

**2016 THEMATIC WORKSHOP
OF THE
AIMS RESEARCH GROUP
“RESSOURCES, COMPETENCES, DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES”**

Tue 22 & Wed 23 of MARCH 2016

Micro-Foundations of Dynamic Capabilities

This call for papers associates with the AIMS research group “*Resources, Competences, and Dynamic Capabilities*” coordinated by Gilles GUIEU, Vanessa WARNIER, Frank BRULHART and Frédéric PREVOT, who already organized a series of workshops dedicated to the analysis of competences and dynamic capabilities, and to their role in strategic management or in innovation studies.

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KEYWORDS

Microfoundations; Dynamics capabilities;
Open innovation; Ambidexterity;
(Strategic) Knowledge Management;
SMEs; Global firms; Industry internationalization.

JEL : L22 (Firm organization), M1 (Business administration),
O3 (Innovation), D8 (Information & Knowledge), F23 (Multinational firms).

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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THE CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IN CONTEXT

The workshop focuses on the investigation of the micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities.

“Dynamic capabilities” (Teece et al, 1997) represent now a key concept in management science and, more specifically, in the analysis of the innovation and of competitiveness. The capacity to integrate, to construct, and to reconfigure knowledge and resources has become an essential element for the understanding of firms. Teece (2007) explains further that dynamic capabilities rely on the capacity to identifying and taking advantage of new opportunities, and to transforming them in order to capture value. The importance of the concept increases when working about firms confronted with turbulent environments, with changes in the technology, in the institutional and legal framework, and in the end-users expectations.

As a concept, “dynamic capabilities” apply to lots of organizations: large firms and SMEs, public and private organizations. When dealing with SMEs, it makes it possible to understand how firms adapt in combining internal and external resources. The concept can also explain the rationales of “born global” firms developing activities in a globalized ecosystem early on after their emergence (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). In large and mature firms, characterized with organizational designs fostering their stability and managing internal complexity, the development of dynamic capabilities represents a key issue at stake in order to cope with the complexity of the external environment and with the variety of technologies, products, and end-users expectations (Teece, 2007). Dynamic capabilities represent a relevant basis for the investigation of the international development of firms (Prange & Verdier, 2011; Teece, 2007; 2014), and of the management of local vs. global constraints. The appraisal of the ability to coping with local (geographical) specificities in global firms, and of consistent international strategies (Rugman & Verbeke, 2004), can directly elaborate on the dynamic capabilities concept.

Scientific literature in management has now expanded the dynamic capabilities concept along diverse perspectives, such as antecedents (Gibson et al, 2004) or organizational inertia (Schereyogg et al, 2007). Multiple links have been drawn with other concepts such as ambidexterity (Raish et al, 2009; Jansen et al, 2009), or with processes driving the development of new products (Marsh et al, 2006). Numerous contributions at macro-organizational level have also investigated the drivers of innovation.

Recent publications have focused on the understanding of the acquisition of dynamic capabilities in organizations, on their implementation, and on their preservation on the long run. These investigations complement the macro-organizational perspective with a focus on micro-foundations (Felin et al, 2012; Teece, 2007). We can borrow from Teece (2007), Foss (2011) and Felin et al (2012) in order to introduce a definition of the micro-foundations approach: the investigation of individuals, of their interactions and of inter-individuals processes at work in organizations. The micro-foundations approach is nothing new in management science but Felin et al (2012) stress that it is however scarcely used in research. We miss for instance an integrative approach of the micro-foundations that would make it possible to progress with the understanding of the actual implementation of dynamic capabilities in organizations.

According to Felin et al (2012), the absence of micro-foundations approaches explains why we cannot fully benefit from the use of the dynamic capabilities concept in the actual managerial life. Dougherty (1996) identifies a paradoxical situation. The investigation of organizational practices leads to the elaboration of lists of “best practices” acknowledged as such by both scholars and managers. At the same time, they do not translate into actual implementations in the actual world. In order to make sense of them, Dougherty complements the macro-organizational analysis with the identification of contextualized individual and collective practices, and makes sense of individual action in a collective framework. De facto, Dougherty locates then at the level of micro-foundations. Micro-foundations represent therefore a major layer of the investigation. Felin et al (2012) also claim that the micro-

foundations approach only can allow for an appraisal of the heterogeneity of performances between organizations. In the domain of organizational routines, Becker (2004) also stresses that the micro-foundations approach only makes it possible to understand the issue of recurrence in organizations.

The analysis of the individual and interpersonal dimensions of micro-foundations stems from the finding that creative and entrepreneurial capacities are unevenly distributed in organizations with dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007). The automatic consequence is easy: investigating the rationales for innovation and creativity has therefore to focus on key individual profiles, and on the aspects of complementarities. Several strands in academic research have devoted their investigations to precise individual behaviors, such as motivation and discipline (Jansen et al, 2009), or to individual cognitive capacities (Laamanen et al, 2009). Other scholars have focused on specific actors in the organization, such as middle and senior managers, and on their practices (Augier et al, 2009), even though their roles deserve much more efforts for a comprehensive characterization.

Several scholars (e.g. Mon et al, 2007) have also identified that ambidextrous organizations need middle and senior managers able to work under “paradox thinking” schemes, even if they do not elicit what it does actually mean in the every-day life of a company. Another voluminous body of literature highlights the key role of “boundary spanners” (Levina et al, 2005; Hsiao et al, 2012). The latter people are creative individuals, who are able, at the same, time to identify opportunities and to transfer knowledge assets over the boundaries between two different worlds. The senior managers’ managerial and entrepreneurial competences, and their leadership, represent for instance key assets in the execution of strategy when going international. In multinational firms, the ability to align tangible and intangible assets between the corporate level and the various daughter companies locates at the kernel of strategy and of success (Teece, 2014). When working in “born global” firms, the international deployment of activities directly depends on the entrepreneurial orientation of senior managers and on their comprehensive (world-wide) vision of markets (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004). There is still an impressive list of open questions in relation with the role of middle and senior managers and available dynamic capabilities.

The analysis of the collective dimension of the micro-foundations often leads to consider dynamic capabilities as a set of routines and processes suited to the reconfiguration of organizational resources by the managers (Eisenhard et al, 2000). In that case, the focus is directly on the collective dimension and the individual drivers are artificially left away from the analysis (Felin & Foss, 2005). Here we meet the arguments commented on as the “poverty of stimulus” by Felin and Foss (2011) in a debate with Winter, Pentland, Hodgson & Knudsen, and published in the *Journal of Institutional Economics*. Most scholars point out that behaviors, abilities, and individual motivations impact the combination of resources and knowledge in organizations. Several key concepts are used today for the investigation of the collective dimension: organizational practices (Dougherty, 2001), communities of practice (Cohendet et al, 2007), reflexivity in teams (Hamed et al, 2011; Hoegl et al, 2006), and routines (Zollo and Winter, 2002; Becker, 2004; Cohendet et Llerena, 2003). The collective dimension for sure associates with key perspectives for the understanding of organizations, but links between the concept of dynamic capabilities on the one hand, and the proper conceptual link between individuals and the various forms of the “collective” dimension on the other hand, represent topics for further research. From a conceptual point of view, the collective and individual dimensions are poorly integrated together (if ever methodologically possible), and into the analysis of dynamic capabilities. After Felin and Foss (2012), we identify at the minimum an epistemological problem (the model of mind and man) and three methodological problems (the levels of analysis, the issue of causation, and the reconciliation between individual and collective concepts).

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The workshop focuses on the investigation of the micro-foundations in dynamic capabilities. The organizers are looking for research papers confronting theoretical research with field research investigations, either on public or private organizations.

5 main topics have been identified:

- Dynamic capabilities and (strategic) knowledge management;
- Dynamic capabilities and ambidexterity;
- Dynamic capabilities and the effectiveness of best practices;
- Dynamic capabilities and open innovation;
- Methodological issues in relation with the investigation of micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities.

Some more words about each topic.

Dynamic capabilities and (strategic) knowledge management

Knowledge is a key in the understanding and appraisal of dynamic capabilities (Grant, 1996; Teece, 2007). The specialization of knowledge and their integration in the organization represent major issues at stake (Grant, 2013). Boisot et al (2002) or Hakanson (2007) have already installed seminal paths for the investigation of conceptual relations between knowledge and dynamic capabilities, yet the topic is still in emergence. The link between micro-foundations and knowledge management is still under-investigated in the academic literature (Foss & Pederson, 2004). Here are some open questions:

- ➔ How to investigate the articulation and the combination of knowledge?
- ➔ What are the micro-foundations mechanisms prevailing in the reconfiguration and integration of knowledge?
- ➔ How is it possible to investigate the individual dimension in the collective learning processes at work with dynamic capabilities?
- ➔ Are there specific drivers and properties for different types of organizations?
- ➔ How does the heterogeneity of the environment (ecosystem, market, institutional and legal framework, cultural environment, etc) and its (positive or negative) impact on the transfer and recombination of knowledge assets combine with the (individual) perspective of micro-foundations?
- ➔ How Do managers influence the management and transfer of knowledge in global firms? What are the related drivers and patterns?

Dynamic capabilities and ambidexterity

The interaction between dynamic capabilities and ambidexterity has now become a recurring topic in the scientific literature. The missing link deals in reality with their respective micro-foundations: the micro-perspectives behind each concept are not automatically consistent with each other.

- ➔ Is it possible to address the micro-foundations of ambidexterity as a component or as a side-argument of the micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities?
- ➔ What are concepts suited to the analysis of the antecedents of ambidexterity in a micro-foundation perspective? How is it possible to conceptualize the antecedents at individual level (Litchfield & Gentry 2010)?

Several articles suggest that major differences between large firms and SMEs characterize in discrepant ways the organizational form of ambidexterity (Parmentier et al, 2009).

- ➔ Does it have an impact on, or an origin in, their respective dynamic capabilities (SME vs. large/global firms)?
- ➔ Does the orchestration of new vs. already exploited resources depend on the size of the firm? on its nature? on its strategy? (cf Teece, 2007; 2014).

Dynamic capabilities and best practices

How is it possible to explain the paradox between the identification of best practices and their absence of effectiveness in the very same organizations (Dougherty, 2001)? Dynamic capabilities have a tacit component and they are therefore complex to transfer/transpose over the organization's boundaries.

- ➔ Are micro-foundation approaches suited to provide with an explanation of the generalization of best practices? What are the managerial implications?
- ➔ Are the interaction mechanisms between a parent firm and its subsidiaries to be explained in terms of micro-foundations of the dynamic capabilities?

Dynamic capabilities and open innovation

The AIMS research group on "Resources, competences and dynamic capabilities" held a workshop on 'Dynamic capabilities and innovation' in 2013. This workshop will therefore focus on the issue of Open innovation. The redefinition of competitive advantages on highly demanding markets introduces new questions about the boundaries between organizations, and about the complementarities between contributors to ecosystems (Adner, 2010).

Teece (2007) and Eisenhardt et al (2000) introduce the environment as an endogenous variable for the analysis of dynamic capabilities. Lichtenthaler et al (2009) go even further and identify now different components of the dynamic capabilities in the context of open innovation. From the micro-foundations perspective, issues in relation with the dynamic capabilities of global firms relate to specific individual profiles and original managerial capabilities to exist both at corporate and business unit levels.

Here are some open questions in relation with the micro-foundations perspective:

- ➔ What are the decision-making processes at work in reference to open innovation between the corporate business model and the business units?
- ➔ Is it possible to identify specific dynamic capabilities precisely suited to the management of open innovation at an international scale, or in global firms? Are there differences between large and small firms with this respect?
- ➔ Is it possible to explain these phenomena with the roles / actions / decisions introduced by executives? With the impact of the ecosystem (Monferrer et al, 2015)?
- ➔ When firms confront with a variety of ecosystems, is the variety of ecosystems a source of heterogeneity in the management of open innovation? How is it possible to explain these phenomena in reference to micro-foundations?

Methodological issues in relation with the investigation of micro-foundations

The micro vs. macro debates in the methodology of the social sciences, and in strategic management more specifically, do apply in the specific framework of dynamic capabilities.

This represents a recurring topic in all social sciences and it expands into very difficult issues when focusing on the issue of the management of knowledge assets (tacit vs. explicit; local vs. global; micro vs. macro). The methodological and epistemological dimensions of the micro-foundations perspective affect all aspects of the discussion of dynamic capabilities and of organizational behaviors, because the analysis confronts with the recurring individual vs. collective problem. This represents the kernel of the debate published in the *Journal of Institutional Economics* (Felin & Foss, 2011; 2012).

We identify methodological (field research, data collection, causation), epistemological (conceptual categories, levels of analysis), and epistemic (knowledge and rationality) issues.

Here are some open questions in relation with methodological aspects:

- What is the originality of field research investigation with respect to micro-foundations?
- What are the specific methodological issues at stake with the investigation of micro-foundations of *dynamic capabilities*?
- How is it possible to translate the individual vs. collective concepts into proper data collection or data investigation? What are the main constraints prevailing for data collection about micro-foundations, and how to cope with them?
- Are there specific difficulties for the access to relevant data about micro-foundations?
- Are there specific difficulties in the interaction with the various agents / managers / executives during field research (cf the transposition of Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" into social sciences)?
- What are the respective advantages/difficulties with qualitative vs. quantitative methods?
- To what extent is direct observation relevant for the analysis of micro-foundations?

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SPECIAL ISSUES IN JOURNALS IN RELATION WITH THE WORKSHOP

The workshop organizers will propose a selection of best papers for publication in two special issues in different journals. Both special issues will be guest-edited by Agusti CANALS, Nicolai J. FOSS, Valérie MÉRINDOL and David W. VERSAILLES.

MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL has accepted to publish a special issue with 10+ articles presented at the workshop.

Negotiation is still under development with another journal.

CALENDAR FOR SUBMISSIONS; ORGANIZATION MILESTONES

- 20-NOV-2015 : Deadline for full papers submission
- DEC. 2015 – JAN. 2016 : double-blind peer review process
- 25-JAN-2016 : Notification to authors
- 25-FEB-2016 : (HARD) Deadline for author's registration (at 1200 Paris time noon)
- 07-MAR-2016 : (HARD) Deadline for final papers submission (at 1200 Paris time noon)
- 23+24-MAR-2016: Workshop

INDICATIONS FOR AUTHORS:

EVALUATION PROCESS

Any article submitted to the organizers of the workshop will go through double blind referee process. One of the referees will be selected from the scientific board installed for this workshop; the other one from the list of authors submitting a paper at the workshop (whatever his/her academic status or affiliation). Referees will receive appraisal guidelines validated both by the organizers and the coordinators of the AIMS research group “*Resources, Competences, and Dynamic Capabilities*”.

The organizers will make the final decision on the submissions on the basis of the evaluation introduced in the double blind referee process.

Contributions elaborating about field research will be privileged, whatever the method used in the paper. Genuine theoretical papers will be also accepted. The organizers of the workshop accept submissions inspired from diverse theoretical frameworks (management, economics, etc).

LANGUAGES

Submissions are accepted in French and in English.

Sessions will be organized accordingly. Both languages will be used during the workshop.

SUBMISSION FORMAT

Authors have to submit their proposals **both** in MS WORD and PDF formats.

The format for submissions **shall** follow the following guidelines:

- Page format: A4 (US letter is *NOT* accepted);
- Top-down-left-right margins = 2.5cm;
- MAXIMAL number of pages: 30, including notes, bibliography, annexes;
- Font: Times New Roman 12 points ;
- Paragraphs : double spaced, justified, no blank space before/after the paragraph, no indentation;
- No text (including name of the author(s), title of the article, etc.) in the page footer / header;
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- Titles have to be explicit and written “to the point”, with a maximum of 3 levels, and numbered in reference to the following pattern:
 - Title 1 (eg. 1. Xxxxx): Times New Roman 12, bold, in capital letters;
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The **first** page of the article (numbered 0), will display:

- The title of the article (Times New Roman 18, Bold, normal font);
- The name and affiliation of the author(s) (Times New Roman 14, Bold);
- Snail and electronic mail addresses, telephone, fax and gsm for the corresponding author (Times New Roman, 12, normal font);

- Abstract (250 words; simple spaced paragraph; Times New Roman 12; justified) presenting the problem addressed in the article, the method, and the main results;
- Keywords (5 maximum) and JEL categories (3 maximum) in reference to the themes and concepts discussed in the article (Times New Roman 12).

The second page of the article (numbered 1) will display the title of the article, the abstract, keywords and JEL categories. The text of the article will start on the third page of the proposal, numbered 2.

The authors are expected to use the appropriate MS Word styles (including for titles and sub-titles, legends for figures and tables, etc.) and to avoid the use of italic fonts. They are expected to limit footnotes to a strict minimum, and to avoid the use of endnotes. Tables and figures have to be inserted directly in the text.

Annexes have to be inserted at the end of the article, after the bibliography, with the following pattern (level 1): X. Annex A: Title Xxxxxx

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*Proposals shall be send to the workshop organization
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WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

The workshop will develop over two days. The workshop will develop with a welcoming plenary session, two keynote addresses, and a series of parallel sessions.

Time table	Activities	Facilities	Location
Day 1 Tue 22- MAR- 2016	0930-1030	Registration	Anticafé private room
	1030-1100	Welcoming addresses	Small Amphi
	1100-1230	Keynote address (#1)	Small Amphi
	1230-1400	Networking lunch	Anticafé private room
	1400-1630	Parallel sessions #1	2 rooms x 40 seats
	1630-1700	Coffee break	Anticafé private room
	1700-1830	Parallel sessions #2	2 rooms x 40 seats
	2000-++++	Dinner (optional)	TBD
Day 2 Wed 23- MAR- 2016	0930-1100	Parallel sessions #3	2 rooms x 40 seats
	1100-1230	Keynote address (#2)	Small Amphi
	1230-1430	Networking lunch	TBD
	1430-1600	Parallel sessions #4	2 rooms x 40 seats
	1600	Conclusion	Small Amphi

The number of parallel session will adapt to the volume of proposals submitted to, and selected by the organizers. We expect a maximum of two sessions running in parallel, and 8 sessions at the maximum.

Parallel sessions will be chaired by one the organizers of the workshop, or by one of the coordinators of the AIMS ‘Resources, competences, dynamic capabilities’ thematic group.

For each paper:

- 15min presentation by the author(s),
- 15min open discussion.

VENUE AND OTHER PRACTICAL ASPECTS

The workshop will take place at Paris School of Business premises: 59 rue Nationale, 75013 PARIS (close to subway station Olympiades, not far away from Place d’Italie, 75013).

A list of hotels will be made available to workshop participants.

REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fees (including coffee breaks and lunches).....	200€
Special rate for PhD students	125€
Discount rate for PSB faculties	150€
Gala dinner (optional)	TBD