SUMMARISING THE VIEWS ON COGNITIVE PROXIMITY IN COOPERATION AND NETWORKING PROCESSES

Introduction

Nowadays inter-organizational cooperation and networking processes are intensively explored areas of studies in strategic management. Homogeneity and heterogeneity of independent organizations applying strategies based on inter-organizational cooperation [6] are among interesting directions of modern research on inter-organizational processes particularly. Simultaneously, these specific areas of interest have been exploited for around three decades in the field of economic geography but under different label, named proximity. In one of the first articles linking directly the proximity concept with strategic management issues (i.e. innovations, organizational learning, knowledge management, inter-organizational cooperation, and networking performance), proximity has been defined as “the closeness of actors” [3, p. 63]. This short definition is based on the assumption that proximity is a multidimensional construct covering five different, but interdependent dimensions: geographical, organizational, social, cognitive, and institutional. However, an extensive systematic literature review run by Knoben and Oerlemans [17] adopting strict management perspective has shown that only three out of these five dimensions are relevant for performance of inter-organizational cooperation and competitive advantage based on that cooperation: geographical, organizational and cognitive dimensions of proximity.

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1 Note that to date this article remains the most cited publication about proximity concept even in the field economic geography. Cited 2848 times according to Google Scholar – 23rd of August 2015.
However, given the existing stock of knowledge and prior research on all of these three dimensions, in this paper we focus on cognitive dimension of proximity as it remains beyond the mainstream of past investigation.

As our literature review shows, there is an important knowledge gap related to cognitive proximity considered from strategic management perspective. First, most of former publications linking proximity and cooperation have explored the geographical dimension while there is a strong need to broaden the examination beyond spatial proximity and investigate the role of other proximity dimensions. Second, prior literature points out that most of existing cognitive proximity definitions are partial or unclear and lead to excess generalization. Third, there are direct claims that in case of cognitive proximity, there is a real need for further exploration as it remains the less researched and the most ambiguous component of proximity. Furthermore, it is worth noting that after bridging prior literature on cognitive proximity and heterogeneity of cooperating organizations, it becomes clear that the role played by cognitive homogeneity in case of inter-organizational cooperation and networking seems to be prevailing. One of the newest, comprehensive and deep reviews of prior strategic management literature on inter-organizational cooperation made by Corsaro, Cantù, and Tunisini has revealed six areas of organizations’ heterogeneity responsible for longitudinal and successful (dyadic or network) inter-organizational cooperation: actors’ knowledge bases, actors’ capabilities and competencies, actors’ perceptions, actors’ goals, actors’ power and position, and actors’ cultures. However, to our best knowledge three first of them refer to cognitive proximity, while three further to organizational dimension of proximity. Given the fact that geographical proximity has attracted the greatest interest in academic research so far and that organizational proximity has attracted attention of Polish researchers, we decided to focus on cognitive proximity as it remains more unexplored area of interest, especially in domestic literature. Thus in this paper we aimed at providing literature-based conceptualization and division of cognitive proximity.

1. The essence of cognitive proximity

Cognitive proximity, as defined by Nooteboom, is usually explained as a similar way in which organizations (through their employees) perceive, interpret, understand and assess the surrounding world. It is acknowledged that cognitive
proximity is manifested by the homogeneity of competencies, capabilities, skills and knowledge bases [3; 11] possessed by independent organizations. In the light of earlier literature, however, cognitive proximity does not only have to be all-embracing, but can also be relevant to selected or even individual aspects (components) of the aforementioned similarities. This lack of common perspective on the scope of cognitive proximity causes problems with regard to generalizability and comparability of prior findings. Additional ambiguities within cognitive proximity concept stem from the fact that some scholars take into account the above-mentioned aspects by means of cognitive, technological, industrial, or professional proximity. Furthermore, there are papers, which classify similarity of knowledge bases, competences and perceptions under socio-economic [29], or even organizational proximity [3]. This scarcity of terminological cohesion decreases the transparency within prior literature on cognitive proximity.

In general, cognitive proximity used to be considered at two levels of analysis: micro (inter-individual) and macro (inter-organizational). First, micro level of homogeneity refers to cognitive similarity between individuals representing particular cooperation partners. In this perspective, the literature points at communication codes, written language [30] with the emphasis on specific technical language [13], shared professional or scientific backgrounds [30]. Second, macro level of homogeneity refers to cognitive similarity between independent organizations. Cognitive proximity at the inter-organizational level used to be reduced to similarities in knowledge bases [8] or knowledge repertories [10], capabilities [11], competences [3], or experiences [25]. In this paper we follow the most frequently used approach in which homogeneity of mental models, knowledge bases and other professional (i.e. technological, industrial) similarities are considered as cognitive proximity together. Cognitive proximity understood in that manner is a construct in the broadest sense [31] encompassing all aspects pertaining to knowledge, competences, skills, technology, experiences and perceptions about the world around.

Surprisingly, so far cognitive proximity has been usually investigated at one and hardly ever at two levels of analysis simultaneously. We claim that these levels, as well as particular aspects investigated at these levels are interrelated and should not be considered separately. We believe that there are important interdependencies between cognitive similarity among individuals (micro level) and between organizations (macro level). For instance, on one hand technological similarity may require specific language skills or shared professional backgrounds and on the other hand very specific technical language may result from the high level of technological proximity [28]. Therefore, we argue to consider cognitive proximity at both levels simultaneously as we see them rather as complimentary than substitutive. Thus, the discussed here essence of cognitive proximity embraces technological, industrial, and professional proximities described in prior literature. However, we are aware
that cognitive proximity can be perceived in a narrow sense, concerning only a single area of above-mentioned aspects.

2. Narrow and unidimensional approaches to cognitive proximity

Cognitive proximity can be considered as a unidimensional construct which restricts the perception of cognitive similarity to one, purposefully selected area at micro or macro level of analysis. In this vein, the findings of our literature review indicate three different narrow approaches focused on mental similarity of employees engaged in inter-organizational cooperation, technological homogeneity of cooperating organizations and doing business within similar industrial settings.

First, cognitive proximity can be perceived through employees using the same language (jargon), scientific standards and technological formal codes [30] which enable communication during collaboration [17]. Its high level would be determined by mental similarities between employees [20] as well as by shared competences and past experiences [29]. An expression of cognitive proximity in this sense is employees’ adherence to the same community of practice [5] or community of interest. Cognitive proximity defined in this manner fully resembles professional proximity and is considered at micro level of analysis only.

Second, cognitive proximity can be understood as similarity of knowledge, competences and technological aspects considered at macro level of analysis. Then it manifests itself by organizations operating within the same technological area [4]. Cognitive proximity defined in that manner is often narrowed to technological proximity [17]. In essence, technological proximity boils down to using similar technological solutions [24]. In a broader sense, technological proximity is also determined by technological experiences of an organization to-date and ensuing technological know-how [5]. Some authors call technological proximity defined in the aforementioned manner plainly cognitive proximity. However, advocates of distinguishing between cognitive and technological proximity would argue that the former is key for engaging in interactions, whilst the latter is critical for the subject of those interactions. From that perspective, absorptive capacity displayed by given organization is crucial. Sorenson, Rivkin and Fleming [28] suggest that technologically similar organizations show twice the absorptive capacity of companies more

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3 Professional proximity is assessed by analysing company employees (micro level) sharing the same way of reasoning and competencies. It manifests itself by using the same professional language and standards. Employees of analysed organisation belonging to communities of practice are an example of high professional proximity [26].
technologically distant. In particular, technological similarity of partners is vital for organizations collaborating on research projects, since it improves productivity of both the research efforts and partaking entities [19]. However, another good example of great importance of collective exhibiting high technological proximity are technological communities based on technological similarities to the greatest extent.

The last area of proximity related to cognition and knowledge considered between organizations is sectoral (industrial) proximity being investigated at the macro level of analysis. The term sectoral proximity was first used in publication written by Maliepaard and Oosterom [20], but is yet to be defined. Bearing in mind different ways in which various dimensions discussed in their paper are perceived, one can arrive at a conclusion that sectoral proximity stands for similarity of sectors in which cooperation partners run their activities.

The author claims that all of the above-mentioned approaches are not sufficient as they do not cover the whole range of cognitive proximity and boil it down to one aspect while it is acknowledged to be multifaceted [e.g. 3; 13; 22]. Thus, the presented here framework of cognitive proximity applies multidimensional approach.

3. Broad and multidimensional approaches to cognitive proximity

In more recent studies cognitive proximity is argued to be a multidimensional construct which must not be limited to one particular area of cognitive similarity. Indeed, if we take a closer look into seminal studies on cognitive proximity, we find out that it is determined by several cognitive areas of similarity simultaneously: employees perceptions, knowledge bases, competencies and technological capabilities [3; 22]. Nevertheless, even though existing conceptualizations indicate broad scope of cognitive proximity, it is hard to find empirical works applying this broad and multidimensional approach. For instance Huber is one of the very few authors who have tried to identify the components of cognitive proximity. His empirical findings prove the multidimensional nature of cognitive proximity, as he identified four significant components: technical language, (2) the way of thinking about the technology or product, (3) work-related technical details/facts (know-what), and (4) work-related know-how [13].

In our opinion, even though the above-mentioned research proves the multifaceted nature of cognitive proximity, we claim that identified components do not fully cover the whole scope of cognitive proximity. We believe the essence of cognitive proximity refers not only to language, technology and knowledge but is also conditioned by past experiences, individual perceptions, skills, competencies and environmental conditions. We claim to take into account the whole range of different faces of cognitive
proximity as they have been evidenced to be strategically important for organizations interested in cooperation and networking.

4. The strategic importance of cognitive proximity

Cognitive proximity is a theoretical construct explained within proximity concept [e.g. 3; 9] as one of its the most important dimensions [17]. In general, cognitive proximity has been explained using three different theoretical backgrounds: transaction cost economics, social exchange theory and theory of knowledge [22]. However, from the inter-organizational cooperation standpoint, cognitive proximity used to be the most frequently explained from the knowledge management perspective. The popularity of cognitive proximity among researchers stems from the fact that it improves collaboration between organizations. Above all, its significance is reflected by positive impact on inter-organizational communication and thus on different processes related to knowledge creation and utilization through inter-organizational cooperation. Cognitive similarity of separate organizations accelerates communication by making it more precise [9] and more efficient as it reduces the risk of misperception of the message [30]. That said, positive impact is notable at the stage of codifying information sent over by the partner as well as at the stage of decoding it by him. Beneficial influence on communication processes further enhances information, knowledge flows [20; 25] and learning processes [10]. Existing literature pays the greatest attention to knowledge-related benefits of cognitive proximity. In the light of previous research linking cognitive proximity and different aspects of knowledge management we claim that even though cognitive proximity does not guarantee knowledge creation or knowledge transfer [1], it is the “key mechanism” in inter-organizational knowledge-related processes [2].

It has been proved that high enough cognitive proximity speeds up and intensifies knowledge access [24], its creation [11], transfer [3; 5], examination and exploitation [30] – Table 1. On the one hand, similarity of mental models to a large extent not only allows entities to communicate more efficiently but also to absorb, understand and implement the exchanged information [1]. On the other hand, the technological component of cognitive proximity accelerates processes of common knowledge creation by partners [28] and is the driving force behind the synergistic effect.

Cognitive proximity seems to be important knowledge management success factor for all types of organizations engaged in inter-organizational cooperation, namely for [27, p. 24]: knowledge absorbents, knowledge transformers, knowledge creators and knowledge accumulators. Ultimately, cognitive proximity facilitates understanding and capturing opportunities coming with potential business partners, and to expand and develop the knowledge base they own. Furthermore, it allows organizations to use
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– more effectively – their own absorptive capacity as well as absorptive capacity of their employees. However, one should bear in mind that there is an empirical evidence that the importance of cognitive proximity depends on the type and stage of the process of knowledge creation [11]. First, the role of cognitive proximity is conditioned by the type of knowledge which is created or shared, namely it is important if it is tacit of codified knowledge, as well as if it is technological or rather architectural type of knowledge [10]. Second, the meaning of cognitive proximity is shaped by the stage of the process of knowledge creation, specifically it is important if it is production or rather utilization phase as cognitive proximity should be supported by other different dimensions of proximity [30] in different phases of knowledge creation processes.

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* based on Noteboom 2000
Source: own study.

It is worth noting that these knowledge-related benefits from cognitive proximity cause that it is identified as more important factor for cooperation and networking than other dimensions of proximity. It has been proven that cognitive similarity is more important than geographical proximity especially for knowledge integration and for organizations operating within science-driven sectors [30]. Additionally, it was shown (together with institutional dimension) as more important for global competitiveness based on technological leapfrogging than organizational, social or geographical proximity dimensions [18].
Furthermore, some authors emphasize that learning processes in the absence of cognitive proximity (at least) would be outright impossible [9] as it is needed for mutual understanding and effective information sharing [13]. Above all, it has been proved that cognitive proximity enables collective learning [10] as it allows organizations to reap benefits of the knowledge spillover effect [19] and protects them from lock-in effect [11]. To conclude, it is worth adding that from the RBV perspective all of the above knowledge- and learning-related benefits of cognitive proximity result in leveraging organizations’ resources including: knowledge, creativity and innovativeness, social capital, and inter-organizational relationships.

What is more, there is an empirical evidence which has proved interdependencies between cognitive and other dimensions of proximity. It means that cognitive proximity can: (1) replace some missing resources like appropriate location [24] and thus substitute geographical proximity; (2) build trust and informal contacts between organizations [26] and thus leverage social proximity, and (3) improve communication and coordination during cooperation [7] and thus positively impact organizational proximity. Thus, from the RBV standpoint cognitive proximity can be perceived as a trigger, driver or accelerator for competitive advantage. Nevertheless, besides all of those advantages related to knowledge, learning, innovations, or other dimensions of proximity, there is also the dark side of cognitive proximity. In general, it is acknowledged that cognitive proximity generates significant tangible benefits, however, once it exceeds certain level, it could bring about opposite, than intended, consequences.

Even though cognitive proximity provides important advantages, when it is too high it does not generate assumed synergistic effects and can be harmful for cooperating partners. Among the negative effects of too high level of cognitive proximity, the literature emphasizes the risk of: lessening of creation and transfer of knowledge [4]; diminishing of learning and innovation performance [3], and above average risk of opportunistic behaviors and unintended knowledge flows [9]. In the literature, the phenomenon of continuous struggling with the tensions between cognitive homogeneity and cognitive heterogeneity has been empirically proven and labelled as “proximity paradox” [4] or “proximity dilemma” [13]. The paradox of cognitive proximity is represented by parabolic (inverted “U”) character of the relationship between cognitive proximity and its knowledge-related benefits. This bendiness of the relationship induces organizations to constantly monitor cognitive proximity in order to achieve a “cognitive friction” [11] maximizing the positive effects of being similar. This optimizing level of cognitive proximity is achieved by continuous balancing

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4 The author adopts a process approach to cognitive proximity and considers it at the individual (micro) level of group work only. She claims that cognitive friction is created when members of a group are becoming cognitively proximate through knowledge base content but remain cognitively distant through a knowledge base structure [13, p. 601].
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between no cognitive proximity (misunderstandings, communicational difficulties, no common business areas) and maximum cognitive proximity (homogeneity of knowledge, information and data). Hence maintaining correct level of cognitive proximity is a tall order, since it involves much more than just maximizing it.

5. The integrated structure of cognitive proximity

Given the fact that cognitive proximity has been proved as multidimensional construct and acknowledged as convergence in several cognition-related aspects, we claim it comprises four interdependent areas of similarity between organizations, i.e. mental, technological, related to knowledge, and environmental conditions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dimensions of cognitive proximity

Source: own study.

In the proposed approach four, substantially and analytically different but inter-dependent areas of cognitive proximity remain separate, however, have certain common denominators.
We believe that this broad approach remains in line with existing literature that acknowledged cognitive proximity as similarities of knowledge and technological competencies owned by organizations, taking its source in similar ways in which employees perceive, interpret, understand and assess the surrounding world.

It should be emphasized that the first area, namely similarity of mental models is considered to occur between organization's employees (micro level of consideration), while the remaining three including technological similarity, similarity of knowledge, and environmental similarities are considered for the entire organizations (macro level of consideration). We claim that all of these components should be considered during evaluation of cognitive proximity of cooperating organizations as all of them have been proved to be important in the literature and research on cognitive proximity. Furthermore, we argue that partial decomposition of considered construct can be misleading [11] as it may lead to ambiguous conclusions and substantial difficulties in comparing the results of studies.

**Similarity of mental models** is understood as a convergence in perception of the surrounding world, similar mind-sets of employees rooted in professional backgrounds and experience (professional proximity included) as indicated by seminal work of Noteboom [22]. This dimension is expressed by using coded messages, jargon and operating procedures [30], common understanding and perception of the professional world [13], as well as by shared professional norms, values and general goals [21].

This sub-component of cognitive proximity shapes the way, in which an organization sees the world, the cognitive perception it adopts for its operations depends on mental models, world-view and ideological beliefs of its employees. In this aspect, cognitive similarity of companies can derive from past, common professional experiences and comparable education. As per above-given definition of mental models, it is clear that mental similarity can be exhibited by organizations distant both technologically and environmentally. Organizations using similar technologies employ experts with communication skills enabling efficient exchange of information, at least as far as technological processes are concerned. In a sense, common specialized language is an effect produced by technological proximity [28]. On the other hand, organizations with different technological approaches but employing similar experts are also capable to communicate in a competent manner. It should be emphasized that even though similarity of mental models has been acknowledged to be one of

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5 The authors include all cultural homogeneity related to norms, values, artefacts, goals in both professional and non-professional expressions of individuals and expressions of cooperating organisations. In our opinion, this cultural homogeneity should be divided into three parts which ought to be taken into account under different dimensions of proximity. In the light of the existing literature, we claim that non-professional cultural homogeneity expressed by individuals should be considered under social (relational) dimension of proximity [e.g. 12], professional cultural homogeneity expressed by individuals should be considered under cognitive proximity, while professional and non-professional cultural homogeneity expressed by organisations should be considered under organisational proximity dimension [e.g. 16; 20].
the core components of cognitive proximity [22] it has attracted a limited attention in the literature and remains the least researched dimension of cognitive proximity [6] while it seems to be one of its crucial components [13]. To conclude, it should be noted that it is the only one component of cognitive proximity considered at the micro level of analysis, as it depends on similarities between individuals engaged in inter-organizational cooperation processes.

**Technological similarity** is considered as a similarity regarding technologies used by organizations related to both technological know-how [5] and professional knowledge flows [25]. One distinguishes four sub-components of cognitive proximity within technological similarity, namely technology, capabilities, competencies, and skills. In particular, we perceive technological similarity as technological relatedness in the area of real cooperative activities aimed at joint transformation of inputs into outputs. In such an approach, the technological similarity reflects the process view on cognitive proximity expressed in the literature [13].

We do claim that technological similarity should not be restricted only to the homogeneity of adapted technology but it should definitely reflect the similarity in overall technological expertise [25]. We believe that similar technologies determined by particular technological solutions, implemented processes and utilized machines and equipment do not reflect the whole scope of technological expertise and thus the full scope of technological relatedness [23]. For example, it is possible that there are some power and technological asymmetries between cooperation partners. In this case, the “stronger” partner may use newer, more expensive, and more advanced technologies than the “weaker” one. From the technology point of view, there is no technological proximity, or at least it is at the minimum level. However, even though the partners use different technological solutions and follow different technological procedures, it does not mean that these partners are technologically distant. First, the “stronger” partner may have technological competencies and skills related to technology adapted by his “weaker” partner which he used in the past. Second, even if these technologies are different, they may be based on the same technical standards or general industrial procedures (e.g. complete different welding methods used during production of aircraft engine blades, or the manufacture of aircraft wings using different technologies based on various composite materials). Therefore, we suggest to expand prior approach (restricted to technology only) and include similarities in competencies, capabilities and skills to the technological similarity considered as a component of cognitive proximity. It should be highlighted that

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6 In the light of prior research technical and professional language considered within compliance of mental models has been identified as the most important and the hardest to be replaced sub-component of cognitive proximity – see: [13].
these “additional” technological aspects have been included in key conceptualizations of cognitive proximity [e.g. 3; 17].

**Similarity of knowledge** is a third component of cognitive proximity perceived as a resemblance of knowledge owned by organizations which can be valuable or even desired for the achievement of shared goals. We suggest to distinguish this particular component of cognitive proximity as similarities of knowledge bases have been recognized as important [3], but the most ambiguous area of cognitive dimension of proximity so far [13; 17; 29]. The level of knowledge proximity is operationalized as the extent to which knowledge bases overlap. It is noticeable that not only the assets of codified, but also tacit knowledge used by organizations are considered here, because only when those two types of knowledge are combined one can talk about general knowledge base of particular organization. Moreover, based on prior research on cognitive proximity we suggest to include other two sub-components, i.e. *know-what* and *know-how*. In the proposed decomposition similarity of *know-what* [in terms of 13] deals with technological knowledge [in terms of 10] while similarity of *know-how* [in terms of 13] refers to architectural knowledge [in terms of 10]. We suggest to include these two other sub-components as they grasp dynamic nature of knowledge processes while the former two related to knowledge bases seem to be more static ones [10]. Furthermore, we claim that if we take into account knowledge bases, only there is a risk that some knowledge-related aspects may be missed as they may not be included to the formal knowledge bases of organizations (e.g. organization is not aware that it possesses some valuable knowledge, as it treats this knowledge as worthless or of little value).

Last but not least component of cognitive proximity is **environmental similarity** considered in terms of the sector of economy and type of the industry. The first one refers to the type of the sector which can determine similarities in the area of general business environment. Organizations differ depending on whether they operate in primary (extraction of raw materials), secondary (transformation of raw materials) or tertiary (supplying services) sector of the economy. Furthermore, they vary in terms of dynamics, technology advancement and knowledge-intensity. Thus, it is important to consider if cooperating partners operate in similar environmental contexts. However, we claim that this sub-component does not reflect fully the environmental similarities and more detailed consideration is needed. Thus, we propose to take into account the type of industry understood as running the same business activity in terms of NACE Classification [4; 14]. We believe that both of these sub-components ought to be considered together as it is possible to operate in different but similar industries, like in automobile and aerospace, or nanotechnology and software. Concluding, it is worth noting that environmental similarities should not be

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7 Please note that some authors consider homogeneity of knowledge bases as technological proximity [8].
identified with technological proximity, the other, distinguished here, component of cognitive proximity. We claim that both of these sub-components ought to be taken into account under the label of environmental similarity as the logical contents of those sub-components are mutually complementary, consequently making up a more comprehensive picture of organizations’ cognitive proximity. Organizations competing in the same industry can, but not necessarily have to use the same technology. On the other hand, it is likely that entities from different sectors are similar technologically in certain parts of their operations (e.g. accounting, IT, CRM).

Conclusion

Cognitive proximity has been acknowledged as important success factor for inter-organizational cooperation and networking. Nevertheless, in the existing stock of knowledge there are some relevant inconsistencies regarding its definition and composition. These ambiguities induced us to review existing literature and provide integrated and less fragmentary approach to conceptualization of cognitive proximity. The conclusions drawn from conducted literature analysis show cognitive proximity as a multidimensional construct including thirteen sub-components divided into the following four components: similarity of mental models, technological similarity, similarity of knowledge, and environmental similarity. Cognitive proximity as per proposed approach remains compliant with the most frequently quoted approaches and eliminates contentious aspects (e.g. taking into account similarity of knowledge bases). We believe that our proposition opens up new directions for future research, which can be focused on theoretical considerations about operationalization of particular components and sub-components of cognitive proximity, as well as on empirical testing of our proposition.

Acknowledgment

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SUMMARISING THE VIEWS ON COGNITIVE PROXIMITY IN COOPERATION AND NETWORKING PROCESSES

Abstract

Inter-organizational cooperation and networking are at the top of academic interest. Critical success factors of long term and beneficial cooperation have been among the most important issues considered so far. This paper considers one of such factors labeled as cognitive proximity.

As our literature review shows even though cognitive proximity has been acknowledged as a critical aspect of inter-organizational homogeneity, it remains one of the most ambiguous and the less explored dimension of proximity. Thus, in order to address the identified knowledge gaps, this paper aims at providing literature-based conceptualization and division of cognitive proximity.

In general, based on the review, synthesis and integration of prior findings, it is claimed to perceive cognitive proximity as a multidimensional construct including four components related to inter-organizational similarity of: mental models, technology, knowledge, and environmental conditions. Furthermore, it is suggested to adopt – especially during operationalization process – a more detailed view on cognitive proximity as these four components can be further decomposed into thirteen analytically separate but conceptually interdependent sub-components.

The authors believe that the presented propositions not only integrate previous findings but also do open up new directions for future research aimed at investigating the cooperation and networking performance.

**Key words: proximity, cognitive proximity, collaboration, cooperation, networking, heterogeneity, homogeneity**
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BLISKOŚĆ POZNAWCZA W PROCESIE WSPÓŁPRACY MIĘDZYORGANIZACYJNEJ – WNIOSKI Z ANALIZY, INTEGRACJI I SYntezy wiedzy dotychczasowej

Streszczenie

Współpraca międzyorganizacyjna, w tym współpraca w sieciach wzbudza coraz większe zainteresowanie zarówno praktyków, jak i teoretyków zarządzania. Pośród aktualnych oraz istotnych kierunków dociekań lokują się krytyczne czynniki sukcesu długoterminowej i skutecznej współpracy. Mając to na względzie, niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na jednym, dotychczas fragmentarnie rozpoznanym czynniku tj. bliskości poznawczej kooperantów.

Wyniki systematycznego przeglądu literatury wskazują, że bliskość poznawcza, pomimo iż jest postrzegana jako kluczowy aspekt współdziałania to wciąż pozostaje jednym z najbardziej mglistych, niedookreślonych, a jednocześnie słabo rozpoznanych empirycznie wymiarów bliskości międzyorganizacyjnej. Celem zapewnienia wylewionej luki przedmiotem artykułu jest przedstawienie opartej o literaturę przedmiotu konceptualizacji oraz logicznego podziału bliskości poznawczej.

Integracja, analiza i synteza dotychczasowej literatury wskazuje, że bliskość poznawcza może być postrzegana jako wielowymiarowy konstrukt obejmujący swoim zasięgiem cztery komponenty dotyczące międzyorganizacyjnego podobieństwa: modeli mentalnych, technologii, wiedzy oraz uwarunkowań otoczenia. Dodatkowo, sugeruje się przyjęcie – zwłaszcza na etapie operacjonalizacji – uszczegółowionego podejścia, w którym cztery wymiary bliskości poznawczej dekomponowane są na zbiór trzynastu, analitycznie odrębnych, aczkolwiek konceptualnie współzależnych sub-komponentów. W opinii autorki, przedstawione w artykule propozycje nie tylko integrują dotychczasowe ustalenia naukowe, ale także stanowią krok w kierunku podjęcia prac badawczych zorientowanych na rozpoznanie – dotychczas niezbędnych – uwarunkowań sprawności współpracy w diadach i sieciach rozpoznawanych w przekroju czterowymiarowej bliskości poznawczej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: BLISKOŚĆ, BLISKOŚĆ POZNAWCZA, WSPÓŁPRACA MIĘDZYORGANIZACYJNA, SEI CIÓW MIĘDZYORGANIZACYJNE, HOMOGNICZNOŚĆ PARTNERÓW, HETEREONICZNOŚĆ PARTNERÓW