LESSONS LEARNT FROM START-UP STRATEGIZING: IDENTITY CRISIS AND RECOVERY OF SMALL SOFTWARE FIRMS

Sari Laari-Salmela[1], Tuija Mainela[2], Vesa Puhakka[3]
University of Oulu, Oulu Business School,
Department of Management and International Business

[1]corresponding author, P.O. Box 4600, FIN-90014 University of Oulu, Finland tel. +358 8 553 2595, sari.salmela@oulu.fi
[2]tuija.mainela@oulu.fi
[3]vesa.puhakka@oulu.fi

Abstract Many of the software start-ups commence with business models based on subcontracting, customer-tailored software and/or selling the expertise in a limited number of relationships in regional networks. They have often been established via different types of spin-offs, or might even represent quasi-outsourcing strategy by the parent, and, as a result, are highly dependent on their typically large customer organizations. Symbiotic relationships offer security but also pose challenges to strategizing, especially at times of disengagement by a client. In the start-up, the firms have created a specific network identity based on their early relationships but, sometimes very soon, should be able to strategically redirect. We focus on the question how network identity is intertwined with strategizing and strategy formation of the small software firms over time. We emphasize the viewpoint of an individual strategist, and therefore build on the concept of perceived network identity, that is, socially structured individual cognition about who the organization is in the light of its network connections. We studied four small software firms and combined multiple case study with grounded theory methodology. Our findings suggest that strategizing in network context requires managing five identity-related and interconnected contradictions. Becoming aware of the ways boundaries have been drawn as well as the basic assumptions and beliefs behind the strategic practices may help managers to re-consider their firm's identification with the network.

Keywords: network identity, organizational identity, strategizing, boundary drawing, identification, software start-up

INTRODUCTION

From an industrial network perspective, interaction lies in the core of all firm activities. In business-to-business markets firms are tightly interconnected through different activity links and resource ties, due to which traditional notion of strategic planning has not been considered very useful (e.g., Gadde et al., 2003). Strategic development is tied to the firm's position in the network and the pursuits to change it by the process of strategizing.

This is evident also in the case of small software firms that have unique characteristics differentiating them from their bigger counterparts. Start-ups become tightly connected to their clients as the software produced is tailored not only to meet the requirements of a single buyer, but they also operate on business models based on selling the expertise. In the start-up phase, the relationships the actor builds define the firm to the core - not only strategy-wise but also identity-wise. However, as long as there is no need for change or outside force majeur to change, the symbiotic relationship with bigger parent or client firm positions small companies as children. Identity-constructive questions like 'who are we', 'where are we' and 'where should we go' remain tied to their parents' strategies. In the times of radical change, disengagement by the parent leaves the small firms drifting without a clear sense of direction. This state could also be defined as an adolescence identity crisis of a firm, a period of self-doubt and active questioning about one's definition of self (as in the theory of psychosocial development by Erikson, 1959). The options in resolving this crisis are to either find another parent to which to cling to, or to reach maturity by developing strategies and identity of their own. The firms need to become start-ups again, re-defining their business and relationships through restart strategies.

The concept of network identity has been coined to define the distinct identity that a firm obtains by its relationships to other actors (Huemer, 2004; Anderson, Håkansson, & Johanson, 1994; Håkansson & Snehota, 199; Johanson & Mattsson, 1992). Identity amalgamates certain strategic choices made early on. On the other hand, identity change can also be triggered by strategizing activities (Gioia et al., 2000) when the firm reconsiders the choices made. Even though identity has been considered something relatively stable over time (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985), due to the dynamic nature of business networks, network identity may change as new relationships are built (Anderson et al., 1994).

According to Huemer et al. (2013: 1112), contemporary research within and beyond industrial network tradition has not sufficiently studied the interdependence of organizational identities and activities. These are often equated, even though asking 'what are we doing' might provide a different understanding than asking 'who we are'. They present 'organizational identities in networks' approach to complement the studies made about network identities. As this approach bridges the internal and external appraisal of identities, it is adopted in the present study as well.

This paper builds on previous work from both within and outside the IMP tradition by studying network identity in the light of change as an antecedent and outcome of strategizing. We aim to understand how strategizing of the firms and identification to their relative networks in the start-up phase define their network identities, and how this identity then affects strategizing later on. Earlier research has covered network identity in stable and change conditions, but the relationship with strategizing in network context has received scarce attention in industrial marketing research. The research described in this paper contributes to that body of knowledge. What makes this study significant is that in contrast to

traditional investigations of both network identity and network strategy, our research considers the mechanism that explains strategizing within a network context. The research question addressed by our paper is: *How do firms strategize in startup identity crisis within network context?*

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we present a summary of the relevant literature, including the theoretical lens for this study. In the third section, the research setting and methodology is explained. The fourth section presents the findings of our GT analysis. The fifth section presents a theoretical integration of our findings with the chosen theoretical lens for this study. We then conclude with a brief summary of our contributions and suggestions for future research.

STRATEGIZING IN NETWORK CONTEXT: BOUNDARY DRAWING AND IDENTIFICATION

As the present study was conducted partly as a grounded theory study, the purpose of the literature review was not to impose concepts on the data. However, we did adopt a theoretical lens for our study in order to use it for theoretical integration of our GT analysis and compare our findings with this framework. (McAllin, 2003; Urquhart et al., 2010.) Therefore, a literature review of organizational identity and network identity is presented and the framework of Huemer et al. (2004) and Huemer et al. (2013) is used and further developed in the discussion section.

Identity and identification

Identity research has been conducted on both the individual level (e.g., Lindgren & Wahlin, 2001; Alvesson, 2001) and the organizational level (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). During the recent years, researches within IMP tradition have shown interest towards studying identity on the network level. Identity has been seen to play an important role in differentiating between firm's various relationships, and providing guidance about how to behave within them (Huemer et al., 2004; Huemer, 2004; Öberg et al., 2011; Bonner, Kim, & Cavusgil, 2005).

Organizational identity is defined as individual-level cognition about 'who the organization is' (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail 1994; Harquail & King 2003; Haslan & Elleners 2005). This definition covers two different concepts that are described to be like two wings of a bird: collective organizational identity and perceived or construed organizational identity (Corley et al. 2006; Harquail & King 2003). The original Albert & Whetten (1985) description of organizational identity maintained that the identity referents are central, distinctive, and enduring. Whetten (2006) has also added a description of social, relational, and personal identity attribute-sets to the definition that together constitute a composite identity. These are 1) adopted social norms, social categories, and comparable group memberships; 2) established ties with organizations and institutions; and 3) distinguishing organizational practices, competencies, and traits, including organization-specific attributes of members, products and services. According him, a properly organized/identified organization includes selections from all three parts of this menu and that the logical structure of the menu guides the formation of a coherent organization/organizational identity.

Especially the relational aspect of organizational identity has drawn attention of the industrial marketing scholars. The concept of *network identity* has been coined to refer to the distinct

identity that a firm obtains by its relationships to other actors (Huemer, 2004; Anderson, Håkansson, & Johanson, 1994; Håkansson & Snehota, 1995; Johanson & Mattsson, 1992). Gadde & Håkansson (2001) state that identity of a firm is determined by its position in the structure of actors, resources and activities in the network and therefore sets the conditions for which actors are perceived as valuable counterparts. Anderson et al. (1994: 4) conceptualized a firm's network identity as the "attractiveness of a firm as an exchange partner due to its unique set of connected relations with other firms, its links to their activities, and its ties with their resources". This definition has also been referred to as *strategic network identity*.

Huemer et al. (2013) have presented the notion of '*organizational identities in networks*'. With this they refer to the 'network paradoxes' (Håkansson & Ford, 2002): identities depend on interplay between internal features and successful control, and the internal features of others and their successful influence. Their approach combines the organizational view on identity as inside-out approach, and the outside-in approach advocated by the network research. Both are relevant, as actor can and must have a certain control over its own identity development, but an organization's identity development is subject to interplay between the features of the focal actor and the actor features of others (Huemer et al, 2013). This is the approach adopted in this paper as well.

Identification, on the other hand, has been defined as a person's sense of oneness or belongingness with an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Based on this definition, the notion of network identification is perceived as an organization's identification with actors in its surrounding network. It is a continuous process whereby "actors simultaneously imagine, visualize, and experience identities depending on the boundaries that are drawn, the meanings that are understood, and the set of relationships that are acted upon". (Huemer et al., 2004: 64.)

The original Albert & Whetten (1985) description of organizational identity maintained that the identity referents are central, distinctive, and enduring. However, Anderson et al. (1994) have described how relations impact on the network identity of a company, and if there are changes in relationships, also identity is subject to change. Also Whetten (2006), while revisiting the original paper, notes that enduring definitional standard does not stipulate that only very old organizational features will be experienced by current members as central and distinguishing features. An organization's commitments are made "irreversible" by the degree to which they are made central to an organization's policies, procedures, and practices (Selznick, 1957).

Other researchers have expanded this notion of endurance and state that some organizational identities are more flexible, less central, and even less distinctive than originally defined (Corley et al. 2000; Gioia et al. 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Since organizational identity is a socially constructed, self-referential belief, similar to all forms of identity (Ashforth & Mael 1996), it is subject to influence and change over time.

Like organizational change in general, identity change is not always triggered by events in high-velocity environments but also by managerial activities in envisioning future changes and preparing for them – through proactive strategizing (Gioia et al. 2000). Gioia et al. (2000) have suggested that the management of instability in identity might be the actual strategic concern for organizations. While certain elements of identity provide the necessary security for change, organization would benefit from an increased capacity for change that the managing of instability would create.

In this study, we focus on identities as the relational aspect or attribute-set of organizational identity (in organization studies) and follow the organizational identity in networks approach by Huemer et al. (2009). The other aspects of organizational identities are present in the analysis, but the focus is on the 'network identities' and their dynamics as we want to understand how the stability and change in identity affect strategizing.

Boundary drawing as strategic activity

Strategizing in network context is about making choices concerning relationships and networking, and strategic change implies major changes in these relationships (Mattsson, 1988). Strategy formation is a combination of deliberate and emergent sides of strategy: a combination of management activities whose objectives are to cause changes, and that are reactions to the changes in the relationships (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998). Thus, the network view on strategy highlights the choices concerning relationships the firm is building and maintaining. However, as in the case of identity, the network paradoxes (Håkansson & Ford, 2002) apply also to strategy: strategic choices affect relationships, but the relationships influence the firm's strategic choices. In extant literature, strategy has been connected to identity through decision-making (Ashforth & Mael 1996; Dutton & Dukerich 1991; Reger et al. 1994). Identity relates to how experiences are interpreted and understood, and how strategies are developed, chosen and evaluated (Huemer, 2004).

Another challenge of strategizing in network context relates to the 'fuzzier view' of networks advocated by IMP approach (e.g., Johanson & Mattsson, 1992). As actors may view the network, its boundaries and the nature of its exchange relationships in quite different ways, none of which need coincide with the possible description provided by an analyst who is not an actor (Huemer et al., 2004), the nature of the network is indeterminate. The way actors draw boundaries denotes strategic choices. Boundaries also denote a starting point for identification. The way firms imagine and understand boundaries of oneself and others, "affects firm's identification *of* other actors as well as its possible identification *with* them" (Huemer et al., 2004).

The idea of the *boundary* has been very closely associated with the idea of 'organization' (Hernes & Paulsen, 2003). The identity of a firm is defined by its organizational boundary which dictates who are (and who are not) members of the organization (Huemer et al., 2013). However, boundaries exist in different levels, and organizations operate within multiple sets of co-existing boundaries (Hernes, 2004). Hernes (2004), drawing on the distinction of spaces in social science by Lefebvre (1991) and institutional mechanisms by Scott (1995), distinguishes mental, social, and physical boundaries. Mental boundaries relate to core ideas and concepts that are central and particular to the organization; social relate to identity and social bonding tying the group or organization together; and physical relate to formal rules and physical structures regulating human action and interaction in the group of organization. According to him, change processes in organizations are about creating, moving, or consolidating boundaries. Although boundaries are not static but under constant change, some boundaries can be relatively stable whereas others change more rapidly.

Although identity is mentioned as a separate concept within social boundaries, these boundaries as a whole can be seen as overlapping with the identity referents presented by Whetten (2006) discussed earlier, suggesting that boundary drawing and identity, in fact, go

hand in hand. In conclusion, the way organizations, and managers as individuals, identify themselves and the way boundaries are drawn are seen as interdependent, ongoing processes held together by, and changing, network identity (interpreted through the approach of organizational identities in networks) is described in Figure 1. According to the network paradoxes, both processes affect, and are affected by the relationships the organization has. As with strategizing and organizing, they follow each other the way 'the left foot follows the right one' (Mintzberg, 1990; Pye & Pettigrew, 2006). Hence, the core of strategizing in network context lies in the way the managers are able to (1) become aware of identity referents and the way boundaries are drawn both mentally, socially, and physically; (2) create, move, or consolidate these boundaries; and (3) manage the resulting instability in identity. In this study, the processes of strategy formation (involving strategizing as the deliberate forming of strategy) and identity formation are seen to go hand in hand, and where boundary drawing and identification are seen as intertwined, practical activities of strategy formation.
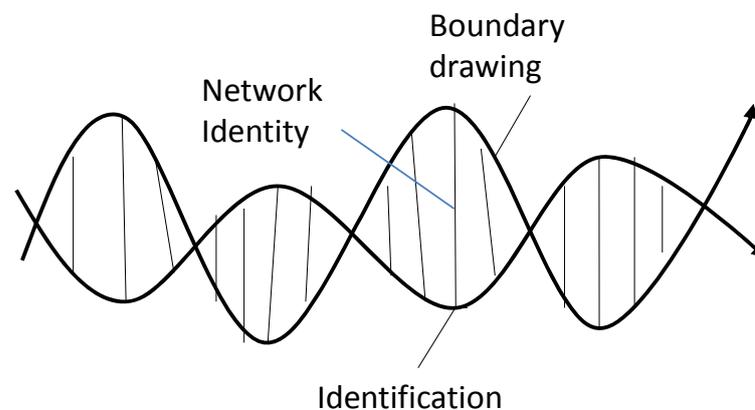

Figure 1. Boundary drawing and identification as intertwined, practical activities of strategy formation (adapted from the idea of Pye& Pettigrew, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, multiple case study as a research strategy has been adopted and combined with grounded theory analysis. Multiple methods used in data collection include in-depth interviews, analysis of archive materials, and observations. Grounded theory is used mainly as the method of data analysis but is reflected into theory building too. As there is little existing theory on network identities in strategizing, grounded theory was considered useful as it enabled a broad exploration of antecedents and outcomes of network identities in the process of strategizing.

Data collection

Four small software companies took part in this study as each of them represent a different form of identity crisis. Two of them were 'traditional' software firms, established on subcontracting for one big client; and two of them served different industries (dairy and forestery). Case descriptions are presented in the next section. Data were gathered for each company, covering the entire time period since their inception. The main data source was interviews. A total of 22 interviews within the four case companies were conducted. The first round of interviews (first four themes) was done in 2006 and the second round in 2008. The interviewees were the CEOs of the firms, the long-time employee and successor of the CEO in Alpha, and the COO in Beta. In Gamma, there was no other person that could have been interviewed. After the research project had ended, the representative of the new owner and the

new CEO of both Beta and Gamma were interviewed in 2011. Delta had already merged with Epsilon, so only former founder and CEO of Delta was interviewed.

The CEOs were interviewed five times and the others once. Each interview session had a specific theme, starting with 'business start-up' covering topics relating to the start-up phase of the firm, and continuing with 'managing the business' relating to strategic issues and development of the firm as a whole, 'renewal of business' covering innovation-related topics, and 'biography' about the personal lives of the managers. The second round of interviews concentrating on the theme of 'strategy formation' and this was discussed also with the other two interviewees. Length of interviews varied between 90 and 120 minutes. In addition to the primary interviews, the data of the research project as a whole consist of informal interviews and discussions (with managers, employees, and partners of the companies), participative observations in different occasions (like seminars, training sessions, informal visits and coffee breaks), and other collaboration activities. Researchers were also involved in the board activities of the local collaboration network association the companies were members of.

Also secondary data, such as memos of interviewees, web sites, and sales materials were utilized. Although a lot of the secondary material is informal, it has enabled the researchers to gain an understanding of the managers' actions and interactions as seen by others. In Alpha, the researchers have talked with all the key persons (5), individually and together; in Beta, both key persons and individual software developers have taken part in joint activities (meetings, seminars, trainings), and their views have been discussed. Alpha and Beta are co-operating, and they talk about each other in the interviews. In Gamma, the current and former employees have been informally interviewed, and Alpha's and Beta's managers have talked about the developments of the company. In the association's meetings the companies' activities have been discussed. Additional data sources include Beta's key partner's managers' and their common key customer users' (4) interviews. In former Delta, only the key person was interviewed due to further lack of access.

Data analysis

Only interview transcripts were coded. Secondary material was then reflected on the findings from the primary data. The data was analyzed with the help of QSR N'Vivo software. The study began with analysis of the interviews with a general focus on strategizing. The cases were first analyzed separately to gain a contextualized understanding of why things happened the way they happened. First, open coding was used and it was done either paragraph by paragraph or line by line, depending on the data source and which one seemed more useful at each point. Soon the coding started to build around identity, and as open codes were sorted to selective codes, identity formed as the core category. Only those categories that were connected to the core category in a significant way were included (Glaser, 1978). These were; perception of the network ('where are we'); strategy picture ('what do we do'); cultural ways-of-doing ('how we do things'); and purpose ('why we do what we do').

However, at this point, we used the concepts derived from the non-committal literature review and decided to conduct analysis also in a cross-case, cross-interviewee fashion by using boundary drawing and identification as 'the main' selective codes. As a result, we identified the commonalities between the separate cases. In that sense, the analytical process is more abductive one than a pure grounded theory analysis, containing features of systematic combining (cf. Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Therefore, the study is more about theory development than about theory building, although some theorizing based on the relationships

with the selective codes is done and discussed in the light of the chosen theoretical framework.

CASE DESCRIPTIONS

Alpha

The story of Alpha started in an ADP department (automatic data processing) of a local dairy. The ADP team saw a business opportunity in servicing other dairies' systems, but their management did not agree but was cutting down the ADP personnel instead. The team decided to establish a company of their own in order to maintain people's jobs in the area. As a start-up, the business strategy was based on the competence and knowledge of the customers gained while working for the dairy. They took customers also from other fields they had connections with through their earlier or existing relationships, and tried also the sales of hardware and office equipment, but the main business remained with the dairies. As Alpha started as a sort-of-a-spin-off of the mother dairy (not supported by the mother, though), they have had difficulties in identifying themselves as an IT company. Their business understanding and relationships come from the dairy business, and this has made them unable to relate themselves to the wider IT sector. They have spread their business through the existing customers and have tried to productize projects made with individual customers but as the dairy industry has declined due to industry-wide structural changes, this is not enough anymore. They need to re-identify themselves and think of how to become a start-up once again, creating a 'restart strategy'.

Beta

The key person in Beta (hereinafter MB) is a serial entrepreneur who, after selling his earlier business to large IT company and staying working for it for a while, started to doubt the future direction of that company. He was originally working for a large company and became an entrepreneur since he wanted to avoid 'large companies' ways of doing things'. Through a subcontracting contract with a big client he decided to start a new company. The plan was that Beta will service the client, and after MB would have managed to grow the business of Beta, the client would buy the company. However, the client left Beta suddenly a couple of years later. Since the whole business was depending on the client, MB had to rethink the whole firm and its purpose– in a way, to restart Beta. Customers were searched for through the entrepreneur's relationships, and product development was also seen to be one option. Through a local OEM manufacturer the new direction was found within mobile vehicle information systems, and Beta gained a new identity as an information systems provider for that particular niche.

Gamma

The manager of Gamma (MG) used to work for the local paper company as an office manager at the forest department. The national forest and paper industry was changing throughout the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Also this paper company was merged with another large paper company. The working place of MG would have moved to another town, so MG made a decision not to leave but to establish a company, based on the management system developed earlier for the forest department. As a start-up, the firm was tightly identified as a management system provider for the paper companies. In the beginning of the 1990s, the mergers in the industry continued and soon there were only three large companies. For

Gamma, this meant losing all its main customers practically during the same year. The entrepreneur decided not to give up but to win these newly formed companies over once again. He succeeded in the task and was able to maintain firm's operations with the remaining few large customers. Instead of any restart strategies or identity crisis, Gamma continued to business as usual. The operation principles and the business of Gamma still correspond to the original idea: the main thing is to keep the company profitable, and since the product development, and the development of the company in general, takes place only in customer projects, there's no need to dwell on in strategic thinking. MG has recognized the decline of the market and is aware of the map applications that would offer new business opportunities. However, he has decided to leave that to the follower as he is about to retire.

Delta

Already as a young student, the manager-to-become of Delta (MD) worked for a large telecommunication company and after finishing his studies wanted to return to his home town. Together with his employer's managers that were responsible for subcontracting he negotiated a way the work could be continued within his own firm. Delta was established in summer 2000 and already in the autumn the firm employed four people and had gained also other customers. The business was based mainly on subcontracting and service providing, but after year and a half they started product development. The company grew steadily, and in 2007, Delta merged with a large company, Epsilon. As a start-up, the entrepreneur personified the company and his ways-of-doing and thinking, vision and ambition, largely formed the identity and guided the development. Although they didn't have a clear vision of what to do in the beginning but the business idea came directly from the customer, they have avoided the trap of being totally customer-led, and their commitment to innovativeness and a passionate way of working has always been strongly their own. This has been visible in the way new ideas have been welcomed and their presentation encouraged, and the operations relied not so much on formal systems but on co-operation and 'we'-spirit, have a joint mission as a company. Humane aspects of decisions were taken into consideration, and they have aimed at trust-based operation in every aspect: in employer-employee relationships and in vendor-customer relationships.

RESULTS

In what follows, we present the results of the analysis through the concepts derived from extant literature. We examined the identity crisis and re-start strategies of the firms as well as their implications on boundary drawing and identification both as antecedents and outcomes of the crisis. As a conclusion, we present five contradictions the management of which is central for strategizing in network context.

Identity crisis and re-start strategies

A strong sense of 'us' as an answer to the question 'who we are' seems to be a prerequisite for understanding what kind of choices the firm might have, and where network-wise those choices could be realized. In the start-up phase, firms draw boundaries, mentally and socially, according to the way they build their business. They identify with the chosen network with a certain position, and their network identity then is about who they are in the light of their network connections. However, as networks are inherently dynamic: relationships are ended and new ones created, actors leave and new ones enter, also the identity has to have flexibility built inside. It is not necessarily the individual relationships –even though they might be

profound ones in the beginning – that define the firm on a network level. It might be more about the whole combination of different attribute-sets of which the identity is composed and which are affected by different networks as a whole. Let us consider the individual firm examples:

Alpha has gradually become lost due to their home industry's decline. Dairy business is so distinct and separate from other fields that shifts in boundaries within the network is not sufficient. They would need active, radical re-drawing. The other aspects of identity, such as local networks and group memberships; competences; and distinguishing organizational practices give some support. Nevertheless they are not sufficient without a network they could feel fitting in, through group memberships, or through customers and partners. They feel like they are drifting without knowing which direction to take and they do not consider themselves as idea-rich or innovative.

> *"Q: How do your customers affect your firm's doings?*
> *A: It's, they do affect.*
> *Q: How?*
> *A: Completely. They aff-, they control.*
> *Q: In the leash, is that so?*
> *A: Yeah, like a ram in a tether. The ram is led in the leash allright."(Alpha)*

> *"There always has to be some knock that makes you think that this thing has to be taken seriously into consideration … As people we love comfortable life so much that we should have those kinds of idea men that would be going and developing all the time … We are more like hard-working people that develop when they are forced to … Of course we aim at [development] but if I say it directly as it is, we haven't [done that much]." (Alpha)*

Hence, they try to find suitable partners who could lead the way and give them the needed direction. Their strategic activity for crisis resolution could be summed up as a "search for a strategic partner".

Beta faced a breach in identity when the client left them suddenly. However, identification with other parts of the business network (local networks & regional collaboration) combined with their strong sense of identity from other sides (local networks & group memberships; competences, distinguishing organizational practices) helped them to recover from the loss and actively find new ways to draw boundaries, i.e. to define what we do and what we do not do; and who we are and who we are not.

> *"When we are at the margins of the network, we may be subcontractor's subcontractor or whatever. And sometimes we can do work directly to the customer, like we have also that kinds of customers or clients that when they face business fluctuation and a project ends quite suddenly, those guys almost fall into our lap from that project….We tried to find … larger clients that could have the continuity and … that would back each other up in a way that when the others have a more quiet period, the others could have more demand." (Beta)*

Through this kind of strategizing, Beta found a new niche within mobile vehicle information systems and an OEM within that local strategic network. Thus, their strategic activity for crisis resolution could be summed up as a "network redefinition".

Gamma's network identity is rock-solid even though MG has himself identified the need for change. The forestry industry no longer brings sustainable business for Gamma. They have competences built around geographic information systems, and map technology would be something around which they could build their future business. However, as the manager himself is not intending to vision the new future for Gamma but leaves that to 'younger men', aiming to sell the company, the identity stays fixed. This is also reflected in the strategizing:

> "Relating to the situation of Gamma I could say that it's a quiet phase going on. That we in a way executing the past. But that [mapping of customer needs] is an issue in the future, with the next CEO." (Gamma)

Hence, they do not have any re-start strategies as they have not faced the identity crisis yet. Their strategic activity for crisis resolution could be summed up as "postponed actions".

Delta was built around its founding manager and his way of building business. As he believes in passion, continuous learning and aiming high, these are also embedded in Delta's distinctive practices. Delta has not experienced any breaches in network identity before the merger with Epsilon as the relationship with the subcontracting client has always been The One. In that sense, that part of the network has also been a strategic network, with a clear hub and identification to that network through that hub. However, due to the distinctive practices and related assumptions and beliefs, Delta has always had a clear sense of identity of its own, and MD has identified to those ways of doing as well, helping them to develop business also outside the strategic network. He has believed in proactive development instead of just following the client, and believed that this kind of acting is more valuable to the client as well.

> "There was not any innovativeness or novelty value involved [in the start-up business idea]. But after that I think that the prerequisite for the business has been the innovativeness in order to maintain these customer relationships. We cannot afford to be only as a receiving party, but we have to be able to give as well." (Delta)

Now the identity crisis results from merging to a larger firm for which the client is just one, albeit an important one, among others. This is visible also in the strategic activity for crisis resolution that could be summed up as "existing relationship advocation".

Identity is not formed only inside-out, intertwined with strategic actions, but in network context identity is built also as reflections from the images of others. Through the constant reflection of other actor's images to the perceived identity the latter changes gradually, like with Delta. Clients and other firms' appreciation made themselves realize just how great things they had been doing:

> "It was quite well how one main designer at [the Client] put it, that 'why don't you advertise that you are the leading [special technology] supplier in the world?' And I was like 'how's that', and he said 'well, [Client] is one of the leading equipment manufacturers in the world and you are doing right in the core the [special technology] for [Client], and more than what these big firms do much more in public'. It was just that we did the job quite in the dark and we ourselves did not even notice that we were quite at the top, if we think it that way. … In the same way when different companies were courting Delta I was said, by a company that was buying us, that they have done

analyses and you are one of the leading companies in Finland. And there were only 15 of us. That it comes from somewhere, I don't think he, since he was buying, he meant it. Since if he says something like that, I'll definitely raise the price, I'm not going to sell it that cheap if it's that good..." (Delta)

On the other hand, after the merger with a larger company MD started to feel worried about their image and its correspondence with their new culture. As MD was strongly identified with the customers and the wider network, he started to feel alienated from the actual organization.

"...why I say that credibility is a problem with us... there are these kinds of comments that 'what is your own will, what Epsilon wants to do for real'. Customer is asking these questions. So I think it's quite a clear sign that we are not able to show our own intent, what we want, when he says that they know that you'll do if we ask you to, but what is it that you really would like to be doing, what kind of role would you like to take in this business field for real. So I don't think we have been able to convince the customers in this matter." (Delta)

On the other hand, the perceived image of Alpha has made them feel even more alienated from their colleagues in the wider IT field. If the reflected images do not reinforce a positive identity, the firm might want to concentrate on those aspects of their activities that they feel they are more confident of and have given them positive reflections. Like in Alpha's case considering their risk-avoiding character which has, according to their interpretation, given them an "old-fashioned" image, and integrity and strong customer-orientation on the other hand:

"They [other firms], many gave us that kind of [feedback] that if you don't do these [Wap] things what are you then going to do. You don't have a future. ... We were a bit depressed at some point that we are these kind of wretched ... of course we have also had this kind of stubborn way of finding our own way. And it is visible also today in that these networking things just don't catch fire. They think we are that different. I don't think we should be that frightening, but obviously we're that strongly those ones that make their own paths. That's the stigma we have gained." (Alpha)

The external appraisal of identity has implications also on the other attribute sets defined more internally. A strong sense of 'who we are' in general, not only in the light of current business relationships with particular actors, helps with crisis resolution and re-start strategies: playing with the boundaries and giving room for innovation and learning as is the case with Beta and Delta. For Alpha, this has been more challenging. As competence, practices and social norms are always tied into some community of practice, Alpha should first be able to identify with something on a network level in order to start shifting boundaries.

Paradoxically, strong network identity may even act as a hindrance to the development of the firm, as in the case of Gamma. In their evolutionary type of strategic thinking where the choices made early on will define also the future development of the firm, the choices stay fixed even with a declining field. The firm with strong identity will go down as the locus of identification ceases to exist. Alpha represents the next phase where identity crisis is recognized and change is attempted to achieve, but newly positioning themselves to the network and re-establishing their identity has proved challenging due to the lack of

innovation. As long as the firms do what they are being told to by their clients, and not considering what they themselves want to, their network identity may be strong but the organizational identity as a whole only seemingly so. As the network identity is solely dependent on their 'parents', the firms remain as children and are heading towards identity crisis sooner or later.

Network identification in start-up and re-start strategizing

In the start-up phase, the background of the founding person or teams played an important role in determining the future direction of the firms. Beta and Delta started off as more traditional subcontracting companies tightly connected to their client, but both entrepreneurs had worked within the field of their clients already earlier. MB was a serial entrepreneur who has just sold his previous company for a larger one; MD was working for his client before setting up a firm of his own. What distinguishes them from MA and MG is the way they are first identified with the network and only second with the organization; their professional identity lies at the whole system/network level. As MB had sold his previous company, he could no longer identify with the new organization but wanted to restart the business. As Delta merged with another company, MD could no longer identify with the newly formed organization, but made a clear distinction being committed to the network: customers and partners, not the organization as such:

> *"… I'm not in that way necessarily committed [to Epsilon]… but to this network, meaning customers and others, those are the ones that I've dedicated myself to quite strongly, even at this moment, even though I'm working through Epsilon, but I'm doing it for the network. Because we have such good relationships there at the next level, I have no reason to destroy them with this. … At Epsilon, the first thing they said was that 'it's funny to hear you speak when you say that* we do'*… I meant the network. … I try to fight against it that when people are studying some problem and stating that 'it's your fault'. I said that it doesn't matter, because it's* our *fault! It's* always *our fault, all of us! Even if you do your best in your [blinded] team but there's something wrong with OEM, the system won't sell. … If the [Client] won't sell, then Epsilon won't sell, that's the fact. And it's the value of the network that defines the value of its members in a way."* (Delta)

In contrast, services provided by Alpha and Gamma to the dairy and forestry industries, respectively, were not in core of their customers' business. They were IT professionals within another industry, whereas Beta and Delta were bundling their competence with OEM manufacturers and other subcontractors. Hence, the identification with the network was profoundly different. Even though a client would abandon the firm, like in the case of Beta, due to the wider network new opportunities can be built with the help of existing relationships. Although the same thing happened with Gamma, and also a bit more slowly with Alpha, as the customer base diminished significantly, new business opportunities were not that easy to create. Their identification was made, and competence tied, to the 'wrong' industry.

Boundary drawing in start-up and re-start strategizing

The way boundaries were drawn at the start-up phase seemed to play an important role for the future strategizing. Beta and Delta were founded on subcontracting and positioned to be part of a strategic network with a certain hub firm. In that sense, the business network had clear,

set boundaries. However, due to the identification of MB and MD through connecting their own competences, assumptions and beliefs to the wider network, they saw the strategic network as well as the indeterminate nature of the network at the same time. This helped them re-drawing the boundaries when needed, both symbolically and socially. The indetermination can be seen already in their vision statements when explaining what their firms were about, and what they wanted to achieve. For Beta and Delta, it was achieving something that also others in that network would deem valuable and appreciate, and by gaining growth would be able to achieve even more. The Delta's quote below shows how the mental boundaries were around the field of specialization but not the location of operations:

> "…that we would be in this niche, in which we are operating, that we would be internationally known and leading expert organization."(Delta)

They form a contrast with Alpha and Gamma, for whom it was mostly about maintaining jobs and servicing those customers they were already familiar with through their employer. This is highlighted in Gamma's quote below where the mental and physical boundaries are set by the core idea of the business and related rules:

> "Because the customers for whom we were able to offer this service were all well-known. Everybody was well-known. So I really didn't think about it any further. At that point, if I had been cunning and clever, I would have also been thinking about future needs and been prepared and so forth. But it was all black-and-white, I was concentrating on servicing those customers from whom I was able to get money immediately." (Gamma)

As a result, the network that Alpha and Gamma were embedded in was closed with set social boundaries with the industry and its certain number of actors. For Beta and Delta it was only natural that the boundaries are set by themselves, and that the business is what they themselves make of it. Also Alpha and Gamma were aware of the need for change, but they seemed to lack understanding of boundary drawing and how to see their network as indeterminate instead of fixed.

The ability to draw boundaries both mentally and socially relates also to the circumstances at the founding time. As Alpha and Gamma are founded as collections of jobs, providing basic security and focus on operational efficiency and the profound 'strategic ways-of-doing':

> "[Strategic ways-of-doing?] What could I say, … like, secure things." (Alpha)

Again in contrast, Beta and Delta are more as tools in their founders' entrepreneurial processes, and continuous learning and innovation are their 'strategic ways-of-acting'. The related way-of-thinking is crystallized in MD's citation:

> "One should all the time think what one is doing. There are these sayings as well that says that 'a firm does not fail by doing wrong things, but in practice, a firm fails by doing things that are considered good, for too long'. That if you get stuck with them for too long, that's where the seed for failure is more certainly. Rather than in making wrong choices. (Delta)

To conclude with, all four firms faced identity crisis for different reasons and dealt with it in differing ways. To aid the conclusions, the connecting and distinguishing features of the firms

are presented in the table 1 below. Relating of the selective codes and discussing the results in the light of the extant literature is done in the following section.

Table 1. Connecting and distinguishing features of the firms.

	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Line of business	Software production projects and systems for dairy industry, then for several fields	Software subcontracting and production projects, systems; first in telecommunication, then in mobile vehicles	Software systems for forest industry	Software subcontracting and production projects in telecommunication
Boundaries set through relationships	'Closed' network (certain number of actors within the field)	Strategic network → Indeterminate & strategic network	'Closed' network (certain number of actors within the field)	Indeterminate & strategic network
Crisis	Declining industry, no new position in sight	Loss of the 'parent'	Declining industry, no new position in sight	Merging Delta with a larger firm
Network identification	Dairy industry → Identity lost	Client-led strategic network (dyadic relationship within IT field, special niche) → another client-led strategic network (more open-formed)	Forest industry	Client-led strategic network (dyadic relationship within IT field, special niche) →diversified customer base after the merger
Sense of identity	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong
Contradicting identification processes: individual-organization/network	None experienced	Network first, organization second: individual more strongly identified with the network than the organization	None experienced	Network first, organization second: individual more strongly identified with the network than the organization
Strategic activity for crisis resolution	Search for a strategic partner	Network redefinition	Postponed actions	Existing relationship advocation

DISCUSSION

The research question addressed by this study was as follows: How do firms strategize in startup identity crisis within network context? The broader aim of the study was to investigate the difficulties of small software firms after their initial start-up phase in changing their strategies along with changing network conditions, due to the commitments made in the start-up phase. We focused on one core category, identity in a study concerning the strategizing processes and practices of small software firms. In this section we discuss our findings in the light of the literature and the chosen theoretical frameworks presented by Huemer et al. (2004) and Huemer et al. (2013).

Organizational identity has been widely studied (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998; Pratt & Foreman, 2000), and also the relational aspect of identity from the industrial networks approach has been considered important in order to understand firms' network-embedded activities and development (Huemer, 2004; Anderson, Håkansson, & Johanson, 1994; Håkansson & Snehota, 199; Johanson & Mattsson, 1992). The framework of organizational and networks dimensions of identity and identification presented by Huemer et al. (2004) was the main theoretical basis to which we reflected the findings from our analysis.

In their paper (p. 64), they present implications of a network level of analysis on organizational identity. First, these implications relate to the organization's ability or inability to shape the means that define its commitments and its forms of belonging (its own ability in imagining a networked 'Us'). This statement was supported with our data as we found out that finding new future directions was dependent on the manager's ability to imagine new ways of being related to a network – i.e., in the first place, being aware of 'who we are' and with what kind of network they could identify themselves with. This ability represents the practice of boundary drawing for oneself.

Second, the implications relate to the organization's ability or inability to shape the network theories of others (helping 'Them' in imagining 'Us'). This related to the symbolic part of boundary drawing in which different versions of 'reality' rival of dominance, being about the practice of boundary drawing for others. This was not the specific focus of our study. However, those managers who were skilled in imagining and shifting boundaries impacted also others' perceptions of the boundaries – in fact, within their strategic networks this was even asked of them.

And third, from an IMP perspective, the implications relate to the organization's ability or inability to influence shared network perceptions and improving one's own 'strategic network identity' (Anderson et al., 2004). This statement was confirmed as well when considering the reflected identity as an image, and how that image of others was then perceived. Positive, strong identity was positively reflected also in the image, improving the strategic network identity of the firms. On the other hand, identity crisis made also others doubt the firm's own intentions and will, not only making seeing strategic choices more difficult, but also harming strategic network identity.

These implications are reflected in the intertwining of strategy and identity in a wider sense as well. It has been presented that identity relates to how experiences are interpreted and understood, and how strategies are developed, chosen and evaluated (Huemer, 2004). As strategy is seen here as something both deliberate and emergent and strategizing as an ongoing process that goes hand in hand with boundary drawing and identification, strategies do not follow identity or identity follow strategy, but they are mutually constitutive. Who we are is not the same thing than what we do, but what we do has implications on what we believe we are. When the firms faced a breach in network identity, the direction of the firm necessarily started to change, as the extant way of operating was no longer possible. Although from many parts the organizational identity still remained the same (for instance core features, norms, and practices), the changed situation required strategic activity. They took form of re-start strategies that were different for each firm.

For Alpha, the restart strategy was about finding a partner that would ultimately lead the way and help them to identify themselves with a new network. However, as long as they do not accomplish this, they tend to remain in a strategic drift as the identity crisis remains unresolved. They being customer-led – they do whatever it is that customers they happen to get need since they do not have a clear direction themselves. The problem they had with boundary drawing was not so much with restricting boundaries and relationships, as they did not form any strategic partnerships, but more about the lack of boundaries. As the security they had from belonging to the dairy network started to fade, they had no other network in which they could identify themselves – not even within software business. For Beta, the restart strategy was about network redefinition. As the dyadic relationship with the client broke, they needed to redefine the network they are a part of. Unlike with Alpha, MB had a

wider view on the network to begin with, and through his personal relationships was able to do different things for different customers until finally finding their new platform in mobile information systems with a local OEM manufacturer. Boundary shifting was something that came naturally from the manager, both to himself and to others in the network. Gamma, on the other hand, had the same thing going on as Alpha with more fixed boundaries. But Gamma deliberately postponed any strategizing activities and as long as the remaining customers are alive, also its identity remains fixed. And finally the identity crisis of Delta was due to a very different reason – resulting from its own strategic actions, not because of the network. As the merger changed also other aspects of organizational identity, not just by widening the customer base and shifting boundaries in the network, some of the new traits were unacceptable for MD. Being already in the beginning more identified with the network than the firm itself, the strategic activities of MD concentrated on existing customer advocation.

To conclude, we present the summary of our findings through relating the used concepts (selective codes reflected with the concepts derived from theory) and, in the spirit of Håkansson and Ford (2002) and Gadde et al. (2003), discussing them in the form of six contradictions identified in the case analysis. We suggest that the management of these manifestations of contradictions lies in the core of strategizing and thus sets the future direction for the firms' development. The firms, depending on the commitments made during the start-up phase, may develop as children, identity tied to the one of their 'parents'; or as adults with a strong identity with or without particular relationships. This is defined as the contradiction of customer-centrism below. All the contradictions relate to the core contradiction in management, i.e. that of between change and stability. Some aspects of the firm's activities drive change; others have the inclination to maintain the status quo.

Contradiction of boundaries (1). A well-defined picture of the relevant business relationships and the business network is needed for developing one's business. However, the way boundaries are drawn both symbolically and socially should be paid attention to, especially in relation to strategizing. In what business the firm considers itself to be defines its future development options. The clearness of a defined or closed network may be helpful for some time, but may act as hindrance for future strategizing. Embracing the indeterminate nature of network frees the mind of the manager to envision future directions, and in the time of changes in the network helps to resolve the resulting 'identity crises'. The first strategizing issue then is to become aware of the mental, social, and physical boundaries and shifting them. When boundaries set by others change, own strategies become obsolete and a need for creating something new emerges.

Contradiction of relationships (2). The existing relationships a firm has bring security and continuity, but at the same time may prevent the firm from developing and providing basis for future success. This depends also on the way boundaries have been drawn. Also the guiding vision and the conditions during the start-up have an effect on how the business was perceived and whether security is considered more important than innovation – although security is both prerequisite and outcome of change. This is also one of the paradoxes identified by Håkansson and Ford (2002). From the identity perspective, the second strategizing issue concerns the nature of relationships and their effect on the focus of everyday practices. Managers should have a heads-up whether the relationships provide freedom for innovation, or keep the firm in a child position indefinitely.

Contradiction of identity (3). Relating to the paradox of relationships, a strong network identity may help in achieving change, but can also act as a hindrance to change. If the firm has defined itself strongly through the relational aspect of identity, it might be difficult for it to define a business without the existing relationships. This depends not only on the emphasis put on security/innovation, but also with what kind of network the identification has been made, and whether the network represents symbolically a closed or an indeterminate one. Thus, the third strategizing issue is to become aware of the features that are central, distinguishing and enduring in the firm's assumptions, beliefs, practices and relationships. Important is also to consider the reflected identity as image of others, and strategic network identity. Since identity tends to emphasize positive features, it might be beneficial to see the firm also through others' eyes, by reading signals and communicating.

Contradiction of identification (4). Normally the identification takes place on both levels, on organization and network level. Individuals identify with the organization, and organization identifies with the network. However, entrepreneurial managers acting as specialists in a wider network might be more identified with that network directly than with the organization as such. If there is a too significant identity change in the organization as a result of a merger, they rather stay loyal to the network than to the organization. As in all paradoxes, neither one is clearly the better option since strong identification with the organization first could prevent overt customer-centrism, helping to draw boundaries drawing on the organizational identity. On the other hand, building on the distinctive competence and value creation at the network level helps resolve identity crises resulting from changes in the network and draw boundaries in a more flexible manner. Hence, the fourth strategizing issue is to balance the organization-network contradiction through boundary-drawing and continuous development mindset.

Contradiction of customer-centrism (5). Relating to the contradiction of relationships, but most strongly to the general network paradox (Håkansson & Ford, 2002) software firms struggle with balancing the existing business with existing, well-known customers and partners, and the need for innovations and new business areas that would bring the security also in the future. Even though living really close to the customers is generally a good thing, it can hinder the development of the firms if no clear boundaries with the customers' business and firm's own business can be drawn. Hence, managing all the manifestations of the previous contradictions boils down to the question whether the organization has a clear identity of its own, or is it embedded in the 'parent's' identity. The final strategizing issue is making a distinction between the identity and future of the firm, and that of the network – treating the firm as an adult.

In conclusion, our empirical study reflects Huemer et al. (2004) suggestion that "an important role for an organization's identity is to facilitate network identification, i.e. that an organization's theory about "who we are" is consistent with the idea of taking an active interest in boundaries". Based on our study we state that for the start-ups, it is important to pay attention to how and why boundaries are drawn, and how they are related to the organizational and network identity. If, for instance, due to the conditions at the time of the start-ups the ways-of-doing of the firm reflect more security than innovation, the central, distinctive and enduring features of the firm's activities tend to reflect these and the mere idea of 'touching' the boundaries might prove to be difficult.

More precisely, in accordance with the theoretical framework summarized in Figure 1, we found out that boundary drawing and identification are two important processes that in the start-up phase result in deep commitments that, if not consciously considered, may hinder

change and development of the firm in the long run. Consequently, we suggest that boundary drawing and identification also represent two central strategic practices that are connected through identity, holding the basic assumptions and beliefs behind organization's cultural ways-of-doing. In more practical terms, we presented five contradictions the management and balancing of which defines the way firms strategize in network context. In the start-up phase, when the founding strategic decisions are made in form of mental, social, and physical boundaries as well as identification with a particular network takes place, boundary drawing and identification have deep implications on what kind of freedom the identity has to develop. If being too tied on customers or other 'parent', the start-up has a danger of condemning itself to be in a child's position indefinitely.

REFERENCES

Albert, S. & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. In L. L. Cummings, & B.M. Staw (Eds.), Research in organizational behaviour, 7. (pp. 263–295). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Alvesson, M. (2001). Knowledge work: Ambiguity, image and identity. Human Relations, 54(7), 863–886.

Anderson, J. C., Håkansson, H., & Johanson, J. (1994). Dyadic business relationships within a business network context. Journal of Marketing, 58, 1–15.

Ashforth, B.E. & Mael, F.A. (1996). Organizational identity and strategy as a context for the individual. In J.A.C. Baum & J.E. Dutton (Eds.), Advances in Strategic Management, vol. 13. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp. 19–64.

Bonner, J.M., Kim, D., & Cavusgil, T. (2005). Self-perceived strategic network identity and its effects on market performance in alliance relationships. Journal of Business Research 58(10): 1371-1380.

Corley, K. G., Harquail, C. V., Pratt, M. G., Glynn, M.A., Fiol, C. M., & Hatch, M. J. (2006). Guiding organizational identity through aged adolescence. Journal of Management Inquiry, 15(2), 85–99.

Dubois, A. and Gadde, L.-E. (2002), "Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 55 No. 7, pp. 553-60.

Dutton, J. M., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. Administrative Science Quarterly, 39, 239–263.

Dutton, J.E. & Dukerich, J.M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. Academy of Management Journal 34(3): 517-554.

Ellis, N., Rod,M., Beal, T., & Lindsay, V. (2012). Constructing identities in Indian networks: Discourses of marketing management in inter-organizational relationships. Industrial Marketing Management, 41, 402–412.

European Journal of Marketing, 45(9/10), 1470–1500.

Gadde, L. E., & Håkansson, H. (2001). Supply network strategies. Chichester: JohnWiley & Sons.

Gadde, L. -E., Huemer, L., & Håkansson, H. (2003). Strategizing in industrial networks. Industrial Marketing Management, 32(5), 357–364.

Gadde, L. -E., Huemer, L., & Håkansson, H. (2003). Strategizing in industrial networks. Industrial Marketing Management, 32(5), 357–364.

Gioia, D.A., Schultz, M. & Corley, K.G. (2000). Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability. Academy of Management Review 25(1): 63-81.

Håkansson, H., & Ford, D. (2002). How should companies interact in business networks. Journal of Business Research, 55(2), 133–139.

Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (1995). Developing relationships in business networks. London: Routledge.

Harquail, C.V. & King, A.W. (2003). Organizational identity and embodied cognition: A multi-level conceptual framework. Academy of Management Proceedings: E1-E6.

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2002). The dynamics of organizational identity. Human Relations 55(8): 989-1018.

Hernes, T. (2004) Studying composite boundaries: A framework of analysis. Human Relations 57(1): 9-29.

Hernes, T., & Paulsen, N. (2003). Introduction: Boundaries and organization. In N. Paulsen, & T. Hernes (Eds.), Managing boundaries in organizations: Multiple perspectives (pp. 1–13). Houndmills:Palgrave McMillan.

Huemer, L. (2004). Balancing between stability and variety: Identity and trust trade-offs in networks. Industrial Marketing Management, 33(3), 251–259.

Huemer, L. (2013) When in Rome, be(come) a Roman? An actor focus on identities in networks. Industrial Marketing Management 42: 1112-1120.

Huemer, L., Becerra, M. & Lunnan, R. (2004). Organizational identity and network identification: relating within and beyond imaginary boundaries. Scandinavian Journal of Management 20: 53-73.

Lamont, M. & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. Annual Review of Sociology 28: 167-95.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). The production of space. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lindgren, M., & Wåhlin, N. (2001). Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals.

Mael, F. A., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. Journal of Occupational Behavior, 13, 103–123.

Mattsson, L.-G. (1988). Management of strategic change in a 'markets-as-networks' perspective. In Pettigrew, A. (Ed.), The Management of Strategic Change. Chichester: John Wiley.

McCallin, A.M. (2003). Grappling with the literature in a grounded theory study. Contemporary Nurse 15(1–2), 62–69.

Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B., & Lampel, J. (1998). Strategy Safari. London: FT/Prentice Hall.

Öberg, C., Grundström, C., & Jönsson, P. (2011). Acquisitions and network identity change.

Pratt, M.G. & Foreman, P.O. (2000). Classifying managerial responses to multiple organizational identities. Academy of Management Review 25(1): 18-42.

Pye, A., & Pettigrew, A. (2006). Strategizing and organizing: Change as a political learning process, enabled by leadership. Special issue introduction by the guest editors. Long Range Planning, 39, 583-590.

Reger, R.K., Mullane, J.V., Gustafson, L.T., & DeMarie, S.M. (1994). Creating earthquakes to change organizational mindsets. Academy of Management Journal 1994 8(4): 31-43.

Scandinavian Journal of Management, 17(3), 357–377.

Scott, W.R. (1995) Institutions and organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Selznick, P. (1957). Leadership in Administration. New York: Harper and Row.

Urquhart, C., Lehmann, H. & Myers, M. (2010). Putting the theory back into grounded theory: guidelines for grounded theory studies in information systems. Information Systems Journal 20(4), 357–381.

Whetten, D.A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity. Journal of Management Inquiry 15(3): 219-234.