Organizations frequently partner with actors in their environment in order to increase competitive advantage, at times, even with competitors. During recent decades, researchers have therefore become interested in simultaneous cooperative and competitive behavior between organizations, which they refer to as coopetition. Despite the increasing trend of treating strategy as activities performed by individuals, there is limited knowledge concerning how coopetition emerges and becomes shaped by individuals.

The articles in this thesis address coopetition from a strategy-as-practice point of view, particularly taking an interest in how actors at different organizational levels make and give sense of emerging coopetition, i.e. coopetition agency creation. A longitudinal case study follows a strategic change process of implementing ongoing cooperation against a background of competition, from formulation to implementation. The case study findings show that cooperation requires modification in established cognitive frames, and that cooperation strategizing becomes complex stemming from the pluralism of views and attitudes across and within actor levels.

The findings not only extend the notion of influential strategic actors external and internal to the organization engaged in coopetition, but also problematize the coopetition strategists. It is suggested in the thesis that it is pivotal to understand what enables and hinders individuals’ participation in initiating coopetition strategies, before strategy development and outcomes can fully be understood. Moreover, rather than treating coopetition as a deliberate strategy resulting from pure intentional and rational processes, the findings prove that unintentional influences from multiple levels must also be taken into account.

Individual level differences in modifying past practice patterns to fit emerging cooperation are argued to be grounded in who strategists really are, in their backgrounds, histories, and motivations. Looking into the past is vital as the findings show cooperation strategists across organizational levels hold multiple social identities that influence how sense of the present and future is made and given, and how different action patterns emerge, explaining why certain strategy outcomes are produced. The findings from the articles together emphasize how crucial talk and social interaction in different forms are to how far coopetition is accepted or resisted in organizations. However, different sensemaking patterns and different degrees of modifications in sustained structures and practices tell that accomplishing shared views on cooperation across inter- and intra-organizational levels become a challenge, and open future research paths to explore how coopetition frames are enacted over time.
Making Sense and Giving Sense of Coopetition
From Strategic Position to Processes and Practices
Making Sense and Giving Sense of Coopetition: From Strategic Position to Processes and Practices

Key words: Coopetition, coopetition strategy, sensemaking, strategy-as-practice, strategic change

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April, 2017

Eva-Lena Lundgren-Henriksson
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1 INTRODUCTION

“At work, the potter sits before a lump of clay on the wheel. Her mind is on the clay, but she is also aware of sitting between her past experiences and her future prospects. She knows exactly what has and has not worked for her in the past. She has an intimate knowledge of her work, her capabilities, and her markets. As a craftsman, she senses rather than analyzes these things; her knowledge is “tacit”. All these things are working in her mind as her hands are working the clay. The product that emerges on the wheel is likely to be in the tradition of her past work, but she may break away and embark on a new direction. Even so, the past is no less present, projecting itself into the future.” (Mintzberg, 1987: 66).

Traditional strategy perspectives have to a great extent defined strategy in terms of planning and managerial rationality, disregarding environmental complexity and uncertainty, as well as the role of social, cultural, and political factors in the strategy process (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998). Mintzberg’s story of crafting strategy captures an emerging trend in the strategic management research, which recognizes the individual as “shaping, making, and executing strategies” (Whittington, 2006: 619). This assumption is central to the strategy-as-practice approach to strategy, which has emphasized the importance of recognizing strategy as an activity, influenced by cognition, behavior, and the social interactions of individuals, within and outside of organizations (e.g. Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007; Johnson, Melin & Whittington, 2003).

The strategy-as-practice approach increases our understanding of how strategy formulation and its implementation processes are executed in practice, and consequently what micro level practices underlie the emergence and development of strategies (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). One stream of studies in the strategy-as-practice tradition has in particular illuminated how individuals are able to affect strategy implementation (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Narayanan, Zane & Kemmerer, 2011), and organizational responses to change, through their sensemaking processes (e.g. Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). The sensemaking stream in strategy-as-practice research pays particular attention to the influencing role of both intentional and unintentional actors and their activities on strategy development (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007), capturing the simultaneity of the deliberate and emergent features of strategies (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Another growing area of research in strategic management recognizes the role of interactions between individuals at the inter-organizational and network levels. The concept of coopetition has emerged in recent decades, attracting an ever larger research community. Coopetition is defined as simultaneous cooperative and competitive interactions between actors at any level of analysis, forming a paradoxical relationship (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). Organizations engage in coopetition in order to set industry standards, create new products, or join forces in shared market competition (e.g. Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Luo, 2007).

This particular research field has evolved from a combination of the research traditions on networks and business relationships (e.g. Håkansson & Ford, 2002; Håkansson & Snehota, 2006), and the resource-based view (e.g. Barney, 1991). Together, these traditions have contributed to the general understanding of coopetition involving access to resources and value creation through inter-competitor cooperation, and the leveraging
and capture of this value through individual competition (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Ritala & Tidström, 2014; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013).

As a strategy then, coopetition involves mutual goals and intentions that are to be realized, although the individual goals of the coopeting parties do not necessarily converge (Padula & Dagnino, 2007). In this manner, coopetition encompasses dualities and contradictions, contributing to the assumption of coopetition as having inherent paradoxes when presented to the individuals involved in realizing the strategy, and which thus require organizational and individual coping strategies (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Bengtsson, Raza-Ullah, & Vanyshyn, 2016b; Fernandez, Le Roy & Gnyawali, 2014; Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Raza-Ullah, Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Tidström, 2014).

The popularity of coopetition stems from the phenomenon’s existence across multiple industries, contexts, and company sizes – from service and production to research-intensive industries (Bengtsson, Eriksson & Wincent, 2010a; Bengtsson, Kock, Lundgren-Henriksson & Näsholm, 2016a). In fact, coopetition has even been portrayed from the viewpoint of evolution, meaning that all human groups entail both cooperation and competition (Loch, Galunic & Schneider, 2006). Therefore, given the phenomenon’s broad range, irrespective of industry or context, individuals that are faced with coopetition face challenges (e.g. Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Tidström, 2014). Researching coopetition therefore becomes highly interesting from the viewpoint of multiple stakeholders, not least from the customer perspective (Walley, 2007).

1.1 Research gap

Even though the coopetition research is burgeoning, the strategic dimension of coopetition has been depicted as an under researched area (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2014; Tidström, 2008, 2014). The previous research in the field has mainly focused on the relational level, neglecting the organizational and individual levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). Calls have consequently been made to address the role of individual level factors, such as experiences, goals, and motivations (e.g. Dahl, 2014), throughout the coopetition strategy process, ranging from drivers to outcomes (Dorn, Schweiger & Albers, 2016). In addition, there is also a need for a process perspective on coopetition, where the dynamic interplay between cooperation and competition is addressed (Bengtsson, Eriksson & Wincent, 2010b; Dahl, 2014).

As such, the emerging adoption of theoretical approaches emphasizing the individual level in the field of coopetition, such as sensemaking (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a, 2016b; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016) and strategy-as-practice (Dahl, Kock & Lundgren-Henriksson, 2016; Tidström & Rajala, 2016), clearly points to the value of employing a micro level approach to investigate coopetition strategy formulation and implementation, with a particular focus on practices and processes over time. This is, for example, manifested in the recognition of the role of cognitive processes and emotions, as well as lower organizational actor levels, regarding understanding coopetition development and its outcomes (e.g. Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016).

The subsequent benefits and competitive advantage generated from the synergy of simultaneous cooperation and competition have been assumed to rest in organizations’ capabilities. Coopetition capabilities are increasingly starting to be addressed in terms of the aggregation of cognitive and behavioral coping with the paradoxes that occur across
multiple actor levels, rather than as a pure organizational level construct (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali, Madhavan & Bengtsson, 2016; Le Roy & Czakon, 2016; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). Similarly, the coopetition research field has also been argued to benefit from the adoption of theoretical approaches that interlink multiple levels (Bengtsson et al., 2010b; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014), including the individual level with coopetition dynamics (Park, Srivastava & Gnyawali, 2014) and outcomes (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). Taken together, two areas can be distinguished where further research is needed to increase the current academic understanding of coopetition strategies; processes and practices at the micro level as well as their interrelatedness with other levels and their subsequent effects on coopetition strategy development and outcomes.

1.1.1 Lack of micro level research

Studies have rarely addressed the individual level when seeking to explain the complexity of simultaneous cooperation and competition between organizations. However, there has of late been an increased interest in understanding the origin (Fernandez et al., 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), management (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Seran, Pellegrin-Boucher & Gurau, 2016) and outcomes (Tidström, 2014) of coopetition tensions from an individual level perspective. In particular, these studies demonstrate a cognitive origin behind the tensions, and a clear need for further advances in understanding the role of individual level cognition in terms of coopetition (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Park et al., 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

Accordingly, even though the development and outcomes of coopetition have been depicted as contingent upon the adoption of new cognitive frames by managers (see e.g. Mariani, 2007; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Ritala, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen & Blomqvist, 2009), the cognitive dimension has received scant attention over the years (Bonel & Rocco, 2009). Research on how tensions can be understood is rare (Park et al., 2014), and the field has overlooked sensemaking processes (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014) that could increase understanding of how individuals actually deal with ambiguity and tensions in practice (Gnyawali et al., 2016). There is, moreover, limited knowledge about how coopetition strategies are actually created and developed in the daily lives of strategists (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014), and on what constrains and enables individuals in their realization of coopetition in practice (Bengtsson et al., 2016a).

Even though there is nascent recognition of both the deliberate and emergent features of coopetition (e.g. Czakon, Mucha-Kús & Rogalski, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016; Tidström, 2008), as a strategy, studies have traditionally treated coopetition from a set perspective; to a great extent recognizing top managerial rationality and planning (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Likewise, coopetition capabilities, generally understood as a mindset for managing coopetition dynamics in a beneficial manner (Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Gnyawali & Park 2009, 2011; Luo, 2007; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkonen, 2013), have traditionally been understood to reside in the minds of top managers, even though employees have been recognized as having influential power in shaping coopetition strategies, because they are subject to the tensions arising from coopetition (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Kylänä & Rusko, 2011; Luo, 2005), and consequently have to cognitively deal with them (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016).

The past coopetition research has therefore been criticized for placing too much emphasis on economic values, as well as adopting too narrow a view of the influential
actors involved in coopetition strategies (Chen & Miller, 2015). In the field’s present state, coopetition scholars are thus encouraged to consider multiple stakeholders influencing and being influenced by coopetition within and outside the organization as well as the stakeholders’ underlying motives for coopetition (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Akpinar & Vinzce, 2016; Volschenk, Ungerer, & Smith, 2016). The coopetition research field could therefore benefit from broadening the definition of strategists and strategic activities (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016), before considering the effects of the simultaneous interaction logics of cooperation and competition on coopetition outcomes (cf. Park et al., 2014).

The discussion above shows that in order to advance coopetition knowledge, in-depth research on the individual level needs to be more systematically incorporated into the field. The individuals influencing, formulating, and implementing coopetition need to be problematized, thus, before the mystery – vis-à-vis individual coping with the coopetition paradox – can be solved, research needs to tackle who the strategists really are and what motivates their participation in coopetition.

1.1.2 Lack of multilevel research

Over the years, the coopetition research field has seen an increase in longitudinal studies on the development of coopetition dynamics (e.g. Ritala & Tidström, 2014; Chiambaretto & Fernandez, 2016; Park et al., 2014). However, research has rarely addressed linking the dynamics of cooperation and competition, and coopetition performance with the individual level (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Gnyawali et al., 2016; Park et al., 2014). For example, Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah (2016) posit that the complexity, role conflicts, and ambiguity produced by coopetition should be addressed in terms of individuals’ emotions, cognition, and behavior, and hence how the relational level affects individuals inside organizational boundaries and how they cope with the generated tensions, as well as the reciprocal influence on relational development.

Gnyawali et al. (2016) argue that adopting a microfoundations approach to coopetition and tensions, i.e. recognizing individuals across actor levels as forming the battleground for tensions, has the potential to unravel the paradox of coopetition from a multilevel perspective. Tensions might be experienced in a variety of ways (Park et al., 2014) as well as cognitively coped with in different ways (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015) by individuals, and accordingly they need to be addressed at multiple actor levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016a, 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016). In other words, understanding the manifestation and development of a coopetition strategy as originating in the minds, actions, and interactions between both managers and employees has largely been overlooked by previous research.

There is also a need for more research on the interplay between multiple organizational actor levels. Recent research shows that inter-organizational tensions might be transmitted from top managers to lower level employees (Bengtsson et al., 2016b), and that tensions in this way aggregate across organizations (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). How this aggregation is linked with processes and actors at different levels, as well as with strategic outcomes, still requires further attention. Coopetition research therefore needs to consider influences from the institutional level, not only in terms of coopetition formation, but also in terms of the origin of cooperative and competitive behavior at multiple actor levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016).
Last, previous research has demonstrated that coopetition can produce different results to those expected (e.g. Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Tidström, 2014), yet, from a micro level perspective, what causes these outcomes remains unknown. Thus, taken together, the lack of multilevel research on coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014) can be summarized in two senses. First, limited knowledge exists concerning how processes (Bengtsson et al., 2010b), as well as actors and activities at multiple levels are interlinked (Dahl et al., 2016). Second, the coopetition research field has only basic knowledge of the relationship between the origins, developments, and outcomes of coopetition, and the aggregated behavior of individuals across actor levels over time (cf. Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Clearly, there is a strong need to bridge individual sensemaking processes and the social context. This requires researching how the processes of the creation of meaning both within and across actor levels are interrelated, as well as looking deeper into how coping with the coopetition paradox shapes strategy at organizational and relational levels.

1.2 Purpose

The overall purpose of this thesis is to increase knowledge on the origin, nature, and development of coopetition by applying a micro level approach to strategy. In particular, the thesis seeks to define the practices and processes underpinning the development of coopetition strategy, as well as to explain how they contribute to coopetition agency creation and maintenance over time, and consequently why certain coopetition strategy outcomes occur.

1.2.1 Presentation of the articles and their sub-purposes

Article 1: This conceptual article addresses the antecedents of coopetition practices, and the purpose is to analyze coopetition from a strategy-as-practice approach. The article aims to outline the origin and nature of the actors and activities underlying strategy formulation and implementation, from both a deliberate and emergent perspective. Four scenarios are outlined: coopetition as a planned practice, as an adaptive practice, as a contextually derived practice, and as a reacting practice. In doing so, a coopetition strategy is conceptualized to originate, form, and manifest through the interplay between actors and their more or less intended activities at intra- and inter-organizational levels. Applying a practice perspective on coopetition, the social embedding of actors and activities at multiple levels of analysis is outlined, extending current academic understanding of what activities are considered strategic and the type of actor that can be considered a strategist.

Research questions: How and why is coopetition as a deliberate and as an emergent strategy formulated and implemented by actors at multiple levels? Who are coopetition strategists?

Article 2: This empirical article addresses the process of coopetition agency creation. The purpose is to scrutinize how managers make sense of a newly formed coopetition strategy. Coopetition is approached as strategic change, and by applying a sensemaking perspective, the focus lies on understanding how individuals are able to create and adhere to an emergent coopetition frame, and consequently create future accounts legitimizing engagement in realizing the strategy. The article explains individual level differences in modifying established competitive frameworks to fit the emerging frame, and proposes that the affective dimension of sensemaking, such as emotions and
expectations, mediates this creation. Moreover, the article contributes to the emerging practice stream in coopetition research, showing that individuals differ in their ability to break with old practices, and accordingly create new practices legitimating simultaneous cooperation and competition that is largely grounded in their backgrounds, histories, and motivations.

**Research questions:** How is a coopetition frame constructed? Why do managers differ in their frame creation?

**Article 3:** This article addresses the influence of different coopetition agency patterns on coopetition strategy development, approaching coopetition as a strategic change in the implementation phase. The purpose of this empirical article is to increase knowledge on how a coopetition strategy is crafted in practice over time, as well as what practices enable and constrain coopetition agency creation. The sensemaking perspective is combined with the structuration stream in strategy-as-practice research, serving as a tool for understanding individual level differences in the choice to deploy coopetition as an ongoing practice, how emergence proves both positive and negative for strategy development, and how sensemaking processes are intertwined throughout time (past-present-future) and space (within and between actor levels). Four patterns in making sense of coopetition are derived from the findings; resolved, developed, limited and non-resolved sensemaking. The findings suggest that old and new competitive structures co-exist and manifest through old and new practices, which creates ambiguity for organizational members. The realization of coopetition as a continuous practice is both aided and hampered by the discursive and social practices of different natures.

**Research questions:** How and why do managers at different actor levels shape coopetition emergence and outcomes? What practices enable and hinder coopetition agency creation?

**1.3 Key concepts of the thesis**

**Coopetition strategy** – “consists of more or less intended cooperative and competitive activities that are consequential for the direction of the intercompetitor relation, and ultimately, for the organization” (Dahl et al., 2016: 96).

**Strategizing** – “more or less deliberate strategy formulation, the organizing work involved in the implementation of strategies, and all the other activities that lead to the emergence of organizational strategies, conscious or not” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 287).

**Frames** - cognitive or mental models, acting as a “filtering device” (Porac & Thomas, 1990: 234).

**Strategic change** – “a process of re-institutionalization of cognitions, actions, and practices” (Gioia, Thomas, Clark & Chittipeddi, 1994: 380), “following a redefinition of organizational mission and purpose or a substantial shift in overall priorities and goals to reflect new emphases or direction” (Gioia et al., 1994: 364).

**Sensemaking** – “a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014: 67).
**Coopetition sensemaking** – “the individual and collective interpretative processes that managers engage in, in order to enact the changes in routines and practices coopetition brings” (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b: 23).

**Sensegiving** - pertains to a “process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 442).

**Coopetition sensegiving** – “managers' deliberate or unintentional discursive utterances or statements concerning coopetition, which have a noticeable effect on others' view of the strategy” (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b: 23).

**Practices** – “behavioral, cognitive, procedural, discursive and physical resources through which multiple actors are able to interact in order to socially accomplish collective activity” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 9).

**Practitioners** – actors “who shape the construction of practice through who they are, how they act, and what resources are drawn upon” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 11).

**Agency** – “the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 970).

**Structure** – is “the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes: the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction” (Giddens, 1984: 374).

**Process** – “a sequence of events or activities that describes how things change over time, or that represents an underlying pattern of cognitive transitions by an entity in dealing with an issue” (Van de Ven, 1992: 170).
1.4 Positioning of the thesis and the intended contribution

In order to advance present academic understanding of coopetition, the thesis combines and applies the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice approaches to coopetition (Figure 1), in particular focusing on the coopetition strategy process rather than solely its content. Article 1 establishes the theoretical base for the discussion on coopetition by employing a strategy-as-practice approach, whereas Article 2 addresses the strategy formulation phase and frame creation by largely drawing on the sensemaking perspective. Article 3 addresses strategy implementation and the subsequent outcomes of the sensemaking processes and practices, for example by drawing on structuration theory in the strategy-as-practice approach.

The combination of the sensemaking and practice approaches enables the bridging of the cognitive and strategic dimensions of coopetition. The sensemaking perspective, which combines cognition and action, is largely drawn upon in order to address individual and collective constructions of a new coopetition frame (cf. Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995), as well as agency creation in terms of how individuals construct meanings of their own and others’ coopetition participation (cf. Laine & Vaara, 2007, 2015). In addition, the perspective allows the investigation of how individuals cope cognitively and behaviorally with the paradoxes present in coopetition (Gnyawali et al., 2016) when dealing with ongoing change and ambiguity in practice, including resistance, as coopetition develops (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2015).

The practice approach to strategy outlines the reciprocal influence of institutionalized practices and activity over time (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2006), assuming that strategic agency is enabled or constrained by these very practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2015). The practice approach therefore complements sensemaking in the thesis, constituting a tool to address the creation of new practices and micro level agency, including the link with other levels, such as the development and outcomes of coopetition strategies over time, their social embeddedness, and what enables and hinders this creation (Golsorkhi et al.,

Figure 1  Positioning of the articles included in the thesis

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It also allows the exploration of both intentional and unintentional strategic activities, including those on lower organizational levels in order to investigate those actors that are traditionally not considered formal strategists, such as middle managers (Rouleau, Balogun & Floyd, 2015).

In particular, in order to bridge the knowledge gaps concerning cognition and strategy in the coopetition research field, the thesis departs from the assumption that coopetition constitutes a strategic change, signifying the modification of an established cognitive perspective stemming from the introduction of a new strategy (Gioia et al., 1994: 376). Article 2 and Article 3 both address coopetition as a strategic change. It should be clarified that the scope of the thesis does not include the investigation of optimal coopetition tension management, rather it aims to understand and explain performance in terms of individual coping strategies throughout the strategy process, and the link with other levels and coopetition outcomes (cf. Bengtsson et al., 2016a, 2016b; Raza-Ullah & Bengtsson, 2016).

Overall, the intended contribution to the coopetition research field is focused on increasing knowledge about the multilevel nature of coopetition strategies by following practices and processes over time at both macro and micro levels of analysis. In particular, the multilevel nature is approached both in terms of activities, actors, and processes at inter- and intra-organizational levels, as well as in terms of the reciprocal influence between institutionalized practices and individual agency. Subsequently, the multilevel nature is also visible in how micro level agency contributes to the development of coopetition strategies over time. The thesis can therefore contribute to increasing knowledge on how and why coopetition development and strategic outcomes can be understood to originate from the individual level. In this sense, the macro level is extended from the organizational and relational levels to incorporate the institutional realm, and the process dimension is broadened from the antecedents to the outcomes of coopetition strategies, including ongoing individual and collective sensemaking processes, too.

1.5 Structure of the thesis and the presentation of the articles

The thesis hence comprises three articles. Table 1 offers an overview of these; the publication site, the focus, key findings, and main contributions to coopetition research. The next chapter offers the theoretical framework for the thesis, followed by descriptions of the research context and process. The final chapter presents and discusses the main findings and contributions, closing with suggestions for future research.
Table 1  Presentation of the three articles included in the thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 1</th>
<th>Article 2</th>
<th>Article 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Conceptualizing coopetition strategy-as-practice: A multilevel interpretative framework</td>
<td>A sensemaking perspective on coopetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Johanna Dahl and Sören Kock</td>
<td>Sören Kock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication site</strong></td>
<td>International Studies of Management and Organization</td>
<td>Industrial Marketing Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim &amp; focus</strong></td>
<td>The aim is to analyze coopetition with a strategy-as-practice approach, and provide a framework of activities and actors at intra- and inter-organizational levels from a deliberate and emergent perspective.</td>
<td>The aim is to apply the sensemaking perspective to coopetition in order to analyze the creation of an emerging coopetition frame and explain individual level differences in this creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective on coopetition</strong></td>
<td>Strategy-as-practice</td>
<td>Sensemaking and strategy-as-practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>12 interviews, observation, and media coverage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Key findings**

Coopetition strategy-as-practice develops through the interplay between competing organizations’ practices, praxis, and practitioners, as well as the institutional environment.

Grounded in different natures of the strategy elements, coopetition strategies take on both deliberate and emergent characteristics.

Individuals differ in their ability to update sustained competitive frames, to fit with an emerging coopetition frame, based on different expectations of, and attitudes towards, the future.

From a practice approach, individuals differ in their propensity to create new practices that provide legitimacy for coopetition. This results from individual level backgrounds, history, and motivations.

Individuals differ in their sensemaking and subsequent strategy participation within and between actor levels, contributing to coopetition strategy development with emergence.

Crafting coopetition as an ongoing practice requires modification in sustained competitive structures and practices, which is grounded in individual level abilities and interests.

Coopetition agency is constrained by recursive modes of strategizing, entangled with providing value for the customer and preserving organizational identity.

Coopetition agency is enabled by inter-organizational social interaction, particularly through meetings, as well as an emerging industry discourse through which a cultural identity manifests.

**Contributions to coopetition research**

Provides a definition of coopetition from a strategy-as-practice approach.

Conceptualizes the origin, nature, and development of strategy elements from both deliberate and emergent perspectives, thus unifying and advancing previous conceptualizations in the field.

Offers a model of coopetition frame creation and agency at the individual level, through past-present-future sensemaking.

First acknowledgement of coopetition sensegiving.

Offers a multilevel framework of the interplay between structural, situational/action, and strategic realms.

Acknowledgment of coopetition strategies encompassing intertwined deliberate and emergent processes and activities, where emergence proves both beneficial and negative for coopetition strategy development.
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The existence of both cooperation and competition between organizations has been acknowledged in independent streams, such as the cooperative oriented IMP approach (Ford & Håkansson, 2013), as well as the strategic management research stream focusing on competitive dynamics and strategic alliances (Chen & Miller, 2012, 2015). However, coopetition as a research interest and phenomenon originates from the perceived incompatibility of the cooperative and competitive paradigms alone to capture fully the dynamic and complex nature of business relationships (Padula & Dagnino, 2007). The concept itself has traditionally been argued to stem from Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996), who illustrated coopetition as horizontal or vertical relationships between actors in an organization’s value net, including customers, suppliers, and competitors. The inherent assumption of coopetition was generated in this manner, the simultaneous existence of both cooperation and competition.

Within the value net, or actor approach to coopetition, an organization cooperates with some actors while competing with others in its network (see also Afuah, 2000; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996), which is distinct from the activity approach to coopetition that later emerged (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). Pertaining to the latter approach, Bengtsson and Kock (1999, 2000) provided the narrower definition of dyadic coopetition in terms of direct competitors, as being simultaneous cooperation and competition between two actors, which spurred a new coopetition research stream (e.g. Fernandez et al., 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Cooperation is illustrated as taking place far away from the customer, while companies compete in activities closer to the customer. In this manner, cooperation and competition become separated, in other words, organizations are assumed to cooperate to create value, whereas competition takes place in the later stages of coopetition when sharing the co-created value (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Dowling, Roering, Carlin & Wisnieski, 1996).

Coopetition research has hence evolved from considering cooperation and competition as separated between actors (actor school), and the strengths of cooperation and competition as interdependent, towards treating cooperation and competition as two independent flows (activity school) (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016; Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Park et al., 2014). The optimal balance, while hard to obtain and sustain over time, has been argued to constitute moderate levels of cooperation and competition, in order not to let the strengths overtake each other (Bengtsson et al., 2010a): cooperation domination could constitute a source of knowledge leakage where the possible risk of appropriation by the partner exists (cf. Gnyawali & Park, 2011), as well as an increased risk of overembeddedness and stagnation, influencing the possible benefits of the dynamics, such as innovation. On the other hand, overly strong competition might hamper the development of trust and reciprocity and, as a result, stagnation in the mutual exchange of knowledge might occur.

In recent years, the coopetition definition has been extended to include simultaneous cooperative and competitive interactions between actors at any level of analysis that produce a paradoxical relationship (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). The core of this coopetition definition is thus the paradox dimension, also previously recognized by other scholars (e.g. Chen, 2008; Dowling et al., 1996). Generally, the most agreed upon assumption concerning coopetition is its paradoxical nature, and that tensions are assumed to occur at multiple levels, stemming from the contradictory interaction logics of cooperation and competition in the same relationship (Chen, 2008; Dowling et al.,
The coopetition tension and paradox discussions are the streams increasing the most in the coopetition research field, hence, the duality between cooperation and competition is no longer solely addressed at network and relationship levels, but also at the individual level (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

2.1 Dominant discussions in the coopetition research field

If early coopetition research can be called descriptive and fall under strategy context research (cf. Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016) – in terms of who an organization cooperates and competes with, the present dominant discussions have centered around describing and explaining strategy content and process, i.e. describing and explaining in terms of what, how, and why organizations coopete. Drawing on Gast, Filser, Gundolf and Kraus (2015) and Bouncken, Gast, Kraus and Bogers (2015), three dominant and ongoing, but also interrelated discussions in the coopetition research field can be distinguished.

First, coopetition scholars have generally been interested in the strategic outcomes of coopetition, particularly regarding the relationship between coopetition and innovation (e.g. Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Park et al., 2014; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009, 2013; Strese, Meuer, Flatten & Brettel, 2016a, 2016b). Previous research has proven this relationship to be positive (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Morris, Koçak & Özer, 2007), or less beneficial (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013). Accessing resources, both tangible and intangible, through cooperation, and the later internal leveraging of these resources in an optimal manner, has been argued to lie behind coopetition as a successful innovation strategy for organizations (Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Ritala, 2012; Ritala et al., 2009).

The simultaneity of cooperation and competition imply support for and conflict over knowledge sharing and knowledge protection (e.g. Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013). In terms of outcomes, studies have also confirmed that coopetition might prove beneficial as a strategy in terms of ameliorating an organization’s position in a network or market (Ritala, 2012; Sanou, Le Roy & Gnyawali, 2015), or establishing and maintaining a resource flow through relationships (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). Recently, another stream focusing on the actual motives and outcomes of coopetition from a social perspective, rather than from a pure economic oriented incentive, has started to gain ground. The field is hence moving towards acknowledging other values and incentives as well as actors that prove decisive for coopetition strategy engagement (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a; Volschenk et al., 2016).

Second, the innovation stream converges with another stream in coopetition research. As the interests of coopeting organizations have been argued not to fully converge, coopetition implies the existence of both value creation and value appropriation (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Luo, Slotegraaf & Pan, 2006; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009, 2013; Ritala & Tidström, 2014). Firms come together to create mutual value, but competition arises when it is time to share the value. Regarding an organization’s ability to manage mutual value creation and individual value appropriation in order to profit from coopetition, a coopetition capability is necessary (e.g. Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013). If the innovation stream discussed above is argued to address strategy content and why firms choose to engage in coopetition, studies addressing coopetition capabilities could be depicted as addressing strategy process. In this stream, studies that address the balancing between, and shifts in, cooperation and competition, i.e. coopetition dynamics,
are also included (Dahl, 2014; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). Rather than addressing an optimal balance between cooperation and competition (Bengtsson et al., 2010a), these studies have adopted a change perspective on coopetition, explaining how and why change in the dynamics occurs over time.

The coopetition capability discussion has mainly followed the same evolution as the capability discussion in strategic management (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015), which previously had a strongly focus on the organizational level of analysis. From an individual point of view, coopetition capability has mainly been addressed in terms of top managers, including the support of both value creation and appropriation activities in a manner that allows the organization to benefit the most from coopetition, possessing the ability to spot opportunities for coopetition in the environment (Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011), and communicating the strategy across the organization (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Tidström, 2009). The latter activity also includes creating a particular organizational culture that nurtures this type of strategy (Luo, 2007) while also engaging in sensemaking in order to foster the emergence of the strategy (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a, 2016b).

The coopetition capability discussion addressed above has recently started to merge into the paradox discussion. To deal with the coopetition paradox, Gnyawali et al. (2016) distinguish between managerial analytical capability and managerial executional capability. An analytical capability corresponds to the ability to understand the paradox and accept the coopetition situation in an accurate manner, whereas executional capability embraces developing and utilizing coopetition routines, as well as the leverage gained from these, both at the inter- and intra-organizational levels. The authors posit that the latter capability also influences the former because the analyzing and executing of coopetition strategies occurs simultaneously. However, top managers are acknowledged, as reasoned here, to have the ability to create a shared mindset that covers actor levels across an organization when coping with the coopetition paradox.

Last, the coopetition tension stream embraces the actual management of coopetition. In this manner, it could be illustrated to address how coopetition actually takes place in practice, and hence also comes under the heading of strategy process research. Previous research has addressed the origin, management, and outcomes, of coopetition tensions (Tidström, 2009, 2014), focusing on how they are managed. This research stream in particular suggests that the origin of tensions should be sought in the minds of individuals (Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Dealing with tensions becomes important given the proposed relationship with coopetition performance: a high degree of tension produces only routine behavior in individuals and not innovative behavior and also results in stress – factors that do not favor the leveraging of benefits from coopetition (Gnyawali et al., 2016), thus hampering the development of the coopetition dynamics (Bengtsson et al., 2010a).

The management of coopetition tensions has been studied from the two approaches that have dominated this stream: the separation and integration principles. The separation principle embraces the assumption that individuals deal only with one interaction logic at a time, arguing that cooperation and competition become separated into different activities and time periods (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). For example, cooperation between organizations could take place in joint production, whereas competition begins with the sales and marketing functions. Recent research, however, shows that individuals are able to internalize the coopetition paradox by being innovative in their daily work (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). The integration principle hence builds on the fact that individuals cognitively internalize coopetition tensions (Chen, 2008; Fernandez et al., 2014). In
particular, managers and employees at lower hierarchical levels, who have to deal with the duality of cooperation and competition in their daily activities (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Luo, 2005), are assumed to be subject to this principle (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). Consequently, a combination of both the separation and integration principles has been argued to be the most beneficial for managing tensions (Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015).

2.1.1 Multiple theoretical perspectives on coopetition

Drawing on several reviews in the coopetition research field, a number of theoretical roots can be distinguished (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Bouncken et al., 2015; Czakon et al., 2014; Gast et al., 2015). Generally, the competitive paradigm is said to stem from the resource-based view, transaction cost economics, game theory, strategic alliances and competitive advantage, whereas the cooperative paradigm has its origin in network theories, such as the IMP approach. The coopetition paradigm therefore combines both economic oriented and social theories (Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Walley, 2007) and has been described as a new (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010b; Padula & Dagnino, 2007) and a hybrid (Chen & Miller, 2015) paradigm.

In terms of the competitive origin of coopetition, it has traditionally been assumed to capture the strategic dimension of coopetition (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). The influence from the resource-based view, competitive dynamics, and strategic alliance stream forms the general assumption of why organizations engage in interaction with competitors in terms of gaining otherwise inaccessible knowledge while their own interests are guarded and preserved (e.g. Das & Teng, 2000; Hamel, 1991; Khanna et al., 1998; Lado, Boyd & Hanlon, 1997). The resource-based view assumes that competitive advantage is generated by organizations themselves, based on their abilities to leverage benefits from their resources (Barney, 1991). The strategic alliance stream recognizes both cooperation and competition – although not necessarily occurring simultaneously (e.g. Das & Teng, 2000; Doz, 1996; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Hamel, Doz & Prahalad, 1986) and to a large extent treating cooperation as resource extraction. Inter-organizational cooperation is therefore pursued solely to increase performance and generate competitive advantage (e.g. Ahuja, 2000; Doz, 1996; Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Economic-oriented theories that have contributed to the emergence of the coopetition concept include transaction-cost economics as well as game theory. Scholars have often chosen game theory, commonly in combination with the resource-based view, as a lens because this perspective explains why firms choose cooperation between competitors in the first place and does so by addressing both the individual and collective levels (Ritala, 2012; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkonen, 2009). That perspective consequently forms the base for the conceptualization of collective value creation and individual value appropriation and posits that creating value together renders all participants better off since there is accordingly more value on the market to be captured individually by participants (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). Cooperating with competitors to create value is hence justified by the potential to later capture a part of this value through individual competition (Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkonen, 2009).

The transaction cost economic perspective brings an element of uncertainty and high risk into the coopetition picture. Due to the prevalence of individual incentives for all the engaged parties, the possibility for opportunistic behavior arises and therefore the possibility of valuable knowledge leaking to competitors also increases (Khanna et al., 1998; Lado et al., 1997). This dimension of potential misfit between individual incentives
and choices and the collective agreement between the coopeting firms also explains why many coopetition endeavors fail (Park & Russo, 1996).

When considered as originating in these streams, the competitive aspect of coopetition includes the existence of risks, such as opportunism and win-lose situations, including the change of the game as well as its rules (Afua, 2000; Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1995; Dussauge, Garrette & Mitchell, 2006; Park & Russo, 1996). The dynamics of cooperation and competition between organizations are primarily assumed to be driven by organizational level factors and short-term goals (Khanna, Gulati & Nohria, 1998). A long-term perspective on inter-organizational relationships is hence disregarded because the competitive dynamics perspective builds on the view that competitive advantage is gained by continuously predicting and responding to changing market competition (e.g. Chen, 1996; Chen & Miller, 2015).

Business network theories complement the calculative and economic side of coopetition described above and present its softer side, illustrating the relational and social dimension. This perspective recognizes that organizations do not exist in isolation in the environment, that they are interwoven due to a multitude of direct and indirect social relationships through which resources flow in networks, encompassing trust and social exchange between individuals (e.g. Håkansson & Ford, 2002; Håkansson & Snehota, 2006). The cooperative part of coopetition can also be illustrated as being built on inter-organizational research, where relationships unfold and change over time based on the development of trust and social relations between individuals (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Early studies in the coopetition research field could be argued to set the scene for present coopetition research in terms of providing scopes, definitions, and descriptions of the inherent nature of coopetition. These studies could be illustrated to mainly stem from a cooperative origin (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999, 2000; Dowling et al., 1996). Bengtsson and Kock (1999, 2000), for example, underline the existence and importance of the social nature of exchange and relationships with competitors in an organization’s network. On the other hand, the innovation stream in coopetition research mainly draws on the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities, allowing studies to address, for example, the relationship between external resources and organizational performance (Choi, Garcia & Friedrich, 2010; Morris et al., 2007; Gnyawali & Park, 2009); and what governing mechanisms are used in organizations in order to share knowledge at the same time as knowledge is protected (Dussauge et al., 2006), as well as how an organization’s absorptive capacity becomes decisive in gaining knowledge from competitors (Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013).

Likewise, the expanding discussion on tension departs from the resource-based view, yet combines with other theoretical streams, such as socio-psychological oriented theories as well as behavioral strategy. This becomes visible, for example, in the discussion on paradox theory (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). These studies show that the field is starting to more closely analyze coopetition behavior across multiple actor levels and its links with coopetition performance. According to Schad, Lewis, Raisch, and Smith (2016), paradox research has become extant in management research and has been studied in multiple ways, ranging from the nature of paradoxes to their manifestation at multiple levels of analysis and different outcomes. Paradoxes form due to the existence of and interrelatedness between different opposing forces or elements, such as exploration and exploitation (e.g. Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005), stability and change (Huy, 2002; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), or cooperation and competition (Das & Teng, 2000; Lado et al., 1997).
Due to simultaneous cooperation and competition, coopetition research has focused on the tension between cooperation and competition elements forming a paradox and the interrelatedness between these elements. Drawing on Smith and Lewis (2011), Raza-Ullah et al. (2014) were amongst the first to explicitly deploy a paradox lens to coopetition, arguing that it is suitable due to the fact that coopetition entails, in terms of cooperation and competition, both ‘either/or’ thinking (separation) at the same time as ‘both/and’ exists (unification). Coopetition scholars drawing on paradox theory could hence be argued to adopt the definition of paradox as “contradictory yet interrelated elements that exists simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2011: 382; see also Schad et al., 2016: 6). Thus, it is particularly important to consider how individuals cope with the coopetition paradox, since the contradicting logics of interaction inherent in coopetition have the potential to generate synergies – if coped with and managed properly (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016).

### 2.1.2 Multiple levels of analysis in coopetition research

Coopetition has often been depicted as a multilevel phenomenon (Bengtsson et al., 2010b; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). If the different levels addressed in coopetition research are considered, the network and relationship levels of analysis have clearly dominated the field (Bengtsson, Johansson, Näsholm & Raza-Ullah, 2013; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Tidström, 2008). Below, the different levels are described, ultimately showing how previous coopetition research has presented and addressed the individual level. It should be noted that even if they are assigned to a particular level of analysis, studies often address multiple levels while not explicitly stating a multilevel approach (Bengtsson et al., 2013).

Studies under the actor school of thought have frequently adopted a network level of analysis, in order to address interdependences between actors and how these are likely to change (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). The innovation stream could broadly be applied to the network level. The network level has been addressed in terms of an organization’s position in a network, and how this affects their competitive advantage and coopetition behavior (Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001; Gnyawali et al., 2006). Organizations tend to engage in coopetition within their networks because it increases their chances of attaining a competitive advantage by accessing resources, and thus improving their market position (Ritala, 2012; Sanou et al., 2015). It has also been proven that the inclusion of coopetitors in an organization’s alliance portfolio is utilized during periods of uncertainty in an industry (Chiambaretto & Fernandez, 2016).

However, the inter-organizational level has dominated coopetition research both in terms of the strategic as well as relational dimension. Many studies have investigated in-depth dyadic coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999, 2000) and changes over time in the relationship (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Ritala & Tidström, 2014). Gnyawali and Park (2011) even show how dyadic coopetition between two giant firms can affect the industry as a whole in terms of technological development. In addressing dyadic coopetition, these studies fall within the activity school of thought (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016).

The innovation, capability, and tension streams have addressed multiple levels and the inter- and intra-organizational levels and their dependence have been the most frequently addressed. The tension stream has probably been the most active in integrating the levels, mainly addressing the inter-, intra- as well as the individual levels, especially in terms of the origins, manifestations (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2009), management, and outcomes of tensions (Fernandez et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014).
Recently, the tension stream has started to focus on the intra-organizational level of analysis (Seran et al., 2016), as well as specific actor levels, such as middle managers (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b) and project managers (Fernandez & Chiambaretto, 2016; Fernandez & Le Roy, 2015; Seran et al., 2016). These advances show that management in terms of both formal and informal coordination mechanisms, and managers that champion coopetition, could be viewed as the most optimal management forms for dealing with tensions arising from coopetition. Studies focusing solely on the \textit{intra-organizational level} have commonly addressed coopetition between departments (Luo, 2005; Luo et al., 2006; Tsai, 2002) and, recently, organizational culture in terms of fostering and facilitating coopetition at relational levels (Klimas, 2016).

Dyadic coopetition has also been approached in terms of how coopetition relationships develop based on addressing both the \textit{organizational and individual levels} of analysis (Bengtsson et al., 2010b; Dahl, 2014; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). These studies have particularly improved the understanding of coopetition relationships as dynamic (Yami, Castaldo, Dagnino, Le Roy & Czakon, 2010), and the development of coopetition interactions as contingent upon processes at both inter- as well as intra-organizational levels (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010b; Dahl, 2014).

\subsection{The individual in coopetition research}

Few coopetition studies have addressed empirically and in depth the individual level (see Table 2), particularly in terms of managerial perceptions and experiences (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Walley, 2007; Yami et al., 2010). Generally, the individual level has been approached in relation to often negative behavioral implications stemming from coopetition (e.g. Castaldo & Dagnino, 2009; Czakon, 2010; Khanna et al., 1998; Lado et al., 1997) and their effects on coopetition development (cf. Ingram & Yue, 2008; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014). Naturally, the discussion about tension is most evident in relation to the individual level as individuals engaged in both cooperative and competitive interaction have been assumed to experience role and goal ambiguity (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Dowling et al., 1996), as well as multiple identifications (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014).

Some studies have addressed the \textit{origin and nature of cooperative and competitive behavior}; however, many have been of a conceptual nature (Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Loch et al., 2006; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014). Cooperation between individuals is assumed to be driven by the need for social belonging (Loch et al., 2006) and a sense of social and/or professional identity, as well as personal ties (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Choi et al., 2010; Oliver, 2004; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014). Cooperative behavior also includes elements such as trust, commitment and complementarity (Bengtsson et al., 2010a), whereas competitive behavior, is among other factors, driven by pride, prestige and the preservation of organizational identity (Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Loch et al., 2006). Individuals might be involved in either cooperative inter-organizational interactions or competition, or they might be involved in both intra- and inter-organizational interactions (see e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Dahl et al., 2016; Herzog, 2010). It is this latter type of action pattern that is assumed to produce tension for the individuals involved, since it explicitly brings the duality of both cooperative and competitive behavior into action (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Fernandez et al., 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

Previous coopetition studies have furthermore touched upon \textit{individual perceptions of, and experiences resulting from, coopetition}, including the role of cognition in the
development of coopetition. Different interpretations and views on coopetition have been argued to exist (Dahl, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a, 2016b), depending on an individual’s position in an organization and the different degrees of engagement in coopetition activities (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), as well as previous experience of coopetition (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Tidström, 2009). Baldwin and Bengtsson (2004) investigated how changing conditions in competition and the unpredictability of roles in the market triggered emotions and sensemaking processes, affecting how competitors interpreted the resulting change and consequently interacted. Sensemaking processes have been more explicitly addressed by Lundgren-Henriksson and Kock (2016a, 2016b), and to some extent, by Enberg (2012).

With regard to the individual level and change in coopetition dynamics, Dahl (2014) conceptually addresses individual level experience and the accumulation of intra-organizational learning as underlying change in inter-organizational interactions. Tidström and Hagberg-Andersson (2012) empirically show that managers’ experiences influence their present perceptions of coopetition and, in this manner; the retrospective evaluation of key events might eventually constitute sources of shifts in the dynamics of relationships. Similarly, Ingram and Yue (2008), as well as Näsholm and Bengtsson (2014), posit that managerial perceptions and identity underlie shifts in cooperation and competition. The contradiction between introduced cooperation in the present and enacted competition throughout the past might even constitute a source of negative views and dissatisfaction for individuals. Tidström (2009) argues that it might be hard for individuals to forget a competitive history, eventually culminating in the fostering of conflicts and dissatisfaction due to incompatible goals and processes of the coopeting organizations. Another source of dissatisfaction and confusion has been illustrated to stem from change in organizational practices and the introduction of new practitioners, which particularly has consequences for lower level organizational members (Bonel & Rocco, 2007, 2008).

These studies all point to the fact that past experiences play a crucial role in forming perceptions and attitudes towards coopetition – up to the same extent as actual engagement, commitment, and personal contact (Lindström & Polsa, 2016; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). This becomes, for example, evident in the assumption that managers directly influence the direction of the coopetition interactions based on their cognitive models, which are derived from past experience (e.g. Herzog, 2010; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Tidström, 2009). Regarding the concept of cognition, strategic cognition is defined as the relationship between managerial beliefs about the business environment, their own organization and its position within that environment, and the decisions made in the strategy formulation and implementation stages (Porac & Thomas, 2002).

Top managers have traditionally been treated as the prime actor group influencing the formation and development of coopetition strategies through these cognitive models (Lado et al., 1997), and their commitment and personal relationships that have proved beneficial for coopetition outcomes (Lindström & Polsa, 2016). Likewise, coopetition leadership and management have often been addressed in terms of top managers holding their coopetition capability in the form of a mindset (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Luo, 2007; Peng & Bourne, 2009). For these managers, the need for new mental models and their enactment – based on the new reality of coopetition – has been argued to be decisive for initiating coopetition and development (e.g. Mariani, 2007; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Ritala et al., 2009).
Coopetition also requires interaction between organizational members at the intra-organizational level supporting the internal leveraging of resources extracted from inter-organizational cooperation (Dahl, 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011). Recent research points to the fact that coopetition tensions are experienced irrespective of the actor level, and that managerial capability involves not only communicating the paradoxical mindset (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Luo, 2007), but also actively creating a shared understanding of coopetition in their organization (Bengtsson et al., 2016b). Dissatisfaction at lower levels has even been argued to stem from the inability of managers to communicate the benefits and potential of a coopetition strategy across an organization (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Tidström, 2009).

As tensions are assumed to aggregate from the individual level across an organization (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), a coopetition organizational capability not only helps in creating shared understanding, it also upholds moderate degrees of tension (Bengtsson et al., 2016b), which are said to produce positive coopetition performance (Gnyawali et al., 2016) and facilitate decision-making (Seran et al., 2016). Even though the simultaneity of cooperation and competition is the main source for leveraging and producing benefits (Bengtsson et al., 2010a), degrees of tension that rise above moderate might produce negative outcomes (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; see also Gnyawali et al., 2016). Thus, for top managers, the capability also includes the elimination of felt frustration at lower organizational levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016).

However, top managers should also be treated as imposing the same coopetition tensions on lower organizational levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014), in this sense creating an overspill of tensions from the external inter-organizational realm to the internal context, contributing to the degree to which tensions are felt by lower level employees (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Fernandez et al., 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Bengtsson et al. (2016b) make a distinction between paradox as existing due to simultaneous cooperation and competition between organizations, and tensions as the felt difficulties of managing opposing interaction logics. As such, tensions become the actual manifestation of the coopetition paradox (Bengtsson et al., 2016b), which individuals are assumed to cope with to a greater or lesser extent (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2105; Seran et al., 2016).

In particular, tensions are assumed to stem from individuals evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of coopeting, and in this manner, can be seen to hold both positive and negative emotions related thereto (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Depending on their degree of participation in coopetition, the intensity of the felt emotions varies: positive emotions are connected to cooperation and the development of trust and mutual goals, but negative emotions connected to competition relate to the fear of the negative implications that could arise from coopeting for the individual or the organization (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Addressing the group level, Loch et al. (2006) conceptualize emotions that are connected to cooperation as maximizing benefits for in-group members and a sense of belonging, and emotions connected to competition as striving for benefits for the self in terms of status and resources. These emotions are derived from human evolution, and the authors argue that they are present when individuals try to find a balance between the implications and tradeoffs for ‘me’ and ‘we’ when managing simultaneous cooperation and competition.

Due to the strategic significance of knowledge flows between competitors, previous studies have devoted some attention to individuals at lower organizational levels (e.g. Solitander & Tidström, 2010). Employees have frequently been assigned the task of managing the crucial balance between the sharing and protecting of knowledge
(Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013). It might, however, be hard for employees to balance loyalty to the organization while simultaneously working on a coopetition agreement (Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014) because the enacted view of each other often stems from a previous history of competition (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Tidström, 2009). There is also the inherent risk of knowledge leakage based on informal relationships and shared social identities (e.g. Oliver, 2004). From a cognitive and individual point of view, a coopetition capability should therefore be approached as an individual’s ability to think paradoxically (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016). For lower level employees that, to a great extent, deals with coopetition in practice (e.g. Hamel et al., 1989; Hamel, 1991; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015), the ability encompasses the development of paradoxical frames, indicating an understanding of when to use a cooperative or a competitive frame, or both (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016), and the ability to manage multiple identifications (Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014).
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<tr>
<th>Coopetition content</th>
<th>Coopetition process</th>
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<td><strong>Individual drivers for the formation of the strategy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual implications arising from the strategy and management</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Focus and example studies</strong></td>
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<td>Emotional bonds, trust, and personal connections facilitate coopetition formation (Choi et al., 2010; Czakon &amp; Czernek, 2016; Czernek &amp; Czakon, 2016)</td>
<td>Assessment of participation in simultaneous cooperative and competitive activities/interactions</td>
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<td>Individual preferences to coopete (Chin et al., 2008; Geraudel &amp; Salvetat, 2014)</td>
<td>→ simultaneously holding positive and negative emotions</td>
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<td>Managerial mindset: spotting the opportunity to coopete (Gnyawali &amp; Park, 2009, 2011; Lado et al., 1997; Luo, 2007)</td>
<td>→ experience of coopetition tensions (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), i.e. the manifestation of paradoxes (Gnyawali et al., 2016)</td>
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<td>Prior relationship history and the experience gained from coopetition influence opinions on coopetition (Gnyawali &amp; Park, 2009; Padula &amp; Dagnino, 2007; Tidström &amp; Hagberg-Andersson, 2012)</td>
<td>Holding multiple and conflicting perceptions and identities dictating cooperative or competitive behavior (Ingram &amp; Yue, 2008; Näsholm &amp; Bengtsson, 2014)</td>
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<td>Individual ability to internalize tensions (Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy &amp; Fernandez, 2015)</td>
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<td>→ ability to understand and accept coopetition and to execute it in practice</td>
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<td>Developing the paradoxical frames of employees: Holding cooperative and competitive maps and applying these in accordance with an either/or logic (Stadtler &amp; Van Wassenhove, 2016)</td>
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<td>Managerial mindset: creating a coopetition culture across their organization (Gnyawali &amp; Park, 2011; Luo, 2007)</td>
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<td>→ a shared understanding that mitigates frustration and maintains moderate tension levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016b)</td>
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2.1.4 Multiple approaches to the coopetition strategy process

Looking at coopetition from a strategy process point of view, although often addressing multiple stages, previous research can be categorized into different stages (see Table 3). Starting with antecedents to coopetition, the literature provides several examples of the motives and anticipated outcomes underlying the pursuit of coopetition, covering external, internal, and relationship specific drivers (for a full review see Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). Entering into the strategy could involve economic incentives, including access to tangible and intangible resources and the ability to reduce costs (e.g. Dagnino, 2009; Gnyawali & Park, 2009) in order to strengthen a firm’s competitive advantage. In this sense, the compatibility between organizations’ resource profiles becomes a driver for coopetition formation (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Padula & Dagnino, 2007). Coopetition might also be pursued as a growth strategy for small and medium sized enterprises (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Morris et al., 2007), or be driven by the potential consumer value that can be generated (Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Ritala, 2012).

However, firm level factors are not the exclusive explanation for the likelihood of coopetition, industry characteristics must also be taken into account (e.g. Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Luo, 2007; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Ritala et al., 2009). Luo (2007) argues that firms might join forces against a common competitor on the market, or cooperation might form in order to meet change in consumer demands or rapid change in an industry (Padula & Dagnino, 2007). Various studies have also acknowledged the social and regional influence on coopetition formation, like that based on geographical proximity between companies (Choi et al., 2010; Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Kylänä & Rusko, 2011; Lechner & Dowling, 2003). Engaging in the strategy might also be driven by non-economic incentives, such as cultural (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a) and socio-environmental values (Volschenk et al., 2016). Last, individual level preferences and the personalities of managers have also been noted as important for the initiation of a coopetition strategy and the propensity to coopete (Geraudel & Salvetat, 2014), particularly regarding the recognition of a coopetition opportunity (e.g. Chin, Chan & Lam, 2008; see also Gnyawali & Park 2009, 2011).

Although coopetition research traditionally originates from a planned and deliberate strategy perspective, the coopetition strategy process is now usually approached as including both deliberate and emergent features (e.g. Dahl et al., 2016; Czakon & Rogalski, 2014; Mariani, 2007; Tidström & Rajala, 2016; Volschenk et al., 2016). In particular, the environmental influence on coopetition, such as industry changes (Bonel & Rocco, 2007) or impositions of coopetition on companies by institutional actors (e.g. Kylänä & Rusko, 2011; Mariani 2007), illustrates the stream in the coopetition literature that has recognized emergence in the strategy process. Emergence has also been addressed in terms of the development of the coopetition strategy process. Unintended effects when implementing the strategy (Bonel & Rocco, 2007) as well as unforeseen behavior (Kylänä & Rusko, 2011) could be argued to fall under the emergence label. Emergent coopetition patterns (Czakon & Rogalski, 2014) thus also become visible in the unpredictable evolution of coopetition relationships over time, where cooperation and competition constitute dynamic flows (Bengtsson et al., 2010a, 2010b; Dahl, 2014; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). In this sense, emergent coopetition strategies fit the definition offered by Mintzberg and Waters (1985: 257) as “patterns or consistencies realized despite, or in the absence of, intentions”. However, the authors question the total absence of intentions, hence, the existence of pure forms of emergent strategies. A
description of emergent strategies would thus include consistency in action without (explicit) intentions, i.e. unintended order. In addition to this, emergence in coopetition studies can also be approached as rendering change in its opposing logic, deliberate strategy.

The coopetition process encompasses role conflicts and ambiguity in the actor school, and contradictions and tensions in the activity school of thought, although both schools share views on innovation, knowledge, firm performance, and the relational outcomes of coopetition, the latter encompassing both positive outcomes, such as learning and the development of mutual goals and trust, and relational failure (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). When applied to the streams previously discussed in the chapter, the tension and capability streams address both *strategy process and outcomes* stages. Relational factors, such as trust and commitment when cooperating (Dagnino, 2009; Castaldo & Dagnino, 2009: Lindström & Polsa, 2016; Morris et al., 2007), have been identified as driving forces for coopetition development. Over time, cooperation allows for resource access, whereas competition drives the relationship forward (Bengtsson et al., 2010a). Generated tensions between the opposing forces have, however, been treated as slowing down coopetition interactions as well as cooperative development (Doz, 1996; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Tidström, 2009; de Rond & Bouchikhi, 2004). Studies addressing the actual outcomes of coopetition tensions prove that tensions produce both positive and negative effects (Tidström, 2009, 2014), and constitute a source of stimulation and improvement for organizations. Moreover, they point to the fact that outcomes can vary between the coopeting organizations, proving positive for some and negative for others (Tidström, 2014; see also Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016).
2.1.5 Criticism of coopetition research

In general, the coopetition research field has been characterized as fragmented and not unified when it comes to the adoption of concepts and theories, which has even been argued to constitute a source of stagnation in the field (Bengtsson et al., 2013; Dorn et al., 2016). In particular, one source of criticism concerns the lack of advances regarding the multilevel nature of coopetition (Bouncken et al., 2015), which has recently evolved into calls for a shift in the dominant assumptions held in the research field, where a stronger focus on microfoundations is stressed and called for (Bengtsson et al., 2016a).
This coincides with the criticism that the coopetition research field has recently experienced from competitive dynamics scholars, concerning the previous neglect of social motives and values, as well as of the influence of multiple stakeholders on coopetition (Chen & Miller, 2015).

However, one of the main criticisms of coopetition research concerns the lack of the adoption of a common definition (Gnyawali & Song, 2016), particularly concerning the nature and scope of coopetition (Gast et al., 2015). Over the years, definitions of coopetition have developed, ranging from a dyadic construct (Padula & Dagnino, 2007), to a strategic and dynamic process (Bouncken et al., 2015), as well as a paradoxical relationship (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). The first definitions of coopetition build on the scope of coopetition. Departing from the general definition offered by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1995: 59) as “looking for win-win as well as win-lose opportunities”, Bengtsson and Kock (2000: 414) stated in their first definition that coopetition constitutes simultaneous cooperation and competition between two firms.

Some years later, Padula and Dagnino (2007: 47) defined coopetition as “a dyadic construct that represents the nature of the interdependences between any pair of firms interacting on the basis of partially overlapped private interests”. Moving one step closer to individuals and processes, Bengtsson et al. (2010a: 200) define coopetition as “a process based upon simultaneous and mutual cooperative and competitive interactions between two or more actors at any level of analysis (whether individual, organizational, or other entities)”, whereas Bengtsson and Kock (2014) treat coopetition as simultaneous cooperative and competitive interactions between actors at any level of analysis – horizontal or vertical – that forms a paradoxical relationship. Recently, Bouncken et al. (2015: 591) extended the economic as well as process dimension of coopetition when defining coopetition as a “strategic and dynamic process in which economic actors jointly create value through cooperative interaction, while they simultaneously compete to capture part of that value”.

Even though all the above definitions have substantially contributed to advancing the research field, it becomes evident that the definitions exclude the strategic influence of actors and activities in depth. As a response, following the general evolution in strategic management, a practice definition of coopetition has recently been offered. Dahl et al. (2016) state that coopetition as a strategy should be understood as cooperative and competitive activities of a more or less intended nature, which prove consequential for the development of the relationship and thus for the organization. This definition not only recognizes different types of activities as strategic, but also opens a critical discussion on coopetition strategists.

**2.1.6 Summary**

The overview of the coopetition research field allows for some conclusions to be drawn concerning the main assumptions of the coopetition strategy concept in terms of the issues, strategists, and the sequence of actions in the strategy process (cf. Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst, 2006). First, the review clearly shows that the management of tensions and paradoxes is the main issue with which both managers and employees are faced. Despite this, only a few studies have empirically investigated how the paradox is coped with. The strong interest in managing coopetition has also contributed to the fact that, in terms of strategists, previous coopetition research has favored a top managerial orientation, such as that visible in the coopetition capability discussion. Top managers are accordingly assumed to be the first strategists involved in
managing value creation, which is followed by value appropriation; this also illustrates the strong economic orientation of coopetition research, leaving out other incentives to coopete.

In light of the general trend in strategic management, from strategy context to content and process, the emerging strategy-as-practice approach also becomes a natural development in the coopetition research field. The thesis accordingly picks up this emerging research stream and combines it with the sensemaking approach, providing a socio-cognitive lens for understanding coopetition strategies. Together, these approaches provide a framework for understanding coopetition strategies as a continuous interplay between micro and macro levels, and for understanding processes and practices as the building blocks of coopetition strategies (Figure 2).

Figure 2  Integration of the approaches

### 2.2 The strategy-as-practice approach

The process tradition has contributed to notable advancements in strategic management in terms of humanizing the field and illustrating strategy as an organizational phenomenon, yet it has failed to adequately recognize managerial agency or provide links between processes and strategic outcomes (Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 2007). Against this background, the strategy-as-practice approach has evolved, mostly focusing on people and activity (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2007). Strategy-as-practice is an approach, a sub-field in strategy research and also denoted as a new discipline, where both social, management and organizational theories are used. Rooted in these different theories (Golsorkhi et al., 2015), the strategy-as-practice field defines strategy as an activity performed through social interactions within and outside organizational boundaries (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Regnér, 2008; Whittington, 2006). The focus is largely on the micro level of strategies, in particular the tools and techniques that individuals apply in daily activities (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), and therefore on the skills and performance of individuals in drawing upon them (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). In this manner, the practice approach problematizes strategy performance and shifts the traditional focus from the economic outcomes of strategies to the effects of the strategists' use of practices and the execution of strategy work on strategy emergence and development (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

The strategy-as-practice approach fills an important gap in strategic management, not only bridging micro and macro levels of analysis when approaching strategies (Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Vaara & Whittington, 2012), but also in recognizing the effects of cognitive and social processes on strategy development and outcomes.
The field has hence contributed to a better understanding of micro level agency in maintaining and changing strategic practices, combining the intra-organizational context with an extra organizational field (Whittington, 2006). In recent decades, the practice field has experienced an increase that is visible in the different streams emerging from within it. For example, these range from numerous studies on formal practices, such as meetings and workshops, sensemaking in strategizing, discourse, materiality and tools, to the identity of practitioners (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

2.2.1 A social approach to strategy

Inspired by sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), the practice approach holds a number of assumptions about strategy and strategic work. First, strategies are inherently assumed social and dynamic constructions (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The social underpinning also provides the assumption that strategies emerge and generate legitimacy through interaction between individuals, which is also termed interactive strategizing (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The approach hence starts from a sociological base for understanding strategies rather than drawing on pure economic theories. One central assumption is that in order to understand strategies, research has to start with understanding the individuals in strategy work as “living beings whose emotions, motivations, and actions shape strategy” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 70).

Second, the strategy-as-practice approach also problematizes the role of individuals in strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) by cultivating an interest in strategists’ identities and backgrounds. Strategic performance should therefore be understood as resting in the power of strategists and their ongoing agency, where their backgrounds, history, gender and identity, for instance, all dictate actions and interactions (Denis, Langley & Rouleau, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007), and contribute to shaping the construction of practice (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Set against this background, strategizing thus becomes complex because multiple goals, incentives, and views co-exist (Denis et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006). Given that individuals construct and shape strategies, it is recognized that views and interpretations can also generate multiple and divergent strategizing patterns, like those grounded in different degrees of participation in activities and routines (Regnér, 2003). Moreover, the strategy-as-practice approach deviates from traditional views on who constitutes a strategic actor, by acknowledging the influence of other actor levels on strategy than just those of top managers (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). Following the practice approach’s definition of a practitioner as someone who does “the making, shaping, or executing strategies” (Whittington, 2006: 619), strategists or practitioners become formal and informal actors both internally and external to the organization, who deliberately, or in an unintentional manner, affect the emergence, development, and outcomes of strategies.

The practice approach further assumes that strategies are constructed through practices; the tools, norms, routines that guide day-to-day activities. Practices can broadly be described as mental infrastructures (Jarzabkowski, 2003), and as formal or informal, “invisible” rules, norms and routines for enacting strategy that are accepted and shared, providing legitimacy for actions and interactions (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006), thus helping to create collective activity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 9). Studies addressing formal practices have focused on the role of particular episodes, such as meetings, and how the outcomes of strategy meetings
shape strategy (Hendry & Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008). Given that there seems to exist no general definition of practices within the strategy-as-practice field (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), the definition of practices in this thesis combines those offered by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007: 11) and Whittington (2006: 619) as shared routines and norms for thinking and acting, whether cognitive, behavioral, procedural, discursive, motivational, or physical.

Practices moreover construct, praxis, or practice (Jarzabkowski, 2004), which are the actual formal or informal activities used in formulating and implementing strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The three elements of practitioners, practices, and praxis (Whittington, 2006) form a flow of activity that constitutes strategizing (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Fourth, practices should also be assumed to have both constraining and enabling effects on actors' participation in strategizing (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). For example, Mantere and Vaara (2008), show how the particular use of discourse in communicating strategy can enable or hinder participation in strategic work by including or excluding particular groups of managers, whereas Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015) address how particular strategy tools enable or constrain decision making.

Last, the practice approach not only broadens the idea of who constitutes a strategist, but also what activities should be considered strategic and prove significant for the emergence, development, or outcomes of strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The approach thus acknowledges both deliberate and emergent characteristics of strategy in assuming the simultaneity of deliberate goal-oriented activities that contribute to intended strategic outcomes and the daily streams of activities that have an unintentional strategic influence, but do not initially fit traditional definitions of strategic activities (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

### 2.2.2 Strategy-as-practice from a multilevel approach

The strategy-as-practice approach treats strategies as well as practices as existing at multiple levels (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Even though the approach applies a micro level lens to strategy, it also generates understandings of the recursive links to the macro level. First, the micro-macro relationship can be approached in terms of agency at multiple actor levels and linked with strategy outcomes. The approach recognizes the fact that opinions about strategies do not necessarily converge across an organization (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), thus generating divergent action patterns at lower hierarchical levels, which might produce activities that produce unintended strategic outcomes (Balogun, 2006; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007).

Micro level activity can also be understood by considering the macro/institutional and societal levels (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). One stream in the practice approach deploys social theories (Golsorkhi et al., 2015) and draws on structuration theory and Giddens (1979, 1984) in particular. These studies approach the link between structure and agency by assuming that situated activity is informed by the institutional level, and hence that structure both constrains and enables agency (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008; Whittington, 1992, 2015). Hence, legitimate strategizing behavior becomes guided by sustained practices in the institutional realm (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2015), which continuously re-create and sustain these very institutions (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008). Yet, the continuous re-production of practices in the strategizing flow also provides
actors with the ability to alter recursive practices through agency (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2004).

Accordingly, the structuration theme not only captures the reciprocal link between structure and agency, but also the enabling and hindering effects of practices as structures that are institutionalized through the past, manifest through practices (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Actors should therefore be understood as constrained and enabled by multiple social institutions and identities in their choices when drawing upon particular practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1992). Jarzabkowski (2004) conceptually offers a distinction between recursive and adaptive modes of practices that exist simultaneously. This distinction shows that practices constitute both stability and change, and recursive modes show how practices attain habitual and repetitive characteristics in order to become ‘practised’ over time, that is, used in practice and deployed to changing environments, capturing the adaptive mode. This conceptualization therefore combines the stream of practice studies that approaches strategizing and practices as habitual and unintentional with the view of the deployment of practices and institutions as deliberate and purposive (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Chia & Rasche, 2015). It is the latter view that is most widespread in the strategy-as-practice field (Golsorkhi et al., 2015).

Overall, the practice approach particularly emphasizes the extra-organizational character of practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006), the relationship between agency and structure, as well as the simultaneity of intentionality and unintentionality (or deliberateness and emergence), in terms of strategists, and the deployment of practices, as well as strategic outcomes. To summarize the discussion: from a strategy-as-practice approach, the emergence and development of strategies become inherently social, originating from interconnected actions and interactions between individuals and their contexts (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). Taken together, strategizing is made up of a continuous stream of conscious and unconscious activities in which individual agency is both informed by and informs structure, which dictates organizational members’ realities, as well as providing legitimacy for their strategic engagement.

Despite the increased understanding of agency and strategy making produced by strategy-as-practice scholars, the complexity of agency has not been fully captured (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). In order to understand how structure and agency are linked, the different forms of activities need to be investigated in terms of the enabling and constraining effects of multiple practices (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). In addition, until recently the practice field has favored top managerial levels, leading to the fact that there is still much to be discovered concerning organizational members that do not formally participate in decision making (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Moreover, activities have generally been considered strategic in the practice field if they have been consequential for strategic outcomes, survival, or competitive advantage (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). The general view is that activities are assumed to be of a deliberate and intentional nature and dictated by the backgrounds of the actors, thus excluding emergent activities that have been formed by historical practices rather than human intention (Chia & Rasche, 2015). The discussion now moves from strategizing and examines organizing in more detail.
2.3 The sensemaking approach

This section offers a brief introduction to the sensemaking approach and a review of how sensemaking has been adopted by strategy-as-practice scholars. The sensemaking perspective takes on a socio-psychological approach to understanding organizations, and individuals’ roles in creating them. In its broadest sense, sensemaking is about creating plausible realities, organization and communication (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005), and creativity in terms of discovery and invention (Brown, Colville & Pye, 2015; Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) illustrates sensemaking as taking place through cognitive frames, which are the filters through which the environment is seen. Individuals are, in this way, acting upon an established view of the world, but because sensemaking never reaches an end state, the frames are continuously tested and re-created. As such, organizations are conceptualized as interpretative systems, where environmental cues are continuously interpreted in order to produce and re-produce organizational reality (Daft & Weick, 1984).

The term sensemaking should therefore not be used interchangeably with interpretation; it should be understood as the continuous process of generating interpretation, and as individual and collective activities of sensemaking production (e.g. Brown et al., 2015; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Through ongoing sensemaking, individuals thus engage on their own and collectively in social processes of interpretation, creating and re-creating new understandings and logics of action (e.g. Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). But these sensemaking processes can also accomplish outcomes that ranges from the individual level, such as cognitive frameworks (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Maitlis & Cristianson, 2014), to collective level outcomes, such as the collective outlook shared by an organization (Weick & Roberts, 1993), or a shared understanding of change in an organization (Daft & Weick, 1984; Stensaker, Falkenberg & Gronhaug, 2008).

Based on a number of reviews of the sensemaking field (Brown et al., 2015; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick et al., 2005), some generally shared assumptions concerning sensemaking can be distinguished. The expanding literature on sensemaking is largely guided by the assumptions of sensemaking provided by Weick (1995), who described sensemaking in the light of seven properties; identity construction, retrospective, social, ongoing, driven by cues, plausibility, and enactment. These properties are, in the following, merged to illustrate the dominant assumptions and discussions in the field.

To start with, sensemaking is triggered by ambiguity; this might range from the violation of expectations and new experiences, to uncertain or ambiguous situations and outcomes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). Individuals thus engage in sensemaking in order to proceed, and to create a sense of how to act (Weick, 1995). Moreover, the present is made sense of retrospectively, by analyzing previous actions and comparing the present with experiences and events in the past (Weick, 1995). However, the prospective dimension of sensemaking has also been emphasized, since assessment of what can be accomplished in the future, as well as desires and aspirations, also form the sense made in the present (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2007; Weick et al., 2005).

The sensemaking approach also assumes a reciprocal relationship between cognition and action (Daft & Weick, 1984; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995). Ongoing cognitive assessments are intertwined with actions because sensemaking precedes actions and interactions, from which further cues are extracted.
and cycles of sensemaking generated (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). However, individual interpretation is mostly influenced by how others act and have acted (Weick, 1995), thus sensemaking becomes, in this sense, a process of creating inter-subjective meaning (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). The social property of sensemaking becomes even more evident in studies focusing on how sense is made between individuals in times of change (e.g. Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007) – where communication and discursive use are the central focus (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010).

Last, identity assessments and constructions are also central to the sensemaking process (Brown, Stacey & Nandhakumar, 2008; Brown et al., 2015; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015) since individuals are assumed to experience violations of identity when facing uncertainty and to engage in assessing the consequences of particular events with regard to the present and future maintenance of identity (Weick, 1995). Preserving shared identity is particularly evident in studies addressing sensemaking and change (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010).

### 2.3.1 Sensemaking and change

Many of the sensemaking studies inspired by Weick (1995) are conducted in a change context (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). If Weick (1995) can be said to address ‘ordinary’ sensemaking, change studies address sensemaking in more specific episodes, such as a crisis (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), or major planned or unplanned organizational and strategic changes (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). This approach to change could be argued to stand in contrast to the view of change as continuous in organizations, where ongoing sensemaking processes uphold organizational reality and identity and hence stability (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Change within or outside the organization might constitute triggers for sensemaking processes and hence disrupt stability (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Individually and collectively, managers and employees engage in sensemaking in order to create a plausible understanding of a new reality. For example, industry changes might spur the need for a new understanding of competitors (Bogner & Barr, 2000). Internally, the threat to identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Sonenshein, 2010) and the introduction of new structures, practices, and roles (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) stemming from organizational change have been depicted as triggering sensemaking, particularly at lower organizational levels. Thus, divergent views may appear and responses to change other than those originally intended might occur (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007) due to the fact that what could seem reasonable for one group, e.g. managers, is not necessarily always reasonable for other groups, such as manual workers (Weick et al., 2005: 415). For example, previous studies have shown that collective activities involving employees discussing and actively trying to make sense of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005) substantially contribute to the change outcomes that are generated (Balogun, 2006; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007).

Even though all studies are grounded in Weick’s (1995) conceptualization of sensemaking as creating inter-subjective meaning and revolving around ambiguity and uncertainty, the studies falling under the strategy-as-practice approach (in this section addressing organizational change), go deeper into social activities, talk, and politics when addressing sensemaking. This is particularly visible in the focus on the dynamic interplay between the individual and the collective levels and the effects on the sense made in organizations. Thus, sensemaking studies focusing on change have not only been
concerned with understanding the outcomes of sensemaking processes, i.e. produced actions or non-actions in organizations, but also what particularly influences the process (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), such as discourse, identity, commitment, expectations, and emotions. An emerging stream in sensemaking research focuses explicitly on emotions, for example, Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara (2014) show that expressed emotions become contagious in crisis situations, affecting how sense is made.

To summarize, the process of sensemaking is assumed to never stop as it is inherently social – both retrospective and prospective, occurring at individual, collective, and organizational levels (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). The sensemaking process is triggered by uncertainty and ambiguity, yet most research in the sensemaking tradition has been concerned with change and crisis (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). From a strategic point of view, individual and collective sensemaking is present in both the formulation and implementation of strategy through cognitive frames and sensegiving (Narayan et al., 2011), dictating both individual and collective actions, as well as non-actions (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). The relationship between change and sensemaking is, however, reciprocal because strategic change triggers sensemaking, but is also affected by it (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

The assumptions inherent in the sensemaking research outlined above exclude a number of important dimensions. First, studies have favored the change context when addressing sensemaking, meaning that there is little known about sensemaking occurring as a continuous process outside of such situations (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). However, the most important criticism stems from the field’s fragmentation in terms of defining sensemaking as an individual or collective process (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Even though Weick’s (1995) conceptualization of sensemaking also leans toward the social dimension’s influence on meaning creation, recent streams, such as the strategy-as-practice approach, place more focus on shared meanings and the inter-individual influence in accomplishing this (Schildt & Cornelissen, 2015). Thus, although the early sensemaking research influenced by Weick brings light to cognitive processes by having a focus on framing and creating mental models, it also leaves out the social influence, which this research aims to address by adopting a more social approach to sensemaking centered on talk and discourse.

Second, similar to the tendency in strategy-as-practice studies, sensemaking scholars have overlooked the wider historical context and how it shapes sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). In addition, scholars calling for a stronger integration of the prospective dimension have recently reassessed the time dimension of sensemaking. These studies provide complementary knowledge of sensemaking as incorporating not only retrospective and prospective dimensions, but also the past, present, and future (e.g. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).
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<th>Approach</th>
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<th>Strategy-as-practice</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing individual and collective level interpretations and organizing (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005)</td>
<td>Multilevel nature of practices (Balogun et al., 2014; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Vaara &amp; Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coping with ambiguity and uncertainty (Weick, 1995) and change (Maitlis &amp; Christianson, 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Basic assumption(s)</strong></td>
<td>Reality is a social and discursive construction (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005)</td>
<td>All actors and activities that have an influence on strategy, intended or unintended, are treated as ‘strategic’ (Vaara &amp; Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sensemaking incorporates the past and the future, and is influenced by expectations, identity and power among other factors (Sandberg &amp; Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995)</td>
<td>Strategies are socially constructed as well as constituted (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara &amp; Whittington, 2012)</td>
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<td>Sensemaking should be understood as social, and as an interplay between interpretation and action (Gioia &amp; Chittipeddi, 1991)</td>
<td>Practices constrain and enable activities and hence strategy making (e.g. Vaara &amp; Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2010, 1992)</td>
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<td>Sensemaking and sensegiving constantly fluctuate (Rouleau, 2005; Weick, 1995) → sensemaking contains dimensions of politics (Kaplan, 2008) and emotions (Liu &amp; Maitlis, 2014)</td>
<td>Reciprocal link between structure and agency (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2008; Whittington, 1992, 2015)</td>
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<td><strong>Implications for a coopetition strategy</strong></td>
<td>Coopetition implies new frame creation</td>
<td>Actors at all organizational levels contribute to realizing and developing coopetition, both intentionally and unintentionally</td>
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<td>Coopetition as a strategic change requires and is shaped by individual and collective sensemaking processes, taking on both retrospective and prospective dimensions</td>
<td>The practices that actors use in realizing coopetition strategies might be a constraint or resource, enabling or hindering coopetition participation</td>
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<td>Coopetition as a strategic change implies new practices and requires modifications in established strategizing and institutionalized structures</td>
<td>Coopetition strategizing patterns are shaped by individuals and who they are, their backgrounds, histories, and identities</td>
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<td>Sensemaking in a coopetition context should also be understood as containing a dimension of politics, and sense as stemming from individual level factors</td>
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<td>Intentional and unintentional ‘talk’ of coopetition in various forms influences how sense is made</td>
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2.4 Integration of the theoretical approaches

In this section, the strategy-as-practice and sensemaking approaches are integrated in order to address the processes and practices of coopetition from a multilevel approach. Table 4 offers a summary. The main argument is that in order to understand individual level participation in realizing coopetition strategies and the subsequent effects on strategy outcomes, the research focus should be placed on coopetition agency, understood as incorporating continuous assessments of the past, present, and the future (time dimension), as well as reciprocal influences from the institutional, inter-organizational, and intra-organizational levels (space dimension).

2.4.1 Sensemaking in strategy research

Even though a cognitive perspective on strategy has not been widely applied in strategy research, it is argued to be decisive in understanding strategic outcomes (Kaplan, 2011; Narayanan et al., 2011). Regarding sensemaking in the strategy formulation phase, cognitive frames, or mental frameworks, are of particular interest. The mental frames serve as filters through which managers interpret their environment (Fiol & Huff, 1992; Kaplan, 2011; Porac & Thomas, 1990) at the industry, group, and individual levels (Narayanan et al., 2011). Frames are also subject to reformulations, for example, following changes in the business environment (Bogner & Barr, 2000; Reger & Palmer, 1996), hence sensemaking plays a decisive role in developing new mental frameworks (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Sensemaking also becomes influential throughout the strategy process, if strategy-making is approached as the continuous interpretation of the past, present, and future that serves as the foundation for shared views on strategies (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

As previously noted, leaning towards individual frame creation leaves out social dynamics in sensemaking and what constrain and enable shared actions, which strategy-as-practice studies pick up. Drawing on management and organizational theories (Golsorkhi et al., 2015), the sensemaking stream in strategy-as-practice research has mostly been interested in strategic change, particularly in how individuals make sense of the uncertainty and organizational changes that follow change, as well as how sensemaking influences organizational and strategic outcomes (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). Strategic change is understood as a fundamental reformulation of routines and practices stemming from changes in an organization’s structures and processes in order to meet new business environment demands and threats, or to take advantage of opportunities (Gioia et al., 1994; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Most importantly, it involves a cognitive re-orientation of existing interpretative schemes (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 444). From a strategy-as-practice approach, activities encompassing the creation and influence of meaning are defined as interpretative practices that are used to construct shared meaning and action in times of strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Christanson, 2014; Rouleau, 2005).

When it comes to strategic change, particularly the social dimension of sensemaking and other interrelated and influential factors, such as, discourse, identity, and the affective aspect, becomes of particular importance for the thesis’ framework. Numerous practice studies have taken a discursive approach to strategy (e.g. Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere & Vaara, 2014; Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Mantere, 2013; Vaara, 2010; Vaara, Klemmén & Seriöstö, 2004). These studies share the assumption that strategies materialize through social interaction and communication, in other words,
strategies are talked into existence (Weick et al., 2005). This incorporates both intentional discursive activities such as press releases, as well as informal rumorizing and gossiping, all “consequential for constructing, making sense of and communicating strategy” (Balogun et al., 2014: 175). It is also important to investigate discourse given the fact that it might either hinder or promote participation in the realization of strategies (Mantere & Vaara, 2008).

Particularly when it comes to realizing strategic change and achieving breaks in institutionalized strategizing, the use of discourse by key change actors could be argued to become crucial (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Werner & Cornelissen, 2014). The failure to legitimize change to organizational members, intentional or unintentional and the use of specific discourses (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Sonenshein, 2010) have even been noted as contributing factors to fostering resistance to change (Ford, Ford & D’Amelio, 2008). Therefore, to address sensemaking in strategic contexts, discourse, power, sociomateriality, and physical elements must be incorporated across an organization’s multiple levels, such as the institutional, organizational, and episodic (Balogun et al., 2014).

Regarding influential actors, top managers receive the role of translating stimuli in the environment through their sensemaking for other organizational members (Daft & Weick, 1984; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In terms of strategic change implementation, change not only initiates sensemaking but also sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), defined as activities related to the process of influencing others’ views of reality in a preferred manner (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). After creating an understanding for themselves, top managers are assumed to engage in sensegiving, which affects sensemaking at other internal or external organizational levels, but also iteratively their own sensemaking where new emerging understandings are continuously challenged and developed (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Thus, when considering strategy making, sensemaking should also be understood to contain a dimension of politics (Kaplan, 2008, 2011; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). Engaging in sensegiving consequently becomes a powerful activity because key actors that use this activity can even influence the general view in an organization in line with their own interests and shape the dominant strategy frame (Kaplan, 2008).

Sensegiving therefore contains the idea that change is portrayed in a particular manner so as to influence how a receiver adopts a particular view (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Sillience & Mueller, 2007). This influence might be exercised in structured forms, such as during formal meetings, but also in more unstructured forms at lower organizational levels, such as through gossiping and rumorizing (Balogun et al., 2014; Maitlis, 2005). Sensemaking at all actor levels therefore becomes important (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). Middle managers have frequently been regarded as prime change agents in studies addressing strategic change (e.g. Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) due to their influential role in creating unintentional and often informal strategic activities for change development and outcomes. For example, middle managers are assumed to create the legitimacy for change throughout an organization by influencing others’ views (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). However, shared understandings of change that develops through informal sensemaking at middle managerial levels (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005) might be inherently different from the intentions of top managers, thus producing consistent or deviating responses to change at the organizational level (e.g. Balogun, 2006; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007).
Practice studies have also addressed change and identity. In times of strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), sensemaking particularly revolves around generating and maintaining identities (Brown et al., 2008) because change poses a threat to organizational identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Sonenshein, 2010). When organizational members come together and collectively make sense of change, change narratives centered on identity construction are created and enacted (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007). The collective construction of change narratives is aided by meetings (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001), as change actors take a break from the ongoing strategizing flow and make room for evaluating change (Hendry & Seidl, 2003). A number of practice studies have therefore demonstrated that the more structured instances of the creation of meaning that occur through, e.g. meetings, might have substantial strategic effects in terms of how change is adopted, or how stability is maintained (Hendry & Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008).

Some strategy-as-practice studies have explored cognition and sensemaking in depth, connecting emotions (Cornelissen et al., 2014; Liu & Maitlis, 2014) and paradoxes (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Van de Ven, 2013; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) with strategizing. In terms of paradoxes, Lüscher and Lewis (2008) demonstrate how different paradoxes of performing, belonging, and organizing – as driven by change in an organization – are dealt with by actors and how this contributes to participation in realizing change, which Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) ultimately connect to strategizing over time. Thus, when faced with change, organizational members are forced to consider who they are and who they will become while assessing how to balance contributing to the realization of change at the same time as maintaining organizational routines and determining how integration will occur in practice and affect daily work (cf. Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

Turning to emotion, Brundin and Liu (2015) note that strategy-as-practice research has focused on emotions in connection with discursive practices, top managers, decision-making, and the strategic change process. Regarding strategic change, emotions are understood as contributing to how the change process develops and what its outcomes are, by constantly mediating between strategy initiatives and implementation (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph & DePalma, 2006). For example, change development has been addressed through how middle managers balance different emotions connected to both stability and change (Huy, 2002). Emotions that are felt and expressed at the individual level might substantially affect sensemaking in every direction (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Liu & Maitlis, 2014). Thus, success or failure in collective decision making and the resulting actions can be linked with expressed positive, negative or mixed emotions (Liu & Matilis, 2014), which reinforce or impede sensemaking (Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, Vogus & Lawrence, 2013). Negative emotions, such as anxiety and fear, become particularly problematic in contrast to positive emotions, such as joy (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010).

In sum, even though this particular stream of practice studies has accomplished a broadened understanding of social meaning making in times of strategic change, it has remained on a somewhat general level in treating sensemaking as ‘thinking and acting’ (Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015), thus neglecting strategic resistance and the influence of emotions on strategy making (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). This neglect also includes a lack of attention been given to lower organizational levels, resulting in the depiction of a rather linear process of sensemaking and sensegiving (Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015).
2.4.2 Coopetition from the strategy-as-practice and sensemaking approaches

The strategic management field has shown an interest in approaching competition and competitive dynamics as cognitive constructions (e.g. Chen & Miller, 2012; Chen, 1996; Kaplan, 2011; Narayanan et al., 2011; Porac et al., 1995). A cognitive perspective on competition suggests that competition is based on individual and collective assessments of being engaged in competition and competitive acts (Chen & Miller, 2012; Narayanan et al., 2011). Porac and Thomas (1990), as well as Porac, Thomas, Wilson, Paton and Kanfer (1995), introduced the notion of strategic groups, meaning that individuals form an understanding of competition based on grouping similar organizations in their surroundings together to form competitive frames.

In coopetition research, managers’ perceptions and experiences (e.g. Herzog, 2010; Tidström, 2009), as well as emotions (e.g. Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Loch et al., 2006), have been illustrated to play an important role in how they interpret and act towards competitors. In particular, some studies of coopetition have approached competition from a cognitive point of view, i.e. as a managerial perceptual issue (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Easton & Araujo, 1992; Tidström, 2009). Taking a perceptual approach to competition regards competitive strategies and strategizing as becoming enacted over time through continuous interaction between actors within the strategic groups (Porac & Thomas, 1990; Porac et al., 1995), rather than as resulting from the structural characteristics of an industry (Chen, 1996; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). A perceptual approach also suggests that the perceived existence of competition might differ from individual to individual, which has become evident in recent coopetition studies where the strengths of the competition are assessed by managers (Lindström & Polsa, 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b).

Even though previous studies have opened a research path that examines the minds of individuals involved in creating and executing coopetition strategies, much remains to be explored. Regarding managerial perceptions, the studies remain at a descriptive level and the link with individual actions and organizational outcomes is hardly mentioned, and coping with the coopetition paradox in terms of developing paradoxical frames is left out, as is the influencing role of emotions on this creation. In addition, top managers are to a great extent assumed in early studies on coopetition and cognition and accordingly other influential actor levels have mostly been disregarded.

The emerging strategy-as-practice approach to coopetition is therefore essential. If early coopetition research, which falls under the actor school of thought, could be argued to take a deliberate perspective on the coopetition process, where the development of tactics and positioning in the network becomes central, then the activity school embraces emergence to a greater extent, such as the interplay between cooperation and competition at multiple levels unfolding over time (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). The emerging practice approach in coopetition research picks up this trend and digs deeper into the dynamics in shedding light on their social and individual level creation over time (Dahl et al., 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b; Tidström & Rajala, 2016).

The coopetition practice stream recognizes that not only do top managers constitute key influential practitioners, but that the activities traditionally considered strategic can also be broadened to involve, for example, informal activities at lower organizational levels (Dahl et al., 2016), such as rumoring (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). In this manner, from a strategy-as-practice approach, coopetition strategies encompass both planning and the execution of intentional activities at inter- and intra-organizational
levels, at the same time as un-intentional influences from all the actors in play at those levels are acknowledged as influential for coopetition formation and development. For example, Tidström and Rajala (2016) empirically show how both deliberate and emergent activities performed by individual practitioners, or collectives of practitioners, across the inter- and intra-organizational levels influence the shaping and development of coopetition over time. Influential activities at these levels prove to be of consequence for relational development and hence fall under the definition of ‘strategic’, which includes communicative practices and meetings. In this manner, these practices, or even their absence, demonstrate the crucial influence of inter-personal social interaction on the practitioners’ attitudes towards coopetition and their subsequent actions, as well as the potential of intra-organizational activities to shape activities at the inter-organizational level (see also Dahl, 2014).

Applying a sensemaking approach to coopetition informs research of the link between cognition and action at both the inter- and intra-organizational levels, as well as the role of experiences and the affective dimension on influencing the sense produced. Coopetition and sensemaking has not been widely or explicitly addressed in the field, except in some recent studies (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a, 2016b; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). Although not explicitly applying the sensemaking lens, Enberg (2012) approaches sensemaking when touching upon individual problem solving and collective decision making regarding knowledge sharing in project teams, whereas Stadtler and Van Wassenhove (2016) in depth address employee sensemaking. They show that employees are able to develop paradoxical frames that enable them to realize coopetition strategies by applying one frame at a time, cooperative or competitive, although the other is not ignored. The authors also argue that this particular holding of paradoxical frames shapes employees’ understanding of what they should do, as well as their assessments of identity. This shows that employees are able to cope with the coopetition paradox, which thus challenges previous assumptions about employees as mere victims and recipients of the strategy.

Similarly, Lundgren-Henriksson and Kock (2016b) show that middle managers become decisive actors for the development of coopetition as a strategic change, by coping with the coopetition paradox, which manifests itself in felt and expressed emotions, to a greater or lesser extent. Drawing on Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010), they connect positive emotions with joy and optimism, whereas negative emotions are linked to fear, skepticism, and anxiety (see also Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). In this manner, they extend understanding of the coopetition paradox as the authors empirically show how middle managers experience contradicting emotions, and therefore, drawing on paradox studies (e.g. Lüscher & Lewis, 2008); organizing, performing, and belonging paradoxes are identified. In the study, coping with the paradoxes is also connected with top managerial sensegiving, depicted and explained as either failed or successful in terms of the subsequent action patterns produced at the lower levels of the organization. However, despite these empirical findings, much of the coopetition strategist as well as what constrain and enable coping remains unknown.

2.4.3 Clarifying the coopetition strategy concept

It is fair to say that research on the individual level has been superficial in the coopetition research field. For example, researchers have stated that there exist multiple interpretations of coopetition in organizations, including negative views, (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000), but how these manifest and what the effects are on coopetition development have not been investigated. Similarly, we know about influential processes
at the intra- and inter-organizational levels (e.g. Dahl, 2014) but in terms of what and how these processes take place remain on the conceptual level. Also, recent research has stated that simultaneous deliberate and emergent activities co-exist at the intra- or inter-organizational levels (Tidström & Rajala, 2016), yet, we do not know why these emerge and how these are interconnected from the perspective of the individuals involved. Thus, bridging sensemaking and strategy-as-practice as two lenses on coopetition can shed light on the complexities inherent in strategizing in a context where different views and motives might exist at both the intra- and inter-organizational levels. In other words, in acknowledging a plurality of views, the coopetition strategist must be problematized based on their background, history and identity (cf. Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007). For example, champion managers prove beneficial in coopetition projects (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015), but we do not know how or why these managers support coopetition. Looking deeper into individuals’ social belonging and how they shape, act and contribute to strategizing (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) therefore presents a new approach to the subject of coopetition.

The bridging of lenses should moreover be connected to responses to paradoxes at individual and collective levels (cf. Schad et al., 2016) in order to understand coopetition strategy development and outcomes. Coopetition researchers have called for new frame development by managers, but how this takes place and the influencing factors remain unknown. In other words, even though there is shared consensus in the coopetition research field that the paradox has to be coped with, we do not know how this occurs in practice and what the links with the organizational and relational levels are. Applying a sensemaking lens to coopetition should therefore be driven by the aim to explore the creation of paradoxical frames by individuals (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016).

Coopetition research has so far addressed the nature of the paradox (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), the management of the paradox at the organization level (Bengtsson et al., 2016; Gnyawali et al., 2016) and the individual management of the paradox (e.g. Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). The latter group of studies correspond to the stream in paradox studies focusing on the acceptance of the paradox (Smith & Lewis, 2011), for example in terms of working out ways to deal with a paradox in practice (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) on both the collective and individual levels. What is of importance to this thesis is largely the individual level in terms of sensemaking regarding a paradox (Smith & Tushman, 2005), including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses (Schad et al., 2016) at both top (e.g. Smith & Tushman, 2005) and middle (e.g. Huy, 2002) managerial levels. Addressing the individual level also calls for sensitivity to the fact that responses to paradoxes can accomplish both desired and unintentional outcomes, and that different social and cultural backgrounds influence the particular responses of individuals (Schad et al., 2016).

The combination of the sensemaking and practice lenses, which manifests in the thesis’ engagement in the strategic change discussion, allows in depth investigation of coopetition frame creation within and across actor levels and coopeting parties, and most importantly, what practices enable and hinder this creation. In this manner, the structure agency relationship can be explored (Golsorkhi et al., 2015) regarding coopetition. Moreover, the definition of a coopetition strategy as consisting of intentional and unintentional activities (Dahl et al., 2016) permits investigation of individuals that do not fall under the traditional view of a coopetition strategist, as well as social interactions that have previously been overlooked as having strategic influence. For example, the combination of the lenses can provide insight into why certain managers favor coopetition and how different identities provide legitimacy for coopetition participation (cf. Loch et al., 2006) across the organization.
Taking a pluralist stance on coopetition also has the potential to unravel the diversity of motives to coopete as well as of frame creation, and the extent to which these become shared within and between organizations. Grounded in this argument, sensemaking – in terms of coopetition – must be acknowledged on both the individual and social dimensions. Coopetition research also needs to consider what affects sensemaking, such as shared expectations, identity and emotions (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) within and across actor levels, as well as what is actually accomplished and hence move beyond the notion of emotions manifesting the paradox (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). Lastly, particularly in terms of treating coopetition as a strategic change, shared meanings are emphasized (e.g. Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), however, with regard to coopetition, this emphasis should be addressed by analyzing across actor levels and across coopeting parties due to the multitude of incentives to be realized and the possible divergence in goals. Only by integrating new theoretical approaches into the field, such as strategy-as-practice, can we really start understanding the black box of coopetition strategies.

To conclude this chapter and set the theoretical framework of the thesis, key concepts need to be clarified and interlinked. The theoretical discussion points to the fact that addressing coopetition in terms of process should not only be made in terms of strategy initiation, realization, and development, but also in terms of the individual and collective production of meaning. The constant flux of cooperative and competitive activities of a more or less intended nature (Dahl et al., 2016), i.e. those through which a coopetition strategy is assumed to exist and develop, should therefore be understood as created and re-created through actors’ continuous sensemaking processes over time (cf. Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl & Vaara, 2010; Tsoukas, 2010).

First, the creation and re-creation of coopetition agency must be clarified. By combining the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice approaches, the influencing role of individual agency throughout a coopetition strategy process is not only defined as a new emerging discussion in the coopetition research field, but can also advance how the field has previously approached the individual level. How actors make sense of their participation in and influence cooperative and/or competitive activities and interactions, at the intra and/or inter-organizational levels (Dahl et al., 2016) should be approached by acknowledging the continuous influence of the past, present, and future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Coopetition agency is therefore argued to incorporate both retrospective and prospective assessments of engaging in simultaneous cooperation and competition; influenced by experiences and events in the past, as well as by imagining and assessing the future, such as, in terms of identity (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995). For example, over time, managers and employees form a shared understanding of their coopetitors (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Porac & Thomas, 1990), as well as the norms for interaction (Dahl, 2014), or experience particular influential events with coopetitors (Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012), which all combine to determine how present and future coopetition participation is legitimized or resisted (cf. Laine & Vaara, 2007).

Approaching coopetition as a strategic change and departing from a competitive background, the introduction of cooperation into established competitive strategies implies new ways of thinking and acting with competitors (cf. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994), as well as the modification of established cognitive frames at industry, relational, and organizational levels (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a; Mariani, 2007; Porac & Thomas, 1990; Reger & Palmer, 1996). The introduction of coopetition as a new strategy therefore requires the modification of institutionalized competitive strategizing, thus past practices need to be modified through bricolage in order to be
applied to changing surroundings (Jarzabkowski, 2004). As such, the coopetition paradox could be assumed to encompass the contradiction between past practices legitimizing competition and future emerging action and interaction patterns encompassing simultaneous cooperation and competition. In the light of this view, coping with the coopetition paradox takes place by modifying past structures and practices through participation in creating and crafting strategizing patterns at organizational and relational levels (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2005).

Drawing on the practice approach, it is further assumed that individuals will have different abilities to break with past legacies and that creating new modified practices through creativity, discovery, and invention (cf. Brown et al., 2015; Regnér, 2008; Weick, 1995; Whittington, 2006) is influenced by actors’ individual motivations and backgrounds (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). It is conceivable that individuals might differently hold on to old ways of thinking of competitors (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) and accordingly to stability (Jarzabkowski, 2003) by differently drawing upon habitual practices (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004). This also suggests that the choice of actors to participate in implementing coopetition strategies, as well as to engage in sensegiving, should be considered in the light of realizing multiple incentives. This reasoning is grounded in the assumption that individuals belong to multiple social identities and institutions (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1992).

Coopetition sensemaking could, moreover, be illustrated to include both individual and collective meaning assessments – at intra and inter-organizational levels (cf. Dahl, 2014) – that are engaged in, in order to create meaning for the new strategy, cope with ongoing ambiguity, and *enact the changes in routines and practices* that coopetition brings (Bonel & Rocco, 2009). Based on studies on strategic change, collective sensemaking would either seem to take place in situations that are more structured, such as meetings, or in a more informal manner, for example, through discussions at lower organizational levels, potentially generating emergence and unintentional strategy outcomes (Balogun, 2006; Balogun et al., 2014; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). Last, realizing *individual and collective activities* connected to coopetition is assumed to be *constrained or enabled* by established or emerging practices (cf. Vaara & Whittington, 2012). For example, how coopetition as a new strategy is spoken of by top managers inside the organization and aligned with established organizational discourse and identity (Sonenshein, 2010) can greatly influence employee sensemaking and hence strategic participation across multiple actor levels (cf. Balogun et al., 2014).
3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND CONTEXT

In order to study individuals and their activities over time, this research adopts a qualitative methodology in which the case study method serves as the primary tool for collecting and analyzing data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). By adopting the aim of describing and explaining an individual case from the perspectives of different individuals, the research falls under the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes social rather than natural science for studying multiple social realities (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather than adopting a multiple case study approach to generate theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), I followed a single case study approach to study strategic change (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This single-site case study takes place in the Finnish media industry, including three organizations that were followed over a period of two years. The creation of the practice of coopetition was studied in-depth, deploying research techniques that allowed understanding to be generated from the perspective of the individuals involved (Bengtsson et al., 2016a).

The choice of following a particular strategic change initiative in depth was grounded in the fact that the opportunity was presented to follow the case from the beginning, but also in the belief that in order to grasp sensemaking processes, it is necessary to be able to follow how individuals think of, discuss, feel and talk about change (cf. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013, Weick et al., 2005), preferably in a longitudinal sense (Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015). Similarly, to understand how coopetition was established in practice, as well as in relation to other practices, a case study became the natural choice (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) as it was necessary to follow individual action and interaction – the raw material that forms practices – over time (Whittington, 2006).

3.1 Methods

Interviews were employed as the primary method for data collection, and were triangulated with observation, documents, and physical artefacts. The chosen method of observation was selected based on the potential to get as close as possible to the ways in which individuals interacted and talked about coopetition. When combined, this triangulated material generated rich empirical data, allowing the investigation of patterns of acting, talking, and discussing, as well as the views and attitudes of multiple actors, over time. Both data collection and analysis focused on describing and explaining processes and practices, and the underlying structures constituting coopetition. Below, the methodological choice of the thesis is discussed and then the methods are described.

3.1.1 Qualitative case study

A qualitative researcher believes that through the generation of rich descriptions of processes in real life settings, the meanings individuals ascribe to actions and contexts can be discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gephart, 2004). Hence, to reveal the meanings assigned to individual participation in coopetition (cf. Laine & Vaara, 2007, 2015), the deployment of qualitative methods became a natural choice based on their potential to allow a researcher to get close to how individuals think and feel, and how those thoughts and feelings manifest in their daily working lives (Patton, 1990). The research became exploratory over the period the data were collected and analyzed, which is often the case with qualitative research intended for theory generation rather than
testing (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As such, within the plethora of definitions and approaches to case study research (Langley & Royer, 2006), an exploratory case study research design was adopted as it aims to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, in this research particularly addressing the relationship between processes and practices, coopetition emergence, development, and outcomes (Yin, 2012), thus closely studying real life interactions and people (Siggelkow, 2007).

Given the fact that data collection and analysis were conducted over two years and in parallel with each other, the research process became highly iterative and hence abductive (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Van Maanen, Sørensen & Mitchell, 2007). This approach allowed for the continuous evolution of the research as it continuously moved between exploring theory and gathering empirical data, as well as modifying the emerging framework, contributing to theory development (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Ultimately, through the abductive approach, more respondents and organizational levels were brought into the research, resulting in the discovery of many more processes and practices and their influence on coopetition than was anticipated at the beginning of the research process.

3.1.2 The case study and its suitability for studying coopetition

The case study follows the evolution of a new strategy over two years, and accordingly involves iterative cycles between emerging interpretation and re-interpretation. The case, i.e. the unit of analysis and hence the bounded entity (Yin, 2012: 6), comprises cooperation between three organizations in the Finnish media industry that provide newspapers in a minority language. Drawing on Yin (2012), even though the holistic case constitutes emerging cooperation between the organizations and the study is a single-case study, the three organizations could also be argued to constitute subcases embedded within the holistic case study as these have been investigated in the same manner. As such, the analysis of the overall case patterns was based on examining patterns across the three organizations involved (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The case study follows a collaboration involving the exchange of materials between the three organizations, all part of a minority media market. It focuses on the respondents’ views and experiences of the collaboration, from its initiation in 2013 and its development in 2014, which was characterized by mental inertia. The collaboration was implemented against a background of radical change in the media industry, which was aggravated during the time the data were collected, encompassing a recession and changes in consumer and advertiser behavior that rapidly shifted media consumption to the web, thus decreasing revenues for printed media and forcing media actors to re-think their established business models. Against this background, the exchange of materials was articulated as a way for the respective organizations to save on resources that could be directly applied to core areas in order to increase chances of their media market surviving in the future. Clearly, the introduction of cooperation between the parties stemmed from the need to join forces to combat shared and changing market competition, rather than the need for the creation of new products (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Luo, 2007).

The exchange of materials between the organizations was implemented with the aim that it should be a continual exchange but one that is voluntary. The exchange happens through a computerized system, where each newspaper individually decides what materials to use and what to share. Lower level managers were designated the role of implementing the exchange in practice at the organizational level – some also took part
in inter-organizational meetings where developments were discussed and evaluated. The exchange initiative originated from top managers, who also frequently attended inter-organizational meetings during the time the data were collected. In these meetings, the future industry situation and the development of cooperation between the parties were discussed. Industry consultants and experts also played a part in shaping these discussions. Cooperation between the organizations developed over the two years it was studied, generating new projects and the realization of collaborative projects previously discussed between the organizations, such as the joint distribution of newspapers in some geographical areas. Although these collaborative projects played a decisive role in how cooperation between the parties was received and interpreted, it should be noted that the development of the exchange of material was followed in particular.

The case is suitable for studying coopetition for several reasons. The simultaneous existence and reciprocal influence of cooperation and competition – causing change in relationships over time – is present in the case (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). In addition, three other criteria make it suitable for addressing coopetition, particularly from a strategic change perspective (see also Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016a, 2016b). First, the organizations have a history of competition, which is currently changing due to the upheaval taking place in the media industry. The strategic group is beginning to dissolve as the organizations are starting to focus on their respective geographical areas, and direct competition in terms of overlapping subscriber areas is accordingly decreasing. Furthermore, the print media organizations – as a group – are facing new competition from other digital media.

The industry upheaval and changing competition is not only forcing the organizations to rethink their established strategies, individuals are having to revise their perceptions of competition. Thus, cooperation is being implemented in a competitive background, requiring individuals to revise their established views of each other and to enact new industry practices providing legitimacy for cooperation. Cooperation between newspapers issued by different organizations, and to some extent also between newspapers of the same organization, has traditionally been viewed with suspicion and reluctance because journalistic practices are built on being unique and preserving newspaper identity through competition, as well as prestige and pride.

It should be noted that in the case study, a perceptual rather than structural perspective on competition is adopted (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Tidström, 2009), even though these are acknowledged as being interrelated. A perceptual perspective implies that competition and competitive behavior are based on perceptions of being in competition by assessing organizations that are similar in an organization’s environment (Porac et al., 1995; Porac & Thomas, 1990). The case clearly indicates that many respondents still perceived some degree of competition between the organizations, alongside the introduction of cooperation. Taken together, from a strategic change perspective, the introduction of imposed cooperation (e.g. Mariani, 2007) stemming from a changing environment resulted in the fact that actors at multiple levels were faced with a new way of thinking and acting (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994).

The history of competition also constitutes the reason why cooperation had been difficult to establish between the organizations prior to the materials exchange. The initiation and implementation of the exchange of material not only constituted a milestone in the emerging contact, interaction, and relationship between the three parties, but also a source of change in established ways of working. Therefore, given that no frequent contact nor direct cooperation had taken place between the organizations prior to 2013, cooperation encompassing inter-organizational contact and the exchange of material
was new to the respondents. From a strategic change perceptive, the introduction of a new inter-organizational strategy presents challenges for individuals, particularly for those implementing it in practice. The ‘newness’ is visible both at the intra- and inter-organizational levels. Individuals had to not only work out a new routine for implementing external material into the daily production of newspapers and share their own material, but also establish and take part in inter-organizational meetings and other contact on a regular basis. Third, the contradictions between the activities related to the exchange and those activities related to business-as-usual becomes evident in different interrelated areas (see Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). Tensions and ambiguity stemming from the simultaneity of cooperation and competition were hence visible in the case and they are the main characteristics of coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014).

The above arguments confirm the existence of coopetition. It should be noted that coopetition becomes a researcher-imposed label in this particular case. Even though some respondents clearly stated that elements of competition still prevailed between the parties, the respondents did not themselves use the word ‘coopeition’ or ‘coopete’ when referring to the materials exchange. This prevalence of the competitive background distinguishes the initiative from pure inter-organizational cooperation, as well as from open strategy. The latter type signifies that actors internal and external to the organization, such as consultants, are included in an organization’s strategy making (Whittington, Cailluet & Yakis-Douglas, 2011). Even though strategy making in the case fits this description, the competitive background and the difficulties derived from this background that were experienced by respondents, bringing a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity into the case, fill the criteria for coopetition. In addition, although coming close to each other, coopetition strategies differ from open strategies in the sense that the external actors specifically cover competitors – and thus simultaneous cooperation and competition – whose interests might not necessarily converge with the organization’s goals.

Some notes on the role of theory in selecting the case need to be made. Given that the case was exploratory in nature when I initiated the data collection, my prior theoretical understanding of the individual level in coopetition research helped in specifying the case (Yin, 2012). However, the research questions were quite broad and developed during the data collection. Embarking on exploring coopetition in an industry setting characterized by a specific culture that is not common in prior coopetition research (which has frequently focused on research intensive or high-tech industries) counterbalanced the tendency to choose a case that will fit assumptions (Silverman, 2013).

After completing the first round of data collection, it became evident that simultaneous cooperation and competition and the interplay between them was present, however the respondents all viewed cooperation and competition differently. In increasing the sample size based on the evolving theoretical understanding, the theoretical sampling became more evident as the research process progressed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Silverman, 2013). In the second stage of data collection, the implementation phase of the strategy was addressed, and consequently emergent empirical findings were placed alongside theoretical understanding, informing the search for deviating interpretations and emergent action patterns at lower organizational levels.
3.1.3 Sources of data

A common characteristic of case study research is that this type of research examines phenomena in their real-life context where the boundaries between a phenomenon and its context are hard to distinguish both in terms of spatial and temporal dimensions, often drawing upon multiple sources of evidence in order to develop a complete description of the subject being studied (Yin, 1994, 2012). Interviews became the number one qualitative method to explore the subjective and inter-subjective processes of co-opetition agency creation over time. In order to be able to investigate how meanings evolved, and accordingly how the respondents' sensemaking developed as the strategic change unfolded, in-depth interviews were conducted in two rounds, the first round occurred when the strategic change had just been initiated, and the second round approximately one year after, when the change had moved into its implementation and development phases.

In this way, the interviews covered both retrospective and real time events, as the change was ongoing during the whole data collection period. By conducting interviews at multiple organizational levels, retrospective biases were mitigated (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Golden, 1992). Conducting interviews in two rounds and addressing real time change also allowed for better understanding of the retrospective accounts (cf. Jarzabkowski, 2008). For example, after the materials exchange had been implemented, the joint production of standard TV and radio pages was realized after having been discussed for decades. This informed the understanding of the previous relational difficulties between the organizations, as well as the major relational symbol the exchange of material in fact constituted.

All three coopeting parties were included in the collection and analysis of the case study data. As such, the perspectives and opinions of all the parties were followed and compared (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016) as the change unfolded. For the interviews, a semi-structured interview approach was adopted (Patton, 1990). This type of interview has a flexible nature as some topics are chosen beforehand – based on the literature – and covered in all interviews, however, not necessarily in an identical order. Also, semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to obtain rich data concerning the views, attitudes, and experiences of individuals, which are all part of making sense of and adhering to co-opetition as a new unfolding reality. Since both top and lower level managers were part of executing the exchange in practice – although in different ways, interviews were conducted at those two actor levels.

The interviews did not include employees at lower organizational levels since it became clear from the interviews that they did not actively participate or contribute to the materials exchange to the same extent as for example middle managers did. Middle managers received the formal role of uploading relevant material produced by the particular newspaper’s journalists to the exchange, as well as extracting material, since they led the daily routines in organizing tomorrow’s newspapers and the specific theme issues that the collaboration also encompassed. Overall, the interviews facilitated the understanding of different activities that could be considered strategic due to their influence on strategic outcomes (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007); including activities not considered strategic in the first place (Golsorkhi et al., 2015).

To triangulate the data, observation and analysis of texts was used, as these data sources could be viewed as naturally occurring data, existing independently of the research (Silverman, 2006). Observation was used to follow an inter-organizational meeting, i.e. an actual event (Yin, 2012), in which representatives from all three organizations
participated, mostly operational managers. The observation was a non-participant unstructured observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As only access to one meeting was received, the choice of this particular type becomes legitimate as it allows a detailed record of the behavior of the participants without an observation schedule, but with the aim of developing a narrative account (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2012). This narrative was based on field notes of what had been seen, heard, and sensed (Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2012).

The data generated from the observation became a source for verifying or falsifying the statements made, in particular by top managers, in the interviews (Angrosino, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During the observation, focus was put on experiencing the meeting from the perspective of the observed individuals (cf. Angrosino, 2008). The observation became a source for grasping collective sensemaking as it took place in real life because the participants were working together to try to resolve coopetition as a new practice. For example, focus was on the activities taking place, how the participants talked and discussed, and what attitudes, thoughts, and feelings seemed to prevail. In addition, focus was put on how the meeting progressed, what decisions were taken, when disagreements seemed to prevail, and around what issues the discussion seemed to intensify. The observation also became a way to grasp social dynamics and sensegiving (Maitlis, 2005) because it was spotted how certain issues were justified or not justified by key individuals to the collective group.

Since only one observation was made, documents became an important complementing source of data. Triangulating documents with interviews at both top and middle managerial levels became the number one source for understanding sensegiving, particularly texts in newspapers and other media (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2012). When the exchange of material had just been initiated, it gave rise to much discussion in the media, which intensified as the data were collected. Documents therefore included all publicly published material concerning the exchange of material in the media, which was saved in a case file during the two-year period. Interviews with top managers and industry experts were published frequently, and discussed the radical change in the industry and its future, including competition in the industry. Such texts can be understood as raw material for the researcher and as representations, the effects of which were interesting to analyze (Silverman, 2006). The media coverage became a way to grasp how the exchange of material and its potential benefits and development was portrayed to the public and external stakeholders, but also how present and future competition between the parties was discussed and framed in different ways by key actors. Based on the interviews, comparison to how the public framing in the media corresponded to respondents’ views and attitudes, and the actual development of the exchange of material, was enabled.

In assessing this material, an awareness existed that there were risks inherent in using these kind of data concerning authenticity and authorship, in that the texts can be biased, based on what actors choose or choose not to report. Media coverage was therefore used primarily to grasp how key actors framed the exchange, as well as how this affected other actors’ sensemaking. For example, it became evident that key actors emphasized changing competition in the industry and between the parties to justify the exchange of material and quell critical voices. Also, in the later stages of analyzing the empirical material, the media coverage became a useful source for both verifying emerging understandings, and for searching for alternative explanations. Hence, the ‘talk’ analyzed based on the interviews, observation, and media coverage, allowed for grasping both the intentional and unintentional use of discourse, as well as the link with making sense of coopetition as a strategic change (cf. Balogun et al., 2014).
Last, physical artefacts were also incorporated into the empirical material, in terms of computer downloads of employees’ work (Yin, 2012). Access was given to the computerized system – a joint article pool – through which the exchange of material took place between the three organizations. This access allowed the longitudinal following of the frequency of the uploaded and downloaded material of each newspaper involved. These computer downloads were saved in the case study archive and used later when analyzing the case.

3.2 Presentation of the data set

The multiple data sources and sites for data collection in 2013 and 2014 can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6. Given the limited time available to complete a doctoral thesis, the data collection was not continued after 2014 and because saturation had been attained (Eisenhardt, 1989), the accounts of the respondents became highly convergent towards the end of the data collection.

Table 5  The data sets of the three articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 1</th>
<th>Article 2</th>
<th>Article 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data source</strong></td>
<td>Published articles in scientific journals</td>
<td>12 interviews: To a great extent top managers, and lower level managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization A: 4 interviews with top managers, 3 interviews with lower level managers</td>
<td>Organization A: 7 interviews with top managers, 8 interviews with lower level managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization B: 2 interviews with top managers</td>
<td>Organization B: 4 interviews with top managers, 2 interviews with lower level managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization C: 2 interviews with top managers, 1 interview with a lower level manager</td>
<td>Organization C: 3 interviews with top managers, 4 interviews with lower level managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site for collection</strong></td>
<td>Electronic resources</td>
<td>Field research in the three organizations (A, B, C) during 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation</strong></td>
<td>Media coverage</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media coverage</strong></td>
<td>Following the exchange of material through the computerized system</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.2.1 Literature review

One of the articles included in the thesis is a conceptual article, whereas the other two articles are empirical. Regarding the choice of significant literature, for all three articles,
the existing literature on coopetition research was first scanned for relevant studies within the particular article’s scope. The first conceptual article (Article 1) could be argued to form the base of the overall theoretical understanding of the field, since a large amount of coopetition articles were read through together with one of the co-authors. The search for suitable literature took place by using search engines such as EBSCO, where peer reviewed articles were found by using ‘coopetition’ or ‘coopetition strategy’ as key words and by going through the bibliographical lists of published articles. In this manner, frequently cited book chapters were also included in the literature.

In particular, for conceptual Article 1 applying a strategy-as-practice-approach to coopetition, the articles that dealt with coopetition were then scanned for evidence about practice, praxis, or practitioners, before being selected and later matched with deliberate or emergent views on strategy formulation and implementation, and ultimately assembled under a multilevel interpretative framework. For the empirical articles, the first literature review was complemented by finding contradictions and identifying theoretical areas for further investigation in the field of coopetition. Even though the coopetition literature has emphasized the decisive role of the individual management of coopetition tensions for coopetition development and outcomes, theories explicitly addressing cognition, emotions, and behavior have not been widely adopted (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). Therefore, sensemaking was adopted as a theoretical lens that inspired the research questions and aims of the two empirical articles. The theoretical section of the two empirical articles hence incorporates studies that had addressed explicitly or implicitly, although often inadequately, the individual in coopetition strategy formulation and/or implementation.

With reference to the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice literatures, after forming an overall understanding of the underlying assumptions of the two fields, the literature was scanned for suitable articles that could aid me in contributing to knowledge on coopetition from a micro level perspective, and particularly in a change context. I soon arrived at the understanding that one cluster of strategy-as-practice studies also drew on sensemaking theory (see e.g. Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015). I therefore focused on selecting core articles conceptualizing and dealing with strategic change (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994), thus considering the topics of instigating, managing, and influencing change (e.g. Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005), and the relationship between sensemaking and strategy outcomes (e.g. Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004 2005). In developing the theoretical framework for Article 3, this cluster of studies was also extended to include strategy-as-practice studies explicitly dealing with the relationship between agency and structure (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008; Whittington, 1992).

### 3.3 The process of collecting data

The process of collecting data started in 2013, when the case was chosen and the first contacts with respondents were initiated. The opportunity to follow coopetition in practice was presented to me in a published article in a newspaper concerning the exchange of material. After the coopeting organizations had been identified, the first contact with the respective key individuals in the organizations followed – via e-mail and phone.
Table 6  Interview dates, time, and venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of interviews and respondent</th>
<th>Duration of the interview</th>
<th>Site for collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>1:39:39</td>
<td>Organization A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.6.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>50:31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.6.2013 Lower level manager</td>
<td>36:20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.6.2013 Lower level manager</td>
<td>38:30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.6.2013 Lower level manager</td>
<td>26:20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>55:03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.8.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>31:42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.6.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>58:40</td>
<td>Organization B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.6.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>43:22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.6.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>43:15</td>
<td>Organization C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.8.2013 Top manager</td>
<td>55:07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.8.2013 Lower level manager</td>
<td>58:56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>1:03:41</td>
<td>Organization A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>28:45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>22:17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>25:56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>20:15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.5.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>46:06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>1:14:20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>51:50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>29:24</td>
<td>Organization B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>1:07:10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>24:05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>56:13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6.2014 Top manager</td>
<td>1:00:59</td>
<td>Organization C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>59:43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>26:18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10.2014 Lower level manager</td>
<td>47:14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.1 The pre data collection phase

Several issues were dealt with before initiating the interviews. First, I decided how to present myself to the respondents (Fontana & Frey, 2008). The overall aim of the data collection in terms of generating data for an article-based thesis concerning inter-organizational relationships and strategies was clearly articulated to all the respondents. I decided not to use the term coopetition or to reference theory in any situation, so as to avoid influencing the answers (Silverman, 2013). I was also open with my background and membership of the same community as the respondents.

As semi-structured interviews were conducted, an interview guide with questions corresponding to theoretical themes was developed before conducting the interviews. The theoretical themes corresponded to the existence of cooperation and competition between the organizations, as well as views, feelings, attitudes, and issues related to the exchange of material. The aim of the first round of interviews was to gain knowledge about how the respondents viewed the background of the collaboration, its present state, and its future developments. In order to explore sensemaking, the themes were formed based on the prior history of the relationships between the organizations, the present context, and views on the future and relational developments (cf. Halinen & Törnroos, 2005).

The first contact and interview can be seen as a pilot interview for testing the interview guide and exploring whether the case criteria accounted for in 3.1.2 were present. A snowball sampling technique was then used to find further suitable respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The respondents were accordingly asked to recommend other respondents for interview, including respondents at different intra-organizational levels and in the other organizations. I also strove to gain a varied overview of the exchange of material. Hence, not only higher level managers but also lower level managers with suitable knowledge also contributed to enlarging the sample, strengthening the representativeness of all levels of management. All the respondents identified through the snowball sampling technique had knowledge and/or experience of the exchange, either taking part in initiating and formulating it, and/or in implementing it.

3.3.2 The data collection phases

The first phase of data collection in 2013 generated 12 recorded interviews with respondents from the three organizations. I explained to all the respondents that I intended to follow the collaboration over time, hence the possibility of continuing the data collection with follow up interviews was discussed with the respondents in the beginning of each interview. Also, the possibility of not gaining access to follow up interviews was taken into account, and therefore the most important topics were covered at the beginning of these elite interviews (Yin, 2012). All interviews were conducted in Swedish. I strove to build the interviews in such a manner that the respondents told a story of their experience, and hence my interference was kept to a minimum during the interviews. Yet, at times, areas with potential for further elaboration were spotted and discussed in more depth. Since semi-structured interviews were used, the same topics were covered in all interviews, however, not necessarily in the same order (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Patton, 1990). In order to extract as much information as possible from the interviews, the interview guide was only used as an assistant tool and the themes became areas of discussion that I knew by heart, which aided in establishing a flow to the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interview questions’ wording and their order in
the interview guide were refined during the process of conducting interviews, but not changed in terms of content or meaning.

At the end of each interview, the respondents were all asked if they had something they wanted to add, or if they had any questions. Generally, the discussion continued for some minutes after the recording had been turned off, and I noticed that many respondents were keen to talk about the collaboration at this specific stage, known as “end-of interview revelations” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015: 40). Therefore, after each interview had been conducted, I immediately recorded or wrote down thoughts that had occurred to me during the interview, as well as after the recording had been switched off. In order to keep track of my own thoughts and the data collection process as a whole, I wrote a research diary on an almost daily basis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In this journal, the exact date, time, and venue of the interviews were noted, as were my thoughts and impressions of the interviews as well as the respondents. Finally, issues, areas of confusion, and questions to be asked in the second round of data collection were included in the journal.

Regarding the observation of the inter-organizational meeting, at the beginning of the meeting I presented myself and the aim of the observation. I clarified to the respondents that I would not intervene in the discussions, that I would take notes throughout the meeting, and that all respondents were anonymous. The duration of the meeting was approximately three hours. My observation technique followed that described in grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I started with general descriptions of the place and participants, then focused on particular events and deviations from the general flow and pace of the meeting, such as up tempo or down shifts in activities. I also paid particular attention to who said what to whom and with whom the participants interacted most and least. The notes from the observation were transcribed into texts a few days after the meeting to capture the impressions of the observation while still fresh in the mind.

Conducting interviews in phase two in 2014 was aided by the fact that I had established a rapport with many of the respondents, and it was hence easier to gain access to a second interview in some cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As far as possible, I strove to interview the same respondents twice. When conducting follow up interviews with the same respondents, I also had the opportunity to clarify ambiguities in the first interviews, and follow up on issues or themes that emerged then. The possibility to follow up areas of ambiguity resulted in the fact that I could use all data in the data analysis process (Patton, 1990). As far as possible, I also strove to find a balance in the number of respondents from the three organizations in this round of interviews.

Since I also interviewed a higher proportion of lower level managers in the second phase, I also had a different interview guide for this actor level; grounded in the understanding that, in practice, lower level managers had the greatest role in realizing the exchange of material. The purpose of the interviews was to explore issues that had emerged when implementing the exchange and what was done to solve them, as well as how the managers experienced the exchange and its development. This was dealt with in the first part of the interviews. The interviews generally ended with respondents describing their views on the future development of collaborations between the organizations. In this manner, the past, present, and future were also incorporated into the second data collection. In addition, after the first data collection phase, I was granted access to follow the exchange of material through the computerized system, and on a regular basis, I noted the balance of uploaded and extracted articles between the organizations.
3.3.3 Reflections on the two phases

The overall impression I gained from the first round of interviews was that given my own role as a member of the same minority community, I had no difficulties establishing rapport with the respondents. Most respondents were very enthusiastic about the collaboration, and agreed to meet for a follow up interview. This enthusiasm might be connected to the fact that the first interviews were conducted around one week after the exchange of material had been agreed upon and initiated. It should also be noted that all respondents knew that I was interviewing all three organizations, which also presented some confidentiality issues since many of the respondents knew each other and had frequent contact given the newly initiated exchange. Some days I also spent the whole day in the same organization conducting several interviews (see Table 6). As far as possible, I did not reveal who I had interviewed or who I intended to interview next. It also became clear to me after the first round of interviews that the respondents differed in terms of granting access to the exchange process. Some respondents became gatekeepers, giving me access to more sources of data. Clearly, some respondents were more enthusiastic than others, and could easily find time for the interviews.

The semi-structured approach to interviewing gave the respondents the possibility to speak as freely as possible, which also presented me with a large quantity of transcribed materials after the first round of interviews. Occasionally, I felt overwhelmed by the data, and my best defense against the data overload was my theoretical framework that focused the data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Also, by constantly questioning the research process I arrived at an understanding that more data had to be collected, particularly from lower organizational levels (Yin, 2012), since the view of the exchange as well as competition between the parties did not seem to converge across the sample. It became clear from the first round of interviewing that some respondents even seemed reluctant to speak about competition. The choice to include lower level managers in the second data collection also stemmed from the on-site snowball sampling in the first data collection phase. I was also given the opportunity to interview a couple of lower level managers in one of the organizations, which had not been planned before arriving at the organization. This generated more respondents than was intended from this particular organization (Organization A), but the interviews also led to new questions and subject areas being explored across the three organizations.

During the two rounds of interviewing, I noticed that my listening skills substantially improved as I learned the art of handling silence, letting the respondents guide the interview, and the importance of rapport and ‘small’ talk (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For example, on the many occasions when the respondents paused, often for a quite long time, instead of jumping into the next question I waited them out, in most cases leading to deeper elaborations of the themes discussed. In some instances, I also engaged in informal talk with the respondents before or after conducting the interviews, which I believe contributed to establishing rapport rather than influencing the interview situation (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.4 The process of analyzing the data

The process of analyzing data was exploratory, where emergent understandings were continuously re-interpreted based on the evolving coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Even though the study did not follow a grounded theory approach as proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2015), the coding was influenced by this technique, in terms of qualitative
content analysis throughout the case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.4.1 Data analysis phase 1

After all the data had been collected, I sketched a chronological case history, in order to create my own overall understanding of the case and the reality presented to the respondents (e.g. Isabella, 1990; Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1992; Yin, 2012), including events in the past, different views on the present, and possible future developments. To clarify these findings and deepen the analysis, I then proceeded to code the data.

After I had transcribed all interviews, I re-read them in order to initiate early analysis and open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The coding started in terms of bringing together words, sentences, and phrases under first-level codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These descriptive codes stemmed from how the respondents themselves talked about themes in the interviews (Van Maanen, 1979), and were close to the concepts that they were describing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, open coding revolved around spotting phrases pertaining to ‘cooperation’ and ‘competition’ when considering coopetition, and, for example, ‘question’ and ‘wonder’ in terms of sensemaking. The open coding resulted in first order categories. Later on, the codes were further refined in terms of content and process, i.e. distinguishing between ‘cooperation’ and ‘cooperating’. In Table 7 below, examples of the early coding in Article 2 and Article 3 are presented (for more detailed coding see the respective articles). Coding in Article 2 was also used and developed in Article 3, whereas the strategy-as-practice theme was more extensively used in Article 3, as it covered the implementation and development stages of the strategy.

Table 7 The coding process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of coding</th>
<th>Coopetition</th>
<th>Sensemaking</th>
<th>Strategy-as-practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early open coding example</td>
<td>'cooperation', 'cooperate', 'competition', 'compete', 'us', 'we', 'together', 'overlapping areas', 'own news', 'split'</td>
<td>'change', 'question', 'wonder', 'dilemma', 'problem', 'glad', 'fear', 'hesitant', 'opportunity', 'loose', 'skeptical'</td>
<td>'do', 'discuss', 'speak', 'participate', 'meet', 'utilize', 'share', 'exchange', 'active'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed coding example content</td>
<td>Cooperation; Perception external material; skeptic; positive</td>
<td>Sensemaking content; External change; cooperation as an unfamiliar idea</td>
<td>Coding Article 3 Utilization of the exchange of material; external material; own material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motives for cooperation; saving resources, establishing relationship; preserving minority media</td>
<td>Additional coding Article 3 Sensemaking issues development; Cooperation as a new mindset; comparing other contexts for cooperation; previous relational difficulties</td>
<td>Formal evaluation and development; Inter-organizational contact; intra-organizational contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition; Structural; overlapping areas; changes in market competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Informal evaluation and development;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In later stages of the analysis, I proceeded to *pattern coding*. Drawing on Miles and Huberman (1994), the pattern coding revolved around grouping together descriptive codes into a few themes and generating second-order categories. Pertaining to both first- and second order-categories, the concepts within the categories were given certain properties in order to distinguish the codes as well as the categories from each other. In addition, I constantly asked myself how the codes differed and if they had similarities. This constant comparison resulted in some codes being merged as they were similar, while the refining of the properties of other codes further helped to distinguish them from one another, bringing variation to the codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For example, the cultural and social themes in the different motives for coopetition (see Article 2) were initially presented in the same category, but were later separated through comparison.
In order to execute *axial coding* and to start building an understanding of how all the categories were interrelated, I used diagrams and memos to facilitate the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Respondents at the same actor level, such as top managers, were compared across the sample, as were respondents between actor levels in terms of similarities and differences. Since the sample encompassed respondents from three organizations included in the case, I was also able to analyze patterns both within and across the case organizations (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). By using diagrams, I could easily see if something was missed in the analysis. For example, for each respondent, I added descriptions of their role in the collaboration, their view of the competition between the organizations, as well as their attitude towards emerging and increasing cooperation. Ultimately, the categories were assembled under overarching dimensions, and then the relationships between the dimensions were accounted for and visualized in an overall structure, for example, the model of coopetition sensemaking presented in Article 2.

Since the NVivo software was used as an assisting tool, memos were easily connected to different codes. In the memos, I recorded thoughts on the properties of the categories, as well as emerging thoughts on how categories were related with each other. These also pointed to areas that could be further explored in the second round of data collection, aiding my own sensemaking (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This resulted in observations of how particular respondents were perceived by others, which eventually turned into a stronger focus on sensegiving in the second data collection round. Accordingly, interview questions for the second data collection phase were generated through the first analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Regarding the observation, the field notes were transcribed and coded in NVivo alongside the interviews. These data sources were complemented by the media coverage, which was analyzed with the same codes; for example, the early coding of articles scanned for ‘cooperation’, ‘competition’, and ‘minority’.

For Article 2, the analysis resembles discourse analysis, as metaphors were analyzed for their underlying meaning and roles in the respondents’ accounts. Discourse analysis enables the researcher to grasp the underlying meanings of words and speech, as well as the frames of meanings deployed by the respondents, by paying close attention to, for example, what subject position and who was implied when drawing on certain metaphors and wording (e.g. Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Additionally, when coding the texts, attention was paid to how the exchange of material was spoken of and who was implied in that exchange. The metaphors that were identified include ‘bridge builder’, ‘milestone’, and ‘opening door’, which were later interpreted in terms of perceived economic, social, and cultural motives for the coopetition strategy. In the social motive, being a member of an inter-organizational relationship was implied; the economic motive depicted the respondent as a part of the organizations; and the cultural motive embraced their membership of the minority community.

3.4.2 Data analysis phase 2

Pertaining to both stages of analysis, the interview material was transcribed exactly as it appeared in the interview situation, including shorter or longer pauses, hesitation, emphasis, change in voice tone, uptempo or downtempo shifts, laughter, body language, and facial expressions. For example, shorter pauses were noted in terms of (..) and longer ones with (...). In this manner, emotions and attitudes could be grasped in the material, pointing to the different meanings assigned to coopetition by the respondents (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Also, in both stages of analysis, I arrived at a point of saturation
(Eisenhardt, 1989), when additional coding did not contribute anything new and the same codes continuously re-appeared in the analysis.

After working with the data set for Article 2 for some time, I had a good understanding of the case and what and who was to be explored in the second round of data collection. Together with the data collected in the first round, after finishing data collection in round two, I had 28 face-to-face interviews to work with, averaging around 50 minutes in length, covering the formulation and implementation phase of coopetition, including top and lower level managers from all three organizations. This data set was used in Article 3. The data collection in phase two could therefore be argued to be more strongly based on theoretical sampling than the first collection phase, as it was based on concepts derived from the first stage of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Eisenhardt, 1989).

In both phases of data analysis, it was evident early on that the respondents had different views on, and expectations of, the materials exchange. In early stages, some were positive and approached it as an opportunity, whereas others were hesitant and skeptical. The divergent views became even more evident as the exchange developed. In the second phase, after all the interviews had been transcribed, the chronological case history was updated with the events and experiences of implementing the exchanges during 2014 (see Table 8). This aided me in forming a macro understanding of the development of coopetition over the two years, while further validating my thoughts concerning the organizations’ histories prior to 2013 before the exchange of material, events in the first case history, as well as findings derived from the analysis. In addition, key actors and activities were included in the case history, as were the main outcomes for the organizations and the relationships, serving as a tool for investigating how the respondents assigned meaning to the new strategy and actually constructed the exchange of material.
Table 8  Case description in light of the different phases of the coopetition development
Modified from Lundgren-Henriksson and Kock (2016b:26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before the exchange of material</th>
<th>Initiation of the exchange of material</th>
<th>Implementation and development of the exchange of material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market situation</strong></td>
<td>Strategic group</td>
<td>Changing competition → decrease in direct competition between the parties</td>
<td>Changing competition → decrease in direct competition between the parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities at different levels and the subsequent implications</strong></td>
<td>Emerging inter-organizational discussions concerning possibilities for cooperation</td>
<td>Key top managers initiate the exchange of material → communication within the organizations</td>
<td>Increased inter-organizational meetings between top managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some attempts to realize cooperation between the parties</td>
<td>Industry experts and consultants contribute with increased discussion about cooperation in the industry</td>
<td>Implementation of the materials exchange at intra-organizational levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stagnation and inertia in terms of utilizing the exchange on an ongoing basis → exchange not realized as fast as intended by top managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging discussions concerning different forms for future cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Realization of projects previously only discussed between the parties as well as initiating new projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis in phase two followed the same procedure as in phase one, only with more data. This resulted in a more frequent use of matrices as the goal of the analysis was to investigate how actor levels were distinct as well as interlinked (Yin, 2012). Spotting similarities and differences was enabled by comparing rows and columns with each other in terms of clear conceptual themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, respondents were compared in terms of executing or receiving sensegiving, i.e. concepts derived from the literature.

Naturally, the codes incorporated more raw data in the second phase. Accordingly, their revision was also more extensive as the problem of bulk appeared, meaning that some codes were used extensively, requiring that subcodes be created (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 61). This was the case for the code competition, which developed into structural/market competition and cognitive competition. The former subcode encompasses overlapping subscriber areas, while the latter considers competition based on journalism as a profession. Concepts within cognitive competition included ‘race for news’ and ‘being unique’. Also, since the analysis covered multiple actor levels and
strategy stages, the codes were related to each other in a much larger structure in Article 3 than in Article 2.

In addition to the macro understanding of the development of the exchange of material generated by the chronological case history, the case analysis also addressed the micro level, and the link between the macro and micro levels. In other words, the second round of data analysis incorporated not just the investigation of sensemaking and competitive frames, but also the reciprocal link to actions or non-actions in implementing coopetition. Therefore, two dimensions of codes and categories were prevalent in Article 3: in the structural realm and the action realm (Jarzabkowski, 2008). The analysis also incorporated linking these realms together. For example, in Article 3, when deriving the different sensemaking patterns, diagrams were created where each respondent was compared with respondents assigned to the same group, as well as with respondents assigned to other groups, in relation to both perceptions, views, and attitudes, as well as action patterns. This comparison resulted in some respondents being moved to other groups, ultimately forming the different sensemaking types (see Table 9).

### Table 9  Examples of deriving different sensemaking patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondent X</th>
<th>Respondent Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of competition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and compatibility with</td>
<td>Two continuums – an increase in cooperation does not imply a change in competition</td>
<td>One continuum – increased cooperation implies less competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude towards</strong></td>
<td>Mixed – possible drawbacks from increased cooperation</td>
<td>Mixed – possible drawbacks from increased cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>cooperation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation intra-</strong></td>
<td>Active – utilize external material and upload own material</td>
<td>Ad hoc participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>organizational level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation inter-</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>organizational level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found outliers to be particularly interesting and important throughout the analysis, since these imply variations within the emerging theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), the broadening of explanations, and also help to verify findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By focusing on outliers, or extreme action patterns deviating from the most frequently occurring codes in the case, two new sensemaking categories emerged in the coding for Article 3: the positive extreme – developed sensemaking, and the negative extreme – unresolved sensemaking. Last, it should also be noted that analysis in both the first and second stages also had abductive tendencies, since the emerging codes were matched with themes identified in the coopetition, sensemaking, and strategy-as-practice literatures.

### 3.4.3 Units, levels, and the nature of the analysis

Both conscious and unconscious analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) began during the data collection phase in the form of emergent ideas and reflection (Patton, 1990). When transcribing the interviews, I noticed that ideas concerning data analysis continuously
emerged and therefore they were always noted. Since the amount of transcribed material was large, the NVivo software was used to reduce the time needed to conduct the analysis. The benefits of using NVivo include managing large amounts of data and noting and connecting emerging ideas with the empirical source (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In this manner, the analysis could be argued to entail a quantitative aspect as words and phrases were numbered. The software helped to count words and expressions when coding and to see which concepts were more prominent, aiding my overall theoretical understanding. However, following Corbin and Strauss (2015), I did not approach the data analysis in a mechanical manner, as a researcher must have the flexibility and creativity required for qualitative data analysis, directing its evolution. It should therefore be noted that, particularly at later stages of the analysis when categories had been defined, Word tables were used to compare respondents and to establish links between categories.

Regarding case study research, there is no definitive definition of a case; it can be anything, ranging from an individual to an event. The unit of analysis can also be multifaceted and have subunits due to the close connection between the case and the context (Yin, 2012). In this study, the case is the initiation and development of a coopetition strategy, yet the particular strategy and its development is analyzed at multiple levels. The unit of analysis is individuals’ sensemaking processes as they develop over time – as addressed in all three organizations in the case study. Hence, the units of analysis embedded within the case could be regarded as multiple (Yin, 2012). However, sensemaking is a multilevel process, incorporating both the past, present, and future, as well as interactions at multiple actor levels. These processes and generated activities also have a reciprocal relationship with the institutional level, and with the development of the strategy. The case was therefore analyzed at multiple levels (Yin, 1994).

Strategy-as-practice studies on strategic change have investigated sensemaking and sensegiving as embedded in a broader context, including its cultural aspects (Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Likewise, in the data analysis stage, I also had to account for context and process in the data material (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The environmental and cultural conditions influencing the context in which the respondents were situated also helped to advance the analysis in terms of how these were used in framing the strategic change. However, at times, contextual activities and the activities of the case became blurred (Yin, 2012). For example, layoffs occurring during the time the data were collected stemmed from the rapidly deteriorating situation in the industry, yet these layoffs were connected to the initiation of the collaboration by many respondents. In this sense, these contextual activities were in fact connected with managers’ sensemaking regarding coopetition, and thus became part of the case.

The strategy process was captured in the data analysis in two ways (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). First, I followed how and why the intended activities and interactions the exchange of material entailed were realized or not realized, and what the consequences were for the development of the strategy, and for the managers’ sensemaking. For example, not utilizing the exchange as intended at lower actor levels had a negative effect on top managerial sensemaking. Thus, on an individual level, the process was captured in terms of making sense of coopetition, alone and in interaction with others. These sensemaking processes also constitute the sub-processes of the overall development of the strategy process, from formulation to implementation and development, explaining the stagnation experienced in the first evaluations of the exchange (see Article 3). The identification of these different processes, and the subsequent structures and practices enabling or hindering agency, constituted a major step forward in the data analysis.
Actor levels, as well as strategy phases, might be difficult to fully separate as their boundaries are often blurred. In relation to the separation of top managers and lower level managers, I noticed that some managers became boundary spanners, taking part in both strategy formation and implementation activities (Floyd & Woolridge, 1992). These managers are often placed in the middle of an organization’s hierarchy, influencing both upward and downward processes. However, for a respondent to be defined as a top manager, I established that they were not part of the implementation of strategy in practice on a day-to-day basis – such roles were assigned to lower level managers. Regarding separating the strategy formation and implementation phases, I arrived at the understanding that these were not linear, but overlapped and shaped each other (cf. Leonardi, 2015). This became particularly evident when all data had been collected and analyzed, as both the re-formulations of the exchange of material began to occur after evaluating it, and the perceptions of and opinions about the future were revised (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). I hence strove to depict and explain how these stages were interrelated in the analysis.

3.5 Contributions of the articles to the research process

The three articles included in the thesis have been initiated, shaped, and re-shaped in parallel with each other (see Table 10). Data analysis and collection hence became iterative throughout the research process (Yin, 2012) since the analysis of the first round of interviews generating Article 2 was developed in parallel with data collection in phase 2, generating Article 3. In this manner, the research questions also evolved in the second round of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For example, iteration between data collection and analysis becomes evident as the second round of data collection was based on theoretical sampling alongside snowball sampling, where concepts relevant to the understanding of the sensemaking of the respondents had been pinpointed. In parallel with designing and executing the case study, I was examining sensemaking, and strategy-as-practice research in activities that were related to my PhD journey, and thus I was able to interweave emerging theoretical understandings into the empirical process, resulting in the continuously evolving description and explanation of the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, throughout the research process, ‘how’ the respondents were making sense of coopetition and how action patterns evolved were addressed before investigating ‘why’ these patterns emerged (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013).

Throughout the research process, the data were continuously compared against each other, and critical questions were asked, which helped the emergent understandings and theoretical mapping (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This was aided by the experience I accumulated during the two rounds of data collection and analysis during which not only my interviewing but also my analytical skills substantially improved. For example, in the second round of interviews in 2014, the industry situation had worsened, as had the respondents’ working situation. Consequently, I learned the power of context to an interview, and learned to sense the situation and balance sensitive topics and other themes when steering the discussion.

The contribution of the continuous interplay between collecting and analyzing data on the research process became perhaps most evident in terms of understanding when to halt the whole research process. Particularly, when analyzing the case findings in early coding, lower-level concepts were placed under higher-level concepts, forming a category or theme. At later stages, the themes were developed in terms of their properties and dimensions, i.e. variations in the properties, and ultimately linked together under a core category, such as sensemaking. This final stage can be characterized as ‘conceptual
satisfaction’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) as I perceived the categories as fully developed and accounting for variation. This becomes particularly evident in Article 3, where the core theme of sensemaking ranged from developed and resolved, to limited and non-resolved.

### Table 10 Development of the research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 2012-2013</th>
<th>Phase 2 2013-2014</th>
<th>Phase 3 2014-2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions of Article 1 to the research process</strong></td>
<td>Emerging understanding of relevant theory and establishment of research questions</td>
<td>Extension of theoretical framework and revision of research questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework and emergent identification of coopetition knowledge gap $\rightarrow$ Steering the path towards the individual level of analysis</td>
<td>Tool for theoretical sampling $\rightarrow$ describing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions of Article 2 to the research process</strong></td>
<td>First round of data collection in 2013 $\rightarrow$ experience gained from interviewing</td>
<td>First round of data analysis $\rightarrow$ describing and explaining $\rightarrow$ expanded theory and deepened theoretical understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tool for further sampling – enlarging the sample $\rightarrow$ further explaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ameliorated interviewing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions of Article 3 to the research process</strong></td>
<td>Evolving theoretical framework $\rightarrow$ Emergent understanding of sensemaking and strategy-as-practice</td>
<td>Second round of data collection in 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other influential activities</strong></td>
<td>Attending doctoral courses</td>
<td>Going back to the literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conference participation (Article 1)</td>
<td>Review process Article 2 $\rightarrow$ Learning the review process/improved academic writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.1 **Longitudinal and processual aspects of the research**

Longitudinal research is called for to increase knowledge about the dynamic nature of coopetition (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Dahl, 2014). What actually constitutes a longitudinal study has often been debated, although its core characteristics include change in one variable over a period (Hassett & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2013), and the prevalence of both real-time and retrospective perspectives (Van de Ven, 1992). Regarding whether research is longitudinal or not, Hassett and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki (2013) argue that the question is not how long a study should be, but rather why particular phenomena have to be studied in a longitudinal manner. *Time* must hence serve a purpose in a study, where the length of the research only constitutes validation. This study could be argued to show tendencies of both longitudinal and process research, visible in the iteration between induction and deduction (Langley, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997), as well as observation and verification (Pettigrew, 1990). A characteristic of process research is that processes are studied at multiple levels of analysis and in different temporal states (Pettigrew, 1997). Similarly, in this study, the focus is on how processes develop at multiple levels over time (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013).

To follow how and why the sensemaking of coopetition as a strategic change developed, data had to be collected and analyzed over a longer period of time. Since the first round of data collection was performed when the exchange of material had just started, the strategy process had not yet moved into its implementation phase, thus I had the opportunity to follow it. By following emergence both in the initial and development phases of the coopetition strategy – perceptions, expectations, and interactions, as well as their changes were addressed in real time. The past, present, and future were thus continuously incorporated into the data collection, and an analysis extending over two years allowed the study to follow how strategic change unfolded in a real setting (Van de Ven, 1992). Not only were retrospective interviews and case history combined with recent data in terms of observation and media coverage (Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1992), the interviews and themes themselves were also developed around these three temporal orientations, enabling grasping sensemaking (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005).

3.6 **A critical view of the research process as a whole**

The entire research process must also be regarded in a critical light. Recently, coopetition researchers have called for greater rigor when conducting research (Gnyawali & Song, 2016). Throughout the research process, I strove to reach the commonly proposed reliability and validity criteria of research (e.g. Bryman & Bell, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2006) by constantly “checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002: 17). In terms of *reliability*, this included striving to obtain consistency and transparency when designing and executing the case study in line with the chosen research topic and methods (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994). The *internal validity* covering the accuracy of the findings in terms of both respondents’ and researcher’s views (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994), was, for example, strengthened by searching for rival explanations (Yin, 2012).

Case studies often suffer from criticism concerning their broader application and generalizability to other settings, i.e. concerning *external validity* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following the general tendency of case study research, the aim of this study has been to generalize to other situations and make theoretical propositions (Silverman,
Therefore, the findings of the case can be applied to coopetition situations. For example, the sensemaking model presented in Article 2 applies to similar situations when individuals are faced with coopetition as a strategic change, irrespective of where the coopetition strategy is to be found. In addition, the generalizability of the case was strengthened by purposive sampling – by choosing the case and sample based on theory and by changing the sample size during the course of the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Silverman, 2013).

Table 11  Reliability and validity issues and measures taken throughout the research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The research process</th>
<th>Potential reliability and validity issues</th>
<th>Example of measures taken to mitigate reliability and validity issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collecting data</td>
<td>Representativeness of sample →</td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem with snowball sampling</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews: researcher influence,</td>
<td>Theoretical sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respondents not understanding the</td>
<td>Interviewing the respondents at multiple times</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions in the same way, missing</td>
<td>Recording and transcribing in full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>questions, overreliance on dramatic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation: observer fatigue,</td>
<td>Field notes → narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>researcher influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing data</td>
<td>Interviews and observation:</td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher influence/imposing meaning</td>
<td>Distinguishing between emic and etic analysis when analyzing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the observation narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing the whole data material using the same coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole research process</td>
<td>Research process suffers from issues of transparency</td>
<td>Research journal → moving between macro and micro understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings not credible and/or suffering</td>
<td>Longitudinal aspects of the case study → constant iteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from researcher influence</td>
<td>between case study findings and theory, and between describing and explaining → following events over time and investigating why these happened → why did stagnation and mental inertia occur? → identification of the origin and natures of different sensemaking processes and action patterns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.1 Reflections on the process of collecting data

The reliability and validity of the study were increased through triangulation both in terms of data sources, methods, and theories. Conducting interviews in all three organizations and with actors at multiple levels was complemented with observation, text, and physical artefacts, thus increasing the accuracy of respondents’ views of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data were further theoretically triangulated through a combination of coopetition, sensemaking, and strategy-as-practice. In the early stages of the case study, preliminary theory and research questions helped to identify respondents and the themes to be explored in the interviews (Yin, 2012), whereas in later stages theoretical sampling took place as I focused on increasing the sample with lower level managers, whose views on coopetition were different from those of top managers. The theoretical sampling and triangulation of research methods therefore counterbalanced the potential problems of snowball sampling in terms of sampling informants who were not representative, or an overreliance on accessible and elite informants (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To raise the reliability of the study in terms of offering descriptions on what was enacted throughout the research process, and how it proceeded from data to findings (Gephart, 2004), I used a research journal. My reflections on collecting data were noted in the journal which served as an assisting tool when analyzing the empirical data, continuously pointing to what had been done and what ought to be further explored (Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki, 2008). My research journal was over 30 pages in length and included rich documentations of the interviews and my own thought processes. This includes both positive feelings and issues and areas to improve, organized under sections such as “Overall impression”, “What do I want to learn more about”, “What requires further specification and elaboration”. When collecting data in the second stage, I also tried to avoid looking at previous notes and not to think too much about the analysis, so as to keep my mind free from biases. The journal also helped me to form a macro-theoretical understanding of the case that could be matched to micro pieces of data (Morse et al., 2002). By the end of the research journal, it can clearly be seen how the pieces are starting to fall into place in terms of the link between sensemaking patterns and the development of the exchange of material, as well as how data became verified through the interplay between collection and analysis through the two phases of data collection.

I was aware of the fact that the value of the interpersonal level in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Patton, 1990), resulting in researcher provoked data and texts (Silverman, 2003, 2006), also creates potential researcher influence (Fontana & Frey, 2008). However, I believe that being part of the same minority community as my respondents aided the interview situation in creating “sharedness of meaning” (Fontana & Frey, 2008: 139), gaining access, and establishing rapport. However, I actively strove not to become too friendly with the respondents, and to keep objectivity and limit my influence on the interview situations. The research journal therefore helped in distancing myself from my own research practices as the data collection proceeded. As I recorded all my thoughts and concerns in this journal concerning myself, my influence on the process, and my respondents, I was able to modify the research process as it evolved and recognize at least some of my biases and assumptions (e.g. Corbin & Strauss 2105; Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2012). For example, one concern that I had during the first round of interviews was whether I had obtained a balance between the respondents in terms of speaking about cooperation and competition, and how I could get the respondents to speak more about competition in the follow up interviews. In the second stage of data collection, the question of how the respondents viewed competition and their beliefs
about how others viewed it became one of the first issues to be discussed in the interviews.

Regarding the interviews, the first issue was to ensure ethical safeguards (Corbin & Strauss 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2006), i.e. assuring the anonymity of the respondents throughout the whole research process, clarifying that participation was voluntary, and that I was conducting the research for my PhD thesis and not on behalf of some other project or association. That information was presented to the respondents in the initial contact via e-mail, or, at the latest, at the beginning of the interview. During the course of their interview, some respondents asked me to remove certain statements from the recording in order to secure anonymity, which I did. I also presented the respondents with the possibility to read the transcribed material, which no one wished to do. I also chose not to make any distinctions between the three parties when presenting the material in writing, maintaining anonymity as far as possible. This also includes differences in sizes between the organizations, which could reveal identities.

The reliability of the interviews was increased from execution to transcription (Silverman, 2006). Guidelines on how to conduct interviews, pose questions, and construct an interview guide were studied beforehand. By testing and improving the guide in the first interview, and by learning it by heart, I was able to maintain eye contact with the respondent, and follow the conversation. Thus, I was also able to see facial expressions and notice particular pauses and body language. As all interviews were tape-recorded, notes were only occasionally taken to keep track of important questions during the interviews. The choice of adopting semi-structured interviews also presents a risk that all concepts are not covered by all respondents (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Conducting follow up interviews and recording thoughts in the case journal helped to overcome this issue. Regarding interviewing, since I conducted a total of 28 interviews, the flow of the interviews, contextual influence, and my own experience naturally varied. For example, in some interview situations, interruptions occurred, such as telephone calls and questions from other organizational members. These mixed experiences helped me strive to continuously improve interplay in the interview situation.

In the first round of interviews, some respondents were curious about when I would conduct the follow up interviews, and frequently posed questions concerning my research process as a whole. In this sense, I experienced a high amount of enthusiasm from the respondents. However, when I returned for follow up meetings, generally, I felt that the atmosphere had changed. The industry situation had worsened from the first data collection, something which I also noticed in the respondents. Many were stressed and had trouble finding time to spare for an interview, which can also be seen in the length of the interviews in 2014, or the continuous checking of time during the course of some interviews. Even though the interviews became shorter due to limited time, this also validated my emerging thoughts about the importance of realizing coopetition due to the worsening situation in the industry, and the link to the experienced stress and frustration for respondents. Also, layoffs had just occurred and naturally some respondents were quite despondent. By interviewing many actors, negative oriented views could be compared to negative and positive views in other interview situations, and hence the bias caused by overreliance on dramatic events was mitigated (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In terms of observing the inter-organizational meeting, I took into account that I was dealing with a reactive observation, based on the assumption that the individuals observed were aware of me observing them. It was hence difficult to entirely accomplish
an atmosphere of ‘not being in the room’ (Angrosino, 2008: 165; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Silverman, 2006). This was, for example, manifested when participants made eye contact with me while speaking with other participants. When observing the meeting, I had a separate sheet for my thoughts and words, and another one where I wrote as much as possible of the managers’ own words. The triangulation of data counterbalanced the issue of researcher fatigue when conducting the observation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This reasoning can also be applied to the whole research process – I acknowledge that conducting, transcribing, and analyzing all interviews by myself produced tiredness. For example, in some instances I conducted several interviews in a row when visiting the organizations, although this is natural given the limited time of a PhD journey and restricted access to organizations. However, I do believe that being part of the whole research process helped to generate rich material and produce a thorough and multifaceted understanding of the case.

3.6.2 Reflections on the process of analyzing data

To achieve reliability and validity in the process of analyzing data, I particularly drew on triangulation, and participant as well as reviewer checking (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Grounded in the fact that respondent validation as an established validation technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994) has been criticized in terms of potentially changing respondents’ behavior during the research period (Silverman, 2006), and that respondents might not be able to distinguish their own view in the aggregated results (Morse et al., 2002), triangulation became the primary tool for increasing validity. Many of the respondents that I interviewed twice were also curious about the results from the first round of interviews. At times, I discussed general and tentative results quite broadly with some of the respondents, yet this was always handled after the interview had been conducted to avoid influencing the respondents. In fact, this informal talk about my research became a strategy of verification for the first tentative analysis. I also met one gatekeeper after the data collection had ended, discussing the evolution of the case and tentative findings.

Some of the methods for establishing validity when analyzing data as proposed by Silverman (2006) and applied in the study, are interrelated deviant-case analysis and use of appropriate tabulations. Variance in the data was accounted for by continuously looking for action patterns that deviated from the intended development of the case, whereas tabulations were used as counting techniques to cope with the large amount of qualitative data material. During the early coding, the NVivo software allowed me to search for and check the prevalence of sensemaking concepts such as ‘say’, ‘speak’, ‘discuss’, ‘question’ and to proceed with refining the coding. As the analysis evolved, I was able to check how often a code was prevalent. Thus, I could also spot which sensemaking types were the ‘main’ pattern and which applied to most respondents, and the variance in terms of the sensemaking types that converged.

Concerning the analysis of the interviews for Article 3, I was faced with the issue of whether I could use all the accounts. Some of the respondents that had left the organizations since the first data collection were not included in the coding of sensemaking, as they had not participated in developing the strategy after the first data collection. These accounts were thus used in other parts of the analysis, for example, in the chronological case history. Moreover, the analysis of the interviews was triangulated with the other case material (Yin, 2012) to establish if they were convergent. I could also check what respondents in one organization thought about the commitment of other
organizations by looking at the frequency of uploaded materials on the computerized system, and by comparing interview accounts across the organizations.

When incorporating material from the observation into the case analysis, texts from my field notes covering the participants’ own wordings and expressions were included in the raw data, and coded in the same manner as the interview quotes. To establish reliability and overcome the potential bias of imposing subjective meaning on the observed meeting (Angrosino, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Silverman, 2006), I distinguished between etic analysis, i.e. my own concepts, and emic analysis, i.e. the concepts used by participants, in the field notes (Van Maanen, 1979). To mitigate the potential researcher bias, the triangulation of the analysis was executed using documents. Published interviews with managers and industry experts generated text that was not created by the researcher; however, such media coverage was coded and analyzed in the same manner as the interviews, ensuring reliability, as reliability in texts is established by analyzing them in a convergent manner (Silverman, 2006). Last, the articles included in the thesis were peer reviewed, two in scientific journals and one in a conference, further raising their reliability and validity.

Throughout the research process, I strove to obtain self-reflection and critical awareness in terms of continuously questioning my own assumptions, both when collecting data and when interpreting the findings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). The data collection for the thesis was executed at a time of industry upheaval, and I was hence able to intensively experience how a severe industry situation affects members of organizations, and particularly the media outlets of a minority language group. I believe that sharing the same minority language and culture of my respondents contributed to a deeper level of engagement, as I acquired a thorough understanding of the threat to the minority group presenting itself to the respondents, and the value of the subsequent actions taken (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).
4 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the main findings from the three articles included in the thesis are combined and discussed in terms of their implications for established assumptions in the coopetition research field. Table 12 below summarizes the theoretical contribution in terms of levels of analysis and the stages of the coopetition strategy process. The theoretical contribution of the thesis can further be specified both in terms of new and existing discussions in the coopetition research field. In particular, the findings from the articles join previous arguments concerning the multilevel nature of coopetition, yet extend knowledge of this very nature by incorporating the institutional level to a greater extent, as well as the intertwining of sensemaking processes at different actor levels, when describing and explaining coopetition development and outcomes.

Conceptual Article 1 outlines how the institutional, inter-, and intra-organizational levels are interrelated in terms of actors and activities. Article 2 could be argued to address the influence of the institutional, relational, and organizational levels on sensemaking when focusing on coopetition frame creation, whereas Article 3 also includes the effect of sensemaking at multiple actor levels on coopetition development by also focusing on talk and sensegiving. Hence, Article 3 addresses time not only in terms of retrospective and prospective sensemaking as in Article 2, but also follows both the formation and development phases of the coopetition strategy process.

Table 12 Contributions to the different discussions in coopetition research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Previous coopetition research</th>
<th>Findings from the articles – implications for established assumptions of coopetition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional level</strong></td>
<td>Institutional actors’ influence on the formation of coopetition (e.g., Kylänén &amp; Rusko, 2011; Mariani, 2007)</td>
<td>The influence of the business environment on coopetition formation ➔ External practitioners such as industry consultants should be included as they are influential for coopetition formation and development. The institutional level should also be addressed in terms of the reciprocal influence on coopetition agency; Structures manifest through practices enabling or hindering strategic participation ➔ provide norms that legitimize or do not legitimize coopetition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter- and intra-organizational levels</strong></td>
<td>Drivers: Personal relationships enable coopetition formation (Choi et al., 2010)</td>
<td>Drivers: Social and cultural motives for coopetition ➔ The incentives to engage in coopetition should be understood as multiple and grounded in individuals’ experiences, social belongings, and individual incentives ➔ Compatibility between coopeting organizations is addressed in terms of perceived past, present, and future identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage in coopetition based on economic incentives, including innovation/technological improvements (e.g., Gnyawali &amp; Park, 2009, 2011)</td>
<td>Events in the past influence the present (Tidström &amp; Hagberg-Andersson, 2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compatibility between the organizations’ profiles are a driver for coopetition (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016)

Process:
Compete in activities close to the customer, while cooperating further away (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000)

Issue of handling conflicting roles and ambiguities for managers (Dowling et al., 1997)

Differences in organizational and relational goals, and differences in organizational structures and processes, are causes of tensions (Tidström, 2009, 2014)

Organizational coping: Separation between cooperation and competition in time and space for managing tensions (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000)

Coopetition capability as an organizational level construct - dealing with the coopetition paradox (Bengtsson et al., 2016b)
Top managers possess this capability in terms of their mindset and are responsible for spreading it across the organization (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Luo, 2007)

Outcomes:
High degrees of tension might hamper the leveraging of coopetition synergies (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016)

Relationship failure/establishment (top managers) (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016)

Increased innovation, market performance, reduction of costs (e.g. Bouncken et al., 2015; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Ritala, 2012)

Analytical (cognition) and executional (action) capabilities aggregated across the organization (Gnywali et al., 2016) → Link between coopetition capabilities and organizational performance

Intra- and inter-organizational levels are interlinked and change

Outcomes:
Multiple outcomes depending on whose interests are served – coopetition might result in other values besides economic, which might prove superior → Coopetition might have negative outcomes for the individual, yet prove positive for the organization (and vice-versa)

Simultaneous deliberate and emergent features of coopetition strategies → Emergence stemming from lower organizational levels (conscious or unconscious) might hamper coopetition development → the possibility of coopetition strategies not being realized as intended

Tensions and difficulties in realizing coopetition in practice, especially for lower organizational levels, might prove negative not only for the organization but also for the relational development → Inter- and intra-organizational levels are interrelated through
accordingly over time (e.g. Dahl, 2014; Ritala & Tidström, 2014)

**Individual level**

**Drivers:**
- Top managers initiate and handle inter-organizational interaction and the development of the strategy based on their mental models (Lado et al., 1997)
- Top managers possess the ability to spot opportunities for coopetition (Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Luo, 2007)

**Process:**
- Managers (e.g. Mariani, 2007; Ritala et al., 2009) and employees (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016) need new mental frames
- Tensions due to contradictory emotions originating from top managers participating in inter-organizational interaction, and differing degrees of participation in both cooperative and competitive activities (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014)
- Individual coping: internalizing or not internalizing the coopetition paradox (Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015)

**Outcomes:**
- Perceptions of identity might shift the balance of coopetition dynamics (e.g. Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014)
- Tension aggregates from the individual level to other levels (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014)

**Drivers:**
- Key individuals both at higher and lower organizational levels prove influential throughout the whole coopetition strategy process
- Spot opportunities for coopetition based on assessments of the past and engage in sensegiving in order to foster the emergence of coopetition

**Process:**
- The new mental models require modifications to established frames within which individuals differ → influence of attitudes, identity, and expectations on creating and re-creating coopetition frames
- Enabling and hindering effects on coopetition agency → individuals differ within and between actor levels in terms of adhering to new practices
- Experienced coopetition tensions due to contradictions between past and future identities, as well as between cognition and doing → influence of individual incentives and goals on coping

**Outcomes:**
- Different perceptions of the strengths of competition, perceived compatibility between cooperation/competition, and the link with identity assessment, point to the complexity of this type of strategy and realizing coopetition strategizing → Identity assessment proves influential for the development of the coopetition dynamics, yet should be approached in relation to other practices
- Through speech and actions/interactions, negative or positive views of coopetition spread across organizations

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4.1 **Contributions to new discussions in the coopetition research field**

One of the major contributions of the thesis is the identification of the continuous creation and re-creation of coopetition agency as underlying the development of the strategy process, and of the practices enabling and constraining this creation. By combining and drawing upon the strategy-as-practice and sensemaking approaches, this
thesis bridges and advances existing knowledge concerning the cognitive and strategic dimensions of coopetition. In doing so, the traditional focus is shifted from management and the outcomes of coopetition at the organizational and relational levels to the *performance of individuals* in drawing upon practices and engaging in activities and interactions at intra and inter-organizational levels. Accordingly, the effects of processes and practices over time on the development of a coopetition strategy are emphasized. This reasoning is explored in-depth in the following.

### 4.1.1 Bridging cognition and strategy: Identifying coopetition agency

First, by applying a strategy-as-practice approach to coopetition, the *strategic dimension of coopetition* is clarified. The thesis moves beyond the definition of coopetition as a paradoxical relationship by positing that coopetition as a strategy arises and forms from simultaneous and intertwined cooperative and competitive activities and interactions of a more or less intended nature over time. This becomes particularly evident in conceptual Article 1, where the coopetition literature is unified under a multilevel interpretative framework consisting of *practices, praxis*, and *practitioners*, analyzed in terms of their *emergent and deliberate nature*. In this manner, both the external and internal forces shaping the coopetition strategy formulation and implementation activities are recognized, as are actors and activities at multiple levels. The discussion on different degrees of deliberateness and emergence in coopetition strategies is therefore opened.

In particular, coopetition formation takes place through the intersection of the intertwined practices and praxis of the respective organizations interacting, and the institutional environment. The latter encompasses for example established formal or informal industry norms for inter-competitor cooperation, or institutional actors influencing the formation of the strategy. Moreover, the framework sheds light on the *social embeddedness* of activities and most importantly on *the individual* as the crucial building block of coopetition strategies; holding the practices and engaging in strategy formulation and implementation activities at both inter- as well as intra-organizational levels. Consequently, practitioners continuously interact at these levels, contributing to a flow that maintains, shapes, and also re-shapes strategy over time.

Approaching coopetition from a practice approach and hence a coopetition strategy as something individuals *do* (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) also sheds light on the complexity of coopetition from a new angle – by considering the coopetition strategizing flow from a *cognitive perspective*. Article 2 and Article 3 are empirical and introduce the sensemaking perspective on coopetition. Drawing upon this theoretical approach, a discussion on coopetition strategies as consisting of individuals’ continuous and intertwined sensemaking and sensegiving over time – proving consequential for strategy participation and development – is opened. Both articles treat coopetition as a *strategic change* and posit that coopetition requires new ways of thinking and acting with coopetitors, including the modifying of established frames.

Article 2 particularly addresses new frame creation through sensemaking. The discussion revolves around how a *coopetition frame is constructed* by modifying the established competitive frames formed through past action patterns in the industry to fit the emerging coopetition frame. In particular, the findings show that various degrees of coopetition frame creation, i.e. individual level differences in making sense of the emerging strategy, are to a great extent influenced by attitudes formed in the past as well as the ability to update expectations of the future. Positively oriented managers clearly had no difficulties in modifying their competitive frame in accordance with the emerging
coopetition strategy, and perceiving competition as something good, rather than as something incompatible with cooperation or even as a destructive force, which was the case with the managers failing or struggling to make sense of the strategy. Accordingly, this latter managerial group had a more skeptical approach to coopetition, which was grounded in negative experiences of coopeting in the past, or in their assessments of the potential consequences for organizational identity. Thus, managers differed in their abilities to re-think the past. Grounded in different accounts of the future, the complexity inherent in coopetition strategizing is brought to light through these findings.

The strategic dimension of coopetition is also advanced through the findings regarding the creation of new practices that provide legitimacy for inter-competitor cooperation. Departing from a competitive background in the thesis, emerging coopetition not only requires modification within established competitive frames, but also in sustained practices that legitimate competitive strategizing. The empirical findings show that individuals differ in their abilities to deploy newly modified practices to fit emerging coopetition. Article 2 clearly shows that some managers were unable to break with established practice patterns from the past – at inter- or intra-organizational levels – that hindered their creation of future coopetition agency. Contrary to the group of managers that were able to modify sustained practices into ‘new’ practices embracing simultaneous cooperation and competition, these managers became highly habitual in their strategizing, deploying sustained practices adhering to ‘old’ competition.

The multitude of interpretations, attitudes, and views, points to the importance of addressing the concepts of cooperation and competition from a perceptual point of view and as embedded in a wider social context. Hence, by adopting a perceptual approach to coopetition, the coopetition paradox is assumed to be perceived differently, generating multiple and divergent perceptions of the strengths of cooperation and competition (cf. Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016) across actor levels. For example, the empirical findings clearly indicate that managers had different opinions on the strengths of competition, as well as its compatibility with cooperation, which influenced how they were able to justify their participation in the strategy. Some managers approached competition and cooperation as incompatible flows, where the prevalence of competition was viewed as hindering future increases in cooperation (Article 3). As such, changes in market competition that decreased direct competition between the parties were not necessarily aligned with updates to sustained competitive practices, which has consequences for participation in coopetition. This suggests that to understand how and why coopetition participation is legitimized or resisted, competition must be approached at the perceptual level, as well as in terms of what actions are produced in practice.

By following the development of the case study over two years, sensemaking, in both the strategy formulation and implementation phases and the different action patterns generated by the four sensemaking types, is outlined and explained in relation to realizing coopetition as a continuous practice. This covered both negative and positive sensemaking orientations, producing action patterns that were more or less in line with the intentions of top managers (Article 3). The case study findings show that coopetition agency is enabled by social interaction, especially taking part in inter-organizational meetings and drawing on a new industry discourse, which was also connected to the cultural identity to which the organizational actors and the parties’ customers belonged. These practices contributed to the fact that managers could easily legitimize their participation when realizing the intended activities, since a new future relational reality was perceived, including new and shared competitive structures enabling coopetition. For these managers, the coopeting parties were no longer identified as prime competitors.
A majority of top managers took on a positive orientation towards the strategy based on the fact that they were not involved in realizing it in their daily tasks (Balogun, 2006; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). In contrast, being situated closer to the customer and taking part in informal talks that depicted the imposed cooperation as harmful for organizational identity, contributed to the manifestation of old structures of competition. This clearly hindered coopetition agency and sustained previous ways of thinking about the coopeting parties. Therefore, negative orientations became more widespread at lower organizational levels due to limited inter-organizational interaction, and detachment from the newly emergent relational atmosphere. These managers perceived their potential contributions to the exchange, and accordingly to changing the institutionalized practices, to be hindered by others’ sustained views of cooperation as undesirable. Hence, the empirical findings in Article 3 show that sensemaking in a coopetition context must be regarded in relation to other practices, such as various discursive practices (cf. Balogun et al., 2014) at both intra- and inter-organizational levels. Moreover, the findings of the empirical articles not only highlight the role of identity assessment (cf. Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016) on coopetition agency creation, for example shared identity at both inter- and intra-organizational levels enabling sensemaking, they also problematize the coopetition practitioner (cf. Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

4.1.2 Extension of strategic actors

Overall, by drawing upon the strategy-as-practice approach, the thesis moves away from rationality, economic centered, and deliberate perspectives in strategy research, by recognizing the role of emotions and cognition as well as the coopetition manager as a member of multiple social institutions informing strategic participation (cf. Whittington, 1992, 2007). By focusing on the origins, manifestations, and implications of the divergent goals, interests, and incentives of multiple actors in the coopetition strategy process, attention is shifted from economic performance, or balancing appropriation and the creation of value, to the performance of the coopetition practitioner at the micro level. This performance includes the effects of sensegiving and discursive practices, as well as how and why coopetition practitioners draw on them (cf. Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

The findings from the articles suggest that before understanding coopetition at macro levels, researchers need to consider top and middle managers and other employees in terms of who they are, their histories and backgrounds, which form the basis for the individual incentives to be realized through strategic participation, or non-participation (cf. Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007). Also, the findings show a plurality of social identities drawn upon when coopeting, enabling or hindering participation. For example, some managers were able to connect the professional and shared minority identities, in this manner integrating cooperative and competitive frames that enabled sensemaking (Article 2 and 3). Thus, these managers understood that if drawing upon value for the minority community when justifying coopeting, the value for the organization was included (cf. Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). The value of incorporating the strategy-as-practice approach deeper into the coopetition research field can further be specified in terms of the case study’s extension of the actors that are involved in and influence the formation and development of strategy, both outside and inside of organizational boundaries (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). External to the organization, industry consultants and experts are included as influential strategy practitioners both in the formation as well as the development phases of coopetition.
strategies. The findings in Article 2 and Article 3 show that this actor group has a major influence on how strategy is interpreted across top and lower managerial levels. Coopetition agency was aided by drawing upon a changing macro industry discourse, from competition oriented to emphasizing cooperation as the only future choice, which was mostly produced by industry experts, with the additions of published articles including top managerial statements on cooperation. The role of the customer is also emphasized in the case findings. Generating future value for the customers by preserving a future cultural identity became a way to legitimize coopetition engagement in both the strategy formation and development stages, particularly by one group of top managers (Article 2). On the other hand, particularly in Article 3, the customer also became a source of reluctance towards engaging in realizing the strategy as it progressed, which was visible in the negative views and assessments connected with the possible drawbacks for organizational identity as a result of coopeting.

Even though the empirical findings point to the fact that realizing a coopetition strategy is contingent upon key influential top managers, initiating, developing, and influencing activities and interactions, particularly at the intra-organizational levels, the findings oppose the traditional view of top managers as the sole crucial agents for the realization and development of coopetition. As discussed in Article 1, departing from a pure deliberate strategy perspective suggests that the internal and external forces contributing to strategy formulation and implementation activities are based on rationality and predictability, and that activities are always realized as intended. The empirical findings in Article 3, however, show that managers lower down in the organizational hierarchy are usually those crafting, developing, and influencing the development of the strategy in practice – based on their abilities to deal with ambiguities and the strategy’s novelty – in their daily activities.

Additionally, Article 2 and Article 3 show that coopetition sensemaking was greatly influenced by attitudes, emotions, and expectations, concerning perceptions of the own as well as the other organizations’ shared commitment and willingness to realize coopetition, thus contradicting the deliberate and rational view of coopetition strategies. For example, the fear of not existing in the future aided agency creation, as did feelings of optimism and joy stemming from a perceived new shared relational consensus, contributing to some managers gladly welcoming the emerging strategy (Article 2).

Overall, the identification of personal incentives guiding the choice of individuals to engage or not engage in realizing coopetition in its initial and development phases shows the importance of addressing emergence to a greater extent when investigating the process of coopetition.

4.1.3 Addressing emergence

Clearly, the above discussion rejects the competitor as the most influential actor in coopetition, and planning and prediction as the number one strategic activity of managers. The complexity that becomes visible when the multiple actor levels and different sensemaking types are addressed stands in stark contrast to the view of coopetition strategies as purely deliberate. Therefore, based on the proposed framework in Article 1 and the empirical findings in Article 3, it is suggested that coopetition should be regarded as a constant flow of both intended and emergent cooperative and competitive activities executed by practitioners. No organization is ‘born’ into coopetition, rather, intentional and unintentional activity patterns form the strategy over time (see also Tidström & Rajala, 2016). The case study’s findings prove that coopetition strategies are, to a great extent, characterized by unintentionality and emergence.
Drawing on Mintzberg and Waters (1985) emergence pertains to the tendencies of evolving behavioral patterns, diverging or converging with a set of pre-defined intentions. In this sense, emergence includes both undesired and welcomed unintentional patterns, also indicating that (managerial) intentions can be shared in an organization to different degrees.

In **Article 1**, emergence is particularly addressed in terms of flexibility, strategic learning, and adaptation throughout the strategy process. Moving closer to the individual level, in **Article 2**, emergence is addressed in terms of how a coopetition strategy develops both in the past and future tense, as individuals both retrospectively and prospectively create and recreate a coopetition frame through continuous sensemaking. In **Article 3**, informal rumoring at lower organizational levels about coopetition leading to layoffs, clearly influenced sensemaking processes and produced action patterns that were neither desired nor intended from the beginning by top managers. However, these emergent patterns coexisted with action patterns in line with the intentions of top managers that contributed to the realization of coopetition in practice to some extent.

Those findings converge with the conceptual discussion in **Article 1**, where the emergent perspective becomes visible at the intra-organizational level, as top managers have to be sensitive to the fact that employees across the organization might not share the same strategic understanding. Informal and unintentional interactions over time between lower level employees of the competing organizations might therefore constitute the source of a coopetition strategy. Similarly, as suggested by **Article 1**, due to the unintentional challenges and opportunities arising as the coopetition relationship progresses, managers need to continuously react and respond. Emergence at the relational level is also supported by the empirical findings because ad hoc inter-organizational interactions formed a pattern of activities over time, which intensified when coopetition was realized for the first time through the exchange of material.

Emergence can also be addressed and explained in terms of the multiple incentives, goals, and motivations of individuals across organizations and actor levels for realizing, or not realizing coopetition (**Article 3**). Pertaining to both empirical articles, emergence can be linked with sensegiving. Key and positively oriented managers engaged in sensegiving throughout the strategy process in order to influence the widespread adoption of positive views on the exchange, and to foster both the emergence and realization of the strategy. These individuals saw their chance to realize increased cooperation between the parties through the materials exchange, something that had only been discussed and debated between the parties previously. Throughout the process, they tried to uphold a continuous contribution to the exchange by visualizing its potential future benefits for the organizations and future success when speaking of and reminding each other about the exchange when interacting.

Externally, to the public, the exchange was portrayed as having immense future possibilities and as the only option to survive the industry. However, the intended sensegiving to specific actors, such as external stakeholders, also resulted in unintended consequences for how other actor groups made sense of the strategy, e.g. lower level managers. The materials exchange was interpreted by many in the organizations as imposed on the employees and the enthusiasm that was projected externally was not expressed to the same extent internally by all top managers. This finding indicates the role of lodestars in the strategy process as well as the political dimensions of coopetition sensemaking, but also that some managers are more prone than others to trying to influence others into accepting the strategy. Also, it highlights the interplay between external and intra-organizational sensemaking and sensegiving (see also Lundgren-
Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). For example, successful coopetition agency – visible in the resolved and developed sensemaking patterns – acted as a symbol for the new competitive structures enabling other actors in their agency creation (Article 3).

In contrast, many managers also unconsciously influenced the sense made by others (see also Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). Due to persisting organizational routines and the specific nature of daily work routines, many managers struggled to perform the exchange of material at the same time as running business as usual (cf. Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). This had a significant effect on others’ sensemaking, largely viewed as the continued manifestations of old competitive structures and a reluctance to coopete. This also indicates that coopetition agency shapes coopetition and its development, but also that it is shaped by this same development. Thus, closely related to the strategic actor discussion, the findings therefore broaden what activities should be considered strategic regarding coopetition.

Based on the case study’s findings, it is possible to argue that interpretative activities both at relational and organizational levels should be considered strategic, proving consequential for an organization and its coopetition relationships. This includes formal meetings and communication, as well as informal talk, both enabling and hindering coopetition agency, ultimately accomplishing development or inertia in terms of realizing coopetition (Article 3). The meetings of different structures, both at inter- and intra-organizational levels, should therefore be considered as key sensemaking instances for evaluating coopetition (cf. Hendry & Seidl, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001). This fits with recent advances in the field that recognize the existence of both deliberate and emergent activities at the same level (Tidström & Rajala, 2016). Particularly in the inter-organizational meetings, the future development of the industry and the inter-organizational interactions were debated and discussed. This illustrates both social contact and a discourse that had not existed before as the previous discourse had clearly been competition dominated and unwelcoming of increased mutual exchange or dialog between the parties.

Moreover, the empirical findings indicate that emergence proves both positive and negative for coopetition strategy development. The exchange of material gave rise to the development of new projects, and the realization of previously discussed projects, whereas mental inertia contributed to the fact that the strategy was not realized as fast as was intended by top managers (Article 3). Thus, inertia overshadowed the new projects and these two types of emergence had counterbalancing effects, contributing to the fact that the ‘status quo’ was maintained (cf. Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007) and, in the end, the progress made was minor. These findings suggest that coopetition strategies should be viewed as consisting of continuous and intertwined cycles of deliberate and emergent processes over time. Last, in Article 1, the emergent perspective on strategy also recognizes the influence of the environment and posits that as a contextually derived practice, a coopetition strategy arises from activities formulated by top management as a consequence of change in the business environment and its requirements. Applied to the empirical findings, the influence of environmental change on coopetition formation and development was clearly evident, forming the foundation for the study’s focus on coopetition as strategic change.

In sum, the empirical findings clearly show the crucial role of the individual manager in shaping and realizing the coopetition strategy process; however, the individual must also be regarded as part of the collective (cf. Gnyawali et al., 2016; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), which determines development. The sensemaking perspective introduces the fact that a coopetition strategy requires shared collective frames across multiple actor levels not
only enabling decision-making, but also strategic participation, in order to be realized ‘successfully’ and as intended. However, the empirical findings, especially in Article 2, show that this becomes complicated by the fact that different views of the past, present, and future, co-exist throughout the strategy process (cf. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) and are more or less aligned at different actor levels. The findings shed light on the differences in the assessments of the emerging coopetition by individuals – even though they had taken part in the same inter-organizational meetings and discussions – as they clearly show the plurality of views and attitudes as well as how individuals interpreted the degree of shared expectations and commitments (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) across actor levels differently, factors which had a significant influence on frame creation. As both top and middle managers engage in parallel collective sensemaking at both intra- and inter-organizational levels, the possibility exists for overall external or inter-organizational ‘sense’ to deviate from the ‘sense’ produced internally in the organizations (Article 3). Thus, the empirical findings show the inherent difficulties in creating shared coopetition frames within and across actor levels.

Therefore, the thesis challenges how previous research has viewed time when considering coopetition – as it stretches the time dimension to incorporate continuous interplay between the past and the future through ongoing sensemaking. Informed by the sensemaking approach, the empirical findings therefore suggest that individual and collective assessments of engaging or not engaging in realizing coopetition should be understood as influenced by legacies and the anticipated future. To summarize, it is possible to argue that coopetition researchers should shift their focus from the interplay between the intra- and inter-organizational levels, to the in-depth consideration of the interplay between the past and the future, cognition and action, structure and agency, and thus between the institutional and action realms.

4.2 Contributions to ongoing discussions in the coopetition research field

Particularly through the thesis’ attention to strategic emergence over time, the ongoing stream of activities forming a coopetition strategy, both at organizational and relational levels, can reveal much more about the role of individuals as the main building block of strategies – because they enact the practices and execute the strategy – than the current understandings available from the research field can tell us. As such, by breaking down coopetition strategies into smaller units of processes and practices and investigating the relationship between them from multiple angles, as well as what they actually produce, the generated findings contribute to existing discussions in the coopetition research field, which can be applied to the whole strategy process. Overall, the contribution lies in the cognitive approach to coopetition drivers, process, and outcomes, and the taking of a multilevel approach to coopetition when addressing, for example, coping with complexity and role ambiguity (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). In addition, the development of the coopetition strategy was investigated in a novel industry setting (Bengtsson et al., 2016a), where a strong cultural dimension prevailed and became evident over time – from the formation of the strategy to the implementation stages.

4.2.1 Drivers of coopetition strategies

Starting with the drivers of coopetition, incorporating multiple actors and levels into the coopetition picture problematizes what drives the formation in the first place. Even though business environment pressure became the main catalyst for coopetition in the case study, the managers’ choices and perceived motives for engaging in the strategy
were inherently different and they assigned different and even competing values to the strategy. This suggests that no universal motive to coopete exists, although the coopetition research has traditionally been highly economic and innovation centered. Drawing on the practice approach, the findings point to the fact that the motive for engaging in coopetition should be addressed as grounded in managers' identities, backgrounds, histories, and the personal goals they wish to realize, such as in **Article 2** where they become visible in the *social and cultural framings of coopetition*. When addressing the formation of coopetition strategy, the individual should be viewed as the prime initiator of coopetition, something that is clearly visible in the empirical findings where managers who engage in sensegiving in order to aid the emergence of the strategy seem to experience personal satisfaction as a result of realizing coopetition at last, after a long relational history filled with resistance to coopete.

**Article 2** thus makes a significant contribution in terms of in-depth investigation into individual level perception (Yami et al., 2010) regarding the formation stage of coopetition. The findings indicate that the drivers behind a coopetition strategy greatly depend on which subject position and subsequent *identity* is adopted by a manager. For example, the positively oriented managers engaging in sensegiving at the start were also more prone to drawing on the potential future value of the cultural identity gained from coopeting. This advances understanding concerning the role of past and future identity assessment for the formation and emergence of coopetition, and not only as an origin for shifts in coopetition dynamics (Ingram & Yue, 2008; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014).

The findings join past and recent research on the inter-organizational level, showing that trust matters greatly in the formation of coopetition (e.g. Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Czernek & Czakon, 2016), placing an emphasis on the relational drivers of coopetition. The expected social value gained from engaging in the strategy (**Article 2**) indicates that some managers perceived the relational value of coopetition as superior to the potential benefits for the organization. Drawing on previous relational experiences, the anticipated future social value encompassed establishing a long-term relationship between the parties, thus repairing previous difficulties. This suggests that the strategic dimension of coopetition is not only captured by the organizational level (Bengtsson et al., 2016a), but that it also extends into the relational dimension. Trust seems to develop based on perceptions of shared views of the future, enabling strategic participation. As such, the relational dimension should not only be regarded as a means for mutual value creation and resource extraction, but also as a source of legitimacy for coopetition engagement.

Last, concerning the choice to coopete and the formation of coopetition, the findings suggest that the research focus should be shifted from the compatibility of the coopetitors to the influence of the customer dimension and the long-term values gained from coopeting. The findings in **Article 2** show that managers situated closer to the customer were more prone to draw on cultural and customer values. Hence, the legitimacy for the strategic participation was created by relying on the potential for securing the future of the minority language’s media presence through coopetition.

### 4.2.2 The coopetition strategy process

By acknowledging the importance of the past and social heritage for participation in the strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006, 2007), the thesis also challenges dominant views on the *coopetition strategy process*. The thesis’ focus on what constrains and enables coopetition agency proves particularly valuable to the ongoing tension and capability discussions in coopetition research. Based on the empirical
findings, the notion of coopetition tensions is extended to originate from the ambiguities and contradictions between the past and the future, between multiple social identities, plus existing activities and activities imposed by coopeting, including making them fit with established practices. In other words, coopetition tensions exist in instances of contradiction between change and stability (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). For example, the findings clearly point to the fact that managers at top and middle managerial levels experienced *ambiguity* due to the simultaneous existence of old and new competitive frames when acting and interacting. In particular, the prevalence of old frames became visible at lower organizational levels during discussions about potential alternative aims for coopeting other than the official explanations, such as future mergers or layoffs. These discussions resulted in a negative effect on shared participation. Many managers consequently prioritized daily work in their organization rather than contributing to the materials exchange that contributed to maintaining the status quo (see Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b).

The findings also highlight the fact that tensions experienced in the past might have long-term effects on coopetition agency – influencing future strategic participation (Article 2). Dealing with tensions is important given the fact that strong tensions might hamper synergies (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016). However, the complexity inherent in coopetition strategizing presented by the articles’ findings, including the emergence and unpredictability of individual behavior, challenges the notion of ideal coopetition tension management. Individuals engaged in coopetition are complex beings, continuously part of intertwined sensemaking processes within and between actor levels, influenced by changes in attitudes, emotions, and experiences over time. In this sense, the thesis’ framework questions whether it is possible to predict how individuals cope with the cognitive and behavioral integration of tensions arising from coopetition engagement (cf. Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). The practice perspective on coopetition further suggests that individuals cope with tensions not because they are employees of a particular organization (cf. Whittington, 2007); rather, tensions are coped with in terms of individual incentives and goals to be realized.

As the strategy developed, the generated actions and interactions constantly influenced the emerging views of the future held by the coopetition participants, pointing to the continuous interplay between cognition and action (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Regarding this, if coopetition is approached as consisting of continuous sensemaking flows (Article 2) where change and stability continuously interact and produce tensions, coping with tensions might also become an ongoing, unconscious activity, which is touched upon in Article 3. Clearly, some managers seemed to experience fewer difficulties and ambiguities than others regarding the realization of coopetition in practice and contributing to driving the strategy forward. The individual exposed to dealing with simultaneous cooperation and competition should thus be approached as a person being shaped by tensions, but also as influencing the degree of tension (cf. Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). The relationships between tensions experienced at the intra-organizational level and the inter-organizational level origin of these (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014) should therefore be regarded as reciprocal, meaning that the coping strategies of individuals in organizations can also affect the inter-organizational level. This was visible in the fact that the overall relational and strategy development was interpreted in a negative sense by a particular group of managers (Article 3) due to a majority of the managers across intra-organizational levels struggling with the realization of coopetition.

By following the development of the coopetition strategy process at different actor levels, the case study extends present understanding of the duality experienced by individuals
affected in one way or another by coopetition inside the organization. The different sensemaking types identified in Article 3 indicate that lower level managers experienced tensions differently (Park et al., 2014). Tensions originated and manifested in different interrelated areas (see Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b), such as trade-offs between performing the exchange of material and working for the organization, however, the incompatibility between different discourses and identities seemed to have their most negative effect on coopetition agency. In terms of top managers, the different sensemaking types also point to the fact that a coopetition mindset becomes an individual characteristic, which managers seem to either have or lack. The centrality of emergence in the case findings also challenges the assumptions of top managers being able to mitigate the frustration felt within an organization (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016). For example, unintentional and informal talk arising at lower organizational levels contributed to the fact that skepticism about the exchange of material was increased, upholding former ways of thinking, which considered increased cooperation between the parties as harmful for individuals and the organization.

The description of the interplay between coopetition sensemaking and sensegiving offered in the empirical articles extends the coopetition capability concept to include these processes. From an individual point of view, the capability should be understood as possessing the ability to draw upon suitable social identities and institutions that enable coopetition agency, an area in which managers were proven to have widely differing abilities. The empirical findings indicate that individually experienced tensions also originate from contradictions between cognition and doing – that is, between analytical and executional capability modes (Gnyawali et al., 2016). For example, some managers were able to understand and accept coopetition, i.e. internalize the paradox, yet were not able to execute it in practice due to, for example, the persistence of organizational routines, which were visible in the limited sensemaking type. In addressing sensemaking and the different action patterns produced over time, the case study defines actions or non-actions as the actual manifestation of cognitive coping with coopetition tensions. The findings therefore support previous arguments about individuals being different in their ability to cope with a coopetition paradox (e.g. Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015), while extending this understanding by describing and explaining the origins of the paradox and why individuals differ in their coping abilities due to enabling and hindering practices.

In approaching the development of relational dynamics over time as contingent upon, and reciprocally related to, micro level practices and processes, the core of a coopetition strategy is revealed to be not only individuals and their ongoing interpretations and actions, but also the practice patterns that are produced and re-produced that either hinder or enable coopetition agency and participation in realizing the strategy. In sum, the thesis acknowledges change as the only constant in coopetition, and posits that in order to understand emergence and the development of coopetition dynamics (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Dahl, 2014; Ritala & Tidström, 2014), researchers need to shift their focus from coopetition dynamics to the social sub-dynamics inside these very dynamics, and to all speech and interaction that make up the cooperative and competitive flows (see also Article 1). For example, the case findings suggest that talking about cooperation as an increasing future trend, visible in the new industry discourse, was one of the main sources for successful sensemaking, as it enabled compatibility between present and future degrees of cooperation and competition to be perceived. This also supports previous arguments made concerning the hindering effects of high degrees of competition on coopetition development (Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Park et al., 2014).
Furthermore, the thesis shows that divergent and unintentional patterns might exist within the simultaneous cooperative and competitive activity streams, influencing their respective development. For example, the prevalence of certain types of sensemaking patterns hindered the realization of increasing the cooperative flow as intended (Article 3) since the exchange was assigned a lower priority in daily work (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b). This finding suggests that the micro level underpins the dynamics of cooperation and competition between parties, and therefore joins the conceptual studies addressing individual level factors, such as perception, identity, and acquiring routines, as shifting the coopetition dynamics balance (e.g. Dahl, 2014; Ingram & Yue, 2008; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014). Last, the developments and outcomes of coopetition strategies should be understood as generated through interaction and talk in various forms across actor levels, through which sensemaking patterns become aggregated (cf. Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

4.2.3 Coopetition strategy outcomes

The thesis extends established understandings of coopetition performance and outcomes by recognizing that the individual level plays a greater role in coopetition, and by increasing the focus on the performance of strategists and reducing the focus on economic performance. Previous research has informed the field that coopetition leads to positive performance, such as economic outcomes and increased innovation (e.g. Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Ritala, 2012), but might also result in relational failure (e.g. Park & Russo, 1996). In incorporating multiple actors and levels into the coopetition picture, the empirical findings challenge the assessments of what actually constitutes ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ outcomes arising from coopetition. If the development and outcomes of coopetition strategies are approached as contingent upon continuous sensemaking and sensegiving, dictating the realization or non-realization of coopetition in practice, what constitutes a ‘good’ coopetition strategy, in other words, for whom the strategy in the end proves successful, is problematized (see also Bengtsson et al., 2016a).

The findings therefore suggest that the ‘success’ of a coopetition strategy should be approached as plural, since multiple and different interests are served by realizing or not realizing the strategy. Addressing multiple actor levels across all coopeting parties also advances coopetition research by demonstrating that the same outcome can be interpreted and perceived in different ways (cf. Tidström, 2014), depending upon which social identity and institution is drawn on. For example, even though it was perceived as beneficial to coopete for the mutual cultural identity, engaging in realizing the strategy could also prove negative for the individual in the end – as was seen in the perceived threat to employment prospects in Article 3. Also, the symbolism of the realized collaboration was mostly perceived as a greater benefit and outcome than the anticipated future economic benefits (Article 2).

The coopetition capability concept can also be viewed in terms of the outcomes produced. The findings posit that tensions do not cause particular coopetition outcomes, instead how individuals choose or choose not to deal with tensions in daily work, consciously or unconsciously, does that. In terms of tensions, the potential for synergies (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010a; Tidström, 2014) was not present in the case, rather, the findings indicate that even low degrees of tension might prove negative for coopetition development when addressing coopetition agency. It thus became evident that the negatively oriented sensemaking patterns that were hindering the intended realization at lower levels was also influencing top managerial attitudes towards, and views on, what could be mutually accomplished in the future. These attitudes were grounded in the fact
that the coopetition development did not match their perceived new shared relational reality (Article 3) nor did the expected shared enthusiasm at lower organizational levels materialize. The capability concept is thereby extended, indicating that the two modes are interrelated even at different levels, thus the capability to execute coopetition at lower levels shapes analytical capabilities at top managerial levels, and vice versa. The empirical findings hence suggest that analytical and executional capability modes should not be viewed as linear but as iterative (Gnyawali et al., 2016), shaping each other over time. In this sense, analytical capability modes might come before executional – but also be re-shaped by an evolved executional mode. The findings thus challenge the idea of an aggregated organizational capability, indicating that individuals will never be in the same mode at the same time and that the fit between both modes seems hard to sustain over time.

4.3 Managerial implications

The empirical findings offer guidelines that can be applied to the whole strategy process by coopetition practitioners. Starting with drivers of coopetition, even though business environment forces need to be taken into account when considering the formation of coopetition strategies, drivers of coopetition should be viewed as originating from the individual level. The practice approach adopted in the thesis not only suggests that some managers are more prone than others to choosing a coopetition path based on individual level motives and incentives, but also that the choice to engage in this type of strategy is not always grounded in economic oriented incentives. Rather, the economic dimension might prove secondary to other anticipated values and outcomes, which also create legitimacy for engaging in the strategy (Article 2). As such, managers should be aware of the possible existence of contrasting interpretations and motives that are assigned to the strategy both at intra- and inter-organizational levels, which can deviate from the intended, agreed upon, and communicated motives between top management. This was visible in the case study as some managers viewed coopetition as an opportunity, whereas others were more inclined to see it as a threat. This also illustrates the need for key change individuals that continuously talk about coopetition in such way that strategic participation is promoted (Balogun, 2006).

The uncertainty of the future present in ongoing sensemaking will also include the coopeting parties and the relational development regarding coopetition (cf. Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015). For example, for some parties in the case study, the coopetition strategy and the development was approached as a success, whereas others interpreted the same evolution as a failure, clearly influencing their view of what could actually be accomplished in the future. The reasons why individuals and their past experiences matter so much to the coopetition strategy process becomes apparent when considering shared views of the present and future (cf. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). The notion of shared views becomes problematic in terms of coopetition, as multiple individuals across organizational levels and competing organizations are incorporated into the strategy. Experiences, attitudes, and views, will therefore naturally differ due to the increased amount of people involved and managers will need to adopt tools and techniques that facilitate the emergence of shared views to aid collective decision-making, including sensegiving and discursive practices.

Therefore, to organize and manage the coopetition process, managers must be aware of their own as well as others interpretations of coopetition that can either inhibit or aid their participation in strategic activities. Skepticism and negative attitudes might have further consequences for implementing the strategy, irrespective of the employee’s level
in the organization, since they hinder engagement in strategic activities (Article 3). Moreover, the findings encourage managers to pay particular attention to the emergence of unintended activities as the strategy progresses, potentially having both positive and negative implications. Unforeseen activities at lower organizational levels, such as informal sensegiving, might prove strategic in the end and influence coopetition development and outcomes in unintentional and unfavorable directions. On the other hand, unintentional activities and emergence might also prove beneficial and constitute valuable opportunities, requiring top managers to use sensegiving to exploit the potential.

As such, even though a coopetition strategy and its development is influenced by top managers and planning, the findings show that the influence from the business environment, external stakeholders, and other actor levels, such as middle managers and lower level employees, on coopetition development, should not be disregarded. Managers should therefore keep in mind that all individuals that have an influence on the formation or implementation of coopetition strategy are strategists in their own and in coopeting organizations. This is clearly seen in the empirical findings, where managers lower down the hierarchy became key developers in influencing and crafting coopetition strategies in their daily activities, while also possessing the power to influence how others perceived the strategy across actor levels (Rouleau, 2005) – in both beneficial and negative senses. For example, skeptical attitudes towards the strategy at lower managerial levels resulted in a lack of engagement in implementing it, influencing views on other actor levels. This finding also indicates that individuals’ experiences in the past might have long-term effects for the development of coopetition strategies (cf. Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012), causing difficulties in creating legitimacy when implementing the strategy. Managers should therefore be aware that integrating coopetition with established ways of thinking and acting both at inter- and intra-organizational levels requires time.

Based on the findings, inertia is proven to occur due to the fact that individuals draw upon institutionalized sets of routines that do not give room for coopetition activities to be incorporated into daily work. Managers are therefore required to create opportunities and give room to employees in their day-to-day work so that they can cope with and realize activities related to coopetition. This not only requires continuous communication but also assessments of the particular discursive practices deployed by managers in organizations. Regarding strategy implementation, discursive practices seem to have a larger impact than other practices, such as formal meetings between the top managers of the coopeting organizations on the sense made. Thus, it becomes evident through the findings of the case study that how managers decide to speak about coopetition, consciously or unconsciously, plays a decisive role in the interpretations and behavior generated in the organization, and ultimately for the outcomes of the strategy. In addition, the alignment of coopetition with organizational discourse and identity in a beneficial light seems crucial at lower organizational levels for making sense of coopetition as a strategic change (cf. Sonenshein, 2010).

Discursive use also influences the sense made of the relational level across coopeting parties and accordingly becomes consequential for the relational development. The findings show that a major perceived value and outcome from engaging in the strategy was the potential for improvement in the relational pattern derived from the past. The anticipated future benefits were hence perceived to stem from the atmosphere of the new relationship (Article 2). As the strategy moved into its implementation phase, the produced action patterns clearly stood in contradiction to the anticipated future, leaving managers doubtful and hesitant. This not only informs practitioners that some
individuals seem more inclined than others to cooperate simply based on who they are (cf. Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007), but also that a divergence between collective decision-making and agreement, and actual cooperation development, might prove detrimental for relational development. In addition, engaging in sensegiving and intentionally trying to influence another’s view of the strategy might also have negative and unintentional effects (Article 3), further emphasizing the power managers have to portray cooperation through speech. In order to mitigate negative views, managers should embed cooperation in a future vision in which its benefits for multiple interrelated identities are clearly stated.

The emphasis on emergence throughout the thesis particularly informs managerial practices concerning anticipated cooperation outcomes. The findings highlight the possibility of inconsistent actions and experiences at the individual level when compared with the anticipated organizational level outcomes. As such, the dimension of politics and the realization of an employee’s own incentives need to be taken into account by managers when assessing the outcomes of cooperation. For example, the choice to not engage in realizing cooperation can be grounded in a fear of changing or even loosing employments. Likewise, in order to understand management and the outcomes of tensions arising from cooperation, managers must take into account who the lower level employees and middle managers really are, for example, by paying attention to how sense is given and made in terms of the wider social or cultural context (Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011), visible in the findings where the strategy was portrayed as the only way to save the future minority media. If individuals are assumed to cope with the strategy based on their own incentives and motivations, the question of how managers can motivate the realization of the strategy is raised, as is whether cooperation can be managed at all. The individual oriented focus of the case study and the findings suggest that each cooperation strategy is unique and involves a unique set of individuals, and accordingly requires customized management, not a universal cooperation management technique (cf. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Fernandez et al., 2014).

Last, although focusing on the initiation and enactment of more long-term oriented cooperation, the findings also say something about short-term projects (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). The findings suggest that cooperation that is continuous in practice is inherently different from projects that have specified structures and time periods, and which do not require individual organization to the same extent as when the strategy becomes part of an organization’s long-term planning (Article 3). Thus, the findings point to the fact that it seems harder to make sense of ongoing long-term cooperation than short-term projects, suggesting that the specific time dimension of the cooperation in question seems influential for the strategic sensemaking that occurs. Implementing cooperation on a voluntary basis seems hard to accomplish, and managers should therefore develop clear guidelines for operational employees.

4.4 **Implications for the strategy-as-practice and sensemaking fields of research**

The findings from the articles have implications for both the strategy-as-practice and the sensemaking fields of research. The thesis invites practice scholars to consider investigating strategizing and practices in cooperation contexts, which could be argued to fall under the description of pluralistic ones (e.g. Denis et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006) since the findings show proof of complexity in terms of multiple incentives, goals, and attitudes. The focus and results of the articles answer the calls made by scholars to explore emergence in strategy work, and the influence of lower
organizational levels on strategy development (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Particularly, the case findings show tendencies of ‘dwelling’ modes across actor levels regarding practices because individuals clearly acted in line with past behavior (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). In addition, not only did the articles address operational managers, external stakeholders, such as industry experts, and their influence on strategy work at both top and middle managerial levels through authoring a new discourse, were identified as influential strategists (cf. Laine & Vaara, 2015).

Coopetition agency and the reciprocal link with competitive structures was explored throughout the thesis, joining practice studies addressing the institutional level and strategizing in order to generate understandings of the structure and agency relationship (e.g. Whittington, 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Last, the case study could be argued to add knowledge to the sensemaking stream focusing on strategic change and middle managers, particularly in addressing both top and middle management sensemaking, connecting it to sustained and emergent practices, and establishing a link not only with perceived economic outcomes, but also with social and environmental ones (cf. Rouleau et al., 2015). This thesis accordingly lays foundations for practice scholars wishing to include competitors as external strategists when considering open strategies (Whittington et al., 2011).

Turning to the sensemaking field, the findings could be argued to add to the emerging discussion concerning retrospective and prospective sensemaking (e.g. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). In particular, coopetition frame creation was addressed as incorporating continuous past and future assessments of action and interaction patterns at inter- and intra-organizational levels. Moreover, scholars in the sensemaking tradition have recently called for studies that address sensemaking at both micro and macro levels in order to fully understand sensemaking processes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This call is grounded in the argument that previous research has neglected the broader institutional level, for example, not addressing the influence of cultural and historical contexts on sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), which this thesis does touch upon when considering historically shaped identities in terms of a cultural minority.

### 4.5 Limitations and future research directions

The case study's findings clearly show the importance of addressing how meaning is created in coopetition as it precedes strategic participation. A new research path is hence opened, emphasizing the value of implementing a sensemaking perspective into coopetition research and expanding it to consider other types of meaning creation or resistance. For example, research possibilities that link strategic participation and non-participation across the organization exist, which would have implications for the organizational, relational (cf. Laine & Vaara, 2015) and project levels (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). Also, the case study was implemented in a change context, therefore the origins of some of the organizational and relational outcomes could be intertwined with that context. Future research should therefore investigate coopetition and the micro level in a context characterized by stability.

Both intentionality and emergence were addressed in terms of strategy development and outcomes throughout the case study. Future research could further integrate the practice approach into this discussion by addressing different degrees of intentionality concerning emerging or established coopetition practices (Tsoukas, 2015). For example, addressing and contrasting more deliberate types of every day practical coping with
unintentionality and dwelling modes (Chia & Rasche, 2015) and what informs different types of coping over time (cf. Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015) could greatly advance the coopetition practice discussion in highlighting self-consciousness in comparison to the internalized tendencies to draw upon practices (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & Rasche, 2015). The case findings clearly show that some managers deliberately use new structures and practices, whereas others seem to deliberately disregard new practices. In contrast, others were, in a non-deliberate manner, submerged by continuity and business-as-usual concerning the implementation of coopetition, pointing to a dwelling mode. Future studies are therefore faced with an under-researched area on how actors combine these different practical coping modes, and what the implications are for practice at different times and across different levels.

Regarding the methods chosen for the case study, only one observation was made and integrated into analyzing the case findings. Future research could deploy observation and other ethnographic inspired research techniques (cf. Vaara & Whittington, 2012) to closely study individual and collective sensemaking over time. The case study showed that the professional practices of producing journalistic material for their own customers was connected to competition and inhibited some managers in their sensemaking of the introduction of coopetition, pointing to how sensemaking transpires and manifests through practices (Balogun et al., 2014), as well as the cultural embedding of practices (Chia & Holt, 2006). Future research could therefore explore different artefacts and materiality, such as power point and other material practices (cf. Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015), and connect them with coopetition sensemaking and not only focus on how coopetition is talked about, which was largely the focus of this case study.

Recent studies have also stated that coopetition researchers should delve deeper into cognitive and behavioral coping when dealing with coopetition at lower organizational levels (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2106; Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Gnyawali et al., 2016). This could be achieved by following how emotions are connected to strategizing (Golsorkhi et al., 2015) across different actor levels. In this manner, different individual and collective coping strategies and their link to individual and collective decision-making could be expanded. However, studying sensemaking requires longitudinal studies (Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015). The longitudinality of this case study ranged over two years in real time, so future studies should therefore extend the time horizon to follow how sensemaking develops and changes over longer periods.

Grounded in the focus of the thesis on processes and practices, future research is encouraged to move beyond practices as simple doings, and to delve deeper into the actual origin of the practices deployed in coopetition strategizing, as well as how these are upheld and changed. Coopetition in this case was supposed to be ongoing, yet the question could be asked as to whether coopetition becomes a norm over time, or will it always incorporate ambiguities, which the case findings suggested. Conducting studies on sensemaking and coopetition over a longer period of time could therefore also generate insights concerning if and how a coopetition strategy has the potential to become institutionalized over time, and how this actually takes place. In particular, addressing how actors individually and collectively craft new practices by maintaining traces of the past, and how these become ‘practicized’ through repetition over time (Jarzabkowski, 2004), embracing both macro and micro levels (cf. Seidl & Whittington, 2014), could greatly advance the coopetition practice discussion. As such, future research is directed to investigate the processes of adopting new practices, ranging from the use of power point to informal talk in its various forms (e.g. Balogun et al., 2014; Whittington, 2006).
It becomes evident through the case study findings, that the practices to be addressed in future research, in relation to other practices and processes, is discursive practices. Future coopetition research also needs to shift its focus from how coopetition is communicated by managers, for example in terms of creating a coopetition friendly culture in organizations (e.g. Luo, 2007), to why managers decide or decide not to talk about a coopetition strategy in a particular manner. In order to advance understanding of different sensegiving patterns (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016b), for example, how and why practitioners perform particular discursive practices in inter- and intra-organizational meetings, and what is actually accomplished by these practices, could be explored in the future. Discursive practices could also be connected to notions of power (Balogun et al., 2014). There might exist key practitioners in organizational positions that possess more power than others in terms of influencing the overall view of coopetition (cf. Kaplan, 2008). On the other hand, key coopetition practitioners could also emerge and have the power to shift a dominant view in the organization as the strategy develops. This also raises the question of whether an organization should implement and train key individuals to manage coopetition, or whether individuals become key practitioners as the strategy progresses.

Emergence is also an area that future studies should address in more detail. The case study focused on enacting coopetition as a strategic change and what enabled and hindered this enactment. Future studies should adopt a view of sensemaking as emergent and continuous and just not a change context (Cornelissen & Schildt, 2015), exploring how coopetition frames are sustained or changed over time. Moreover, the prevalence of old ways of thinking about each other and cooperation in the industry, showed how the practices and the structures manifested seem to persist through time and space, contributing to skepticism about the future. Future studies could address resistance and its implications, e.g. by focusing on sensebreaking (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Laine & Vaara, 2007, 2015; Mantere, Schildt & Sillience, 2012) to see if sustained views perish and how that occurs.

Last, to provide new understandings concerning the crafting of coopetition strategies by a large group of strategists, there are many opportunities for future research to link the emerging coopetition paradox discussion with strategizing and sensemaking (cf. Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). There might exist actor groups in organizations that actively avoid the paradox, or deploy different strategies to eliminate it. Thus, investigating how individuals cope with the paradox over time, and work out coping strategies for handling a mix of cooperative and competitive frames (Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016), could substantially advance the field. Understanding how coopetition is established in practice and accordingly how frames become shared could be generated by closely following how the different paradoxes of performing, organizing, and belonging (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) are dealt with in daily work by organizational members, and by studying the evolution of coopetition dynamics over time. The influencing role of shared emotions on sensemaking was touched upon in the thesis, however, emotional dynamics (Brundin & Liu, 2015), i.e. individual and collective emotions, and emotional contagion (Cornelissen et al., 2014), should be further explored in the future. For example, studies can address how negative or positive emotions connected to coopetition spread across an organization and how they affect shared coopetition frame creation within and across actor levels.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1  INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DATA COLLECTION PHASE 1

Introduction

• Tell me about your background and your current position in the organization

Theme: Cooperation and competition

• Tell me about the background to the collaboration
• Describe the previous contact between the organizations
• What is the scope of the collaboration?
• How is the collaboration organized and executed?
• How would you describe the collaboration?
• How would you describe the goal of the collaboration?
• Tell me about your experience of competition between the organizations

Theme: The present

• What are the implications of the collaboration for your daily work?
• How would you describe your role in the collaboration?
• How would you describe your organization?
• How would you describe the other organizations?
• How would you describe the opinions of others in the organization towards the collaboration?
• Tell me about how the collaboration has been communicated and talked about

Theme: The future

• How do you view the future of the collaboration?
• How do you view future competition?
• What are your expectations of the collaboration?
• What expectations do you think the other parties have of the collaboration?

Conclusion

• Is there anything else you wish to add or discuss further?
APPENDIX 2  INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DATA COLLECTION PHASE 2 – TOP MANAGERS

Theme: Changes and developments in the collaboration

- How would you describe the development of the collaboration?
- Has the development of the collaboration lived up to your expectations?
- Tell me about the decision-making process concerning the collaboration
- Tell me about how the collaboration has been taken into account in your strategy
- Tell me about your role in the collaboration
- How would you describe the collaboration and its goal today?

Theme: Inter-organizational interaction

- How would you describe the contact between the organizations?
- How would you describe the other organizations’ participation in the collaboration?
- Have you experienced any incidents that you can recall?
- How do you think the other organizations experience the collaboration?
- Tell me about your experience of competition
- How do you think the other organizations experience competition?

Theme: Intra-organizational interaction

- How would you describe your participation in the collaboration?
- How has the collaboration been communicated, talked about, and motivated in the organization?
- Have you heard any comments concerning the collaboration that you can recall?
- Have you experienced any difficulties or problems?
Theme: The future

- Tell me about your thoughts concerning cooperation between the organizations in the future

- Tell me about your thoughts concerning competition between the organizations in the future

- Is there anything else you wish to add or discuss further?
APPENDIX 3  INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DATA COLLECTION PHASE 2 – OPERATIONAL MANAGERS

Theme: Changes and developments in the collaboration

- How would you describe the development of the collaboration?
- Has the development of the collaboration lived up to your expectations?
- Tell me about the decision-making process concerning the collaboration
- Tell me about your role in the collaboration
- How would you describe the collaboration and its goal today?

Theme: The exchange of material

- How would you describe the exchange of material?
- Tell me about how you use the exchange of material in practice
- Tell me about your experiences of using the exchange of material

Theme: Inter-organizational interaction

- How would you describe the contact between the organizations?
- How would you describe the other organizations’ participation in the collaboration?
- Have you experienced any incidents that you can recall?
- How do you think the other organizations experience the collaboration?
- Tell me about your experience of competition
- How do you think the other organizations experience competition?

Theme: Intra-organizational interaction

- How would you describe your participation in the collaboration?
- How has the collaboration been communicated, talked about, and motivated in the organization?
• Have you heard any comments concerning the collaboration that you can recall?

• Have you experienced any difficulties or problems?

**Theme: The future**

• Tell me about your thoughts concerning cooperation between the organizations in the future

• Tell me about your thoughts concerning competition between the organizations in the future

• Is there anything else you wish to add or discuss further?
Conceptualizing Coopetition Strategy as Practice: A Multilevel Interpretative Framework

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Abstract: This study uses a strategy-as-practice approach to define coopetition strategy. Coopetition strategy forms, arguably, through the intersection of the organization’s internal and external value networks, giving rise to simultaneous cooperative and competitive activities of a more or less intended nature. Four scenarios encompassing propositions are put forth to explain how coopetition strategy as a deliberate and emergent activity is manifested in the organization. By approaching coopetition from the strategy-as-practice perspective, current conceptualizations of its deliberate and emergent nature are unified under a common framework. The practice approach advances existing understandings of coopetition by shedding light on strategic actors and their actions at multiple levels, the social embedding of the strategic activities, and the dynamic nature of the strategy.

Keywords: Inter-competitor cooperation; coopetition; deliberate strategy; emergent strategy; strategy-as-practice

To understand organizational strategies, the strategy-as-practice stream has emphasized the importance of approaching strategy as something individuals do, rather than as something the organization has (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007, 6). Practice scholars argue that strategy arises out of social interactions, which occur between individual actors at multiple organizational levels as well as in the external environment (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 7; Regné 2008, 568; Whittington 2006, 621). Such a conceptualization of strategy formulation corresponds to the ever growing importance played by networks (Parkhe, Wasserman, and Ralston 2006, 560). Moreover, within the external-facing value network, explanations on how the organization creates value through cooperation have progressively extended beyond interactions with suppliers, customers, partners, and the community (Allee 2008, 6) to include competitors as well (Ritala 2012; Solitander and Tidström 2010). Against the notion that two organizations are collaborative partners in some activities simultaneously as they compete in others, coopetition has been raised as a prerequisite for any network to be efficient (Bengtsson, Eriksson, and Kock 2005) and yet also as an organizational challenge (Bonel and Rocco 2009; Tidström 2009; Yami, Castaldo, Dagnino, Le Roy and Czakon 2010).
As a value creation strategy, coopetition exists at the intersection of the organization’s internal value network, encompassing interactions between members within the organization and its external-facing value network (Allee 2008, 6). Consequently, in addition to cooperation advantages stemming from mutual interactions between two or more competitors, the value created embraces competition advantages that originate in the competitors’ drive to out-perform each other and in their intraorganizational interactions (Bengtsson, Eriksson and Wincent 2010a, 208; Yami et al. 2010, 2). To refine coopetition strategy as a concept, the importance of incorporating both deliberate and emergent features has been emphasized (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292; Kylänen and Rusko 2011; Mariani 2007; Tidström 2008).

To approach this call, there is a need to go further in the analysis of the theoretical elements underpinning coopetition as a deliberate and emergent strategy; as such, a discussion is currently absent. Moreover, to date, there has been little research conceptualizing coopetition strategy as an activity, that is, how the formulation and implementation take place within the organization (Tidström 2008, 215; Yami et al. 2010, 7). Hence, in filling these gaps, this article seeks to develop a framework that explains how and why coopetition strategy as a deliberate and emergent activity is formulated and implemented by individuals at the intra- and interorganizational levels.

The purpose of this study is to define coopetition strategy as an activity from a strategy-as-practice perspective. The value of the practice approach lies in its ability to grasp both deliberate and emergent features of the strategy and to conceptualize it as an activity occurring in the organization alongside the interactions with competitors and the institutional environment (see Jarzabkowski 2005, 40, 43; Tsoukas 2010, 57; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 287). To explain the link between everyday activities of the individuals and the organization’s value creation strategy, deliberate or not, scholars have stressed the centrality of exploring three interrelated theoretical elements (Whittington 2006, 615, 619; see also Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007; Regnér 2008). These elements, which constitute strategy as an activity, embrace shared norms for acting (practices), actual activities (praxis), and individuals involved in these activities (practitioners) (Whittington 2006, 615, 619). Thus, to achieve the purpose of the study, we develop a framework that outlines the deliberate and emergent nature of coopetition through practices, praxis, and practitioners at the intra- and interorganizational levels. According to the foundation for this framework and current coopetition strategy research, four different scenarios encompassing propositions outline how coopetition strategy as an activity is manifested in the organization.

The contribution of this study to the coopetition strategy field permeates three main areas. First, as the strategy-as-practice approach focuses on the actual influence of all individuals involved in strategic activities (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 69-70; Johnson, Melin and Whittington 2003, 5, 14; Regnér 2008, 570; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 309), insights are provided into the importance of strategic actors across multiple organizational levels in formulating and implementing a coopetition strategy (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 1).

Second, the practice approach emphasizes the role that social embeddings, structures, and interactions play in the strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 82; Regnér 2008, 570, 573; Whittington 2006). In this way, the social nature of coopetition is illuminated, thus explaining how the strategy is manifested internally in the organization and externally in the intercompetitor relationship. A link between the intra- and interorganizational levels of analysis is, therefore, also established.
Last, the strategy-as-practice approach serves as a tool for unifying current conceptualizations of coopetition as a strategy under a general framework. Through its assumption on strategy as “a reality in flux” (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 7), it supports notions of coopetition as a dynamic phenomenon (Yami et al. 2010, 6) and of the simultaneous existence and interplay between deliberate and emergent features associated with the strategy (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292; Kylänen and Rusko 2011, 201; Mariani 2007, 120; Tidström 2008, 215).

The discussion is structured as follows. In view of existing coopetition research, the article sets out to approach the strategy as an activity by explaining the character and formation of strategy practices, praxis, and practitioners in an intercompetitor context. Hereafter, the deliberate and emergent features of coopetition strategy at the intra- and interorganizational levels of analysis are outlined in conjunction with prior coopetition strategy research. This analysis leads to the presentation of four approaches that explain how coopetition strategy as an activity is manifested in the organization.

**A STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE APPROACH TO COOPETITION**

This article focuses on coopetition as an interorganizational strategy. Accordingly, strategy formulation and implementation at an intraorganizational level is discussed in relation to the existence of coopetition between organizations. Moreover, coopetition is defined as “a process based upon simultaneous and mutual cooperative and competitive interactions” (Bengtsson, Eriksson, and Wincent 2010a, 200) between two or more companies engaged in the same line of business (Bengtsson and Kock 2000, 415).

**Defining Coopetition Strategy**

From a practice approach, strategy has been defined as a “socially accomplished activity” (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007, 7). The activities arise out of actions and interactions between different individual actors (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007, 8) involved in formulating and/or implementing the strategy (Whittington 2006, 619). Moreover, the activities constituting the strategic concept have been delineated as activities that are consequential for the direction of the organization in either a planned or unintended way (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007, 8; see also Johnson, Melin, and Whittington 2003; Regnér 2008; Vaara and Whittington 2012). This definition of strategy encompasses, on the one hand, deliberate strategic activities where intentions underlie strategy formulation and implementation (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 259). On the other hand, the strategic activities undertaken by the individuals may also be of an emergent and unconscious nature, and, thus, only in retrospect will they form some type of pattern or consistency (Tsoukas 2010, 49; see also Mintzberg and Waters 1985).

Following the definition offered by Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl (2007, 7–8), a coopetition strategy consists of more or less intended cooperative and competitive activities that are consequential for the direction of the intercompetitor relation and, ultimately, for the organization. Cooperative activities arise out of mutual interactions between individuals at the interorganizational level. Simultaneously, competitive activities stem from interactions occurring among organizational members at an intraorganizational level. The interplay between these two types of activities, which results in the simultaneous existence of mutual value creation
and the competitors’ individual use of the common benefits created, lies at the core of coopetition as a strategy (Gnyawali and Park 2011; Ritala and Hurmelinna-Laukkanen 2013).

To explain the underpinnings of this interplay, the attention is consistent with the practice approach (Whittington 2006, 615), directed at three interrelated concepts underlying organizational strategy as an activity. These are shared norms for acting (practices) alongside strategy formulation and implementation activities (praxis). The actors (practitioners) engaging in these practices and performing the strategic activities are, through their continuous interactions, central to maintaining and reforming the strategy. Consequently, as shown in Figure 1, coopetition strategy lies at the intersection of two or more competing organizations’ practices, praxis, and practitioners, and the institutional environment. Through interorganizational interaction, cooperative and competitive activities of a more or less intended nature are formed. The three strategic elements of practices, praxis, and practitioners are described in more detail below.

**Coopetitive Strategy Practices and Praxis at the Intra- and Interorganizational Levels**

Within the strategy-as-practice approach, practices refer to intangible formal and informal shared norms and accepted ways of how to think and act, which individuals draw upon when making and executing the strategy (Whittington 2006, 619–620; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 287). Following the assumption of the practice approach, how individuals act is determined by conceptions of legitimate ways of acting (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 3; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 287). Practices incorporate the using of strategic planning procedures, such as workshops, budgets, analytical tools, and formal documents, but they also entail the influence of the social system on the strategic activities (for a full review, see Vaara and Whittington 2012). These practices, in turn, underlie strategy praxis, which is defined as the formal and informal everyday activities related to the formulation and implementation of strategy (Whittington 2006, 619). Because individuals always act within a context, praxis cannot be separated from the social
practices from which individuals draw (Vaara and Whittington 2012, 288; see also Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 82; Tsoukas 2010, 49). Thus, strategy practices and praxis together constitute the actual strategic activities. In coopetitive relations, these strategic activities may attain a cooperation-dominated, competition-dominated, or a more equal nature (Bengtsson and Kock 2000; Bengtsson, Eriksson, and Wincent 2010a).

Drawing on Vaara and Whittington (2012, 288), the formulation and implementation of coopetition strategy are illustrated as residing in a “web of social practices.” Starting from the institutional level (see Figure 1), practices embrace general rules and norms for competing in the market. Here, informal and widespread “rules of conduct” (Easton 1990, 61), or “rules of play” (Bengtsson and Kock 1999, 181), have been argued to underlie the behavior of competitors toward each other. Under the assumption that practices are interlinked (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 81), these institutional norms are intertwined with relation-specific norms guiding the interaction of two or more competitors. Relation-specific practices may take on a formal, explicit, and contractual nature, or they may be based on implicit and informal trust-based understandings (Bengtsson and Kock 1999, 181; Easton 1990, 73).

The interaction processes that emerge when practitioners of two organizations begin to interact, based on certain institutional and relation-specific practices, underlie coopetition strategy formulation and implementation (see Figure 1). Accordingly, strategic activities can be distinguished both at the inter- and intraorganizational levels. At the interorganizational level, the competitors mutually engage in activities to formulate, reformulate, and implement their cooperative activities and mutual value creation. At the intraorganizational level, strategic activities, in terms of leveraging mutual benefits (Gnyawali and Park 2011, 658) and the creation of individual benefits (Khanna, Gulati, and Nohria 1998), come into focus through a cooperative value creation logic (Mariani 2007) and mindset (Gnyawali and Park 2009, 2011). Other intraorganizational activities may include balancing and managing tensions between cooperative and competitive interactions (Gnyawali and Park 2011, 652) as well as separating the interaction processes between different individuals (Bengtsson and Kock 2000).

**Coopetitive Strategy Practitioners at the Intra- and Interorganizational Levels**

Strategy practitioners are defined as individual actors “who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies” internally at different organizational levels as well as in the external environment (Whittington 2006, 619; see also Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). External coopetitive practitioners (see Figure 1) are institutional actors and associations that influence the cooperative activities through requirements and support (Bengtsson and Kock 2000; Kylänen and Rusko 2011; Mariani 2007; Okura 2007; Tidström 2009) or through the formation of legitimate practices (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008, 102). Internal coopetitive practitioners embrace organizational members engaged in the formulation of the cooperative and competitive activities. Internal practitioners also extend to members implementing and performing these activities within the firm or through participation in the intercompetitor interactions.

At an intraorganizational level of analysis, strategy-as-practice research has recognized actors beyond top management as having an influence on strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 69-70; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 309). Existing coopetition studies have often outlined executives at higher organizational levels as coopetitive practitioners, formulating and managing the interplay
between the cooperative and competitive activities (see Gnyawali and Park 2011, 657; 2009, 324; Herzog 2010, 210; Luo 2007, 143; and Mariani 2007, 112). Scholars have, however, emphasized that other managers who have insights and engage in both cooperative and competitive activities receive important strategic positions as well (Bengtsson and Kock 2015).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, middle managers could be argued to play a central role in not only implementing a coopetition strategy at lower organizational levels but also in mediating insights in a bottom-up manner (Whittington 2006, 619). Furthermore, coopetitive practitioners could extend to include the individual organizational members at operational levels, who are involved in the actual implementation of the interorganizational interactions (Kylän en and Rusko 2011), or who have to address the consequences of these opposing interactions (Bonel and Rocco 2009). Similarly, actors maintaining informal cooperative interactions with another competitor may be defined as coopetitive practitioners (see e.g., Oliver 2004).

The Deliberate and Emergent Nature of Coopetition

Deliberate and emergent features of strategy have been conceptualized to reside in the organization’s ability to predict and control the influence of the external value network and, in the course of action, taken within the organization when formulating and implementing the strategy (Mintzberg and Waters 1985; Whittington 2001). Given this background, four scenarios explaining how coopetition as a strategy is manifested in the organization can be distinguished (see Figure 2). Mintzberg and Waters (1985, 258) argue, however, that a strategy is unlikely to be perfectly deliberate or emergent. By following this notion, in general, and the specific research of Dagnino and Rocco (2009, 9–10), Kylän en and Rusko (2011), and Mariani...
coopetition strategy is argued to consist of both deliberate and emergent features. As shown in Table 1, we approach this view by first depicting the deliberate and emergent perspectives separately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy elements</th>
<th>Deliberate</th>
<th>Emergent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared norms for</td>
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<tr>
<td>acting</td>
<td>Origin:</td>
<td>Origin:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rational planning, analysis,</td>
<td>Instrumental and organizational forces</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and choice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intra-organizational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coopetitive practices:</td>
<td>Static, due to the assumption that:</td>
<td>Dynamic and adaptable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norms for how to</td>
<td>a) long-term predictions can be</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>individually act</td>
<td>made about the environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>toward the</td>
<td>b) long-term strategic coherence can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitor</td>
<td>be achieved through formal planning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-organizational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Origin:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Origin:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>coopetitive practices:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared institutional/industry-based norms or relation-specific norms for how to compete and cooperate with the competitor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Praxis:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal/informal activities</td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intra-organizational</strong></td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Dynamic and adaptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coopetitive praxis:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual strategy formulation and implementation activities</td>
<td><strong>Formulation:</strong></td>
<td>Adaptation to the environment and/or organization (middle-up, middle-down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-organizational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implementation:</strong></td>
<td>Not always implemented as planned → reformulation of practices and praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coopetitive praxis:</td>
<td>Implemented as planned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual strategy formulation and implementation activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic actors: top, middle, operational or external actor</td>
<td><strong>Origin:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Origin:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intra-organizational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nature:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coopetitive practitioners:</td>
<td>Internal or external</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal actor involved in the formulation and/or implementation of the cooperative and competitive activities</td>
<td><strong>Rational and calculated</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter-organizational coopetitive practitioners:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External actor involved in shaping the cooperative and competitive activities between the competitors</td>
<td>Top management or external actors</td>
<td>Top, middle management, operation actors, or external actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coopetition as a Planned Practice

As a planned practice (see Figure 2), deliberate features, in terms of goal-orientation and intension, characterize strategic activities at the intra- and interorganizational levels (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 257). This conceptualization of coopetition as a planned and directed strategy (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292; Kyllänen and Rusko 2011, 194; Tidström 2008, 212), both in the organization’s internal and external value networks, rests upon two key assumptions. Internally, shared understandings and direct adoption of detailed and articulated intensions exist at different actor levels, thus enabling the realization of the strategy as intended (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 259). In addition, the organization has the ability, as a result of planning, to predict and control the influence of the external environment (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 258; Whittington 2001, 3).

In this scenario, rationality and quest for efficiency play a central role in the formulation of a coopetition strategy (Whittington 2001, 11, 26). Within the theoretical perspectives associated with a deliberate view, this rationality has generally been depicted to stem from acting in line with either profit maximization goals or with the social system in which the organization operates and is embedded (Whittington 2001, 3-4). In existing coopetition research, profit maximization has often been regarded as an underlying element of managerial rationality. From a game theory approach, such notions become evident in the assumption that actors are able to assess the elements of the strategic game and possibly change the rules of the game in the market (see Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1995). Here, the focal intentions and strategic activities of the organization are superior to the mutual activities it shares with competitors (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1995; Okura 2007). Accordingly, the nature of the coopetitive practices build on a rationally chosen balance between cooperation and competition (Whittington 2001, 14), which is preset and calculated at the outset of the coopetition strategy. Moreover, the practices underlying the interactions are based on predicting a competitive advantage from the intercompetitor relation by analyzing partner resources and capabilities alongside value creation and appropriation possibilities (Gnyawali and Park 2009; see also Garraffo and Rocco 2009).

With this background, the strategic activities take on a more formal and rigid nature at both the intra- and interorganizational levels. Top management is recognized as prime practitioners controlling the competitive and cooperative activities through the deliberate construction of certain coopetitive practices and intentions (see Mintzberg and Waters 1985). The ability or mindset to perceive and manage opportunities for cooperating with a competitor is, thus, held and passed on first and foremost by executives (Gnyawali and Park 2011, 657; 2009, 324; Luo 2007, 143). In addition, whereas top management controls and possesses insights into the simultaneous existence of cooperation and competition, members at the operational level act and interact in accordance with either cooperative or competitive norms in the implementation stage (Herzog 2010, 210). Based on the preceding discussion, the following proposition is put forth to illustrate how coopetition strategy is manifested as a deliberate intra- and interorganizational activity:

Proposition 1: As a planned practice, coopetition strategy arises out of preformulated activities by top management at the outset, aligned with the focal organization’s intentions.

Current studies have underscored the prevalence of some intentionality (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292), for example, with regard to the risks involved in cooperating with a competitor
Nevertheless, the need for recognizing unintentional features has also been raised (Bonel and Rocco 2009; Dagnino and Rocco 2009; Kylänen and Rusko 2011; Tidström 2008). Scholars using this stream of thought have conceptualized the control and prediction of coopetition as dynamic and challenging (Yami et al. 2010, 5). They have also acknowledged the influence of informal interactions, trust (Bengtsson and Kock 1999, 178; Easton 1990, 73; Oliver 2004), and strategic learning processes (Mariani 2007). In response to this background, the value of integrating an emergent perspective arises.

**Coopetition as an Adapting Practice**

In viewing coopetition as an emergent strategy, the strategic activities form through spontaneous acts (Kylänen and Rusko 2011, 194), and without certain prearticulated intentions (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292; Tidström 2008, 212; see also Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 258), both within the organization and in its external value network (see Figure 2). In this scenario, the environment is assumed to be complex, dynamic, and challenging to predict. The market and the competition herein, rather than the top managers, underlie strategy formulation and reformulation through the market’s power to determine the efficiency and success of the strategy (Whittington 2001, 16).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, scholars have outlined the strategic activities underlying coopetition as externally imposed by institutions (Kylänen and Rusko 2011; Mariani 2007). On the one hand, emergent interorganizational features have been acknowledged through elements of opportunism, occurring without order in the relation and causing continuous changes in cooperative and competitive activities (de Rond and Bouchikhi 2004). Czakon (2010, 69) shows, for example, how coopetition emerges as practitioners make assessments, while realizing a purely collaborative strategy. On the other hand, the strategic activities have been, in a similar vein, outlined to adapt to the development of trust (de Rond and Bouchikhi 2004) and the accumulation of socially embedded experiences among the competitors (Castaldo and Dagnino 2009).

In addition, the emergent perspective questions the value and possibility of the strategic activities to be controlled and realized as intended owing to intraorganizational complexity. The organization is assumed to consist of members with different experiences, roles (Levitt and March 1988, 325), and, ultimately, contrasting views (Jarzabkowski 2005, 64; see also Regnér 2003, 78). Consequently, strategy formulation and implementation are characterized by the bargaining among organizational members (Whittington 2001, 22), rather than a straightforward adoption of articulated intentions by top management. Simultaneously, the emergent perspective acknowledges the possible influence of informal strategic activities inherent in social processes contrasting formal ones (see e.g., Oliver 2004).

As a result of the assumed intra- and intercomplexity of the organization, the emergent view depicts strategy formulation and implementation as gradually emerging and discontinuous (Whittington 2001, 4). Mintzberg and Waters (1985, 270) further emphasize that in the emergent strategy, managers learn and adapt to the experiences created and leave room for organizational members to form and reform the content of the strategy along the way. Following these notions, learning and adaptation have been highlighted as two central themes underlying the development of coopetitive strategic activities (Baumard 2009, 19;
Moreover, scholars have stressed the strategic influence of operational actors and middle management, despite their lack of formal strategic roles (see Kylänen and Rusko 2011; de Rond and Bouchikhi 2004). This latter notion relates to the common assumption of the studies assigned to this category (see Figure 2) that the formulation, implementation, and reformulation of coopetitive strategy practices become an intertwined and continuous process. The competitor’s ability to adapt, be flexible and learn from partners, and react to instabilities is acknowledged throughout strategy formulation and implementation. Hence:

Proposition 2: As an adapting practice, coopetition strategy arises out of gradual and ad hoc activities stemming from continuous social influence.

**Coopetition as a Reacting Practice**

As a reacting practice, emergent features of the coopetition strategy prevail at the intraorganizational level alongside deliberate features at the interorganizational level (see Figure 2). Given the assumption that top management can predict and control its external environment, the cooperative and competitive activities are rationally planned in a top-down manner. The strategic activities are, thus, preceded by preformulated intentions pertaining, for example, to economic benefits, an improved strategic position, and access to skill (Bonel and Rocco 2009). Moreover, and similar to the planned scenario, the coopetitive practices underlying the interactions between the competitors stem primarily from the focal organization. Support for such notions can be found in the strategic alliance literature. Herein, the formation of interorganizational practices has been explained in terms of “learning races” (Hamel, Doz, and Prahalad 1989; Khanna, Gulati, and Nohria 1998; Powell 1998). To this end, attention has been directed at competitive aspects and at the tensions, opportunistic behaviors, and knowledge appropriation concerns arising thereof (Das and Teng 2000; Khanna, Gulati, and Nohria 1998; see also Dussauge, Garrette, and Mitchell 2000).

On the one hand, complexity and delimited control by top management at the intraorganizational level signal the existence of emergent strategic activities underpinning the strategy. Alongside the deliberate nature, studies have acknowledged that the articulated intentions by top management may not be directly adopted due to the absence of a shared understanding, for example, of appropriate knowledge exchanges among operational actors (Hamel, Doz, and Prahalad 1989, 136). On the other hand, the aforementioned elements of self-interest underlie the emergent nature of the strategic activities at the intraorganizational level. The strategy is characterized by the existence of spontaneous reformulations of the preset mutual intentions by the focal organization, as the relation unfolds over time. Managers are consequently assigned the task to react and respond to unintended opportunities and challenges arising in the interorganizational interactions by formulating new practices and engaging new practitioners at the intraorganizational level (Bonel and Rocco 2009, 212).

These emergent features are further depicted by Khanna, Gulati, and Nohria (1998) through their emphasis on intraorganizational learning, which results in continuous reformulations of prevailing strategic activities. In view of the emphasis on learning, middle managers could become important players, mediating information to top management regarding interorganizational
activities. Nevertheless, this role remains indirect as, for example, Hamel, Doz, and Prahalad (1989, 138) suggest: “Learning begins at the top. … But most learning takes place at the lower levels of an alliance.” This discussion leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 3: As a reacting practice, coopetition strategy arises out of continuously reformulated activities by top and middle management against the articulated intentions agreed upon between the competitors.

Coopetition as a Contextually Derived Practice

As a contextually derived practice, coopetition is conceptualized as planned and directed in the organization’s internal value network (see Figure 2). The organization’s ability to plan and control the external environment is, however, delimited, giving rise to emergent features at the interorganizational level. This latter assumption is revealed through the acknowledgement of coopetition as an externally imposed value creation strategy. In the studies assigned to this scenario, coopetition, on the one hand, has been proposed to be socially and/or regionally embedded. For example, Choi, Garcia, and Friedrich (2010) show how the national business culture and strong friendship ties support the formation of coopetitive relations. Lechner and Dowling (2003, 13) highlight, in turn, the influence of regional proximity on interorganizational practices, such as a cooperative attitude, trust, and reciprocal behavior. Scholars within this stream, on the other hand, have acknowledged the influence of consumers, competitors (Luo 2007), and institutional actors (Kylänen and Rusko 2011; Mariani 2007). Finally, research conceptualizing intercompetitor cooperation, in view of the network-based nature of the industry and in relation to the creation of the market or establishment of standards (Fjeldstad, Becerra, and Narayanan 2004; Ritala, Hurmelinna-Laukkonen, and Blomqvist 2009), also supports the notion of coopetition as an emergent strategy at the interorganizational level.

The deliberate nature is revealed through the assumption that top management becomes the key player in reformulating the cooperative and competitive activities in accordance with socially or environmentally imposed directions. This deliberateness, for example, can reveal itself through coopetition as an entrepreneurial strategy (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, 260). Here, the entrepreneur controls the organization and imposes certain articulated intentions on other members simultaneously, as the need to adapt to the external environment prevails (Dagnino and Mariani 2010, 107). Accordingly:

Proposition 4: As a contextually derived practice, coopetition strategy arises out of formulated activities by top management as a consequence of environmental changes and requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has set out to define coopetition strategy as an activity from a practice approach. The approach was adopted to provide a framework that explains how and why coopetition strategy, as a deliberate and emergent activity, is formulated and implemented internally in the organization, and, simultaneously, with respect to the intercompetitor relation. To understand the link between the actual activities of actors and coopetition as a value creation strategy, focus was directed at three elements underlying strategy. These were the actors with an influence on
strategy, the agreed ways of acting and interacting, and the actual strategy formulation and implementation activities. By distinguishing these elements, we explain how the organization’s internal and external value networks intersect. Consequently, we depict how coopetition strategy arises out of the simultaneous existence of cooperative and competitive activities of a more or less intended nature. Depending on the deliberate or emergent nature of the strategic elements and their intra- or interorganizational origin, four scenarios of coopetition as a value creating strategy were presented.

The activities underpinning strategy as a planned practice were characterized by prediction, rationality, and formality through top management control. As an adapting practice, the strategic activities were illustrated to form gradually or ad hoc through social influence, flexibility, and learning at multiple organizational actor levels. In the two other scenarios, simultaneous deliberateness and emergence were depicted. As a reacting practice, strategic activities form in the organization through continuous reformulations of the articulated intentions agreed upon by the competitors. As a contextually derived practice, strategic activities emerge at the interorganizational level due to externally imposed changes or regulations, after which the role of top management’s internal control is acknowledged.

Theoretical Implications

The strategy-as-practice approach advances our current understanding of coopetition strategy as a theoretical concept by approaching it as an activity. First, the approach puts particular focus on the actual effect of all individuals involved in and influencing strategic activities (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, 69–70; Johnson, Melin, and Whittington 2003, 5, 14; Regnér 2008, 570; Vaara and Whittington 2012, 309). In consequence, in addition to top management, other actors, such as middle managers, operational actors, and external actors, are incorporated in the definition of who constitutes a coopetitive practitioner.

Second, by approaching the social nature of strategy in terms of practitioner interactions in the internal and external networks, the simultaneous existence of cooperative and competitive interactions (Bengtsson and Kock 2000; Bengtsson, Eriksson, and Wincent 2010a) at multiple levels of analysis (Bengtsson, Eriksson & Wincent 2010b, 35) is embraced. Thus, the study takes the definition of coopetition strategy closer to its previously articulated features. Most important, by defining the coopetitive practitioners and the practices from which they draw, a link between actor involvement, at the microlevel, and coopetition as a value creating strategy, at the organizational level, is established (Whittington 2006, 615, 619; see also Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl 2007, 10; and Regnér 2008, 566). The social nature of practices also illustrates the simultaneous influence that organizational and institutional level practices have on cooperative and competitive activities (Tsoukas 2010; see also Golsorkhi et al. 2010; Vaara and Whittington 2012) and, thus, on shaping a coopetition strategy.

Third, consistent with previous research, this study highlights the possibility of a coopetition strategy to assume both deliberate and emergent features (Dagnino and Rocco 2009, 292; Kylänen and Rusko 2011, 201; Mariani 2007, 120; Tidström 2008, 215). Particularly, emergent features, such as self-interest and opportunism of organizations, as well as environmental and continuous social influences on cooperative and competitive activities, provide insights into the dynamic nature of a coopetition strategy. Accordingly, the influence of informal and unplanned
interactions, both internally and in the intercompetitor relation, opens up the possibility for activities, not articulated as strategic at the outset, to be consequential for the strategy (Vaara and Whittington 2012, 310). As the scope of what constitutes strategic activities is broadened to include emergent activities alongside planned and controlled activities by top management, the strategy-as-practice approach serves to unify and advance existing coopetition research. The coopetitive framework developed in this article could also contribute to the strategy-as-practice field by shedding light upon practitioners and emergent strategic activities in a new context.

Limitations and Future Research

An interesting avenue for future research could be to further explore the nature and development of coopetitive practices and praxis at organizational, group, and individual levels, from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Vaara and Whittington 2012). Furthermore, the focus on strategy could extend from the intraorganizational level to also embrace the influence of, and interaction between, practices and practitioners at an extra- or interorganizational level of analysis in coopetition research (Whittington 2006). A limitation of this study stems from its conceptual nature. It would be of value to investigate empirically how coopetitive practices are actually expressed, developed, and communicated through strategy practices, such as discourse, formal documents, meetings, technological tools, and consulting tools (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008, 101).

The aspect of time has not been explicitly addressed in the article’s discussion on how coopetition strategy is manifested in the organization. Hence, further research could explore this matter and provide a more holistic picture of coopetition as practice by exploring how the deliberate and emergent nature of strategic activities change as the coopetitive relationship unfolds. Alternatively, research could focus specifically on the development of the coopetitive practices and explore what type of practices dominate in the early stage of coopetitive interactions and what type of practices are used in more mature intercompetitor relations stages. Research could also focus on how the strategic roles of coopetitive practitioners in the organization change as the strategy process unfolds over time.

Another avenue for research, which was beyond the scope of this study, is to analyze the influence of the level of strength of the cooperative and competitive interactions in the relation. Consequently, a valid inquiry is to discover if competition-dominated practices and cooperation-dominated practices are constructed differently. At an intraorganizational level, it could be of interest to analyze and determine empirically if certain coopetitive practices are boundary-spanning through different levels. In this way, future studies could explore if coopetition—as a new behavior that integrates cooperation and competition interaction logics—embraces the organization as whole or only parts of it. Finally, we hope the strategy-as-practice approach will spur additional future research paths to explore coopetition strategy as an activity.

NOTES

1. Depending on the level of deliberateness and emergence, Mintzberg and Waters (1985, 270) put forth, in addition to a purely deliberate and emergent strategy, six types of strategies. In explaining the simultaneous existence of a deliberate and emergent nature it remains, however, beyond the scope of the upcoming discussion to analyze and distinguish the degree of deliberateness and emergence.
2. The studies in Figure 2 have been selected as they provide theoretical and/or empirical insights into coopetitive strategic activities. The categorization of the studies seeks to explore the support for the assumptions underlying the four scenarios and to exemplify these scenarios. It is, however, beyond the scope of this categorization to provide an in-depth review of each study and the study’s potential applicability to several scenarios. It is also beyond the scope of this categorization to provide a review of the coopetition strategy literature as a whole.

REFERENCES


Article 2

A sensemaking perspective on coopetition

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A B S T R A C T

This study approaches coopetition as a strategic change and aims to bridge the gaps in micro level cognition and strategy by exploring how a coopetitive frame is constructed, as well as how individual level differences in this creation can be explained. The empirical case study findings contribute to existing coopetitive research by showing that individuals differ in their ability to create future accounts of engagement in strategic activities, as well as in modifying established frameworks of competition to fit an emerging coopetitive frame. Based on the case study findings, a model of sensemaking is presented, which indicates the influence of attitudes and expectations over time on the development of a coopetitive frame. Managers that were unable to update their expectations from the past accordingly struggled in their sensemaking, whereas the interpretative process was aided by optimism and high expectations of the future. A key contribution of the empirical study lies in the focus on sensemaking differences that shed light on the complexities inherent in coopetitive strategizing.

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1. Introduction

The business network approach has over the years shown an interest in managerial sensemaking and network pictures to understand how managers approach and interpret their environment (e.g. Abrahamsen, Henneberg, & Naudé, 2012; Colville & Pye, 2010; Mattsson, Corsaro, & Ramos, 2015). From a strategic point of view, bringing a cognitive perspective to strategy recognizes the role of individual level mental frames in determining strategy developments and outcomes (e.g. Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Kaplan, 2011; Narayanan, Zane, & Kemmerer, 2011; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007).

When faced with a strategic change or implementation of strategies, organizational members engage in sensemaking to create a meaningful interpretation (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), as well as shared cognitive frames of a new reality (Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick, 1995). The new reality might be, for example, a coopetition strategy, defined as the simultaneous existence of cooperative and competitive interactions between two or more actors, forming a paradoxical relationship (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Bengtsson, Eriksson, & Wincent, 2010). In fact, the benefits of the simultaneity of mutual cooperation and individual competition between actors have also been portrayed as the cause of experienced contradictions and tensions for the individuals involved in the strategy (e.g. Dahl, 2014; Kylåsen & Rusko, 2011; Raza-Ullah, Bengtsson, & Kock, 2014). This complexity has accordingly been argued to require the development of new cognitive frames on the part of managers in particular (e.g. Mariani, 2007; Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Ritala, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, & Blomqvist, 2009).

To approach the paradox of coopetition, the coopetitive research field has during recent years seen an increased interest in the individual level and the cognitive dimension (Bengtsson, Raza-Ullah, & Vanyushyn, 2016; Gnyawali, Madhavan, He, & Bengtsson, 2016; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). This interest has for example been manifested in a focus on managing tensions (Bengtsson et al., 2016; Fernandez, Le Roy, & Gnyawali, 2014; Tidström, 2014), on individual level emotions (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), on identity (Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014), as well as to some extent on individual level sensemaking processes (Enberg, 2012). Despite these interests, we are to date lacking an in-depth assessment of the interpretative activities taking place in a coopetition strategy (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Dahl, Kock, & Lundgren-Henriksson, 2016), and consequently how a coopetitive frame is constructed.

The aim of this study is to scrutinize how managers make sense of their engagement in a coopetition strategy. In addition to the knowledge gap concerning coopetition and cognition, the coopetitive research field has been argued to benefit from the adoption of a micro level lens on strategy (Bouncken, Gast, Kraus, & Bogers, 2015; Gnyawali et al., 2016), particularly from a strategy-as-practice perspective (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016). From a strategy-as-practice approach, the creation and development of strategies takes place through interconnected situated actions and interactions between individuals, influenced by shared views on legitimate behavior (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2006).

We approach coopetition as a strategic change, indicating a reframing of established ways of thinking and acting for organizational members (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Matilis & Christianson, 2014; Whitting...
Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). In particular, we delve deeper into how a competitive frame is developed through matching this new frame with established competitive frameworks, sustained through past actions and interactions. Influenced by the sensemaking view, we further define and explain individual level differences in this creation, as well as factors influencing the process (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007; Weick, 1995). We consequently bridge the gap in individual level cognition and participation in strategy in terms of coopetition, by combining the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice approaches.

The study displays findings that extend our knowledge of coopetition from a cognitive and strategic point of view. We particularly contribute to the field by introducing sensemaking as a new perspective on coopetition strategy research, which serves as a tool in explaining individual level differences in the ability to create and adhere to a competitive frame. Combining the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice approaches, we consequently demonstrate the value of approaching the creation and development of competitive strategies as dependent on individuals’ continuous sensemaking processes. We also make an empirical contribution by examining the early stage of a coopetition strategy in the media industry, when a competitive frame is being created. Given the early stage, we particularly focus on the perceived underlying motives for managers’ engagement in the strategy (Czakon & Rogalski, 2013), as well as the expectations of the future.

The study proceeds as follows. The theoretical framework is presented below, followed by the case study description where the analytical method is accounted for. A presentation of the findings follows, and the study ends with a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical background

We argue in line with previous scholars that coopetition requires individuals to develop a new frame. We suggest that coopetition can be approached as a strategic change that consequently triggers sensemaking processes, in order to reach a shared understanding and cooperation in social activities related to inceptions (e.g. Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). We thus propose that a sensemaking perspective on coopetition can capture how actors motivate their engagement in the strategy (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005). Consequently, the competitive frames individuals have acquired and applied to coopetition could be assumed to incorporate shared industry frameworks of competition, but also perceptions of competition specific to particular inter-organizational relationships (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999), as well as organizations.

Previous advancements in the coopetition research field show that coopetition might form due to changes in an industry (Gnyawali & Park, 2009) and in competition (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Luo, 2007). Strategic changes are often associated with environmental threats or opportunities (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), contributing with a “substantial shift in overall priorities and goals to reflect new emphases or direction” (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994: 364). The sensemaking literature has noted that especially in times of strategic change, individuals engage both individually and collectively in cycles of interpretation, in order to work out the new reality and accomplish a shift in established frames (e.g. Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994).

As we illustrate in Fig. 1, when coopetition is approached as a strategic change, the established competitive frames (Mariani, 2007) at the individual and collective levels must be redefined. This reasoning is grounded in the assumption that ambiguity arises due to incompatibility between established legitimate ways of acting and the new reality coopetition presents. Drawing on Baldwin and Bengtsson (2004), the strategic change is also assumed to be associated with different emotions when making sense of changing competition. Below we extend our discussion on coopetition and sensemaking in the context of strategic change.

2.2. The role of sensemaking in strategic change

Sensemaking becomes a crucial process in the creation of new mental frameworks (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Scholars in the sensemaking field have noted a number of characteristics, as well as influencing factors on the process (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995). One shared view is that when faced with uncertainty, individuals are assumed to draw on earlier patterns of actions, as well as similar events in the past, in order to act and interact (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

While sensemaking is thus a retrospective process, it also incorporates expectations and beliefs about the future (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002; Sonenshein, 2007). In arguing that attitudes and expectations play a crucial role in how individuals frame cooperation, as well as create meaning for future participation, we draw on previous insights on the link between emotions (Loch, Galunic, & Schneider, 2006; Raza-ullah et al., 2014), as well as individuals’ interpretations of past competitive experiences (Dahl, 2014; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Mariani, 2007; Tidström, 2009; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012), and engagement in cooperation. This reasoning is further grounded in the assumption that affective elements, such as emotions and expectations, have a significant influence on sensemaking (Bartunek et al., 2006; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, Vogus, & Lawrence, 2013; Sonenshein, 2007; Weick et al., 2005).

Another common view in the sensemaking tradition is that identity (e.g. Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), as well as social interaction (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995), become important influencing factors on sensemaking. When it comes to strategic change, individuals have been argued to engage in social activities related to influencing and shaping others’ views of reality to their own, ranging from expressing an opinion in discussions to calling a meeting (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). These activities are assembled under the label of sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005).

We thus propose that a sensemaking perspective on coopetition can capture how actors motivate their engagement in the strategy (Gioia &
Thomas, 1996; Weick, 1995), and subsequently the developments of a coopetitive frame. We believe that particularly the strategy-as-practice perspective’s approach to sensemaking is suitable for addressing coopetition as a strategic change, since it provides the assumption that how strategies are perceived and accepted in organizations to a great extent becomes contingent on the sensemaking of actors involved in the strategy (e.g. Laine & Vaara, 2007; Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Vaara, Kleymann, & Seristö, 2004).

2.3. Integrating coopetition, sensemaking, and strategy-as-practice

From a practice perspective, strategies emerge through activities at the micro level (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014; Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). As situated activity can never be detached from the macro level, the approach further assumes the guidance of higher-level established practices on micro level activities, as well as the reciprocal influence of activities sustaining these practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Practices are one type of shared framework, broadly defined as norms of legitimate behavior (Whittington, 2006) upon which individuals recursively draw in implementing patterns of actions and interactions, labeled as strategizing (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Since shared frameworks can be linked to professions (Mattis & Christianson, 2014), we address a higher definitional level when we refer to practices in our discussion as adhering to a specific profession that sets the norms for, as well legitimizes participation in, micro level strategizing (e.g. Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Jarzabkowski, 2004).

From a practice perspective, coopetitive strategies are accomplished through interactions at inter- and intra-organizational levels (Dahl et al., 2016). We consequently define coopetitive agency as participation in, and influence on, strategizing at intra- and/or inter-organizational levels. Given our individual level focus, we approach agency in terms of how it is perceived and motivated by the actors themselves, through their assessments of the past, present, and future (e.g. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Garud, Kumaraswamy, & Karnøe, 2010; Laine & Vaara, 2007; Weick, 1995).

New cognitive frames have been argued to arise through interplay with old ones (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Weick et al., 2005). From a practice perspective, the creation of coopetitive frames would therefore also incorporate modifying shared established practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004) with the new emerging view presented by coopetition, encompassing inter-competitor cooperation.

Drawing on the strategy-as-practice stream, we also acknowledge the possibility of multiple interpretations and diverging views on coopetition (Denis et al., 2007; see also Dahl, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016). We ground this argument in the assumption that individuals’ execution of strategizing is to a great extent determined by who they are, their identity and background, as well as their motivations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007). The tendency to create and draw on new practices is therefore to a great extent grounded in individual choices and abilities (Denis et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004). This suggests that individuals would modify established competitive frames (Mariani, 2007; Reger & Palmer, 1996) differently when making sense of the strategy, and accordingly in matching these frames with coopetitive ones.

We now turn to the empirical setting of our study, where we elaborate on our argument of coopetition as a strategic change, and explore the multitudes of individual level sensemaking and combination of frames.

3. The research setting

The empirical study followed a qualitative interpretative research approach. In particular, a case study approach was adopted (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1989) since it focuses on understanding the case from the perspectives of the studied individuals (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), and is suitable in addressing business networks (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005), as well as sensemaking processes (Woodside & Wilson, 2003).
3.1. Case study description

The case study explores a newly established collaboration in the Finnish media industry. Three parties that publish newspapers in a minority language participate in the collaboration, which takes place through a member association. The collaboration comprises an exchange of materials through a joint article pool, to which all the member newspapers upload. In its present form, cooperation evolves around the exchange and distribution of journalistic material, while the parties produce the material individually. It is based on voluntariness, where each newspaper decides what materials to share, and what to use. The main idea behind the collaboration is that the materials exchange enables the newspapers to save resources that could be directly applied to their respective core areas.

Several factors influenced the choice of the case as an appropriate context in which to study cooperation as a strategic change. First, the newspapers are all facing tremendous change due to the current upheaval in the media industry and the severe financial situation. Increased competition from the digital media, combined with changes in consumer behavior, have contributed to a decrease in print media subscribers. The digital era has produced a paradigm shift, moving the search for news from the print media to the web, changing the role of the printed newspaper and traditional modes of journalism. Changes in consumer demand have also resulted in a change in advertisers’ behavior, reducing advertising revenues from printed newspapers. The above-mentioned issues, together with an increase in the distribution costs of printed newspapers, are forcing newspapers to act in order to survive in the industry.

The changing market environment, including competition (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Bogner & Barr, 2000), present the organizations with a new perspective and contribute with changes in inter-organizational strategies. Cooperation could therefore be illustrated as a response to external change at the industry level (Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Luo, 2007; Mariani, 2007; Padula & Dagnino, 2007). Due to the rapidly changing industry, discussions between the parties concerning different forms of cooperation have intensified over the years. Other forms of cooperation through the member association existed prior to the present collaboration, such as guidance on language use. However, the current form of cooperation have intensified and tightened, while the parties produce the material individually. It is based on voluntariness, where each newspaper decides what materials to share, and what to use. The main idea behind the collaboration is that the materials exchange enables the newspapers to save resources that could be directly applied to their respective core areas.

Although changes in regional proximity between the parties have contributed to a scenario of weaker direct competition over the years (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999, 2000), and cooperation is accordingly at present more dominant than competition (Bengtsson et al., 2010), the newspapers have a history of strong competition. Cooperation between newspapers has traditionally been approached with suspicion in the industry. The previous industry mindset (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995) could be described as building on competition, tied to prestige and pride (Bengtsson et al., 2010), and associated with protecting your own newspaper’s journalistic material and news. The previous reluctance to cooperate and share materials could therefore be said to stem from a sense of preserving the uniqueness of newspapers as well as their identity.

The introduction of a cooperation strategy consequently implies a change in mindset, to encompass cooperation with other newspapers. Organizational members are hence forced to reformulate, both individually and collectively, methods of operation formerly taken for granted in the industry (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Similarly, from a practice perspective, the professional practices that have been produced and sustained over time through interactions, legitimizing competitive strategizing and accordingly not favoring cooperation, are in a phase of transition.

During this time, the industry macro discourse started to shift towards cooperation, which became evident through the increased frequency of discussion concerning cooperation between newspapers in the media. Following the environmental pressure for change, managers engaged in individual and collective sensemaking (Daft & Weick, 1984) in order to formulate and agree on (Narayanan et al., 2011) the coopetitive strategy. The discussions in meetings revolved around how to sustain business (Bogner & Barr, 2000), as well as collective cultural identity (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), in the future. We could therefore be argued in this case study to be addressing the first stage of sensemaking and strategic change, where managers engage in their first tentative cycles of interpretation, as well as sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

3.2. Data collection and analysis

Case studies often involve the use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 1989). Likewise, a triangulated research design was adopted in this study. The empirical material includes real-time data generated through observation, as well as retrospective accounts by managers collected through interviews. Triangulation is also a way to overcome the potential errors inherent in retrospective accounts, in parallel with bringing multiple actor levels across the three organizations into the collection of data (Golden, 1992).

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method for data collection. Interviews were conducted with a total of 12 managers from the three parties, and therefore contribute to a nuanced picture of the collaboration (e.g. Leek & Mason, 2010). A snowball sampling technique was used in order to identify suitable respondents (Patton, 1990). A majority of the respondents had participated in inter-organizational discussions concerning the collaboration, and some were also involved in implementing the strategy inside the organizations. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed in full. The average length of an interview was 50 min. The main purpose of the interviews was to focus on the respondents’ view of competition between the parties. The interviews were characterized by openness and informality where the respondents were given the opportunity to speak as freely as possible. Occasionally, specific themes were spotted and elaborated, and hence at times the interviews took on a more conversational form. One of the researchers also participated in an inter-organizational meeting where representatives from the three parties met to discuss the collaboration. Since the industry change gave rise to much discussion in the media, we also covered what was written about the collaboration in the press.

Since the collection of the empirical material was initiated at approximately the same time as the collaboration started in 2013, there was an opportunity to explore how the respondents were experiencing the collaboration at that present moment, and their reflections concerning the future. The respondents were hence asked to describe the background of the collaboration, their view of its present form and their role in it, as well as their expectations. This is in line with recent views in network research, where the combination of past, present and future in the process of collecting and analyzing data has been illustrated as an access point to managers’ sensemaking processes (Halinen, Törnroos, & Elo, 2013).

The aim of the case analysis was to interpret and understand how managers made sense of cooperation. The analysis was conducted through different stages. First, we created a chronological account of past events (Isabella, 1990; Langley, 1999), in order to understand the strategic change in its present context, and what the implications were for the individuals facing it (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Second, in order to scrutinize how managers individually ascribed meaning to the change, we employed discourse analysis. This choice is supported by the claim that by investigating themes and patterns of language use in texts, a view is offered on the interpretative frames organizational managers use in order to create meaning for themselves (e.g. Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Phillips &
Hardy, 2002). The analysis focused on texts produced in the interviews, as well as in media coverage.

Based on a close analysis of the texts, it became clear that the strategy was talked about in different ways. In order to understand these individual-level differences, the transcripts were re-read, focusing on converging and diverging discourses within and between actor levels, as well as between the organizations. From this stage of the analysis, first emerging themes stemming from the informants' own words and expressions were created (Van Maanen, 1979). As we continued our analysis, we soon noticed different attitudes towards and views of the strategy, and patterns between emerging themes and informants started to appear. As these were refined, an emerging understanding of how managers differently constructed a coopetitive frame, and what informed this construction, started to form. Ultimately, themes were merged into a higher aggregate level. An overview is offered in Table 1. We used the NVivo software as a tool to assist in our data analysis, in order to more easily compare the emerging themes across the accounts.

Our case analysis could be characterized as abductive (Dubois & Gadde, 2002), since we moved between generating themes and the literature on sensemaking, strategy-as-practice, and coopetition. By combining the different stages of the analysis, we were able to discern how managers made sense of the strategy and their engagement differently, by drawing on the past, present and future (e.g. Garud et al., 2010; Halinen et al., 2013).

4. Case findings and analysis: the development of coopetitive frames

Based on the analysis, we were able to identify discourses and meanings that converged with the official versions of the strategy, as well as some that revealed more critical views (Laine & Vaara, 2007; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007; Vaara et al., 2004). It should however be noted that managers drew on multiple and even contrasting discourses and meanings in their assessments of the strategy (Mantere & Vaara, 2008), and that the perceived values of coopetition therefore overlap.

Coopetition was approached either as extant among newspapers offering journalistic material in the minority language, i.e. inside the strategic group (Porac et al., 1995), or as coming from the outside including other groups of competitors on the market. The boundaries of competition between the coopeting parties were thus clearly perceived differently (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Lindström & Polsa, 2016).

The analysis also revealed that managers had different expectations of the future value as well as the realization of the coopetitive strategy. In line with previous sensemaking studies, we claim that these different expectations of the future clearly inhibited or eased the development of a coopetitive frame (e.g. Guiré & Vandenburghe, 2013; Sonsenhein, 2007). In the section that follows, we discuss this argument in greater depth.

4.1. Different temporal orientations of sensemaking

As we show in Table 2, based on the case analysis we were able to group the managers into three different sensemaking orientations, based on their views of what could be accomplished in the future. We join the argument previously made by scholars that the past and present are always incorporated into the construction of images of the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Managers accordingly justified or questioned influence and participation in coopetition differently, based on past patterns of action, judgments of the present situation, as well as imagined futures (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Garud et al., 2010; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Weick, 1995). Inspired by these scholars, we label the different temporal orientations “re-enacting the past”, “contextualizing the present”, and “aspiring for the future”.

In this section, we combine the different managerial views on the value of the coopetitive strategy, expectations, perceptions of competition, as well as the three temporal orientations of sensemaking. Managers’ different orientations towards the future are associated with different combinations of competitive frames with the emerging coopetitive frame. Fig. 2 offers an illustration. If we approach this from a practice perspective, managers clearly differed in their views on future strategizing (see Table 2). With regard to the strategizing mode, we draw on the conceptualization and distinction between recursive and adaptive practices offered by Jarzabkowski (2004). Recursive modes capture the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent first order themes</th>
<th>Refined second order themes</th>
<th>Final aggregate themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How to sustain profitability</td>
<td>• Taking measures to survive in the rapidly changing industry</td>
<td>Perceived economic motive for coopetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation is a must</td>
<td>• Cooperation as an imposition of the environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Necessity knows no law</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cooperation is a milestone and a principle</td>
<td>• Overcoming previous relational difficulties in coopeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘We can do things together’</td>
<td>• Signaling changed attitudes of competition → co-exist on the market</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Proceed into other forms of cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Media as a democratic right for citizens</td>
<td>• Assessments of future identity → joining forces towards shared competition on the market to exist</td>
<td>Perceived cultural motive for coopetition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Who will we be in the future without minority media</td>
<td>• Increasing knowledge &amp; social exchange</td>
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<td>• Securing a diversity of journalism</td>
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<td>• Bridge builder between regions</td>
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<td>• Offer better material for the subscribers through cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Competition as ‘creation of the imagination’</td>
<td>• Competition does not at present exist inside of the strategic group</td>
<td>Different perceptions of strengths of competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment of the changing industry and changing structural boundaries between newspapers</td>
<td>• Competition tied to journalism as a profession</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Own news’ defines a newspaper’s brand</td>
<td>• Competition as a destructive force</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being unique</td>
<td>• Competition tied to journalism as a profession</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal experiences of competition and cooperation</td>
<td>• Competition as a stimulating force and healthy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Magnitude of change</td>
<td>• Skepticism towards realization of coopetition and of actual benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What will cooperation ultimately mean for the organization</td>
<td>• Present form of coopetition is inadequate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sense of shared identity and collective efforts</td>
<td>• Optimism based on perceptions of changed attitudes and the right time for coopetition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fear of not existing in the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sense of satisfaction and personal fulfillment</td>
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Table 1 Alternative meanings to coopetition: Development of themes.
habitual state of practices, whereas the adaptive modes embrace the deployment of practices by individuals in changing environments.

Accordingly, some managers were more prone to hold on to old habitual interaction patterns across the inter- and intra-organizational levels in their constructions of future accounts, informed by established practices building on competition in the past. Some managers, on the contrary, were able to construct accounts of future interaction patterns adhering to new practices that were modified to the changing surroundings. Below, we look more deeply into these different orientations and explore the multiple interpretations of the future in depth.

4.1.1. Social framing of coopetition: re-enacting the past

Our analysis clearly showed that some managers struggled with their accounts of the future. When coopetition was framed in terms of a perceived social value, sensemaking became to a great extent retrospective and oriented towards the past (see Table 2). When creating accounts of future interaction patterns, and assessing mutual value creation in its current form, this group of managers was more prone than others to incorporate cues from previous events and interaction patterns between the parties into their accounts (Tidström, 2009; Weick, 1995). Particularly managers with previous experience of coopetition discursively constructed the strategy as a milestone, in order to pave the way for establishing and sustaining future collective efforts and coopetitive activities between the parties.

In retrospect, cooperation between newspapers was illustrated as an undesirable strategy over the years, due to the professional practices favoring competition and preservation of newspaper brand and identity. The coopetitive strategy in its present form was consequently portrayed as a symbol of change (Gioia et al., 1994), signaling the fact that the parties can proceed into other forms of coopetition, as well as co-exist on the market (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999). This group of managers referred to imaginary competition and the guarding of one’s special preserves, when illustrating attitudes as previous constraining factors and intrusions (Czakon, 2010) in the history of attempts to coopete. The strategy in its present form was therefore perceived to have the aim of ameliorating the relationships between the parties, and the interactions therein:

“[…] better late than never. And if this collaboration turns out well and we learn that we can do a lot of things together well then we should do it.”

[Manager #1]

The managers who were to a great extent dwelling on the history of difficulties in the parties coopeting, were also more inclined to perceive competition in its present form as low. Especially at higher managerial levels, competition was viewed as a destructive force, since they perceived themselves and the organization as members of a non-competing strategic group. As such, managers were making sense of the past in the present, by contrasting their own changed views of competition with the established mindset of the past (Weick, 1995).

When it comes to sensemaking, managers that had previously experienced ambiguity, difficulties, and divergence in their expectations associated with previous attempts to coopete, had low expectations
that impeded the interpretative process (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). As noted by sensemaking scholars, not only expectations, but also perceptions of commitment, are crucial for making sense of ambiguous or uncertain events (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). By drawing on past discrepancies between expectations and outcomes, and accordingly on failed sensemaking, future commitment to the strategy across parties was approached with hesitance. This group of managers could thus be argued to re-activate inter-organizational interactions (Weick, 1995), by “reactivating” previous patterns of thought and action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 971) to the present, as well as projecting those into the future.

Some managers were in this sense not able to match their competitive frames that comprised changes in the industry (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004; Mariani, 2007; Reger & Palmer, 1996), with their expectations of others’ perceptions of competition and cooperation (Guéitte & Vandenberghe, 2013; Sonenshein, 2007) inside the boundaries of the strategic group. In terms of future strategizing, the strong deployment of the established professional practices in the past became for these managers a symbol for non-actions also in the future. A future habitual tendency (Jarzabkowski, 2004) in interaction patterns at the inter-organizational level was clearly emphasized, which also became a hindering factor in the construction of future agency. These managers consequently failed in re-thinking the past (cf. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

4.1.2. Economic framing of coopetition: contextualizing the present

Another group of managers struggled with their accounts of the future based on a perceived incompatibility of the present form of cooperation with the industry situation, or with organizational identity. A more financially orientated motive for the strategy could also be distinguished in these accounts, since coopetition was constructed as an imposition on the organization by its environment (e.g. Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Kyllén & Rusko, 2011; Mariani, 2007; Tidström, 2014), and the severe financial situation. The strategy was hence portrayed simply as a response to the dynamic and rapidly changing business landscape. As one manager put it:

“Changes are easier to realize in critical situations. For some reason. When everything is fine and dandy everyone wants to do everything as it is usually done. So we would not have agreed upon this simple measure if we had not been in an unbearable situation. If not, one would have stuck to ‘if you want a thing done well, do it yourself.’”

[Manager #3]

The above quotation clearly illustrates the past attitudes towards cooperation between newspapers in the industry, as well as the change in mindset cooperation in fact implies.

Through the analysis, critical interpretations of the strategy (Vaara et al., 2004) were traced to perceptions of the inadequacy of cooperation in its present form in the rapidly changing industry, but also to when managers contextualized alternative future action and interaction patterns with past habits (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Hence, when cooperation was framed in terms of economic value, it was approached with skepticism in two senses. First, as managers were evaluating the strategy in relation to the amount of change happening in the industry, it was questioned in terms of its current structure and the actual value that could be derived from it. Also, when evaluating their individual participation, some managers were not able to fully justify the strategy, based on perceived negative trade-offs between mutual inter-organizational efforts and the actual implications of these for the individual organization (Lado, Boyd, & Hanlon, 1997).

For this group of managers, the competitive frames applied to cooperation were derived from established ways of thinking about the organization, where skepticism towards cooperation between newspapers still prevailed. This reasoning is further illustrated by the fact that the actual amount of complementarity between the parties was questioned, stemming from a perceived degree of closeness (Bengtsson et al., 2010; Easton & Araujo, 1992) inside the strategic group. Important-

ly, it illustrates the tendency to stick to a specific path of strategizing, which could best be illustrated as the “problem of recursiveness” (Jarzabkowski, 2004: 530). In contrast to the retrospective relationship-oriented accounts, this recursiveness manifested itself in interaction patterns inside organizational boundaries, which could be argued to continuously sustain organizational identities (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Weick, 1995).

Although this group of managers approved the idea of coopetition, and were able to envision future forms of interaction patterns between the parties, skepticism and low expectations contributed to their not being able to fully justify participation in coopetition. This group could therefore best be described as struggling in their sensemaking and subsequent matching of competitive and coopetitive frames, feeling both optimistic and skeptical at the same time (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

In sum, it is possible to argue that at the same time as the changing environment became an enabling force for sensemaking given the worsened financial situation, old frameworks became a hindering and counterbalancing force (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015) for the ability to legitimize present and future competitive strategizing (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Therefore, in this sensemaking orientation, future adaption was overtaken by practices sustained over time.

4.1.3. Cultural framing of coopetition: aspiring for the future

Thus far in our discussion, it is evident that managers were seeking a motive for engagement in future coopetition by referring to the past, or the present changing industry. In addition, the analysis revealed that one group of managers strongly emphasized a future cultural motive for engaging in coopetition, and hence compared to the other managers, to a greater extent adopted a prospective orientation in their sensemaking (see Tables 1 and 2).

This group of managers clearly viewed the strategy as an opportunity to widen the scope of material in the newspapers, thus increasing social exchange (Easton & Araujo, 1992) and improving understandings of different geographical regions. The degree of complementarity between regions was hence perceived as high (Bengtsson et al., 2010), and competition as not extant inside the strategic group. The position of the coopetition parties in relation to each other was consequently characterized by co-existence (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999), where the parties’ goals were perceived not to affect the goals or position of another party in the market (Easton & Araujo, 1992). Overall, competition between newspapers was approached as a stimulating force for organizations (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011); to a great extent linked to the specific journalistic profession (cf. Oliver, 2004; Ritala et al., 2009):

“[…] so not the hard news, which are often local and then there is this pride and the competitive thinking: you do not give away really good news, you know, it is the brand of the newspaper and you keep those. But when it comes to things of more neutral character we are willing to cooperate.”

[Manager #9]

The future cultural theme could also be distinguished in references to the newspapers’ customers. Through the strategy, newspapers were assumed to be able to provide material that was closer to the readers, offering a deeper and better coverage of society, but also to be able to focus on preserving the newspaper’s identity. In the end, the value of the coopetitive strategy could be distinguished in securing the future diversity of journalism in the minority language in the changing competitive landscape.

Consequently, positive attitudes towards competition and coopetition between the parties can be explained by the sense of a common goal, and a long-term orientation of cooperation (Loch et al., 2006; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), which is created through joining forces towards shared competition in the industry (Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Luo, 2007), referred to as actual
competition. A shared cultural representation of who they are and will become was frequently drawn on when justifying coopetition in the present changing surroundings (Padula & Dagnino, 2007; Weick, 1995):

“I believe at the same time that it is extremely important for democracy and society that it exists a mutual history. And that it exists a qualitative journalistic product, which has been assembled by journalists who have verified the sources, in order for us to have a mutual history.” [Manager #7]

The prospective dimension of agency has been argued to include managers’ imagination of potential forms of action in the future, which are modified in line with desires and fears (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Due to the changing nature of the industry, the fear of not surviving the future influenced managers’ interpretation and full acceptance of coopetition in this sensemaking orientation. The strong emphasis on preserving the collective identity of the strategic group and customers in the future clearly shows the influence of identity and emotions on sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). The affective dimension of sensemaking also became evident where a strong sense of optimism and high expectations were derived from assessments of changed collective views on competition, shared desires of future identity, as well as of commitment, inside the strategic group. These managers were able to easily match competitive and coopetitive frames, as well as to re-think past difficulties in previous interaction patterns (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

In contrast to the other sensemaking orientations, the strong emotional attachment to the cultural identity (Creed et al., 2002) fostered new strategizing through modification of the established professional practices in accordance with the changing context (Jarzabkowski, 2004). The prospective oriented managers were consequently drawing on the new macro discourse of increased cooperation in the industry, which aided their construction of future agency and strategizing (Balogun et al., 2014).

Interestingly, when these managers were assessing the history of coopetition between newspapers, some also seemed to experience personal fulfillment and satisfaction in realizing cooperation, further reinforcing their full acceptance of the strategy. These managers were also more prone to advocate coopetition to others, and could hence be defined as sensegivers (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). This finding clearly shows that managers’ individual specific motivations, as well as their background and history (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007), have an influencing role when it comes to acceptance of a coopetition strategy and the adoption of a new frame.

4.2. The development of frames over time

Fig. 2 depicts the different interrelated temporal orientations of sensemaking. It should also be emphasized that these orientations are not static and are likely to change over time (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The perceptions of coopetition and the frames in their present form should thus be approached as emergent.

Sensemaking is assumed to intensify before a new reality is enacted (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weick, 1995). The case clearly shows that a coopetition strategy in its initial stage involves processes of individual and collective interpretation at inter- and intra-organizational levels, in order to enact the new reality. The different perceptions of the boundaries and strengths of competition across managers’ accounts indicate that change in established frames and practices has not yet achieved enactment across the parties at the collective level, including the intra-organizational levels.

The established professional practices and corresponding competitive frames enacted through past interaction patterns have clearly placed limits on the extent to which coopetition could be accomplished in the past. The insight that some managers have updated their competitive frames in accordance with the changing surroundings (Reger & Palmer, 1996), where perceptions of ‘bad’ competition as coming from inside the boundaries of the strategic group have shifted to actors outside of the group, suggests an impact of the external environment over time on individuals’ sensemaking (Bogner & Barr, 2000), and on perceptions of coopetition. Changes in competition in the industry have therefore contributed to a redefinition of competition between coopeting newspapers (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004), but also of the professional practices:

“A journalist works with the whole body in the race for news. And to be first. And to outdo others. But today this does not exist anymore, everything is on the web immediately.” [Manager #7]

Based on the different perceptions of competition across the accounts, we propose that old frames of competition exist alongside new frames (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). This divergence in competitive frames could be explained by the turbulence in the industry (Bogner & Barr, 2000; Reger & Palmer, 1996), but also by the fact that some managers update their competitive frames to the changing environments more quickly than others (Reger & Palmer, 1996). In the case, differences can also be traced to positions in the organization, where managers closer to the customer were more prone to frame coopetition in terms of its cultural value, and hence approach competition as a ‘good’ and stimulating force for the customers (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010; Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011). We now turn to discussing in more depth the individual level factors that influence the matching of competitive and coopetitive frames.

4.3. Understanding individual level differences in the creation of coopetitive frames

Based on the case analysis, we argue that affective elements, such as attitudes and expectations, become important for the subsequent framing of coopetition. Since sensemaking never stops (Weick, 1995), it could be assumed that attitudes at a particular point in time associated with coopetition continuously develop. Particularly managers framing coopetition in terms of its cultural value provide proof that attitudes towards coopetition have changed over time. These changes in attitude seem to be associated with positive experiences and assessments of changed perceptions of competition at the industry level (Baldwin & Bengtsson, 2004).

Consequently, as the different groups of managerial sensemaking show, some managers were less prone than others to re-think the past (cf. Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). For example, some experienced equivocal feelings concerning present and future inter-organizational interactions, based on patterns in the past (cf. Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012) (dashed arrows in Fig. 2). This points to the fact that expectations connected to established meanings are difficult to change (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), and that failing to update expectations clearly creates difficulties for managers in constructing accounts of future coopetitive strategizing.

Some managers were more prone to incorporate cues from the changing macro discourse in the industry into their assessments of the future (Balogun et al., 2014). The tendency to perceive changed views of coopetition across the industry was also intensified by the strong sense of preserving a cultural identity in the future. As Maitlis and Christianson (2014) note, differences in the extent to which individuals engage in sensemaking and actively seek plausibility concerning how to move on, stem from individual evaluations of the importance of the ambiguous situation. In the case, the threat the changing industry posed to future identity (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) clearly steered this group of managers towards acceptance of the strategy, and more easily creating a coopetitive frame.

From a strategy-as-practice perspective, the findings discussed above show that managers are able to create future cooperative practices and strategizing patterns through bricolage, by drawing on and modifying sustained practices from the past with present changing...
Our discussion presents the idea that from a sensemaking perspective, a new frame is constructed through matching an established competitive frame with an emerging coopetitive frame, mediated by individual level expectations of the strategy. In this manner, we further extend previous conceptualizations of individual level perceptions of competition and emotions (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), showing that optimism or skepticism towards competition either reinforces or impedes sensemaking. Differences can be explained by managers’ personal ability to re-think previous experiences and update expectations of the future, as well as by an individual emphasis on organizational or cultural identity. We thus empirically illustrate that the affective dimension of sensemaking plays a crucial role in matching competitive and coopetitive frames at the individual level.

Moreover, our analysis shows that managers draw on different and even competing social, economic or cultural motives when making sense of their own as well as others’ participation in coopetition. This finding joins and advances previous studies acknowledging the simultaneous existence of both the social and economic dimensions of coopetition (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Castaldo & Dagnino, 2009). The recognition of coopetition as a means of sustaining collective cultural identity moreover extends previous insights that have indicated that managers have solely short-term economic motives (e.g. Czakon & Rogalski, 2013).

The case findings support emergent characteristics of a coopetition strategy (e.g. Bonel & Rocco, 2007; Czakon, 2010; Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Mariani, 2007). At the individual level, a coopetition strategy could be argued to emerge when individuals draw on retrospective patterns of behavior in their prospective sensemaking accounts. The old frameworks applied to the emerging coopetitive frame also point to the predisposition in coopetitive interactions to habitually draw on established action patterns (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004). We are therefore able to empirically extend the recognition and conceptualizations of coopetition as a multilevel strategy (Dahl, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016), to incorporate the powerful influence of higher-level macro practices on action and interaction patterns, persisting over time.

We consequently contribute to the emerging discussion on coopetition from a strategy-as-practice perspective. The case study focused on the formation stage of a coopetition strategy, and we empirically demonstrate the complexities inherent in the transition from shared established practices building on pure competition, to new practices that include cooperation and modified competition with changing surroundings. This complexity could best be illustrated by the simultaneous existence of future accounts where either old habitual or new practices and strategizing patterns are constructed. We propose that these differences across managerial accounts can be explained by the deployment of established practices based on competition in habitual, or novel ways. Coopetitive strategizing consequently requires the skill of bricolage on the part of managers (Jarzabkowski, 2004), including the ability to modify old frameworks building on competition. Drawing on the practice stream (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Whittington, 2006, 2007), we argue that coopetitive strategizing is to a great extent shaped by managers and who they are, their background, and motivations.

We discovered from the empirical findings that competition persists over time through established frameworks, and is to a great extent retrospectively defined. As clearly indicated, the best way to modify and integrate sustained competitive structures with coopetitive frames is by drawing on future value for customers. This finding joins recent insights on customers’ perception on coopetitive formation (Czakon & Rogalski, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2014). We are hence able to suggest that coopetitive scholars should increase their focus on the influence of customers on coopetition, as well as on managerial perceptions (Tyler & Gnyawali, 2009).

Finally, the case study reveals another particular facet of coopetitive relationships. The findings show that activities where organizations cooperate have shifted closer to the customer (cf. Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; see also recent advancements by Lindström & Polsa, 2016).
addition, the analysis implies that cooperative relationships might evolve from competition, via coopetition, to cooperation over time (cf. Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012).

5.2. Managerial implications

Despite the case involving the early stage of a coopetitive strategy, our model of sensemaking has implications for strategy implementation. Understanding differences in individual level sensemaking becomes crucial, as interpretations mediate change initiatives and how these are implemented (Bartunek et al., 2006). The fact that individuals assigned different meanings to the strategy within and between managerial levels could influence realization and development. Since individual interpretations might either promote or hinder participation in strategy work (Mantere & Vaara, 2008), particularly in the case of a more contextually oriented view, the possibility exists for a lack of engagement in the strategy.

Managers should therefore be mindful of their own and others interpretations of coopetition, be aware of the existence of multiple meanings in the organization, and of the fact that sustained frames and identities change slowly (Fiol & Huff, 1992). We therefore propose that dealing with diverging interpretations of coopetition and multiple strategic objectives becomes a managerial issue.

At the inter-organizational level, the fact that actors to a great extent draw on old competitive frames when making sense of engagement in the strategy, suggests that competitive intrusions from the past might long-term effects on the relationship, by influencing both present and future perceptions (cf. Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). This might give rise to conflicts in future developments (Tidström, 2009; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012), which should be taken into account when considering future development in coopetitive relationships.

In sum, our case findings enable us to reflect on coopetition as a strategic choice for managers. The specific context in our case study of a rapidly changing industry was forcing organizations to coopete. We consider that multiple interpretations and future accounts of coopetition indicate that we not for the changing industry, the choice to adopt a coopetition strategy would have been inherently different between managers. We might therefore assume that some managers are more prone than others to engage in a coopetition strategy and in strategizing, guided by their individual level motivations, background, and personal goals (Whittington, 2006, 2007).

The choice to coopete might also be guided by the perceived compatibility of coopetition with established practices. We are thus able to extend the notion of a managerial coopetitive mindset (e.g. Gnyawali & Park, 2009, 2011; Liu, 2007). Applying our results, coopetition as a mindset would include capturing the right time when viewing concerning coopetition change across inter- and intra-organizational levels, and consequently to engage in sensemaking in order to foster the emergence of the strategy. For this mindset to be adopted, a belief in the realization of future strategizing both at the intra- and inter-organizational levels, as well as industry levels, must be enacted.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

A clear limitation stems from the fact that the study is case-specific. This study was implemented in a specific industry context, and future studies should explore the findings in other industries.

The empirical study mainly comprised managers at higher organizational levels. Drawing on Vaara and Whittington (2012), including also lower actor levels could generate intriguing insights on how coopetitive strategies are made sense of at different levels in organizations. Moreover, the study did not address individual and collective activities in the implementation stage of coopetition, and the actual strategic outcomes of sensemaking. Therefore, focusing on how individual level interpretations drive organizational level outcomes (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007) could also generate valuable knowledge in coopetitive research.

Another methodological limitation of this study stems from the fact that it only embraces perceptions of managers in a particular period of time. Since data collection was conducted when the strategy had just been initiated, interpretations in the implementation stage were not addressed in a longitudinal sense. Given that sensemaking is ongoing (Weick, 1995), perceptions are subject to change when individuals interact over time. A longitudinal approach could therefore be favored (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Dahl, 2014), offering insights on how coopetitive strategies are made sense of at individual and collective levels at different times, and consequently how and why interpretations and actions change.

In addition, the case findings clearly call for further investigations of both macro and micro level practice modes in terms of coopetition. The strategy-as-practice and sensemaking perspectives accordingly call for a shift in the level where empirical coopetitive studies are commonly conducted. We believe that the results obtained from our single case study justify the deployment of in-depth investigations at micro levels, and hope to inspire future practice oriented studies on coopetition.

References


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The interplay of agency, structures, and sensemaking: A case study of crafting coopetition strategy in practice

Abstract
This study combines and applies the sensemaking and strategy-as-practice approaches on coopetition, in order to understand how this particular strategy is crafted in practice through individual agency. The approach stems from the coopetitive research field’s previous neglect of the relationship between the institutional realm and individual agency, as well as from limited understanding of how coopetitive strategies are created at micro levels. The empirical data is based on a case study of coopetition as a strategic change initiative and its subsequent development. The study advances the coopetitive research field by in-depth investigating the constraining and enabling effects of particular practices on the creation of coopetitive agency, as well as the subsequent effects on coopetitive strategy development. In particular, realizing coopetition as continuous in practice is illustrated as an inherently complex social process, driven by individual objectives and incentives, as well as characterized by emergence.

Key words: coopetition strategy, strategy-as-practice, sensemaking, sensegiving, agency, structure
1. Introduction

The general trend in strategic management is moving towards problematizing strategic outcomes by to a greater extent recognizing individual cognition and behavior as the micro foundations of strategy (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015). Given this centrality of the individual, strategy-as-practice scholars argue that before we consider strategy outcomes, we must understand practitioners and who they are (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006, 2007), as well as how and why they choose to engage in realizing strategies (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Similarly, recent research on coopetition informs us that insights into the importance of addressing the micro level, such as routines and individual level perceptions, in order to understand development and outcome at the macro level, such as coopetitive dynamics and development, is starting to emerge (e.g. Dahl, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016; Czakon & Rogalski, 2014; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014; Park et al., 2014). From a strategic point of view, organizations are by coopetitive scholars assumed to engage in coopetition in order to reap the benefits from simultaneous cooperation and competition, where the former allows for access of resources though inter-organizational exchange and value creation, and the latter for internal leveraging of the created value (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2010; Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Ritala & Tidström, 2014).

Despite the increased research interest in the individual level, in terms of tension (Fernandez et al., 2014; Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014), multiple identities (Näsholm & Bengtsson, 2014), and coopetitive rules and routines (Dahl, 2014), we know relatively little of how individuals contribute to coopetitive strategy emergence, development, and outcomes through their agency over time, as well as what constrain or enable this particular agency (Bengtsson et al., 2016a). Therefore, the coopetitive
research field has recently called for a stronger focus on cognition, emotion, and behavior as coopetitive micro foundations (Bengtsson & Raza-Ullah, 2016; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014).

The practice approach to strategy has also found itself into coopetitive research (Dahl et al., 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). Studies drawing upon this approach argue that in order to fully understand coopetitive strategy execution in practice, the influence of the institutional realm needs to be taken into account. The institutional realm has previously been addressed in the field in terms of how institutional actors impose a coopetitive strategy upon organizations (e.g. Kylänen & Rusko, 2011; Mariani, 2007; Tidström, 2014). However, to date, there is limited research focusing on the relationship between the institutional and micro levels, and thus how the institutional level informs individual agency when coopetition is already initiated as a strategy.

The above identified shortage of knowledge informs the strategy as-practice oriented focus of this article, in combination with the sensemaking perspective. A coopetitive strategy could from a practice perspective be approached as realized through individual crafting (e.g. Bürgi et al., 2005; Mintzberg, 1987), created through “complex and ongoing sensemaking processes” (Vaara et al., 2004: 5), embracing both the psychological and the social dimensions (Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008). In this study, particular focus is put on structures informing legitimate strategizing behavior, and how new structures emerge through sensemaking. Sensemaking is defined as the process through which meanings are created, triggered when individuals are faced with new experiences, or situations that are unexpected or uncertain (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). Strategic change could constitute such a situation.

A strategic change implies significant alterations in established perceptions, structures, and practices (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994). Approached as a strategic change, the introduction of a coopetition strategy is argued to require change in industry frames (Mariani, 2007; Porac & Thomas, 1990), and consequently the
adoption of new modified practices (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). This includes the establishment of new shared action patterns at intra- as well as inter-organizational levels through individual and collective sensemaking (Brown et al., 2015; Weick et al., 2005). Taking a perceptual approach to competition, competitive strategizing becomes enacted and institutionalized over time through continuous interactions between actors within strategic groups (Porac & Thomas, 1990; Porac et al., 1995), rather than resulting from sole structural characteristics in an industry (Chen, 1996; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001).

The aim of this article is accordingly to increase current understandings of how cooepetition is established in practice by scrutinizing the creation of individual level agency over time, as well as how this creation is enabled or constrained. The empirical data is based on a case study of cooepetition as a strategic change, where cooepetition is established for the first time between three organizations in order to be realized as ongoing and continuous in practice.

The study advances the cooepetitive research field by in-depth investigating the constraining and enabling effects of particular practices on the creation of cooepetitive agency, as well as the subsequent effects on cooepetitive strategy development. In particular, realizing cooepetition as continuous in practice is illustrated as an inherently complex social process, driven by individual objectives and incentives, as well as characterized by emergence. The study also offers an empirical contribution by investigating and comparing realization and development of cooepetition in practice as long term and ongoing, as well as more short-term oriented through projects.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The centrality of individual agency in crafting, executing, and developing strategy

From a strategy-as-practice approach, the emergence and development of strategies become inherently social, originating from interconnected actions and interactions between
individuals and their contexts (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). The approach further deviates from traditional views on who constitutes a strategic actor by acknowledging the influence on strategy from other actor levels than top management, external to the organization or internal (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). In this manner, strategies are understood as influenced and shaped by a stream of deliberate and purposeful activities in combination with emergent activities (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

An inherent assumption in the strategy-as-practice approach is the reciprocal influence of structure and agency (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008; Whittington, 1992, 2010). Practices become the mediating entities between the institutional realm and situated activity, through which structures manifest (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Practices can broadly be understood as formal and informal shared norms and routines for conducting strategy, ranging from established industry norms to specific discursive practices (Whittington, 2006).

Practices receive a central role in understanding individuals’ contribution in realizing strategies since these are assumed as enabling or hindering strategic participation (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 1992). From a practice approach, individual agency becomes informed by multiple social identities and institutions, understood as resources or constraints (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1992). The individual manager is therefore a complex being, belonging to multiple social domains, extending beyond particular organizations (Whittington, 2006, 2007). Actors are therefore assumed to make choices when drawing upon practices, and consequently upon institutions (Jarzabkowski, 2004). Strategizing therefore becomes the continuous stream of activities created when actors act and interact based on sustained practices in the institutional realm, which provides legitimacy, at the same time as the institutions are continuously created and re-created (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2010).
By placing the individual in the center of realizing strategies, mediating between the organizational and extra organizational fields (Whittington, 2006), the approach further recognizes the role of individuals’ incentives for realizing strategies, informed by their backgrounds and history. In this manner, strategizing contains multiple and diverging interests (Denis et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Kaplan (2008) for example provide evidence on how particular individuals can shape the dominant strategic view in an organization favoring own interests, when consensus has not yet been reached.

Sensemaking becomes part of creating agency as the process embrace how individuals create legitimacy of their participation in executing strategy (Vaara et al., 2004; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Sensemaking is inherently social (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995), contains dimension of power (Weick et al., 2005), and is influenced by particular discourses (Mantere & Vaara, 2008), as well as positions in the organization (Regnér, 2003). From a practice approach then, sensemaking cannot be understood in isolation; it has to be linked with different levels, such as the institutional, organizational and episodic levels, as well as across multiple domains (Balogun et al., 2014). As such, how coopetition is talked about in a particular episode, such as a meeting at a particular organizational actor level, might serve to uphold a particular institutionalized identity, influencing how sense is made and strategic actions accordingly chosen (Balogun et al., 2014).

2.2 The individual in coopetitive strategies

A coopetitive strategic change initiative could be assumed to present a cognitive challenge for individuals. The general understanding in the research field is that individuals involved in realizing the strategy are victims of tensions, due to contradicting interaction logics (e.g. Fernandez et al., 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014). In order to mitigate the possible negative effects from tension on coopetitive outcomes, tension management implies
separating cooperation and competition through time and space (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). Fernandez et al. (2014) posit that the most effective management of coopetitive tensions embraces the combination of separation and integration principles, in this manner emphasizing the decisive role of the individual in cognitively dealing with the coopetitive paradox (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015).

From a cognitive approach, the coopetitive paradox materializes through simultaneous and contradicting positive and negative emotions stemming from coopetitive participation (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), which requires coping through a coopetitive capability (Gnyawali et al., 2016). The capability should be understood in terms of both analytical and executional capability, where the former includes the ability to adopt a particular mindset (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Luo, 2007) and understand the coopetitive situation, whereas the latter implies executing coopetition in practice and in routines. It should also be noted that individuals are assumed to deal differently with the coopetitive paradox (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015; see also Park et al., 2014), in this manner also having different effects on coopetitive performance (Gnyawali et al., 2016).

A majority of coopetitive studies depart from the belief that top managers dictate strategy formulation and the cooperative and competitive interaction processes, by possessing a particular mindset and frames, which for example enables the spotting of opportunities for coopetition (Gnyawali & Park, 2011, 2009; Herzog, 2010; Luo, 2007). Top managers have also been assumed to influence coopetitive strategy implementation and outcomes by communicating the strategy to employees (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Tidström, 2009), but also by imposing coopetitive tension on lower level employees (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014). The assumption of top managers as the most influential coopetitive strategists is however challenged by the fact that individuals at lower organizational levels (Fernandez et al., 2014), or other coopeting parties (Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012) might challenge top
managers’ views on the strategy. This has also been acknowledged by the practice inspired studies (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Dahl et al., 2016). A recent extended definition of coopetition inspired by the practice approach to strategy suggests that the economic dimension should be combined with a social approach. In this manner, coopetition is recognized as comprising simultaneous intentional and unintentional cooperative and competitive interactions between multiple stakeholders at any level of analysis, which are driven by ad hoc activities and different interests and goals to be realized, which subsequently form a paradoxical relationship (Bengtsson et al., 2016a).

2.3 Acknowledging the simultaneity of intended and emergent strategic activities

Drawing upon the practice approach, in order to understand the development and outcomes of strategies, particular attention must be paid to emergence (Balogun, 2006; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The simultaneous occurrence of both deliberate and emergent features (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) of a coopetition strategy has previously been addressed (e.g. Dahl et al., 2016; Mariani, 2007; Tidström, 2008), also visible in the extended definition addressed above. Emergence has been approached through the influence of environmental development on the formation of coopetition (e.g. Mariani, 2007), and through intrusions of competition in cooperative activities at the relation level in (e.g. Czakon, 2010). At the organizational level, emergence becomes visible through the occurrence of unintended effects from implementing coopetition at the organizational level (Bonel & Rocco, 2009), as well in growing dissatisfaction among employees (Tidström, 2009). At the individual level, the occurrence of tensions clearly captures emergence and unintentional effects (e.g. Bengtsson & Kock, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014).

Particularly in practice studies concerned with strategic change, emergence is explained through the sensemaking lens (e.g. Balogun, 2006; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). These
studies have proved that when change is initiated and unfolds in organizations, the development is contingent upon intertwined processes of sensemaking. Particularly lower organizational level managers have been depicted to engage in informal collective sensemaking activities in order to develop a shared understanding of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). Interpretations as well as actions (Maitlis, 2005) might in this manner be inherently different from the intentions of top managers, steering realization of change in both intentional and unintentional directions (Balogun, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). Similarly, previous coopetitive research implies that congruence between the formulated coopetitive strategy, and the actual cooperative or competitive behavior of employees, will not always be achieved (Dahl et al., 2016; Kylänen & Rusko, 2011). Different interpretations will accordingly exist depending on positions and engagement in coopetitive activities in the organization (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), as well as discursive abilities of top managers (Tidström, 2009).

Strategic changes particularly imply a threat to organizational identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Nag et al., 2007; Sonenshein, 2010), and therefore requires identity re-formulations (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994). Failure in legitimatizing change has for example been argued to stem from inability to align change with an established organizational discourse (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003). Practice studies taking a discursive approach to strategy (e.g. Balogun et al., 2014; Mantere, 2013; Vaara, 2010) share the assumption that strategies are talked into existence by materializing identities through discourse (Weick et al., 2005). In this sense, discourse might either hinder or promote participation in strategies, by including or excluding particular actors (Mantere & Vaara, 2008). Success or failure of strategic change is thus to a great extent determined by the use of discourse by actors across the organization, as this serves to uphold or change shared identities (Sonenshein, 2010).
The process of sensegiving captures both actors’ social and intentional influence on strategies, and on others’ sensemaking. Top managers have traditionally been assumed to firstly engage in this activity of influencing others’ interpretive processes, understandings, and sense of meaning toward a preferred view of organizational reality (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991: 442; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). This influence might be exercised in structured forms, such as formal meetings, but also in more unstructured forms, such as gossiping and rumorizing (Balogun et al., 2014; Maitlis, 2005).

To sum up, the identified areas of overlap between coopetition, sensemaking, and strategy-as-practice inform the study’s main arguments. Coopetitive agency requires change in institutionalized competitive structures and consequently in sustained practices formed through past action and interaction at intra- and inter-organizational levels (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). This might however be problematized by the existence of divergent interests across actor levels that inform individual choices to deploy new practices. Moreover, coopetitive agency might also be constrained or enabled by particular sustained or new practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), for example discursive, or physical, such as participation in meetings (Balogun et al., 2014). Creation and development of a coopetition strategy as continuous in practice is hence assumed to be characterized by multiple strategizing patterns, as well as emergence.

3. Methodology and research setting

The study followed a qualitative interpretative research design, adopting an exploratory case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1989). Even though exploratory case studies are often used in inductive approaches, the inherent difficulties in fully separating oneself from all prior understandings are often acknowledged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Particularly in the final stages of analyzing the data, the analysis
moved between emergent findings and prior theoretical understandings when generating the final framework. The adopted research approach could therefore best be described as abductive (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Dubois & Gadde, 2000).

The data set covers both the formulation and implementation stages of a coopetitive strategy, and has been used before to approach coopetition as a strategic change (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015). Even though the study shares the data set and approach, it is inherently different as the analysis in this study is deepened in terms of practices as constraining and enabling coopetitive agency. Focus is therefore not put on implementation issues and middle managerial sensemaking (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015), rather on how sensemaking is influenced by discursive practices, distribution of power, physical placement, and social interaction (Balogun et al., 2014). The relationship between the institutional level and coopetitive agency is therefore stressed.

3.1 Case study description

The case study explores a newly established collaboration in the Finnish media industry between three organizations that publish newspapers in the same minority language. The parties initiated cooperation in 2013, stemming from major industry change. The digital era has produced a paradigm shift in the newspaper industry, increasing competition from digital media, as well as changing consumer behavior. The search for news has thus shifted from printed media to the web, changing the role of the printed newspaper as well as competition in the industry. Changes in consumer demand have not only contributed with a decrease in print media subscribers, but also resulted in a change in advertisers’ behavior, in this way reducing advertising revenues from printed newspapers.

In practice, the collaboration comprises an exchange of materials through a joint article pool, to which all the member organizations upload and extract materials. The main idea behind
the collaboration is that the ongoing use of external material enables the newspapers to save resources that could be directly applied to their respective core areas, which is providing the newspapers’ readers with local news. Ultimately, in the long run, the coopetitive strategy is supposed to help the organizations survive the future and to sustain a future cultural identity for the minority group, by continuing to offering media in the minority language.

As the strategy developed, the organizations also initiated joint production as well as joint distribution of newspapers in some areas. Moreover, as the strategy progressed, more structured and planned series of article exchanges through specific projects emerged, where contributions of each organization were specified, organized, and realized. This stands in contrast to the ongoing materials exchange that was rather loose in its structure and organization, to a great extent building on voluntariness.

The three organizations have a history of strong competition. Structural competition in terms of overlapping subscribers between the organizations is however steadily decreasing, as the organizations are starting to focus on their core geographical areas. From a practice point of view, shared norms informing established and legitimate strategizing patterns over time stem from institutionalized competition, guiding reluctance and suspicion towards cooperation in the industry. Accordingly, previous attempts to realize cooperation in different forms before the initiation of the materials exchange have been fruitless based on the professional practices. The journalistic profession could be argued to inherently build on uniqueness and preserving organizational identity through fierce competition. Even though the present industry situation threatens the shared cultural identity, inter-organizational cooperation stands in stark contrast to the professional strategizing norm. In order for coopetition to be established and legitimized as continuous in practice, new collective patterns of shared actions both at inter- and intra-organizational levels have to be established.
The particular change context is suitable for addressing coopetition as a strategic change in three areas. First of all, the paradigm shift in the media industry has called for new strategies. The case therefore offers an ample opportunity to address strategic change in real time, as well as its development. In addition, the change comprises integration of cooperative activities into established competitive strategies that have informed legitimate behavior throughout history. There is hence an opportunity to in-depth grasp the creation and development of coopetition in practice for the very first time, as well as to address the creation of new practices in real time from the perspective of multiple organizational members. Last, the change does not only include top managerial levels, but also organizational members at lower hierarchical levels that could be expected to deal with the change initiative differently than top managers. Taken together, crafting coopetition in practice can therefore be addressed at both macro and micro levels.

3.2 Data collection

Real time data was collected between 2013 and 2014, and comprised interviews, observation, and media coverage. A longitudinal approach was adopted to study change (Isabella, 1990; Langley, 1999) in order to follow the initial strategic change initiative in-depth, how it was communicated and received by different actors, as well as how the initiative later unfolded. In order to increase current knowledge concerning coopetition, a longitudinal approach has also been stressed in the research field (Dahl, 2014; Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). The interviews also privoded an opportunity to form an understanding of the pre-change initiative stage, and the relational history between the organizations. It should be noted that longitudinal case research often comes close to process research, as it gives the opportunity to follow how change processes unfold in organizations (Hassett & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2013; Pettigrew, 1997).
The first round of interviews was conducted in 2013. The respondents were asked to describe the background of the change initiative, their role in it, as well as their views on it. To a great extent, the same respondents were interviewed twice. In the second round of interviews, the respondents were asked to describe how the change had unfolded, how they experienced the change, and what the implications had been for their daily activities. A total of 28 interviews were conducted with managers from the three parties in the two rounds of interviews. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed in full. The average length of an interview was 50 minutes. A snowball sampling technique was used in order to identify key change actors. This resulted in interviews with managers at both higher and lower organizational levels that contributed to realizing the materials exchange in practice, either taking part in inter-organizational meetings and/or being part of realizing activities at intra-organizational levels.

The integration of multiple perceptions across and within actor levels also triangulated the data. In order to overcome the potential errors inherent in retrospective accounts (Golden, 1992), the data collection was further triangulated by closely following how the change was spoken off in the media, which was also integrated into the analysis. The data set also includes observation of a three hour long inter-organizational meeting. Notes were taken and transcribed in full length after the observation, generating text that was later used in the data analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

The interviews, observation, and media coverage generated rich data. The first stage of the analysis included forming a general chronological understanding of the strategy process (Isabella, 1990; Langley, 1999). The tentative understanding that emerged from working with the data set (Sonenshein, 2010) was that managers greatly differed in terms of their view on coopetition, perceptions of the degree of competition between the organizations, as well as in terms of their actual participation in realizing it in practice. After re-reading all the interviews,
managers’ accounts were grouped into different sensemaking clusters, based on the emergent understanding that there existed differences in cognition as well as action. Based on this, three different strategizing patterns were discerned (Jarzabkowski, 2008): actions in line with the intentions and directives of the materials exchange, actions that were not in line, as well as actions that were mixed.

The analysis then shifted to generating codes that applied to the structural/institutional level, as well as action/situational realm (Jarzabkowski, 2008), generating different sensemaking clusters. For example, how managers actually realized coopetition, by participating in meetings or authoring a particular discourse, accrued to the action realm, whereas sustained competitive structures serving to maintain organizational identity pertained to the institutional realm. The different realms where then matched in order to see if they were present in the same managerial account, before a manager where ultimately assigned to a specific cluster. Due to the high amount of data, the NVivo software was used as an assisting tool.

After the different sensemaking types had been identified and refined, the following stage of the analysis included closely studying verbatim quotes (Van Maanen, 1979) in the different clusters, in order to identify how and why particular actions or non-actions were generated, and the subsequent effects on realizing coopetition as continuous in practice (Jarzabkowski, 2008). Particularly, how and why the respondents integrated activities associated with the materials exchange into their daily activities was scrutinized, as well as how this was related to their organizational positioning.

Grasping the different sensemaking types was inspired by previous literature on sensemaking and strategic change (e.g. Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007). Ultimately the understanding emerged that the identified sensemaking types together had different and even contradicting effects on realizing coopetition as an ongoing practice, as well as on the
development of the strategy in general. By combining the different stages of the analysis, one was able to discern how sense was produced, how meanings were given sense of, as well as what the implications were for realizing coopetition as continuous in practice. By iteratively moving between theoretical concepts and the emerging themes throughout the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the data structures’ general themes were ultimately discerned (see Table 1).

A majority of the respondents where in some way engaged in or influenced by the materials exchange, at the same time as they were upholding business as usual through competition. Coopetitive agency is hence defined in terms of participating and influencing the realization and development of the materials exchange as an ongoing practice, at inter-organizational levels and/or intra-organizational levels. The creation of agency through sensemaking was however also influenced by perceptions of power, degree of physical participation, old and new discourse, as well as social sensegiving.

The different dimensions influencing sensemaking are inspired by Balogun et al. (2014), and need further identification before moving on to discussing the case findings. The discursive dimension comprises both old and new ways of talking about cooperation, ultimately informing legitimate strategizing behavior (Vaara et al., 2004). The old discourse is hence argued to produce and uphold a negative and skeptical approach to cooperation between the organizations, manifested through rumors and old jargon concerning drawbacks from cooperation for the organization and involved individuals. The new discourse encompasses an emphasis on the benefits and positive outcomes for the shared cultural identity increased cooperation implies. The physical dimension comprises either actively participating in realizing the strategy at intra- and/or inter-organizational levels, the latter encompassing meetings and inter-organizational contact, or becoming rather passive in realizing coopetition in practice, for example having no or limited inter-organizational contact (Czakon & Rogalski, 2014). The latter could contribute with limited agency in terms of not uploading or extracting material from
the article pool or not engaging in continuous sensegiving, consciously or unconsciously. The social dimension corresponds to the authoring and consumption of old and emerging new discourse, as well as deploying this in practice through executing or receiving sensegiving. Moreover, managers could be argued to execute sensegiving in both an explicit and direct manner through speech, as well as in a more indirect form through particular actions or non actions.

Last, power should be addressed in two senses. Possessing power is in the particular case context associated with the perceived ability to influence and effect (Kaplan, 2008) the realization and development of coopetition in practice through individual agency. This is closely connected to perceptions of a new shared reality across the organizations, which includes a change in distribution of power between the parties (Giddens, 1984, Jarzabkowski, 2008). In other words, adhering to the new reality and relationships presupposes change in relational distance, which has previously hindered coopetitive realization. On the other hand, limited power corresponds to an inability to break with established relational patterns that manifest through being guided by old ways of thinking about the coopeting parties, as well as the organization, in the decision to contribute to realizing coopetition.

Insert Table 1 around here

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 The development of the coopetitive strategy

The expected end value of the materials exchange could be approached in two senses. First of all, the exchange, as well as cooperation in general, was assumed to be a long-term and ongoing commitment, as well as to be integrated into established daily organizational routines when producing newspapers, in this manner supposed to “become a natural part of the daily
work” as one top managers expressed it. From a top managerial perspective, it also became clear that the underlying intent of the materials exchange in particular was to test the degree of change that had taken place in terms of previous reluctance towards cooperation. In this manner, the exchange became a test of the willingness to cooperate between the organizations, and a way to “open the game” as a top manager put it, in order to proceed into more developed forms of cooperation.

Realizing and developing coopetition in practice incorporated activities at the inter-organizational level, such as discussing, developing and organizing joint projects together, which took place through inter-organizational meetings and other forms of social contact. It also included activities internally in the organizations related to producing and sharing own materials, and utilizing external materials. This incorporated both individual and collective actions, such as taking own initiatives in utilizing the materials exchange, as well as discussing with others which materials to utilize.

In both the strategy formulation and development phases, top managers from the three parties gathered in inter-organizational meetings, where the structure of the materials exchange and potential future developments of cooperation between the parties in general were discussed. Some managers at lower organizational levels also participated in inter-organizational meetings, where the practical nature of the exchange and joint projects were discussed. The inter-organizational meetings hence became a place for collective sensemaking of the new emerging structures and practices.

When the coopetitive strategy had been agreed upon between top managers of the three organizations, it was communicated and motivated internally to employees in the respective organizations, as well as to external actors, such as customers and other stakeholders through press releases and published interviews. As the strategy progressed into its implementation phase, change in the industry escalated. In line with this severed industry situation, the macro
discourse in the industry started to shift towards increased cooperation, and the frequency of
discussion between the parties concerning different forms of future cooperation also intensified.
Particular top managers together with industry consultants and experts contributed to the
shifting industry discourse, which manifested through the published interviews in the press, as
well as industry reports. Cooperation was portrayed as the future trend and as highly beneficial
in terms of surviving the industry.

These external discussions also coincided with internal changes in the organizations, such
as staff lay offs, stemming from severed financial conditions. Particularly when the materials
exchange was communicated in the first place, it gave rise to shared suspicions and rumorining
at lower organizational levels, where drawbacks from increased cooperation both for individual
employees as well as for the organization were discussed. These discussions decreased as the
industry situation worsened, and focused shifted to surviving the future by upholding business-
as-usual. Sensemaking and sensegiving thus took place throughout the strategy process both at
intra as well as inter-organizational levels, in more formal and structured episodes in terms of
meetings, but also in more unstructured and informal episodes.

The analysis clearly showed that even though there existed a shared agreement that
structural competition between the parties had substantially decreased, changes in structural
and cognitive competition were not necessarily always interrelated and occurring in conjunction
with one other. Generally, lower level managers still perceived competition tied to the
journalistic profession as a hindering factor when it comes to coopetitive agency, whereas
higher level managers where able to break with the old industry practices. This difference
contributed to the fact that managers made sense as well as participated differently in realizing
and developing coopetition.

As the strategy developed, the organized and short term structured collective projects
were generally perceived as successful and providing value both for the respective
organizations, as well as for the future relationships between the parties. On the contrary, it also became clear that the ongoing materials exchange was not realized and did not develop as fast as was intended by top managers. To a great extent, this unintended development stemmed from the fact that continuous sensegiving throughout the implementation stage was clearly lacking, but most importantly that managers differed in their ability to break with old power relations and dominant discourse, and consequently in realizing coopetition as an ongoing practice.

4.2 The different sensemaking types

Below a description of the different sensemaking types that were identified through the analysis is offered (see Figure 1). This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the different effects of these on coopetitive strategy development. It should be noted that the different types ought to be approached as dynamic and the boundaries as fluid, as some actors border other sensemaking categories (dotted lines in Figure 1). All the sensemaking types contain managers from all parties that participated in inter-organizational meetings where the strategy was formulated and re-formulated, and/or in intra-organizational implementation activities.

4.2.1 Resolved sensemaking

Resolved sensemaking corresponds to perceptions and actions in line with the intended aims of the coopetitive strategy as agreed upon by top managers across the coopeting parties. Managers assigned to this category can be found at both higher and lower managerial levels, where the actors actively and by free will engaged in either utilizing or developing the materials exchange in practice, or engaging in discussions concerning development of coopetition both internally and at relational levels.
Managers assigned to this sensemaking type had no problem embracing and visualizing increased future cooperation between the parties, as it was welcomed as the only way to progress given the industry situation. These managers became recipients of sensegiving, as this justification of the strategy was dictated by influential industry experts, and the materials exchange was in particular perceived as concretizing the changing industry discourse. The initiation of the materials exchange was further approached as a symbol that the distribution of power between the parties was changing given that commitment across the parties seemed to prevail (Lindström & Polsa, 2016), and old relational patterns between the parties were beginning to loosen.

When it comes to realizing coopetition in daily activities, some of the lower level managers in this group actively tried to engage in the exchange, and to contribute to the strategy being developed. This included actively thinking about what material to upload as well as extracting material from the exchange that could be saved and eventually utilized in the future, as well as communicating suggestions for improvements to others. On a personal level, the positive orientation towards the strategy was connected to the specific journalistic profession, and being read by a greater audience by reaching out with one’s own material in the minority language group, as well as the positive social effects from increased structured projects. Managers hence perceived that they also individually possessed the power to influence coopetition in practice.

Yet, a future scenario of increased cooperation between the parties was not approached as flawless. At higher managerial levels, even though cooperation and competition where seen as compatible and independent, cooperation was not desired in areas informing the brand of the newspaper, such as local news. At lower managerial levels, potential risks of cooperating too much manifested through the existence of old ‘jargons’ concerning increased cooperation leading to mergers.
4.2.2 Developed sensemaking

This type of sensemaking clearly produced actions that were in line with and beyond the communicated goals and intentions of the coopetitive strategy. In addition, managers assigned to this sensemaking type also substantially contributed to realization and developments of the coopetitive strategy, in terms of engaging in and influencing discussions at both industry, inter- as well as intra-organizational levels. Accordingly, managers assigned to this category operated at higher organizational levels and clearly became key sensegivers given their influencing roles on others’ perception of coopetition across the parties. These managers were to a great extent perceived by others as loadstars and enthusiasts in terms of developing the coopetitive strategy, particularly in inter-organizational discussions.

These positive managers participated in realizing and developing the coopetitive strategy not only as it was imposed upon them by the severely changing surroundings, but also since they were driven by a passion to realize coopetition, which was approached as a challenge. After unsuccessful attempts to coopete in the past, these managers were driven by personal motives to realize coopetition, as well as to secure media in the future for the minority. As one manager put it “This will be what I do for society”.

The tone as well as increase in meetings and discussions between the parties were viewed as manifestations of a new shared industry framework; a symbol of further commitment and future forms of increased cooperation, as well as of changing power relations. The strong positive orientation towards coopetition was hence based on success of mutual projects, such as joint production, which was compared with the widespread reluctance in the past (Weick, 1995). These managers were also justifying flaws, such as stagnation in the implementation phase, based on internal changes in the respective parties, as well as the initial learning phase.
including establishment of trust at a relational level, and enacting new ways of thinking at organizational levels.

4.2.3 Limited sensemaking

Limited sensemaking corresponds to actions that were undertaken in a rather ad hoc manner particularly at lower organizational levels, both in terms of utilizing the materials exchange, as well as in executing sensegiving after engaging in inter-organizational discussions. In this sensemaking type, both higher and lower level managers can be found.

Managers assigned to this category could best be described as struggling in their sensemaking, embracing the changing surroundings and new emerging relations between the parties manifested through the changing discourse, at the same time as they became limited in their actual participation in realizing and implementing the strategy. Establishing coopetition as a daily routine seemed difficult to accomplish in this sensemaking type due to a number of factors. The limitations in realizing the strategy stemmed from the power of persisting routines, other processes of intra-organizational change that coincided with the coopetitive strategic initiative consuming time and activity, as well as a perceived lack of communication in terms of the strategy and its opportunities to a wider audience internally in the organizations by top managers (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015).

Even though the planned and organized projects were experienced as positive and consequently increased inter-organizational contact was welcomed, the own organization was continuously prioritized on a daily basis. Also, even though the strategy was seen as a major critical issue in terms of the organizations’ existence in the future, the managers had little room to reflect upon the strategy in their daily work. For some managers, the time devoted to the coopetitive strategy was even experienced as a burden. It also became clear from the analysis that the limited sensemaking had a significant effect on how other actors interpreted the
coopetitive strategy, and hence made sense from implementing coopetition. The non actions and generated stagnation when realizing coopetition in this sensemaking type were namely by others approached as a symbol of old power relations.

4.2.4 Non-resolved sensemaking

Non-resolved sensemaking corresponds to actions that were not in line with the intentions of top managers, including passiveness and intentionally not engaging in realizing coopetition in practice. The strategy was to a great extent perceived by managers assigned to this group as an imposition by the environment, and increased future cooperation was approached as unavoidable, yet not fully desired. These managers generally operated at managerial levels closer to the customer, and experienced mixed feelings when it came to sharing and using materials through the exchange. Similar to limited sensemaking, managers experienced difficulties in integrating the new routine of utilizing external material, as well as sharing their own material, with the tempo and nature of the daily activities.

As the strategy progressed, disappointment stemming from the stagnation became widespread in this sensemaking type, as the actual utility and outcome of the strategy initiative did not correspond with the expectations held in the beginning (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). This more hesitant orientation towards future coopetition also stemmed from a perceived incompatibility between experienced external and internal sensegiving. External customer and stakeholder sensegiving centered around a highly positive image of future cooperation, whereas internally, it was associated with decreasing the workforce (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015). This mismatch contributed to sustaining suspicion towards increased cooperation that manifested through expressed dissent towards the initiative in the beginning. Cooperation was perceived to have a limit, and not be compatible across all areas, as preserving newspaper identity for the customers became a number one priority in the changing business landscape.
Therefore, managers assigned to this category did not share the same enthusiasm and passion concerning coopetition as other managers did, for example assigned to the developed sensemaking group.

Prioritization of the own customers over the collective exchange was further legitimized when the other parties’ engagement in the strategy was taken into account. Lack of engagement from the other parties was still interpreted as symbols of old power relations by managers in this category. The actual willingness for realizing coopetition in practice from the other parties was hence questioned, in this manner further legitimizing non-realization of the strategy (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015).

**Insert Figure 1 around here**

### 4.3 Development of a coopetition strategy over time from a practice perspective

As the analysis shows, some types of sensemaking clearly produced actions in line with or beyond the intentions and planned activities of the coopetitive strategy, whereas others clearly fostered divergent actions. The simultaneous occurrence of these contrasting action patterns ultimately served to maintain status quo (Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007), and the subsequent development of collective and shared coopetitive practices was not realized as fast as was intended (see Figure 2).

Interestingly, the activities defined as resolved did not seem to have a significant stagnating nor developing effect on the collective realization of the strategy. This could be explained by the fact that a great part of managers that received the role of realizing coopetition in practice internally in the organizations became limited or non-resolved in their sensemaking. It therefore becomes important to delve into the origin behind these differences in coopetitive agency.
4.3.1 Linking the different sensemaking types with the institutional realm

The different sensemaking types identified through the analysis not only inform us that managers differed in terms of their ability to create and adhere to a new coopetitive practice, but also that this creation is informed by the institutional realm.

Clearly, the more positive oriented and active managers had updated their competitive frames to the new surroundings, aiding their acceptance of coopetition (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). Managers in the developed and resolved sensemaking types perceived cooperation and competition between the parties as compatible, and hence as varying independently of each other in strength (Bengtsson et al., 2010). Lack of engagement in realizing the strategy across the parties was seen to stem from persistent intra-organizational routines, connected to the lack of time for anything else than producing tomorrow’s newspaper, rather than from upheld fierce competition between the parties.

A difference between developed and resolved sensemaking can however be found when it comes to competitive frames. In the resolved sensemaking type, the frames could best be described as frames in transition, as ‘old’ cognitive competition manifested to some extent through perceived limitations and possible drawbacks from coopetition.

When it comes to managers becoming rather passive in their sensemaking, one can clearly distinguish from the analysis that the non-resolved and limited sensemaking types shared the old industry norm of approaching cooperation in a rather negative sense, both from the perspective of the own organizations, as well as on a relational level. Old structures of competition manifested through the fact that competition to some extent still was perceived as a hindering factor when it comes to increased future cooperation. In this sense, increased cooperation presupposed decrease in competition (Bengtsson et al., 2010). Upholding the past in these sensemaking types was tied to the journalistic profession, where competition was
perceived as a necessity for providing quality for the customers. Surprisingly, decrease in competition was by some managers even approached as a pity, as the driving force behind the profession would disappear.

4.3.2 The centrality of the individual in creating and re-creating coopetitive practices

From a practice point of view, crafting a coopetition strategy occurs at multiple actor levels and through a multitude of activities (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The individual manager thus receives an important role in this crafting (Whittington, 2006, 2007) through both conscious activities, such as deliberately executing sensegiving or drawing on new structures, as well as in more emergent and unintended activities, such as being submerged by old practice patterns.

In order for coopetition to be institutionalized and realized as a continuous and legitimate action pattern at intra-organizational levels, collectively shared norms legitimating coopetitive interaction (Jarzabkowski, 2005) has to be adopted both internally as well as on a relational level, as well as be re-produced over time (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2008). From a sensemaking perspective, shared collective actions require shared views (Weick & Roberts, 1993; Weick et al., 2005). As the analysis clearly shows, this was not the case in the development phase since both positive and negative orientations towards the coopetitive initiative co-existed within and across actor levels. Generally, top managers held a positive attitude towards the coopetitive strategy, whereas the more negative orientations existed at lower organizational levels.

Managers in the resolved and developed sensemaking types were able to break with habitual practices and modify these in order to fit coopetition (Jarzabkowski, 2004), in this manner contributing to the crafting of new emerging coopetitive practices. These managers where to a great extent enabled in their ongoing coopetitive agency based on being engaged in social interaction, particularly in inter-organizational episodes, such as meetings. In the
resolved sensemaking type, this even mitigated manifestations of skepticism. The positive experiences from coopetitive interactions contributed with managers perceiving themselves as possessing the ability to influence the strategy through their agency, based on changing relational distances (Kaplan, 2008), which materialized through the new emerging industry discourse (Weick et al., 2005).

Positive cues from coopetitive interactions and activities might therefore serve as resources when it comes to making sense of coopetition (Dahl, 2014; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). The case findings also show that some managers are able to creatively develop coopetition as a continuous practice, driven by their backgrounds and personal incentives (Whittington, 2007). These managers could hence best be described as conscious and inductive in their strategizing (cf. Regnér, 2003), being able to visualize different potential forms of future coopetition, and engage in realizing these in practice through experimentation with the present form of coopetition, crafting hybrid and new practices (Jarzabkowski, 2004). This crafting was to a great extent based upon their cultural identity, becoming a resource for their agency (Whittington, 1992).

On the other hand, particularly managers at lower organizational levels in the limited and non-resolved sensemaking types became constrained in their coopetitive agency by old practice patterns. Due to the fact that they were situated closer to the customers, the old discourse manifested to a greater degree, serving to uphold organizational identity (Sonenshein, 2010). Drawing on persisting organizational routines, i.e. habitual practices, was done in order to serve customers through business-as-usual in the changing surroundings, informing the managers’ purpose and organizational existence (Jarzabkowski, 2004). In this manner, drawing on organizational identity constrained coopetitive agency.

Particularly in the limited sensemaking type, strategizing became to a great extent deductive (cf. Regnér, 2003), and also showed unconscious tendencies. Managers were trying,
ad hoc, to fit new emerging coopetitive practices into daily activities, at the same time as holding on to past tendencies (Jarzabkowski, 2004). To a great extent, managers were struggling with this endeavor, as established practices where not perceived as compatible with the materials exchange. In non-resolved sensemaking, the overall stagnation of the strategy following the large group of managers becoming limited in their sensemaking, informed sustained perceptions of ‘old’ relational distances and power (Kaplan, 2008). Together with limited agency, this informed negative emotions (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), and accordingly their conscious choice to not engage in realizing coopetition in practice on a regular basis. The subsequent effects of the different sensemaking types on coopetition strategy development are discussed in the following.

4.3.3 Interrelated planned and emergent features of a coopetition strategy

The case findings support the discussion in the coopetitive research field concerning the simultaneity of deliberate and emergent strategic features (e.g. Czakon & Rogalski, 2014; Dahl et al., 2016; Mariani, 2007; Tidström, 2008). The development of the coopetitive strategy was in the case driven by a number of unintended activities that arose along the way. First of all, the strategy formed due to emergence and increase of threats in the industry (Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Luo, 2007). Emergence can also be seen at the relational level, where the realization of the materials exchange was by many of the managers seen as a crucial step and symbol in a long pattern of attempts to initiate coopetition between the parties (Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). This very symbolic realization also paved the way for realizations of other collaborations that had been previously just discussed, for example joint production. The ongoing materials exchange that was rather loose in its initial structure as it was grounded in voluntariness also gave rise to more planned and structured projects between the parties, which encompassed more social interaction and organization. One can therefore distinguish
intertwined and parallel deliberate and emergent activities, over time (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

The most significant emergence however stemmed from sensemaking processes generating unanticipated effects (Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). The development of the materials exchange shows that the overall goal to establish ongoing interaction between the parties was attained, however that unintended emergent activities effected its full realization as intended, having both positive and negative effects.

The full realization and development of the materials exchange, as well as integration into established routines, was counterbalanced by the fact that a majority of managers consciously or unconsciously relied on old practice patterns and competitive structures. This produced legitimacy for non-actions in the non-resolved sensemaking group, or ad hoc realizations in the limited sensemaking. Emergence of rather unconscious nature in the limited sensemaking category also had significant effects as symbols in the non-resolved sensemaking, upholding old competitive structures.

Overall, the positive effects from participating in increased social interaction and discussions at relational levels on crafting coopetition in practice, were counterbalanced by intrusions of old ways of thinking and acting (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005). As a result, ‘status quo’ (Stensaker & Falkenber, 2007) was maintained, and the crafting of coopetitive practices was not realized as fast or as widespread, as was intended from the beginning.

Insert Figure 2 around here
5. Conclusions

5.1 Theoretical implications

The particular focus on the recursive relationship between structure and agency in this study contributes to dominant discussions in the coopetitive research field. Inspired by the practice approach, approaching how coopetitive agency is created through sensemaking cannot be made in isolation, the notions of discourse, power, physical participation and social interaction also has to be taken into account across institutional, organizational, and episodic realms (Balogun et al., 2014; Vaara, 2010). The coopetitive research field could in this manner benefit from investigating new realms informing coopetitive formation and development.

The findings show that coopetitive initiation, realization, and development, are determined by individuals’ abilities to draw upon suitable social identities that enables their agency (Whittington, 1992). The established professional practices that served to uphold both a cultural and organizational identity were hence differently deployed by individuals; a cultural identity became a resource whereas an organizational identity a constraint for coopetitive agency. Based on managers’ backgrounds and history, the choice to participate in crafting coopetition as a continuous practice should also be understood as guided by realizing personal interests and goals (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2007).

Coopetitive agency was also aided by social interactions, particularly participation in specific episodes such as meetings, and a shifting industry discourse that contributed to changing perceptions of distribution of power between the coopeting parties. New competitive structures in the industry became in this manner resources for coopetitive agency, whereas old structures served as constraints (Whittington, 2010). Managers holding on to ‘old’ structures of competition were clearly influenced by upholding a unique organizational identity and providing customer value through business-as-usual (Czakon & Rogalski, 2014; Fernandez et
al., 2014), which manifested through an organizational discourse that stood in contrast to the new industry discourse.

As such, managers clearly differed in terms of perceptions of present coopetitive dynamics, as well as in terms of the degree and power of the competitive flow (Lindström & Polsa, 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016). Whereas some managers approached the relationship between cooperation and competition from a one continuum approach, meaning that increased cooperation implies decrease in competition (Bengtsson et al., 2010), others clearly perceived the existence and degree of the two flows as separate and as compatible. This informs coopetitive scholars to increase focus on divergent cognitive structures within and across actor levels, and the subsequent implications on strategy development.

The emerging coopetitive tension and paradox (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014) and capability (Gnyawali et al. 2016) discussions can substantially benefit from the findings. The managers that were able to make sense of coopetition and to actively engage in continuously realizing the strategy could be argued to be able to internalize the coopetitive paradox (Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015), and possessing both analytical and executional capabilities (Gnyawali et al., 2016). The negatively oriented managers were on the other hand not able to accomplish this task. These findings allow the conclusion to be made that coopetitive capabilities are determined by individuals’ emotions and attitudes towards coopetition.

When it comes to the managers struggling in their sensemaking and realizing coopetition in an ad hoc manner, these possessed analytical capability, that is they were able to understand and accept coopetition as a new mindset, yet due to persisting organizational routines they were not able to execute it in practice. Coopetitive tensions and paradoxes should therefore not only be understood as holding and experiencing positive and negative emotions (Bengtsson et al., 2016b; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014), but also as contradictions between individuals’ analytical and
executional capability modes. Based on the findings, the coopetitive capability concept is also extended to include the ability draw upon suitable social institutions that enable agency.

Coopetitive strategizing could moreover be linked with strategizing and paradoxes. From this point of view, strategizing entails contradictions between cognition and doing (Dameron & Torset, 2014; see also Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Strategy crafting is moreover recursive, encompassing both sensemaking and sensegiving (Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008). Applied to the capability discussion (Gnyawali et al., 2016), the findings of the study indicate that executional and analytical modes occur in continuous cycles, and accordingly shape and re-shape each other.

The case findings also extend the emerging discussion concerning sensemaking and coopetition (Bengtsson et al., 2016a; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015, 2016). The study provide evidence that coopetitive sensemaking and sensegiving occurs in more conscious and unconscious modes, are aided and hampered by particular practices, and accordingly produce both intended and unintended strategy outcomes. Unconscious sensemaking and sensegiving moreover have the strongest effect on the initiation and realization of coopetition in practice, as these serve as powerful cues for other actors, supporting old practice patterns and power relations.

Last, the findings contribute and widen the discussion concerning emergent activities and actors in coopetitive strategy development (e.g. Dahl et al., 2016; Lundgren-Henriksson & Kock, 2015), as well as emergence as both positive and negative. Based on the findings it becomes evident that the strong influence of external practitioners on sensemaking, such as consultants and industry experts (Whittington, 2006), should not be disregarded, as these might possess great power when it comes to influencing emerging views and enactment of coopetitive strategies. Influenced by the practice approach, the origin of success or failure of coopetitive strategies should be sought in individual agency, which is informed by multiple and divergent
incentives to be realized. In this manner, crafting coopetitive strategies also includes a dimension of politics (Kaplan, 2008). One could thus conclude that every coopetitive strategy is unique, having a unique set of individuals with their particular views and incentives to realize, or not realize, coopetition.

5.2 Managerial implications

The case study findings offer some managerial guidelines when it comes to realizing coopetition in practice. First of all, coopetition requires targeted and continuous sensegiving in order to be realized as continuous in practice. This argument is supported by the fact that the perceived lack of continuous sensegiving, as well as the execution of sensegiving in conjunction with negative internal changes, clearly fostered the sustainment of old discourse at lower organizational levels that constrained coopetitive agency.

Clearly, for managers, the most challenging task when it comes to coopetition is internalizing a new emerging coopetitive discourse across the organization and into the organizational discourse (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003). In order for sensegiving o be successful, it has to be connected with concrete actions, as shown in the resolved and developed sensemaking groups where the materials exchange was approached as concretized and materialized discourse (Weick et al., 2005) providing legitimacy (Vaara et al., 2004). Managers should moreover be aware that sensegiving also occurs in more unconscious modes, such as through pasiveness or unintentional use of discourse that serve as powerful symbols for other organizational members’ sensemaking. Realizing coopetition in practice thus incorporates managing contrasting discourses and requires consciousness of managers concerning the use of discourse and actions taken by themselves, as well as by others.

Last, some notes on time and structure are offered. Making sense of coopetition in terms of short term projects seems easier than as continuous in practice. This indicates that especially
for managers at lower organizational levels, coopetitive agency is aided by structured projects, whereas otherwise, there is no room to recursively act in a manner that would establish coopetitive practices within the existing action realm. As the case clearly shows, accepting new emergent competitive structures does not seem hard to accomplish, yet integrating new practices into daily activities proves difficult. The experienced ‘failure’ of the strategy hence stemmed from the fact that actors were not in the same stages in terms of breaking with institutionalized structures within and across actor levels. Realizing coopetition as continuous in practice therefore takes time, and differs substantially from coopetitive projects (e.g. Le Roy & Fernandez, 2015). Lower level managers and employees should thus be given the time and space to experiment with coopetitive practices, as sensemaking is all about discovery and invention (Brown et al., 2015).

5.3 Limitations and future research directions

One clear limitation of the study stems from the fact that the realization of coopetition as a continuous practice was addressed in the first stages of initiating and realizing the strategy and therefore coopetition as an enacted practice pattern over time was not fully captured. Future research could therefore address the creation and development of coopetition in practice over a longer period of time. This would also provide a more nuanced picture of the interplay between structure and agency, and consequently the opportunity to follow the development of constraining or enabling practices (Whittington, 1992; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) on coopetitive agency over time.

The findings indicated that managers were enabled in their agency by drawing upon a cultural identity, whereas an organizational identity constrained agency. These identities were closely intertwined with the particular profession. Future research could therefore investigate
how and why managers draw upon particular social identities and institutions (Whittington, 1992) when it comes to realizing coopetition in other industry contexts.

Power was addressed in the sense of changing distribution of power between coopetitors when it comes to influencing the collective realization of coopetition. Power comes in different forms, something future scholars should pay more attention to, as this dimension transpires in any practices (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Whittington, 2010). To conclude, as the study clearly indicates, managers deploy coopetition as a continuous practice based on who they are, as well as to serve own interests. Hopefully the study contributes to an increased discussion concerning the individual as the key entity in crafting coopetitive strategies in practice.

References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example quotes</th>
<th>First-order themes</th>
<th>Second-order themes and general dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural realm</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“There has been agreements that this is our territory and this is yours.”</td>
<td>Decreasing joint geographical subscriber areas</td>
<td><strong>Competitive structures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Overlapping areas are decreasing.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changing market competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is not in our interest that they publish the same material.”</td>
<td>Perceived degree of closeness on the market</td>
<td>Sustained cognitive competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Journalists protect their brand.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“There is a very strong feeling for the own newspaper.”</td>
<td>Value of own material</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“You can still compete for news. But you can also later share what you have created.”</td>
<td>Cooperation and competition as compatible</td>
<td><strong>Modified cognitive competition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In terms of material exchange, one could do other things as well [...] there are a lot of opportunities, and we have taken the first steps.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I am positive and I like getting material from other newspapers as it is a different kind of material that we would not produce ourselves.”</td>
<td>Cooperation as a resource</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Our newspaper and its production is number one priority.”</td>
<td>Business-as-usual</td>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Our core task is to provide customers with local news, that is why we exist.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old reality and relational patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[...] we all have the journalistic background.”</td>
<td>Competition will always exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You are still not one big happy family.”</td>
<td>Ability to influence</td>
<td>New reality and relational patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It has been a positive feeling and you have a common goal.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Everyone thinks the same.”</td>
<td>Changing industry attitudes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“There exists a willingness to cooperate that has not existed before.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Action realm</td>
<td>Individual participation in realizing strategy</td>
<td>Resolved sensemaking</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I have bought texts and brought them into our system, even though I was unsure of the use. Just so you don’t forget it.”</td>
<td>Initiating and developing new projects</td>
<td>Active inter-organizational and/or intra-organizational</td>
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<tr>
<td>“At times I go in and check if there is something that could work in our newspaper.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I am passionate about this [cooperation].”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“My role is decisive in our newspapers participation, that we should share and utilize texts. My role is very active.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The materials exchange is something we have concretized while we are talking about bigger questions. Far-reaching cooperation.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I believe in more cooperation. How I can’t tell, but I believe.”</td>
<td>Collective participation in realizing strategy</td>
<td>Developed sensemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have enjoyed the meetings. You get to meet colleagues and you get the change to think about it [materials exchange].”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Active inter-organizational and active inter-organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In practice, it [materials exchange] is more (emphasis) work.”</td>
<td>Persisting organizational routines</td>
<td>Limited sensemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No one has time for anything else than the daily rush.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Passive/ad hoc active intra-organizational and active inter-organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We have too much to do so then you do not give priority to things that do not contribute with anything.”</td>
<td>Legitimization of passiveness</td>
<td>Non-resolved sensemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You rarely find interesting things there [materials exchange] [...] we fill pages well by ourselves so there is no need to search for material.”</td>
<td>Negative or mixed approach to initiative</td>
<td>Passive intra-organizational</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You are not motivated. You can tell that it is an emergency solution.”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation as a necessity to survive</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The only way to guarantee extensive service for our customers is through cooperation.”</td>
<td>Cultural identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Our goal has to be that irrespective of the economic situation, future media in the minority langue is protected.”</td>
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Table 1. Example quotes, first-order, second-order themes, and general dimensions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Social -</th>
<th>Social +</th>
<th>Power +</th>
<th>Physical +</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Resolved sensemaking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Developed sensemaking</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Power</em>: New reality and relationships</td>
<td><em>Power</em>: New reality and relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Social</em>: Recipients of sensegiving</td>
<td><em>Social</em>: Executors of sensegiving</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Discourse</em>: ‘We’ internal</td>
<td><em>Discourse</em>: ‘We’ external</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Physical</em>: Intra- and/or inter-</td>
<td><em>Physical</em>: Intra- and/or inter-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>organization (active)</td>
<td>organization (active)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power -</td>
<td><strong>Non-resolved sensemaking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited sensemaking</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Power</em>: Old reality and relationships</td>
<td><em>Power</em>: Old reality and relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Social</em>: Recipients of sensegiving</td>
<td><em>Social</em>: Executors of sensegiving</td>
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<td><em>Discourse</em>: ‘We’ internal</td>
<td><em>Discourse</em>: ‘We’ external</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Physical</em>: Intra organizational (passive)</td>
<td><em>Physical</em>: Intra- organizational (passive) and inter-organizational (active)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old discourse +</td>
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<td>Old discourse -</td>
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*Figure 1.* The nature of the different sensemaking types.
**Figure 2.** An integrated framework of structures, processes, and practices across different realms.


Organizations frequently partner with actors in their environment in order to increase competitive advantage, at times, even with competitors. During recent decades, researchers have therefore become interested in simultaneous cooperation and competition between organizations, which they refer to as coopetition. Despite the increasing trend of treating strategy as activities performed by individuals, there is limited knowledge concerning how coopetition emerges and becomes shaped by individuals.

The articles in this thesis address coopetition from a strategy-as-practice point of view, particularly taking an interest in how actors at different organizational levels make and give sense of emerging coopetition, i.e. coopetition agency creation. A longitudinal case study follows a strategic change process of implementing ongoing cooperation against a background of competition, from formulation to implementation. The case study findings show that coopetition requires modification in established cognitive frames, and that coopetition strategizing becomes complex stemming from the pluralism of views and attitudes across and within actor levels.

The findings not only extend the notion of influential strategic actors external and internal to the organization engaged in coopetition, but also problematize the coopetition strategists. It is suggested in the thesis that it is pivotal to understand what enables and hinders individuals’ participation in inducing coopetition strategies, before strategy development and outcomes can fully be understood. Moreover, rather than treating competition as a deliberate strategy resulting from pure intentional and rational processes, the findings prove that unintentional influences from multiple levels must also be taken into account.

Individual level differences in modifying past practice patterns to fit emerging coopetition are argued to be grounded in who strategists really are, in their backgrounds, histories, and motivations. Looking into the past is vital as the findings show: coopetition strategists across organizational levels hold multiple social identities that influence how sense of the present and future is made and given, and how different action patterns emerge, explaining why certain strategy outcomes are produced. The findings from the articles together emphasize how crucial talk and social interaction in different forms are to how far coopetition is accepted or resisted in organizations. However, different sensemaking patterns and different degrees of modifications in sustained structures and practices tell that accomplishing shared views on coopetition across intra- and inter-organizational levels becomes a challenge, and open future research paths to explore how coopetition frames are enacted over time.