

Summary

Relationships are the glue that binds organizations together or that draws them apart. Professional contacts offer referrals, job opportunities and are a major source of work satisfaction. So far, research has tended to focus on relational outcomes, neglecting the processes through which professionals create these outcomes. Highlighting how and why professional actors interact with others, can inform us on whether linearity between actions and outcomes is correct and whether actions are indeed rational or economical oriented. Through the lens of human agency, I particularly focus on the role of subjective perceptions and motivations that drive interaction in practice. This research approach more closely reflects the ambiguous nature of practical reality and actors' subjective experiences. This thesis has been conducted in a variety of contexts, which has led to the following research question:

How can interpersonal interaction be understood under endogeneity in different organizational contexts?

I particularly studied the phenomena interpersonal networking and intuition in task-related interaction. By recording the interpretations of freelancers, entrepreneurs and managers I have collected a rich set of data that forms a nice and detailed illustration of how these actors deal in practice with the two phenomena under study. In what follows I summarize the main findings of this thesis.

In chapters 2, 3 and 4 I have conceptualized networking as behavior. These chapters give insight in motivations for networking and how cognitive factors drive action. Chapter 2 shows the motivations and dispositions freelancers, who are employed in projects in the Dutch infrastructure, have about networking. Their participation in a professional network offers them contacts, professional exchange, the possibility to learn and the feeling that they belong to a group. This group of freelancers was quite uniform in their ideas about networking. Part of networking was seeking business friendships. These relations covered both a private and a professional component. The findings further show that networking was understood as a matter of give and take, that direct business expectations needed to be released, a dislike of goal-directed networking behaviors and an openness towards unexpected outcomes.

Chapter 3 also suggests that the prevailing picture about networking overlooks the cognitive component of professional actors. In the context of entrepreneurs it suggests that networking is also informed to the extent in which actors feel uncertain about a particular aspect of the interaction. Creation theory and effectuation theory are used to describe how entrepreneurs network under the boundary condition of uncertainty. I propose here that

under these circumstances networking can also involve pro-social behaviors such as giving, being open for serendipity as outcome of networking and for co-creation between actors. Overall, this chapter describes an alternative set of network behaviors when networking is informed by the perceptual notion of uncertainty.

Chapter 4 shows how nascent entrepreneurs go about creating their initial business network while starting up a new venture abroad. This study suggests that the development of a business network consists of the components initiating contact, reacting on contact attempts and the cognitive evaluations of network behaviors. I suggest that some entrepreneurs experience network momentum; the perception that their business network starts to exist. This is found to be linked to material outcomes such as acquiring funding or have a first customer or to immaterial outcomes such as gaining legitimacy or being contacted. The findings suggest that it is important to look at relational development at a fine-grained level and that cognition is important in the development of a new business network.

Chapters 5 and 6 were concerned with experiences that are labeled as intuition at work. Chapter 5 suggests that attending to intuition at work is not a piece of cake. By categorizing communalities put forward by managers, when talking about intuition in their work, it seems that intuition is not always clear, may need attention and inquiry and that being too preoccupied is detrimental for attention. In addition, it shows how managers differ in their level of attention for these experiences at work. At the end of the chapter I differentiate three types of giving attention to intuition. These can be understood as a different stage of intuitive development or different attentional preferences. Overall, this chapter shows that intuition may not be self-explanatory and needs more explicit attention.

Chapter 6 in turn shows that talking about intuitive experiences was often done in the context of social interaction. Whereas other empirical work has focused on intuition in first-encounters such as selection and recruitment, I find that intuition is referred to in daily work encounters with the purpose of development, improving cooperation or assessing change readiness of others. Depending on the context, these experiences are communicated to the other person, automatically acted upon or held silent until the time was perceived to be right. These detailed descriptions offer a new angle to the phenomenon of social intuition.

Overall, this thesis forms a call for coming to grips with the subtleties of interpersonal interaction. In this thesis I assume that the motives and perceptions that drive interaction ultimately influence the outcomes that are or are not obtained. A relaxation of

the assumption of linearity and goal-directedness in approaches to interaction reveals a world of experiences that inform exchange at the work floor at a micro-level. In this world give and take, letting go of direct business expectations, enjoying doing things together, being open for unexpected contingencies and daring to share and act upon unexplainable sensations of intuition become central features. Much more work is needed to complement this thesis and to thoroughly theorize on how and why actors engage in interpersonal interaction at work. Research has for a great deal been concerned with the outcomes of interaction. However, in order to fully comprehend these outcomes, we need to go back to the subtleties of interpersonal interaction as these will guide the way to more profound theorizing.