two-dimensional tension approach. Thus far, organisations have acknowledged tension as a single and a dysfunctional concept. However, by understanding the productive and unproductive impacts of tension, managers will be able to use these impacts to their benefit. This is important, in particular, when the common aim is to create new industrial markets, because productive tension has positive impacts on innovation and creativity (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010). In fact, by acknowledging the significance of the productive tension, managers can allocate resources to increase their effectiveness. It is also important here to highlight that by using the outcomes of this study, managers can understand the competing logics between the coopetition tensions that that have impacts on their market practice. Therefore, it is important for managers to take strategic actions considering the playoff between these two competing logics.

Another noteworthy managerial implication of this study is the typology that identifies the level of industrial market creation based on the competing logics of productive, unproductive coopetition tensions. Using this typology, managers can manipulate the coopetitive strategies to achieve their goals. For instance, managers should pay extra attention to the second quadrant in Figure 5 (“disintegration” that draws attention to the breaking point of the cooperation). This quadrant has particular implications for coopetitive market creation, as firms that fall into this quadrant are highly motivated and have a first-to-market agenda. Partnering firms do not want potentially destructive levels of unproductive tension to threaten their market creation practices, and will therefore be driven to the second quadrant. This status allow for the abrogation of the partnership while retaining the possibility of marketplace creation, either individually or with new partners. This strategic action therefore helps them to be the first in the market. That is to say, dominant logic conditions traditionally facilitate only one single firm. A new hub and network logic needs to be implemented whereby complementarity creates industrial markets with valued inputs from a diverse array of industries and organisations (Humphreys, 2010).

Our research produced interesting exploratory insights into coopetition tensions. Yet no research is without limitations, and results must be interpreted with caution. The first limitation of the research comes from its research design. This study answered the research calls for a deeper understanding of coopetition tensions through qualitative research techniques (Raza-Ullah et al., 2013; Tidstrӧm, 2013). However, using a single method to investigate a phenomenon produces constraints on the subject under research (Hall & Rist, 1999). In order to avoid these limitations, systematic data collection, data triangulation, data analysis and conceptualization techniques are used. Yet, a mixed methods research, which would provide the missing quantitative perspective, would be a welcome addition to our research work. Another limitation of the study stems from the “small number” phenomenon. This makes traditional classifications or conceptions of ‘industries’ difficult to access. The findings also point to the important role of market configuring events or temporary spatial clusters because they are occasions to share meanings, sense make and navigate the social domains, monitor and negotiate competing logics with many customers and suppliers, across upstream and downstream industrial environments. There is therefore room for future research to investigate these market configuring events, along with the evolution of the industrial market. For example, how do the coopetition tensions and competing logics change over time and how does that impact tension and market-making activities? In this sense, analysis of the many competing and co-existing logics and the complex social interactions and interrelations between industrial marketing actors remains an important theoretical focus.

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1. List of interviewees and online resources’ details are available up on request. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)