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Analyzing creativity, innovation and renewal in dyads from a focal company view

Keywords: focal company, cooperation, creativity, innovation,
organizational boundaries

Abstract

As competition nowadays very much takes place between networks (Möller and Halinen 1999; Ghauri, Tarnovskaya and Elg 2008) the main strategizing issue is very much the one of interaction between network actors. Areas of interest to study are how cooperation partners can support each other in their activities of maintaining and improving their competitive advantage in the supply network and the development. One of the managers most important task is to combine the resources with the opportunities in the surroundings of the company (Grant 2005). In this way the resources can be developed according to the changes in the market and outside surroundings and demands of the company. Survival depends to a large degree on the companies' creativity, innovation, discovery and inventiveness (Martins and Terblanche 2003) and creativity in our knowledge based society is very much considered as a source of competitive advantage (Florida 2002).

The results of the study show that the sources of renewal lies very often outside the company. The interviewed managing directors often found their sources of creativity and renewal in interaction with cooperation partners, suppliers and in their own activities outside the company. The threats to creative thinking lied both outside and inside their companies. The study contributes to a better understanding of how to plan and organize for creativity in business market relationships.

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Introduction

Managers in many companies are interested in knowing how they can fill the gap between what is part of their strategy and what actually takes place in reality (Helfat, Finkelstein, Mitchell, Peteraf, Singh, Teece and Winter 2007). This gap is according to Martins and Terblanche (2003) filled by the organizational culture. Managing or controlling the company culture is one thing and analyzing it in order to develop it another. According to Judge (1997) this is the key to creativity and innovation. As you realize the difference between controlling and encouraging this

empowers the company creativity. Managing the grey zones between organizations also includes major challenges in terms of almost unlimited possibilities and threats in terms of for example logistical, legal and other different alternatives for example production all around the globe and in cooperation with selected partners. These cooperation partners should fit and complete the company in terms of certain characteristics. The importance of well balanced cooperation is recognized in industrial marketing research (Axelsson and Easton 1992) and as time moves forward this interaction includes more and more elements of interest to study. One area is how we can enhance imaginative thinking, innovation, creativity as a source of competitive advantage (Florida 2002) – and especially in the interaction with others.

As companies cooperate more and more with other organizations it is interesting to find out what happens in the grey zone between the two organizations. As more outsourcing is also taking place in today's business world it is of interest to know how cooperating with others is affecting your own competitive advantage and development (Wagner and Johnson 2004). When more and more activities takes place outside your company borders you may have to evaluate and include them in your own strategic work in order to know how this interaction affects your core business and what you can do about it. Earlier research has identified a lack of research in research into creativity that focuses on relationships outside the company borders (Perry-Smith 2006) and innovation that takes place in dyads and networks (Biemans 1992).

The company is part of an external environment that is continuously changing – this puts pressure on the company to respond accordingly to its environment and to develop in its cooperation with other cooperation partners that fits its strategic goals. In the changing environment a certain approach and leadership is needed in the communication (Kotter 1996). In the business network the company can choose who it chooses to interact more with. By choosing the right cooperation partners the company can increase its chances of survival (Martins and Terblanche 2003, Gadde and Håkansson 1993; 2001) as this also includes a potential to see and evaluate possibilities in network cooperation and future positioning.

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to study managing directors view on threats, sources and existence, type and creation of creativity over organizational boundaries in dyadic relationships from a focal company view of the relationships studied. The empirical part of the study is based on 10 interviews with managing directors and specialists that cooperate and manage relationships over organizational boundaries. The studied firms are active in different industries. The study focuses on what the managing directors perceive as important when leading the company and its activities in industrial business networks. This exploratory study does not focus on any materialized outcome – it is a study of what the leader of the company should focus on in the steps that come before that. This all in order to be able to create the expected materialized outcome that the company needs in the competitive business world of today.

Relationships and their effect on resources as creativity and renewal

As a common motive behind cooperation lie the benefits of cooperation in comparison to working alone. Relationships in networks can be seen as channels to resources (Hammarkvist, Håkansson and Mattsson 1982) as well as knowledge (Möller and Svahn 2006) and development of the company's competitiveness in the market (Ghuri, Tarnovskaya and Elg 2008). One of the resources comes in the form of creativity, i.e. an ability to come up with new ideas and to perform these and innovation – the ability to create something new (MOT Norstedts Svensk ordbok 1.0)

In markets, exchange relationships are connected (Mattsson and Johanson, 2006). The area of exchange and cooperation in relationships and networks is well recognized within industrial marketing research (Axelsson and Easton 1992; Bengtsson and Kock 1999; Ford 1997, 2002; Forsström 2005; Gadde and Håkansson 1993; Håkansson 1982; Håkansson and Snehota 1995; Möller and Wilson 1995, Tikkanen, 1997). In today's business networks, the importance of cooperation becomes more important. Through cooperation, it is possible to gain market knowledge, competence, access to products, reputation, and other resources important for your business (Bengtsson and Kock, 1999).

Cooperation may be of such strategic importance that the company may not get along without it (Vesalainen and Asikainen, 1993). One motive for cooperation is often that one wants to gain

access to the resources that the counterpart has. The interaction between companies concerns how to create supply and use of resources, where the value of the resources is dependent on how the resources can be combined with other resources available (Håkansson, Harrison and Waluszewski, 2004).

When two companies cooperate, each episode or meeting will create the base for future interaction. The base for collaboration is founded on assumptions, trust and planning (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). Trust is based on the actors' past performance as well as reputation. It is also based on personal friendship and social bonds, and it is established in a day-to-day interaction. It is tangible and gives a sense of belonging and interdependence.

Companies in a network create relationships that are maintained, developed or disrupted. All the individual episodes and activities also create the base for the future relationship (Cook and Emerson 1978; Gadde and Håkansson 1993). If the episodes are perceived as good the companies continue to build further on the relationship as the company adapts or invests into the relationship (Hagberg-Andersson 2006; Halinen 1994). A network gives an actor the opportunity to gather information concerning business opportunities and how to improve the competitive advantage of the company. All of these relationships are filled with unique opportunities, complex interactions and adaptations made (Brennan and Turnbull 1999; Brennan, Turnbull and Wilson 2003; Hagberg-Andersson and Grønhaug 2009) and depending on how these are handled the companies can become stronger on the market. Interacting with your cooperation partners are a chance of renewal – a way of enhancing your creativity, imaginative thinking, innovation, creativity as a source of competitive advantage (Florida 2002).

One of the challenges for the management is to cover the market and to create and develop a strategy which enhances the company's possibilities to survive on the market. Among these challenges lies developing and implementing its strategies together with its network partners (Hagberg-Andersson 2007). One of the aims for the strategy is to combine company resources with the opportunities in the environment (de Wit 2004; Grant, 2005). Strong and long-term relationships with cooperation partners make planning for future actions and activities easier. This cannot be done without an open dialogue and mutual trust. Trust and commitment is needed in order to reduce uncertainty as to the way problems emerging in the relationship are solved

(Crespin-Mazet and Ghauri 2007). According to the resource-based view the company is a unique combination of resources and possibilities (Grant 2005), and this also includes its relationships to partners and other actors in its network. The firms' capabilities can be defined as the firms' ability to use its resources to generate competitive advantage (Barney 2001) – as its network of surrounding actors.

Analyzing and creating your competitive advantage is to study your own position on the market and compare it with your competitors (de Wit 2004). Based on your competitive advantage you create your position on the market (Grant 2005). Competitive advantage can be achieved if the company creates superior value for the customer (de Wit 2004). The resources the company has should be the same as the ones that makes you successful in the market. Together with the partners it is easier to cover the market and identify what makes you successful. One of the main challenges for a networking company is to be able to keep the best cooperation partners and keep them satisfied – this enhances the companies possibilities to cover the market and get an overview of the business possibilities available. This all is a way of strengthening and developing the companies' competitive advantage.

Methodology

This study followed a deductive research design (Arbnor and Bjerke 1997; Ghauri et al. 1995; 2005) in order to continue to develop the selected theory. The 10 companies were selected in order to cover different areas, products and services on the Finnish and global market. The personal semi-structured interviews were carried out from 2009 to 2011, and they lasted from 1 to 1 hour 50. The interviews were carried out in the offices of the informants and at the business school. Additional information was asked through telephone calls and internal documents and the companies web sites were used for additional background information about the companies.

The criteria for selecting companies were that they should represent different industries in order for them to represent different activities, areas and dynamics. In the interviews the informants were asked to describe how they perceived that cooperation and suppliers and partners enhanced their creativity and renewal. They were also asked to describe which activities and areas they had chosen to outsource and which areas that could not be outsourced. They were also asked to

describe what was their competitive advantage and in which ways their suppliers and cooperation partners supported the development and support of this competitive advantage. The sources of creativity and innovation were also described by the managers as well as their view on collective versus individual creative output and origin.

Results and analysis

The companies and their activities focus on different products and services.

The first company is producing and marketing jewelry. It employs 250 people. As their most important competitive advantage the managing director mentions the fact that they are genuine. The competitive advantage means that you are a master in your own field and market. The cooperation partners are selected on the basis of their work and professionalism. The partners need to be professional, committed and “speak the same language”. They also need to be big enough as a cooperation partner and they need to be active. It is hard to find good suppliers.

They cooperate with old and new artists on the global market and much of the production is done with artists that have their own companies. Other artists come in contact with the company when they work on scholarships. The products are created together with artists from different backgrounds and nationality and the theme is often history and culture. According to the managing director the natural culture can be seen as an important competitive advantage, as the themes of the products often reflect events and atmosphere that is being described and communicated through the art and jewelry. The culture mix can be seen as a renewal of business and culture. The relationships with the artists are mostly long-lasting, but the artists can work elsewhere for some time and then come back.

In order to keep and develop your competitive advantage you need not to compromise. It should not be a target to be innovative – that is artificial. This means that you start compromising. She also mentions that the company will communicate more about values in the future and that this will be more important in their communication on the market. Innovation lies in the atmosphere and this is important for the competitive advantage. It must be nice to work at the work place – and in their company job rotation has been a good tool to accomplish this. In their company they

describe design innovation as commercialization. This is the soul of the creativity in their products and part of the national culture. To summarize she add “artists innovate – engineers standardizes”.

The second company works with renovation of apartments and houses – focusing on companies and private customers that have little time to renovate and decorate their offices and homes. The company employs 20 people. Their mission is to create well being for customers and personnel. Thanks to their network of cooperation partners they are also very diversified and this network includes about 45 companies. The manager describes the core competence of the company as a model of concept thinking and a strategy of creating what the customer wants and wishes.

Creativity is an important part of their business and they have created themselves an important part of the market because of this creativity. They cooperate with different decorators and carpenters during the years of activity and new technical solutions are an important part of their business. In old houses and apartments the cooperation partners and employees are often forced to come up with new ways of thinking as a customer demands new and practical solutions though the objects they work on are old and where it is not always so easy to find new solutions to old problems. The manager thinks that it is often difficult to maintain their own identity and “soul” together with their cooperation partners. When you do not think in the same way it is hard. When it comes to your own personnel you are part of the business in another way as when you cooperate – and this feeling of belongingness is important according to this owner and managing director. You can outsource many activities in the company but not the core. According to this managing director they still have all the creativity inside the company that they need as a quite new company. But yourself as the leader of your company you need to renew yourself. Stress need to be removed in order to be creative. And getting new people into the firm helps – like trainees – they definitely help out.

The third company is working within the metal industry and produces technical solutions and components to companies in the metal industry. It employs about 50 people. One of their ambitions during the last years has been to “climb higher in the food chain” – i.e. to focus more on activities that includes systems that are being supplied in the network. The company has grown during the last years and focuses now more and more the upcoming years on renewing the activities in the whole supply network of its buyers and competitors. New innovative solutions

are central in their field of business and technical solutions and important part of their competitive advantage. These solutions are often created together with their customers. The manager mentions that the ambition the upcoming years is to develop the competitive advantage together with their suppliers and customers. This will be done by educating the personnel further and choosing the right machinery. In order to stay in this business innovation is needed; better quality, larger volumes and automation. What he wants to see in current and future suppliers is that they look at the product in an innovative way. They also need to understand his company and the future needs, they need to educate themselves, they need to commit and they need to be eager to cooperate. He does not see a problem in keeping the core competence in the company, though many tasks are being bought and outsourced. They still keep in house the things that they are best at doing. He sees the stress as the biggest threat to innovative thinking in his own job and company, and difficulties in finding new personnel when he would like to grow. Having economical problems, too big work load and lots of issues with the personnel is hard to combine with innovative and creative thinking. When he has the opportunity he travels and in this way he can find new thoughts and renew his business.

The fourth company produces engines for the global market and it employs 17.000 people. The interviewed specialist has been working for fifteen years with audits of suppliers and cooperation partners of this multinational firm. This includes finding the right quality product package to the right price and in the right time. As the competitive advantage this specialist sees their ability to deliver a product package that includes development possibilities. This includes the know-how, it is unique and it includes both the buyer's and the supplier's design and solutions. The suppliers' part of the deal is to keep up with the development and they need to deliver to the right price, right quality and in the right time.

Finding new solutions and keeping up with the global competition is in both the supplier's and buyers' interest. By renewing old ways of working the companies can stay ahead and keep their place as the market leader. Innovation and patents are an important part of their business. New innovative solutions are central in their field of business and technical solutions important part of their competitive advantage. These solutions are often created together with their suppliers. What they need to get from their suppliers in the future is loyalty and that they treat the company in a unique way, though they deliver to their competitors. The suppliers also need to talk the same

language. Cooperating with suppliers does not make it harder to keep the core competence. The suppliers are definitely seen as a source of innovation. They understand where they as a customer is heading and they try to deliver according to this. In order to renew themselves for the future they need to listen and get feedback from the customer. This will help them build their core competence and competitive advantage the upcoming years together with their cooperation partners. In order to succeed with this they need to communicate and talk the same language. Having the capability to understand change is also important and to be able to create tailor-made solutions.

The fifth company is a law firm. The firm has 150 employees. The manager describes their business as a continuous chance of renewal and learning, depending on which path they choose. One important part of renewal is the management of the company culture. A central issue is the recruitment and selection process of new employees. The competitive advantage lies far in the market position and company culture the company has created. A source of creativity and innovation in their area is often to be found in the cross cultural meetings and the waves of globalization are seen as a benefit for the business.

They can choose and select carefully and learn something new from their cooperation partners or they can choose a partner or customer where they do not learn anything new. Every meeting and deal is a chance of renewal. Creative thinking is a central part of their products and with the help of their customers this firm can cover the market and what is going on at the moment. With the help of their customers they can themselves develop in a very competitive business world where the creative thinking and the experience base is part of the very important competitive advantage. An important part of their competitive advantage is to come up with new solutions and advice to their customers and creative thinking helps out when time is also an important issue. The competence is shown through the employees ambition and ability to understand the customer and their problems. The cooperation partners are selected by their position and competence in their area. Individual renewal is built in as a conscious carrier plan that is individually built up with the employee himself or herself as a changing career path as the years go by. As a central aspect in terms of keeping up the competitive advantage of the firm is keeping the sensitive ability to listen to the customer and develop with them. As a critical part of

keeping the competitive advantage is also to be able to keep the best employees the upcoming years.

The sixth company employs about 600 persons and sells meat to private customers. The managing director describes their brand as the most important thing in their competitive advantage. Their brand is built on values and good local raw material. They also see themselves as masters in their field in terms of meat technology, and product development – as masters in more than one field. This is their biggest strength. They have outsourced several tasks and activities, but not their core business, like producing the product in itself. This is because of hygiene reasons.

They have created themselves a position on the market as a company that is focusing and selling products that are produced in a way as transparent as possible. The management puts a lot of efforts into information to customers about their efforts in working and producing meat in an ethical way. The meat market that they are active on has been filled with several scandals, describing how animals are treated during upbringing, production and transport and in a way that has made consumers react. Several producers have been described in the media and discussions have followed on how animals should and should not be treated during the time they are brought up before they are sold for slaughter. The consumers want to know that the meat they eat is produced in a good and ethical way. And this message has been built up during the years that have followed the scandals that have occurred in their field of business. The company has renewed their way of working with their contract producers and in their way of marketing their products. They focus their message on the values that they want to bring forward externally to the customers and what they want to communicate internally to all their employees through the strategy. Communication externally to their cooperation partners is mentioned as one of their biggest challenges that he mentions. He also sees the renewal of the business together with their suppliers and producers as one of the most important issues in the future. They focus a lot on renewing themselves and the products for the upcoming years. For this you need new resources, locally and abroad and being able to benefit from the globalization. Challenges they see is in terms of getting personnel and with the right education and motivation. In terms of cooperation partners (2500 farmers) they need to see wide competence and value within the cooperation, commitment and willingness and that they take well care of their animals. The manager sees

innovation and creativity as very important. For this several people is also needed. Central in all this are still the important values that should be visible in the whole company – values that connect the whole company and its cooperation partners.

The seventh company is a vehicle manufacturer. It has 35 employees. It sells its vehicles all over the world, but Europe is the main market. The development of the products in this industry is expensive and times of deliveries are long. The managing director mentions creativity as very central in their business. As their competitive advantage the manager and owner mentions their long experience in this field, good personnel and the ability to deliver quality. As another competitive advantage he sees the creativity imbedded in the product and its image. As something he wants to see in their current and future suppliers and cooperation partners is a willingness to provide service. He also sees it as difficult to keep the core competence in the cooperation with their suppliers. He would prefer to keep it in house – but of practical and economical reasons is it now outsourced. In order to stay creative as a manager he travels in order to get new impressions. In order to keep the competitive advantage and to develop it in the future he needs people to test his thoughts on. They do not need to be outside the company – can be anywhere.

The eight company sells technical design services, training and automation with the help of different technical solutions and it employs three people. They aim at becoming the biggest and best in the market and they want to help to create an enjoyable working environment and homes. As their core competence the managing director and owner mentions knowledge within technical solutions for lightning and how light is important for wellbeing. Their cooperation partners support them in terms of products and special knowledge and activities. In this cooperation it's very important that the personal chemistry works. Sometimes this works, sometimes not. They have outsourced some functions before, but not anymore.

The company sells light solutions that are combined with other systems in the premises of the companies or houses. The light solutions are for example combined with heating, water or ventilation in order to create certain atmosphere or to save costs for the customer. Finding solutions for the customer is a central part of their daily work. Finding good solutions and also quite fast is an important part of retaining and developing their competitive advantage. Working together with selected companies as their partners is an important part of their business. As a

result of this ideas and knowledge is created in the network that they create together and part of their business is often to find new solutions to new challenges and tricky solutions. As sources of innovation the managing director mentions peace and quiet. The ideas though develop together with the partners and in order to develop these you need time together. He definitely feels that that their cooperation partners make them more creative. In terms of the future they would still need to develop their communication– they have the products and the technique.

The ninth company

This company is a growing company within the gym sector. In the company there are two VPs, which are also owners of the company. The company has been in business since the last decade and the business has grown steadily. To the customers they provide gym services, exercise, lead aerobics, dance classes and feel good services in general. It is also possible to use solarium and to use massage chairs and to use the services of health instructors. If the customers have special health problems they can use the services of external services which are provided at the premises of the gym. These contracts are renegotiated regularly from suppliers. Other type of cooperation is also cooperation with local stores that provide special discounts to the members of the gym.

The company describes their position on the market as the fact that they were the first ones on the market and they are now the biggest. The competitive advantage is according to them to be found in the company culture. Their personnel and their knowledge within the field is one of their best competitive strength. Their values are also very important and these the whole company builds on. One of their current projects is to improve the knowledge flows between persons leaving the company over to the ones that are staying in the company. This knowledge is of great importance to the company and essential for keeping the competitive advantage.

Among their cooperation partners they look for the same thinking. With these they work up loyalty programs which guide them in their cooperation. What they especially look for among their cooperation partners in the future is if they will be able to match the future customer segments. They also plan for creating a more international image – this because of the fact that an increasing amount of their customers are coming from abroad.

When the managers are asked to describe what helps them think creatively they mention trade fairs but also their own personnel as creative input. These are partly students from local schools

and these young individuals continuously provide the managers and owners with new ideas. In terms of the future the managers think that their customers will be an even bigger source of creativity.

The tenth company

The boat business is described by this manager as a very competitive. They build boats that are built up with the help of their customers' dreams. All their boats are tailor made and finding creative and innovative solutions are an important part of their competitive advantage. The company employs 150 people. It is situated in a boat building cluster where boats have been built for a long time. Their competitive advantage is according to their manager the boat building skills and how to renew this. This knowledge combined with their boat building experts. From their cooperation partners they buy in all technical solutions.

Finding good cooperation partners is not always easy. They may understand the technique, but not always the soul and identity of the company. To some extent these cooperation partners need to be renewed, other partners they continue working with for many years.

The manager in this company is during this year of their business very concerned with the development of the company structure. The thoughts of increased outsourcing are a continuous one, but how it should be developed is right now under consideration. The company buys the design of their product from suppliers, but most of the manufacturing is done at the company premises. The cooperation with the suppliers and the customers is of great value and it helps the company to keep their competitive strength in their position as one of the world's leading manufacturers of boats in their niche. The suppliers and customers help them to increase their creative capacity as they together can map all of what is available in terms of available materials, design and technique right now. Combining these in new creative ways helps the boat manufacturer to expand the creative horizon and after the boat is delivered the company again has a new competitive position on the market. In the creative process they can develop their ideas for products and processes. The choice of customers is also of great importance as this is a direct proof of which values they want to stress in their marketing activities when choosing who

to deliver to. Communicating value is becoming more and more important part of their brand in the industry and in terms of their competitive position. Their values are the same as their brand.

The results of the study analyses different fields of business and their ways of renewal through creative thinking, innovation and values. This output can be seen in a variety of products, ways of working and thinking. As a threat for creative thinking is mentioned stress, lack of personnel in general and especially good personnel. This can be seen as threats to the managers' individual creativity and also the creativity of the company as it personified in him, or her - often as an owner of the companies in the study.

Outsourcing is done in various degrees in the different companies. In the bigger companies in the metal industry outsourcing was seen as a natural step and certain areas were kept in house. In one of the smaller companies the managing director described that the company strategy would include more in sourcing in the next years. He felt that the companies had leaked too much competence to the cooperation partners the last years and a logical step would now be to work more separately. He also concluded that they had also received a lot of new competence from their close partner, but their own core competence now needed to be further developed as a part of this strategic choice and renewal.

The companies mentioned often how much they learned from their cooperation partners and suppliers. This was not mentioned as a very conscious thing among the smaller company but among the bigger companies this was even a part of their strategy and choice of path in their business choices.

The informants mention their cooperation partners and suppliers as a source of creativity, innovation and solutions and an opportunity for learning. One of the informants also mention the fact that working together with their selected cooperation partners is so much fun – and this is seen as an important part of their competitive advantage. The work goes smoothly forward and creative solutions are found as a natural way to work forward and tasks are not forced forward. The future success for the companies lies very much in the successful or unsuccessful way of handling the cooperative relationships they have to the outside world. The cooperation partners are often selected carefully based on what is mentioned as “a way to think”, trustworthiness and

same values. In the study the companies mention depending on their field of business creativity and innovation means different things content wise.

Conclusions

In today's business world companies are connected with other companies where the dyads create networks and supply chains. The companies become connected in new ways, not only technically, but it is also a fact that they strengthen or weaken each other like the strongest or weakest link that they are. The companies can strengthen each others' competitive advantage or not during different times of interaction. They can also organize and plan for their creativity if they are aware of what is important to stress or avoid in their management of business activities.

<i>Threats of creativity</i>	<i>Sources of creativity</i>
*stress and lack of time	*own personnel
*finding good personnel – recruitment	*cooperation partners
*stability	*customers
*fear of losing competence	*suppliers
*lack of inspiration	*travelling
*misunderstanding among cooperation partners	*peace and quiet
	*learning from cooperation partners

One thing that was mentioned as one important part of their future and part of their renewal by several managers was *the importance of values* in the company. This was mentioned as a very important part of the competitive advantage of the firm. Three managers mentioned it as an important piece of the brand. The values were also seen as an important part of the companies'

strengths to build upon the next years in their development. This was something three managers especially mentioned as something to build further on in their organizational culture.

The results of the study show that the interviewed informants are aware of how the cooperation partners build and renew their business with the creative sparkle that a customer or a supplier can mean for their business. These partners often cooperate year after year and they build up each other's strengths with the same way of thinking, the same values and understanding that build the company's competitive advantage or by innovating common products and solutions for the market. In today's business world smaller company units means more possibilities to cooperate, outsource, buy, select and identify opportunities and pitfalls. Managing the companies' way through the business jungle of today is not easy and the manager need to know the true spirit of the company in order to know on what to build the competitive advantage. This means identifying the weaknesses and strengths of the company and its business of today. It also means that the manager should know what the company and its employees need for their renewal of their businesses. Finding new ways of renewing one's own thoughts is also important for the managing directors as individuals. Visiting fairs, taking courses and having free time without stress were ways of renewals that the managing directors mentioned as a way of renewing their own ways of thinking. Taking time outside their own field of business was mentioned as a way of getting out of the "tunnel thinking" of their own business – as a way of renewal. Inspiring others was one of the tasks that were mentioned as the task of the management in terms of creativity and this inspiration was often searched for outside their own business. Another task of management was to create the frames and atmosphere for creativity. And very often the inspiration was provided by a cooperation partner. Selecting cooperation partners carefully in order to always learn something new and being able to work creatively was mentioned as one of the bigger firms strategy – this as an example that a company has a choice in selecting a conscious path of renewal – or not.

Further research could focus more on the dyadic relationship itself and its renewal. The following interviews in the projects will include interviews with cooperation partners of the companies in the first round of interviews. This is in order to describe more the dynamics and depth of the creativity in the dyadic cooperation process.

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