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Article

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Cogent Economics & Finance

Provided in Cooperation with:

Taylor & Francis Group

Suggested Citation: Nassreddine, Garoui; Anis, Jarboui (2014) : Cognitive governance, cognitive mapping and cognitive conflicts: Structural analysis with the MICMAC method, Cogent Economics & Finance, ISSN 2332-2039, Vol. 2, Iss. 1, pp. 1-12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2014.922893>

This Version is available at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10419/147712>

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Received: 01 March 2014
Accepted: 06 May 2014
Published: 09 June 2014

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cognitive governance, cognitive mapping and cognitive conflicts: Structural analysis with the MICMAC method

Garoui Nassreddine^{1*} and Jarboui Anis¹

Abstract: This research aims to achieve a better understanding of the modes of conceptualization and thinking on issues of governance. It is part of a cognitive approach, to our knowledge unprecedented. This research has shown that the mapping concepts of governance can provide the original performance and meaningful. The purpose was to plot the thought of governance actors in the form of a cognitive map and analyze it. The results highlighted the relative importance of the concepts they used, the dimensions from which they structured more or less consciously, here own thoughts, and the nature and characteristics of the concepts they considered primarily as an explanation or consequences. They allowed characterizing very special or very precise structure and content of the thought of these actors. The construction of collective cognitive maps is to help structure the relationship between governance actors in the sense that it will detect the conflict relations of cognitive order. The cognitive map is by definition a representation of mental models of actors on any topic. Actors of governance do not have the same definitions of the concepts of governance that represents for us a sort of cognitive conflict and hence through cognitive mapping can map the concentration of these conflicts and we are still looking for more to show the effectiveness governance mechanisms to resolve these conflicts.

Keywords: cognitive map, governance cognitive, cognitive conflicts

RESEARCH GROUP OVERVIEW

Our research is part of the debate on the role of mental models for understanding of ways of conceptualizing and thinking problems related of corporate governance. The objective of our research was to better understand different approaches to corporate governance from the presentation and analysis of the cognitive maps of the actors of the company on theme. The use of this tool has allowed us to identify elements that view mental models of the actors of the Tunisian business.

The use of cognitive mapping technique in the field of governance allows to achieve a better understanding of ways of conceptualizing and thinking on governance issues. The application of this technique is useful for all business leaders to know the sources of cognitive conflict between the stakeholders of the company.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Cognitive mapping is a technique for modeling that began to portray ideas, beliefs, values, and attitudes of an individual, as well as the links between them in a favorable size analysis. It is a method for the researcher to approach the performances of the subjects he asks. The generic idea is to work on the cognitive universe of an individual and plot a part of this universe in the form of a map showing the concepts discussed and their connection. Cognitive mapping is used to study both the structure and the content of the graphical representations made. This research is part of the research in cognitive governance and aims to analyze the representations of governance actors with a common technique in cognitive approaches, that of cognitive mapping. This is a modeling technique graph cognition. Cognitive mapping has been shown the existence of conflicts in order of cognitive concepts of governance.

1. Introduction

Cognitive theories based on a radically different vision of the process of creating value in that they lead to give a strong focus on building skills and capacity of firms to innovate, to create their investment opportunities, and to change their environment. The main problem is not one of balancing interests, but much more than the qualitative coordination, alignment, and patterns of cognitive models of anticipation. The cognitive argument used in different ways, either as a means to facilitate coordination and reduce the costs of conflict—which also have a cognitive character—or as a mode of invention of new productive opportunities.

As a corollary, the key to performance in these approaches is more in the ability of management to think, perceive, and build new opportunities (Lazonick & O'Sullivan, 2000) and in the restructuring or reconfiguring portfolios activities of firms in response to changes in the environment.

As stated, the firm is not only an organizational response to informational problems; it is mainly a repository of knowledge. Value creation depends on a priority of the identity and competencies of the firm, conceived as a coherent whole (Teece & Pisano, 1994), which would derive its specificity and its ability to create knowledge and thus to be profitable on a sustainable basis. Work on the firm's innovative Lazonick and O'Sullivan (2000) represent one of the best examples of current attempts that seek to jointly consider the conflicting and cognitive aspects.

In a governance perspective, cognitive analysis of the cognitive world of an actor is important. Examine the cognitive universe of a subject in relation to an object is of particular interest to the expert, "bearing the reference" of the subject, is better equipped to understand, explain, advise, act, and even anticipate (depending on whether the expert is a researcher and/or consultant, etc.).

Whatever the forces that drive an individual, it tends to anticipate, connecting factors (components, events, beliefs, actors, etc.). More broadly, cognitive mapping is a methodological tool for collecting data for researchers wishing to access the subject's representations that he met and interviewed. It is our tool, which is to be included in a broader methodology, we seek to legitimize their use.

1.1. Cognitive Mapping and Governance

Cognitive map is a graphic illustration of the mental representation that the researcher is "a set of discursive representations set out a story from his own cognitive representations, about of a particular object". In this sense, it is an image formed of both concepts or constructed, and linkages or causal relationships linking these concepts or built them. It is true that a concept only makes sense in context, that is to say, linked to other concepts. This leads to a network, some properties could not be updated otherwise, such as loops, or the centrality of concepts.

If construction of cognitive maps is usually after an interview process (s) with one person (individual card) or more (cards group), other contexts of use are possible and may be based on the exploitation textual data. For now, the results obtained in terms of mapping items are a state of advanced theory of governance. This condition leads to a few remarks about key concepts and relationships that seem to unite them.

Work focused on the development of collective cognitive maps composites from a number of individual cognitive maps using the grid of free exploration. It presents a systematic methodology for decision support based on cognitive mapping to produce a network of concepts (concerns) deemed important by the leader for the future of his organization. We will retain this notion of concept which is the basic unit of cognitive mapping in the proposed approach.

Drawing on the biological sciences, proposes the concept of "Simplexity" which expresses the simple nature of rapid and simple appearance of complex phenomena such as biological mechanisms (neural mechanisms that develop rapid responses to analysis of complex situations,

e.g. a reaction while driving, another example would be the adaptive response of living organisms face the complex changes in the environment encouraging the selection of information, etc.). Even if an answer or solution may seem simple, it remains deeply complex and multifaceted, but a learning process can shorten the reaction time. Thus, cognitive mapping is an adventure into the maze of thought.

It is a singular discovery (concepts) and the discovery of the overall system (figure drawn by the ties of influences). It is also a learning process for producing more appropriate solutions and faster (more simplexes).

1.1.1. Format of Thought

According to Fiol and Huff (1992), developing a cognitive map helps clarify a confused idea. Indeed, an effort structuring of thought is required, leading to a clarification of the problem. The construction of the card helps the individual to question, to clarify its own representations. According to this function, cognitive mapping, not only models a representation, but acts on this representation structure, and therefore, the clarification.

1.1.2. Aide Decision

The development of a cognitive map allows considering ways of possible actions to find the path that will lead to desired end point (Fiol & Huff, 1992). The cognitive map can be considered a model designed to include the path by which an individual will find a solution to a problem. In this case, the cognitive map does not represent a general model of the mind of the individual. It is not a simulation model of decision-making but can be categorized as tools for decision support. Eden said that sometimes the card allows the decision-maker to find solutions that may seem obvious to any person other than the principal party. For that the solution(s) emerges and become “obvious” in the eyes of the maker, the speaker (Eden intervenes often in companies as a consultant) can induce her to alter her view of the problem.

1.1.3. Communication

The development of a cognitive map facilitates the transmission of ideas between different makers. It may then become a tool for communication and negotiation (Fiol & Huff, 1992). The card can even “explain” (in the sense of identifying and locating) the problems of communication between individuals. The development of a map in a collective group can also raise awareness to certain members of the group that what is obvious to them is not necessarily for others (Eden & Simpson, 1989). In this sense, the tool is with the explanation therefore communication.

1.1.4. Passage of Practical Consciousness to Discursive Consciousness

“... The cognitive mapping facilitates the passage of the practical consciousness to discursive consciousness and, therefore, review by a subject of what he takes for granted the” self-evident “that governs a very many of its daily practices.” As highlighted in this passage, cognitive mapping can facilitate the articulation of discursive representations on the daily practices of an individual. These practices seem so “obvious” to the subject, they are so integrated that it makes more in the everyday, discursive representations on them. When the speaker asked his thoughts on the subject, after some effort, he managed to articulate those “silent.” This process of “externalization” (Nonaka, 1994), or “formalization” which is to move from tacit to explicit, is interesting in that the subject “may be rooted more in these ideas ‘sees’ the change and debate.” Cognitive mapping offers him the opportunity to increase its pool of knowledge by tapping into its discursive practical knowledge that the cognitive map is partially updated.

1.1.5. Prévision Behavior

Researchers in management generally assumed (explicitly or implicitly) that the map describes and predicts behavior. Then there is a link between thought that would be represented by the map and the observed conduct behavior, and a link between thought represented by the card

and future behavior. Distinguish ourselves through these functions that the instrument is effective in visualizing the problem in our input is cognitive conflicts in corporate governance.

1.1.6. *Strategic Planning*

Research of Chakib Zouaghi, Dorothy May 2010 Boccanfuso allowed to test a strategic planning approach using cognitive mapping in a collective context of participatory management strategy. This method “thinkShop” can quickly lead to a consensus around the strategy produced in a situation of complex decision-making where many actors are involved simultaneously. The testing method provides an operational response in the highly complex and sustainable development would largely meet any complex context of a varied nature (organizational, economic, financial, social, security, etc.). In future research, and with the emergence of new economic theories as heterodox theory Coordination, it might well be other cases tested and lead to a real alternative or complement to current methods of strategic planning.

The explanation of the relationship between cognitive mapping cognitive and governance can be summarized in a process that will be more detailed in the empirical part. The approach is organized into several phases described below.

1.2. *Empirical Study: Results and Discussion*

1.2.1. *Introduction*

Because of its exploratory nature, this research was limited to four cases. Our goal, in fact, is mainly to see the cognitive conflicts in concepts of governance between actors.

1.2.2. *Methods of Data Collection for the Construction of Cognitive Maps*

The methods used to collect and link the concepts of a cognitive map, whether individual or collective, are many and varied. The variety depends to a large extent on the position more or less explicit the researcher or consultant on the epistemological level. See this more closely, beginning with a brief description of the methods most used to date.

1.2.2.1. *Observation Method.* According to participant observer Bougon, Weick, and Binkhorst (1977) have determined the variables considered important by members of the Utrecht Jazz Orchestra. In this classic research, the authors unfortunately do not have many details on how they came to remember 17 variables and not to retain the variables considered too personal to draw the map of this collective group.

1.2.2.2. *Questionnaire Method.* This technique has mainly been used until now to make connections that exist between concepts previously determined (e.g. following a review of the literature in a particular field). Thus, in research Bougon et al. (1977), Ford and Hegarty (1984), and Swan and Newell (1998), each person was asked to rule, usually from a matrix prepared for this purpose, the existence a direct link uniting influence each of the concepts to each other. When the objective is to make a collective map, a link is listed when a significant number of subjects stated that there is one.

1.2.2.3. *Interview Technique.* The depth interview is generally intended to determine from which concepts an individual or group of individuals structure their reality and how they establish links between these concepts. The work of Eden and his collaborators (see, Eden & Ackermann, 1998) is typical of this approach.

1.2.2.4. *Repertory Grid Technique.* This technique, derived from the theory of Personal Construct, aims to show the constructs or dimensions (i.e. concepts) from which everyone is a reality. It would be a bit long to describe this technique here. Include merely illustrative in that research conducted with senior executives of the banking sector, Reger (1990) were asked to consider various banks

presented in groups of three and say how two of them were similar and how they differed from the third. This procedure allowed to determine their cognitive structure constructed, each with two poles (e.g. targeting a national market and targeting a local market).

1.2.2.5. Documentary Research Method. Written documents (archives, annual reports, scholarly literature, etc.) have often been used (see, *inter alia*; Barr, Stimpert, & Huff, 1992), including determining the important variables to consider in a particular field. For example, the study of Ford and Hegarty (1984) on eight variables considered crucial in relation to the organizational structure and the Swan and Newell (1998) on the 13 important variables in the field of production in connection with innovation gave rise to interesting collective maps. There are other methods of cognitive mapping, including that of the Self-Q given by Bougon (1983), that of Visual Spell Card and that based on the use of a systematic exploration grid developed by Cossette (2001).

1.2.3. The Sample

Because of its exploratory nature, this research was limited to four cases. Our goal, in fact, is mainly to detect the points of divergence between the governance actors in concepts and build cognitive maps that visualize the concentration of each actor's thoughts on concepts considered as significant. In four cases, respondents are: an officer, shareholder, and creditor.

1.2.4. Method of Data Collection

The technique employed in our research is the questionnaire. We have used this technique to make connections that exist between concepts previously determined (following a review of the literature). Thus, in research Bougon et al. (1977), Ford and Hegarty (1984), and Swan and Newell (1998), each person was asked to rule, usually from a matrix prepared for this purpose, the existence a link to direct influences uniting each of the concepts to each other.

2. Material and Method of Structural Analysis

2.1. Preview of Structural Analysis Method

The main objective of structural analysis is to identify the most important variables in determining the evolution of the system. Inspired by graph theory, structural analysis is based on the description of a system using a matrix linking all its components.

In weighing these relationships, the method highlights the key variables to changing the system. As a tool, we opted for the software "MICMAC" (cross-impact matrices, Multiplication Applied to a Classification) developed by Mr BUCKET. The first step of the method MICMAC is to identify all the variables characterizing the system under study.

The second step involves the linking of variables by constructing the matrix of direct influence and potential. Indeed, this approach is supported by the fact that in a systemic approach, a variable exists by its network of relationships with other variables. The construction of the matrix by a system of "scoring" was undertaken by assigning the value 1 if a relationship exists and the value 0 in case of absence.

The consolidated matrix was subsequently subjected to the validation of those resources listed above whose aim was to assess the vraisemblabilité of weightings. It is from this matrix what has identified the key variables. Indeed, we obtain the direct ranking by the sum of row and column. If the total online links shows the importance of the influence of one variable on the whole system (direct motor level), total column shows the dependence of a variable (level of direct dependence). (weight of each construct $W = W' + W''$ with W' : sum of lines and W'' : total columns). Ranking indirect cons can detect hidden variables through a matrix multiplication program applied to indirect classification. "This program allows us to study the distribution of impacts by paths and feedback loops, and therefore to prioritize the variables in order of influence."

2.2. Input Data

2.2.1. Presentation Variables

2.2.1.1. List of Variables:

- (1) Strategy (str)
- (2) Earnings (ear)
- (3) Control (cont)
- (4) Decision (dec)
- (5) Objective (obj)
- (6) Investment (inv)
- (7) Performance (per)
- (8) Asymmetry (asy)
- (9) Value (val)
- (10) Sharing (shar)
- (11) Power (po)
- (12) Ownership Structure (os)
- (13) Behavior (beh)
- (14) Interest (int)
- (15) Risk (ris)
- (16) Return (ret)

2.2.1.2. *The Input Matrices.* The third step was to compile a matrix of direct influence between these variables in a scoring session. Matrix Direct Influences (MID) which describes the relation of direct influences between the variables defining the system and the Matrix of Direct Influences Potential (MIDP) represents the influences and dependencies between current and potential variables

Table 1. Matrix of Direct Influences (MID)

	str	ear	cont	dec	obj	inv	per	asy	val	shar	po	os	beh	int	ris	ret
str	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
ear	0	0	1	0	3	2	1	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
cont	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0
dec	0	1	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
obj	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
inv	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
per	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	3	0	0
asy	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
val	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
shar	3	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
po	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
os	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
beh	1	2	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
int	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
ris	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ret	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0

Notes: The influences are scored from 0 to 3, with the ability to report potential influences: 0: No influence; 1: Low; 2: Average; 3: Strong; P: Potential.

Table 2. Matrix of Direct Influences Potential (MIDP)

	str	ear	cont	dec	obj	inv	per	asy	val	shar	po	os	beh	int	ris	ret
str	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
ear	0	0	1	0	3	2	1	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
cont	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0
dec	0	1	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
obj	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
inv	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
per	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	3	0	0
asy	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
val	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
shar	3	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
po	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
os	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
beh	1	2	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
int	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
ris	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ret	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0

Notes: The influences are scored from 0 to 3:0: No influence; 1: Low; 2: Average; 3: Strong.

2.2.1.3. *Matrix of Direct Influences.* MID describes the direct influences relationships between the variables defining the system (Table 1).

2.2.1.4. *Matrix of Direct Influences Potential.* The MIDP represents the influences and current and potential dependencies between variables. It complements the matrix MID also taking into account possible relationships in the future (Table 2).

3. The Results of the Study

3.1. Direct Influences

3.1.1. Features MID

Table 3 shows the number of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 matrix displays and filling ratio calculated as the ratio between the number of different MID values of 0 and the total number of elements of the matrix.

Table 3. Direct Influences

Indicator	Value
Matrix size	16
Number of iterations	2
Number of zeros	175
Number of one	41
Number of two	20
Number of three	20
Number of P	0
Total	81
Fill rate	31,64063%

Table 4. Sommes Rows and Columns of MID

No.	Variable	Total of lines	Total of columns
1	Strategy	7	11
2	Earnings	14	3
3	Control	8	18
4	Decision	11	11
5	Objective	11	8
6	Investment	7	9
7	Performance	10	14
8	Asymmetry	6	8
9	Value	7	9
10	Sharing	15	7
11	Power	0	9
12	Ownership structure	12	17
13	Behavior	10	7
14	Interest	3	7
15	Risk	10	1
16	Return	10	2
	Totals	141	141

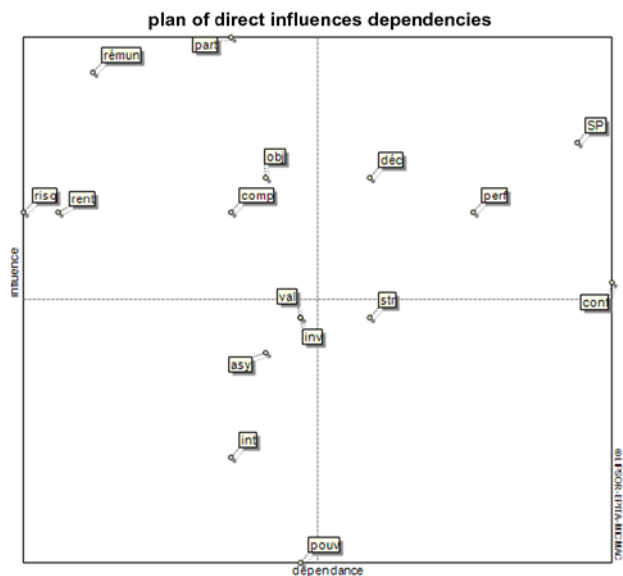
3.1.2. Sommes Rows and Columns of MID

Table 4 is used to learn about the row and column of the matrix MID.

Weight of each concept $W = W' + W''$ with W' : sum of lines and W'' : Column totals
 $W1 = 7 + 11 = 18$,
 $W2 = 14 + 3 = 17$,
 $W3 = 8 + 18 = 26$,
 $W4 = 11 + 11 = 22$,
 $W5 = 11 + 8 = 19$,
 $W6 = 7 + 9 = 16$,
 $W7 = 10 + 14 = 24$,
 $W8 = 6 + 8 = 14$,
 $W9 = 7 + 9 = 16$,
 $W10 = 15 + 7 = 22$,
 $W11 = 0 + 9 = 9$,
 $W12 = 12 + 17 = 29$,
 $W13 = 10 + 7 = 17$,
 $W14 = 3 + 7 = 10$,
 $W15 = 10 + 1 = 11$, and $W16 = 10 + 2 = 12$.

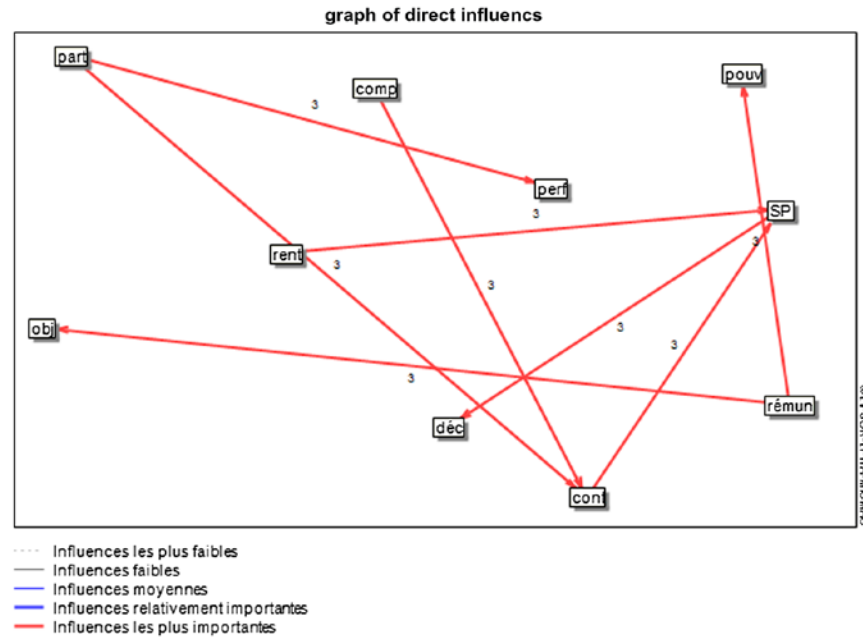
3.2. Plan Influences/Direct Dependencies

This plan is determined from the matrix of direct influences MID.



3.3. Graph of Direct Influences

This graph is determined from the matrix of direct influences MID.



3.4. Potential Direct Influences

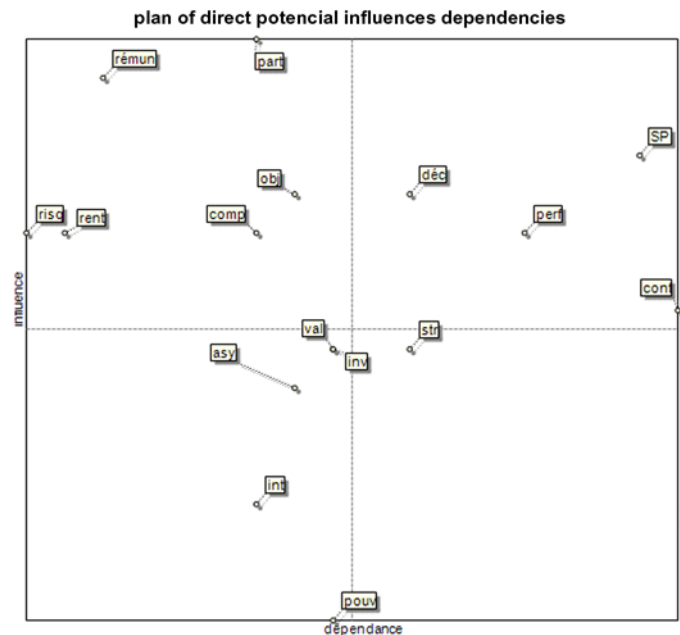
3.4.1. Features of MIDP

Table 5 shows the number of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 matrix displays MIDP and the filling ratio calculated as the ratio between the number of different MID values of 0 and the total number of elements of the matrix.

Table 6 is used to learn about the row and column of the matrix MIDP.

3.5. Plan Influences/Potential Direct Dependencies

This plan is determined from the matrix of potential direct influences MIDP.



3.6. Graph of the Potential Direct Influences

This graph is determined from the matrix of potential direct influences MIDP.

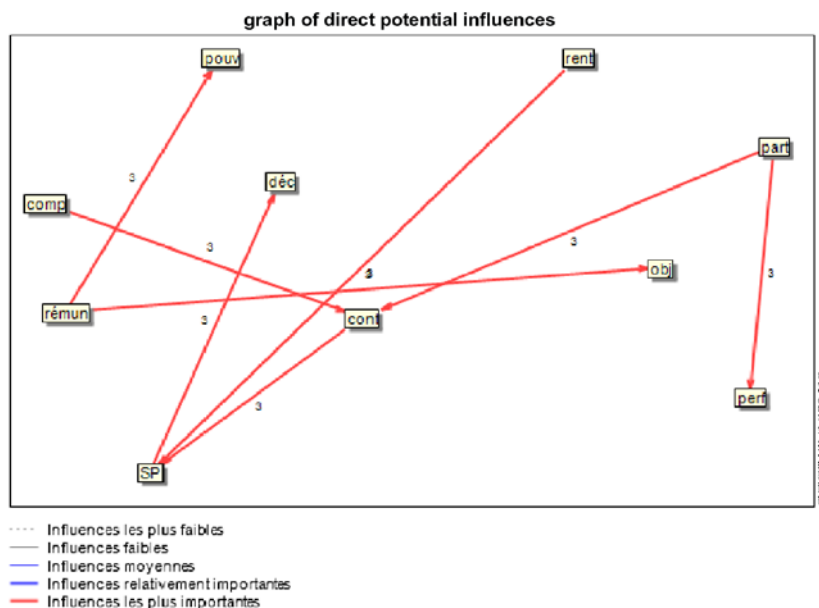


Table 5. Potential Direct Influences

Indicator	Value
Matrix size	16
Number of iterations	2
Number of zeros	175
Number of one	41
Number of two	20
Number of three	20
Number of P	0
Total	81
Fill rate	31,64063%

Table 6. Row and Column of the Matrix MIDP

No.	Variable	Total of lines	Total of columns
1	Strategy	7	11
2	Earnings	14	3
3	Control	8	18
4	Decision	11	11
5	Objective	11	8
6	Investment	7	9
7	Performance	10	14
8	Asymmetry	6	8
9	Value	7	9
10	Sharing	15	7

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued)

No.	Variable	Total of lines	Total of columns
11	Power	0	9
12	Ownership structure	12	17
13	Behavior	10	7
14	Interest	3	7
15	Risk	10	1
16	Return	10	2
	Totals	141	141

3.7. General Synthesis

Our research concerns the demonstration and display of the most central concepts that represent a source of conflict in the understanding of these concepts for the company stakeholders.

4. Discussion

Cognitive mapping has been shown the existence of a cognitive conflict in concepts of governance. Through the central loops of different cognitive maps, concepts central to the governance actors are different which explains well the differences in terms of understanding the same concepts of governance. The cognitive approach to which we subscribed, and the use of cognitive mapping we have tried especially helpful in that they allowed us to capture and present graphically the ideas of the respondents. They also allowed us to shed light on the details: the key concepts of conflict sources, it was probably difficult to be tackled with a different approach. So far there is no application of cognitive maps in the area of governance, but they have already demonstrated their performance in other areas. The field of governance can benefit from the use of cognitive maps to represent the key concepts of conflict sources and facilitate the resolution of these conflicts.

5. Conclusion

This research has shown that the mapping mechanisms and concepts of governance can provide the original performances and meaningful. The purpose of this research was to plot the thought of governance actors in the form of a cognitive map and analyze it using software Decision Explorer. The results highlighted the relative importance of the concepts they used, the dimensions from which they structured more or less consciously of their own thoughts, the nature and characteristics of the concepts they considered primarily as an explanation or consequences. They allowed characterizing very special or very precise structure and content of the thought of these actors.

This research has shown that cognitive mapping is a tool that can help to analyze the sources of conflict cognitive concepts in theories of corporate governance. However, most often, theorists (whether practitioners or not) seem to have spontaneously tend to think in terms of explanations and consequences, in the study of organizations, this trend seems self-evident, perhaps because the concept of organization suggests transforming inputs into outputs.

Cognitive mapping is a technique for modeling began to portray ideas, beliefs, values, and attitudes of an individual as well as links that connect them in a format conducive to analysis (Eden, Jones, & Sims, 1983). It is a method allowing the researcher to approach the subject's representations that he questioned. The generic idea is to work on the cognitive universe of an individual and to plot a part of this universe in the form of a map showing the concepts discussed and their connection. Cognitive mapping allows us to study both the structure and content of graphic representations made. It can thus be interpreted as a form of content analysis but differs from the more common methods that quantitatively analyze fragments of texts by the fact that these are also the relations between cognitive elements that are studied (Huff, Narapareddy, & Fletch, 1990). Representations or beliefs of an individual by nature and are generally inaccessible directly approached by the speech of the individual. This echoes the first major structural bias of the tool. The

speech of an individual may not be very coherent with his value system as suggest the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. For this reason, certain precautions are necessary during the interviews.

As we conceive, a cognitive map is usually defined as a graphical model of a person's beliefs about a particular field. The content focuses on the cognitive map of beliefs and can approach the systems of beliefs. It focuses on beliefs and values and their causal relational structure (Axelrod, 1976). Once a graphical model of cognition is attempted, we can speak of cognitive map. One of several comprehensive definitions describes it as "a graphical representation of the mental researcher is a set of discursive representations set out a story from his own cognitive representations, about a particular object". One of the fundamental aspects of cognitive approaches is to assert that individuals differ in their knowledge, even if they have similar tasks or working same area. The goal of a cognitive map is "to describe a conscious perception of reality with enough detail to capture the idiosyncratic perceptions of the world that an individual" (Langfield-Smith, 1992, p. 350).

6. Limitations of the Cognitive Mapping Technique

The graphic representation as a cognitive map has many benefits ... but it is not without difficulties and it raises many questions, which may reveal new avenues of research. Thus, assessing the relative importance of each concept from the number of links uniting more or less directly to other concepts is legitimate, but the exclusive use of a quantitative criterion for this purpose is not fully satisfactory. For example, a concept might be considered more "important" because it performs, depending on the subject, an influence on a factor considered crucial, or because his influence over another is seen as stronger or critical than that of another factor (Cossette & Audet, 1992).

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Article Information

Cite this article as: Cognitive governance, cognitive mapping and cognitive conflicts: Structural analysis with the MICMAC method, G. Nassreddine & J. Anis, *Cogent Economics & Finance* (2014), 2: 922893.

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