The Network Infrastructure

"A Case Study on Third Party in the Process of Networking"

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Abstract

This thesis increases the understanding of networking and especially the role of third parties in the network infrastructure. That networking is an important activity that plays a central role for companies' success is common sense in today's highly changing environment. However, the role of third parties operating within the networking infrastructure has only been research sparingly. As the author's literature review showed even though we have knowledge about the network process and attributes of the different actors there is still a lack of theories to explaining them. For instance, it is still unknown how the third party can successfully bridge structural holes and how its specific characteristics influence the network. Furthermore, it is unclear how this is affecting the people and consequently the companies involved in the network.

The empirical focus of this thesis is on the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands and the empirical study consists of a qualitative case study. Data is collected through documents, participant observations and qualitative interviews in the Netherlands. The research shows that the third party has succeeded in provide a business and social platform that facilitate the process of combination and exchange of intellectual capital and this creates business opportunities for the members of the network. The study contributes to the research about the third party in the network infrastructure by identifying three success processes how the third party can contribute to the business network and this are: firstly, in combining and exchanging knowledge through a well-developed network structure. Secondly, through creating anticipation and motivation between the members for sharing of knowledge and thirdly, when bridging the gap between different actors with various kinds of knowledge. The thesis also provides suggestions for how the third party can improve their work to create and deepen relationship within networking.

As the thesis demonstrates the role of the third party in a network and as more business is done within networks and with the help of a third party, it also has practical implications. In particular, the study is beneficial for the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, but also for other third party organizations that aim to improve their role in the networking process.

KEYWORDS: Networking, Social capital, Intellectual capital, Third party, Network infrastructure

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1. Introduction

1.1 The unknown benefit of third parties within the network infrastructure

Today, the business environment is seen as a web of relationship – a network – rather than a market with many independent actors (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009: 1411). In this kind of environment it is known that social relationships are critical to develop and improve businesses and that successful companies can be seen as good network builders (Smilor & Gill, 1986: 39). Essentially, the need for co-operation has become evident as the environment is often characterized by uncertainty, complexity and rapid change. This is important for all kinds of companies, no matter the size, as companies often face difficulties in finding partners and therefore also the knowledgebase to be able to find the required resources (Kirkels & Duyster, 2010: 375). In line with this, research shows that companies that make different linkages and combine capabilities from many diverse parties are more agile and move forward faster (Van Heck & Vervest, 2007: 29).

The rising importance of innovations and adaption to the changing environment has changed the nature of interaction and networking has been a dominant organizational form in the 21st century (Scott el al, 2008: 1). A reason for this can be that networks offer potential for learning and building trust and commitment that are preconditions to succeed internationally (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009: 1411-1412). In line with this, many researchers have pointed out the importance of networking and for instance, Johannisson (1990: 41) describes entrepreneurs' personal social networks as the "most significant resource of the firm."

Although the network concept is not new, dating back to the 1930s in organizational research and at least the 1950s in anthropology and sociology (Nohria, 1992: 1), the interest has increased during the last decades. In the 1970s social network research gradually started to grow and established itself as an important field within sociology, with the focus on patterns of relationship between people and their implications (Van der Gaag, 2005: 3). Research within the area of network theories investigates both the structure of the relations between social actors and how patterns in those relations influence the different outcomes (Stuart & Sorensson, 2004: 233). Parallel to this development, the term "social capital" was gaining more attention and a growing number of researchers have invoked the concept of social capital in their own fields (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 37). Even though social capital is also a relatively new research area it is already clear that its investment-linked view on contacts between people and the exchange through these contacts can be a useful tool when explaining the achievement from networking (Van der Gaag, 2005: 4). Therefore, the starting point of this thesis is that social networks can provide openings to collections of available resources and also be a substitute for personal resources and this is what is understood as social capital (Van der Gaag, 2005: 2). More specifically, the author decided, for the purpose of this thesis, to use the following definition of social capital "...the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationship possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243). This definition is suitable for the thesis since the third party can be seen as what is called the "social unit" in the network.

In general, the third parties, such as trade associations, have an important role in the process of finding partners and/or resources and thus creating social capital that most often gives a positive impact on the development of new and existing networks (Conway 1995; Grotz and Braun1997; Hanna and Walsh 2002). The third party has a dual role in promoting growth. Firstly, they ideally act as natural knowledge brokers. Secondly, they can also act as conduits for the development of informal relationship that are the basis for the development of network relationship (Pittway et al, 2004: 137). However, there is a gap in the research when examining the third parties role within the networking infrastructure. The existing evidence suggest that the third party is important for the development of informal relationships but the process through which these relationship develop and affect the outcome has to be investigated further (Pittway et al, 2004: 160). From the author's point of view, the third party in the network infrastructure is seen as the independent actor that is structuring and organizing the relations between the members of the network with the aim to create and/or deepen the relations. More specifically, the third party is in the chosen case seen as both the tangible part such as the General Manger and the people working for the network but also includes the intangible structure and relations that are set up of the third party and supports the network.

1.2 Problem statement

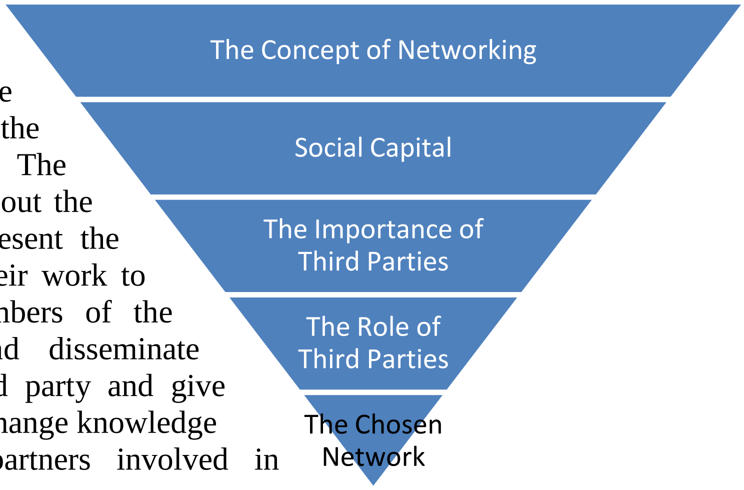
As the first section has concluded, it is known that networking is an essential activity in today's highly changing environment and that the network plays a central role for companies success. However, previous research has focused on the benefit of networking from a dual point of view between - most of the time - two actors. The role of third parties operating within the networking infrastructure has to date received scant attention. Despite the substantial insight we have today into the attributes of organizations as a knowledge system, there is still a lack of a coherent theory to explaining them (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 242). Additionally, it is also still unclear how the third party can successfully bridge holes and how specific characteristics influence the capacity of brokers (Kirkels & Duyster, 2010: 375).

In other words, firstly, there is a lack of knowledge about the combination and exchange of activities that the third party is carrying out within the networking infrastructure. Secondly, it is unclear how this is affecting the people and consequently the companies involved in the network in different ways.

To examine these two main problems the study addresses the following research question:

> *How does the third party provide benefits to the members within the network infrastructure?*

1.3 Purpose of the thesis



The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of networking and in particular the third parties' role in the network infrastructure. The author will with her work provide knowledge about the role of third parties within networking and present the factors in which the third party can improve their work to create and deepen relationships between members of the network. The thesis will also generate and disseminate knowledge about the benefits provided of third party and give advice on how the third parties can create and exchange knowledge and resources to provide benefits to the partners involved in networking.

Figure 1. Defining the Problem Area

Empirically, the research will be conducted on the network activities of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The author of this thesis has spent the last five month as an intern at the Swedish Chamber. The fact that more business than before transpires within networks and with the help of a third party, the practical contribution of this paper is, therefore also, beneficial for the Swedish Chamber as well as other organizations that will improve their networking process. How the author has defined the research area by starting broad and narrowing done the topic, based on the purpose of this study, can be seen in figure 1.

1.4 The context of the thesis

A case study, which is done in this thesis, emphasizes the real-world context in which the phenomena occurs and due to this fact the author of this thesis thought it to be useful to explain the context of this study (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 25). The empirical study is performed during work at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and carried out in the Netherlands, Amsterdam during 18 weeks. The Netherlands has the most densely population in Europe with its 16, 4 million inhabitants on an area of 42 500 km2. The harbor in Rotterdam is the biggest in Europe and the Dutch transporters are in charge of one third of all the transportations within Europe road haulage. The country is Sweden´s 7th biggest export market and the 6th biggest trade partner including both import and export. 200 Swedish subsidiaries can be found in the Netherlands and the products as well as the Swedish people have a good reputation in the country (Swedish trade, 2010). The organization is located in Amsterdam; the capital of the Netherlands that is a city with 738 000 inhabitants. The Netherlands can be described as a multicultural society and in Amsterdam more than two hundred different nationalities can be found (Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions, 2010). A market like this is built upon networks and relationship in which people are linked to each other in different, complex and invisible patterns. (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009: 1411-1412).

The network that the study is based on is the Swedish Chamber of Commerce. The Swedish Chamber is an independent, non-profit networking organization, which promotes commercial exchange and networking. The aim with the organization is to serve as a network for interchange between Swedish and Dutch companies. Today the organization has 156 company members from Sweden, the Netherlands and other European countries (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce, 2011). This study is based within the context that will be further explained in "The background" under the section "Empirical observations".

1.5 Delimitation

Research on networking is a huge field that extends across physical, social, technological and biological domains and provides an interesting area for research (Scott el al, 2008: 12). Because of the huge amount of information, the author found it important to define the research area. Therefore, the scope of this thesis has been social capital and more specifically "the social capital framework" of Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998) as this structure facilitates the purpose of the study to examine the role of the third party. The most important parts of the framework for the specific case have been explained more in depth but the different dimension of social capital have been kept apart. In other words, the independent effects of these dimensions are analyzed and how they are correlating with each other could also be an interesting area for research but is not considered in this thesis.

1.6 Outline

The organization of this thesis is around a "skeleton" built upon three main components; problem, method and result (Backman, 1998: 33) within these structures 11 chapters can be found.

The first chapter has the aim to guide the research process and starts with explaining the problem background, that is justify by a problem statement and motivated by describing the purpose of the study. To give the reader a bigger picture, the context in which the study has been carried out is also explained. This is followed by describing the delimitation and the most important definitions used in this thesis.

The second chapter gives the methodology that describes the author's view of reality, the research approach, the research strategy, the research design and the research methods used for conducting this study. In the end of the second chapter are also the choices made regarding the theories and literature described. The third chapter, "The frame of reference" offers the reader an understanding of previous literature as a background for the investigation in this study. The chapter is divided in to two parts where the first part explains the historical development of network theories followed by a summary of some of the empirical studies within the field and an argumentation around the strengths and shortcomings of the chosen theories.

Chapter four presents the data collection included the research process, an explanation of the participant observations and the respondent selection and the sampling techniques. This is followed by an analysis of the qualitative interviews and a discussion about the interview guide. Additionally, throughout the chapter, the access problems are considered from a critical point of view. The chapter ends with an explanation of how the analysis was carried out. In chapter five and six are the empirical data provided and dived into three parts; background, participant observations and qualitative interviews for getting a good structure in the seventh chapter that consists of the empirical analysis. The eighth chapter presents the main conclusion drawn from this study that also includes a discussion about the contribution of the thesis. Chapter nine highlights the quality of the research. In chapter the ten is advice for further research given and the thesis ends with a reference list.

1.7 Definitions

For the reader to understand this thesis some definitions can be desirable. The following have been used in this thesis:

Social capital: "...the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationship possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243).

Intellectual capital: "the knowledge and knowing capability of a social collectivity, such as an organization, intellectual community or professional practice" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 245).

Networking Event: "All those business, quasi-business, and social situations in which you have opportunities to develop valuable connections" (Barber & Waymond, 2007: 4).

Organization: "Any group you join for the purpose of making business connections (professional association, Chamber of Commerce, alumni group, business referral group, board, etc.)" (Barber & Waymond, 2007: 4)

Social explicit knowledge: the shared body of knowledge; personify for instance by scientific communities and often regarded as the most advanced form of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 247)

Social tactic knowledge: embedded in the social and institutional practice and resides in tactic experience enactment of the collective (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 247)

Obligation: "a commitment or duty to undertake some activity in the future" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 255).

Identification: "the process whereby individuals see themselves as one with other persons or a group of people" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 255).

Third party: the independent actor that is structuring and organizing the relations between the members of the network with the aim to create and/or deepen the relations

Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs): small companies with up to 49 employees and medium sized companies with 50 to 250 employees.

2. Methodology

2.1 Choice of subject and a short overview of the research approach

The interest in writing about networking and foremost a third party's networking activities derives from the attractiveness of learning more about this highly important research area. The fact that the author was spending the semester abroad and could observe the activities and outcomes within an existing network made the choice of the topic even easier. The acquired contact with the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands contributed to the choice of where to carry out the study. Furthermore, social capital has become an established paradigm but the applicability is still relatively unclear. Networking and social capital therefore provides the focus of this paper and enriching the understanding about these different ties, their use and application.

Because relatively few studies have been performed about the role of the third parties in the process of networking, the author realized that the problem statement would be better addressed by theory-building (traditionally an inductive approach) rather than theory-testing. Nevertheless, the author has throughout used the Social Capital Framework of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) as a theoretical structure, that helped to collect and interpret the data, which also gives the study strongly deductive influences (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 11). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that this theory was never used with the aim to be tested and the theory generating approach is hence evident in that the empirical data is utilized to develop an understanding of the role of third parties in networks within the scope of Nahapiet and Ghoshal's Social Capital Framework.

Largely a more exploratory stance was considered suitable for this thesis. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009: 133) agree that exploratory studies is beneficial in order to find out what is happening, clarify a problem, seeking new insights and asking questions and this together with a qualitative approach was chosen as it delivered the data necessary to answering the problem statement. The qualitative study is carried out using the research design called a case study, this kind of approach is beneficial when the author aim to gain intensive and as well as an in-depth examination of the object of concern as in this case the role of third party (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 62-63). The research method used to gain the empirical information to this case study was the collection and qualitative analysis of text and documents, participant observations as well as qualitative interviews. These are all different qualitative research methods that differ from each other considerably (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 404). The methodological assumptions explained above were linked to the purpose of the study and the aim to answer the problem statement.In what is following the research approach will be discussed more in-depth. The purpose with a detailed explanation of the method of the thesis is replication and evaluation. With replication is meant that the method should be possible to replicate for someone else and the evolution will bring the possibility to value the empirical process (Backman, 1998: 37-38). Figure 2 shows the structure of the methodology choices.

Figure 2: The Structure of the methodological choices

2.2 Methodology assumptions

Before moving on to the research strategy, it is necessary to consider the author's view of reality as this has influenced the outcome of the study. Explaining what reality is, how reality can be examined and what method to use are all concerns related to ontology, epistemology and the methods (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 16-24).

Firstly, the ontological assumptions in this thesis can be seen as constructivism and this means that the social phenomena and meanings are constantly being accomplished by social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 23). Secondly, for the epistemology assumptions a position of interpretivism is taken and this is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and objects and this requires a social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 19). In the specific case this means that it's the author subjective meaning of the case that is provided. Although the theory-building process in inductive research sometimes can be seen as "subjective", a well-done research can on the other hand be seen as natural because its close adherence to the data keep the researchers "honest" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 25). The fact that the author has been working within the network and making observation has given a relatively honest picture of the role of third party. On the other hand, the close relations to the actors within the network can also have given the consequences that some of the things have not been observed. These could be things as behavior, discussions and happenings that were constantly coming back and because of this after a while was taken for granted.

What also has to be considered is that the author has taken a sociology perspective where these are some of the basic principles that are making up the structural economic sociology:

1. "Economic actions is a form of social actions
2. Economic action is socially situated or embedded
3. Economic institutions are social constructions" (Granowetter & Swedberg, 2001: 8)

Accordingly, the focus has been on theories and assumptions contradicted to the classical economic concept that sees the market as a homogenous collection of identical suppliers and buyers. The focus is rather on relationship than attributes and on structured pattern of interactions rather than isolated individual actors (Scott el al, 2008: 1). The reason for taking this perspective is also due to the purpose to provide knowledge about the role of third parties in the infrastructure that characterize today´s business environment. The authors of the main "Social capital framework" used also sees that the roots of social and intellectual capital is deeply embedded in social relations and in the structure of these relations and is therefore in line with the authors own assumption (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 260). The author's aim has been to provide the members' subjective world but the consequence of the ontological assumptions have been that it's the author of the thesis that outermost interpret the contribution of the third party in this network. In other words, the author's subjective meaning of social action has influenced the outcome of this study and therefore the reader of the thesis has to keep these methodology assumptions in mind.

2.3 Research strategy: Qualitative strategy

In this thesis, a qualitative strategy is used when collecting the data. This research strategy, as also seen in this thesis, usually emphasizes words rather than quantification when gathering and analyzing the data (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 28). Furthermore, this approach can as Bryman and Bell (2007: 416) state offer a more clarification important to the subject and understand and observe the reality from the research objects view. This was according to the author an appropriate approach to the addressed problem since the author wanted to provide a holistic view of the case. This is also in line with the previously explained fact that researchers followed the qualitative approach takes the epistemology position of interpretivism.

The qualitative strategy do not aim to identify a statistically representative set of respondents and expressing results in relative frequencies could therefore be misleading (Pope et al, 2000: 114). On the other hand, the qualitative research approach is not as standardized as quantitative research and this gives possibilities for variety, (Backman, 2008: 4). This was beneficial in this specific thesis as the research started very broadly before the author left Sweden and the focus was narrowed done during the work at the Swedish Chamber. This kind of approach is also mainly used when the researcher aims to see pattern in the society and in these settings is quantitative factors as age and gender less important compared to the individual’s capacity (Frost, 1997: 10). In line with this, the author of this thesis wanted to identify the role of third party and therefore the quantitative research was more suitable for that purpose.

However, when taking on this approach the concern is raised that the view is might getting different from what an outsider would have expected (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 416). In this thesis, the concern can rise because of the author interpretation of the phenomena and the insider information gained during the work. Another concern that the author has taken into consideration is the fact that qualitative studies in general provide a wide extent of information (Backman, 1998: 57). To overcome this problem the author was aware of the fact that she had to structure and selects the most relevant information in the meantime when the data was collected.

2.4 Research design: Case study

Within the qualitative approach, a case study approach is used in the studied case. Saunder et al (2009: 139) describes this as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular and contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. This case can be a community or a person or as in this thesis an organization such as the Swedish Chamber of Commerce (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 39). In this thesis the Chamber of Commerce and especially the network within the organization is in the interest of the author and an as the aim is to make an in-depth evaluation of this the case study is a suitable research design for the case. In a single case study, the challenge of presenting rich qualitative data is addressed by simply presenting a complete rendering of the story within the text (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 29).

From the author's point of view, the Chamber of Commerce can be seen as a "representative or typical case" and this kind of case search exemplifies a form of organization (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 64). Therefore, the case study approach examines the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam. With the risk for transferability, this could be representative for other Swedish Chamber of Commerce (see Quality of research). On the other hand, additional studies have to be completed before it can be valid. Recently, multiple-case study designs have become more common, this approach is used with the aim to comparing the included cases (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 64). Anyway, since the purpose of the thesis is to examine the third parties' role the author has not seen it necessary to compare and contrast the findings as the thesis is rather aiming to show the overall opinion of the people involved.

Furthermore, a case study often favors qualitative methods as these are viewed as helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 62). The research strategy – a qualitative strategy - will be elaborated further in the next section as the three research methods used in this case study will be explained more in detail.

2.5 Research method

In this thesis, empirical data was collected through participant observations, qualitative analysis of text and documents, as well as qualitative interviews. A case study can, accordingly to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007: 28), include a rich variety of data sources and it's called a triangulation when more than one source of data is used in the study of a social phenomenon. The motivation for this is that "a combination of methods…emerges as the most valid and reliable way to develop understanding of such a complex social reality as the corporation" (Kanter, 1977: 337). Furthermore, the author also believes that in order to use different qualitative methods can avoid too great reliance on just one approach, which in this case study was appropriate to give a holistic view of the chosen case. In what is following the three methods will be explained, as well as why these are appropriate according to the problem statement and lastly the purpose will be elaborated further.

2.5.1 The Ethnography and participant observation

The author began to collect the data using ethnography (also referred to as participant observation) and this approach was used during the entire time at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce. In short, the research method is based on that a person joins a group for an extended period and is observing behavior, listening to the conversations and asking question. The research approach can also be described as an attempt to describe a variety of aspects and norms of a culture group to gain understanding of the people being studied (Malterud, 2001: 1). The difference between the definition of Ethnography and Participant observation is not easy to distinguish but the term used in what follows will be ethnography to show that the author has done more than just observing during the process of collecting the data (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 442).

The fact that the author got the unique chance to be close to the research object (the Swedish Chamber of Commerce) during a longer period made the choice easy to use ethnography as one of the research methods. The purpose: "to increase the understanding of networking and especially the third parties role in the networking infrastructure" was also - to a high degree - fulfilled through using this approach.

The author, together with the manager of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands, decided how the ethnography was going to be carried out and what role the ethnographer was going to have. The role taken was in the end "Participant- as observer" and this is a role were the researcher is a fully functioning member of the social settings but the members of the social settings are aware of the fact that the ethnographer is a researcher (Bryman and Bell. 2007: 454). This choice was because the author was responsible for many other tasks additional to conducting the thesis and this research method.

In line with this, the approach was also beneficial as the author got to be close to the research object in a wide range of different situations during the observations the author also realizes the importance of observing other things than the people, such as the different environment and social settings. Malterud (2001: 1) explains that the researcher must go into the field and get close to the people and involved in the environment in order to learn about the enormous amount of things that influence the research objective.

Finally, for the author to narrow done what to observe the main aim with the ethnography was to get more information about the structural dimension of the "The social capital framework", which will be discussed later. More in detail, how this was done in practice is explained under the data collection and analysis.

2.5.2 Interviewing in qualitative research

As a complement to the ethnography, qualitative interviews were used. This was motivated by their flexibility to collect the required data to answer the problem statement (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 472). Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007: 28) state that interviews are an efficient way to collect rich empirical data especially if the phenomenon is episodic and infrequent. The fact that the author is examining a network with many different parts made interview a suitable research method. The most popular types of interviews are the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interviews. The latter has gained the focus in this thesis. Furthermore, qualitative interviews are well connected to the exploratory purpose of the research purpose that is followed in this thesis as the research objectives are explaining their view of the phenomena (Saunders et. al., 2009: 113). As will be seen later on, the interviews carried out were as other qualitative interviews, based on that the researcher asked simple questions and received complex and comprehensive answers (Trost, 1997: 7).

The qualitative interviews differ from quantitative research and tend to be less structured and show a greater interest in the interviewee's point of view (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 473-474). Therefore, this approach was suitable for this thesis as the aim with the interviews was to get the opinion of the network participant's.

It is also important to point out that qualitative interviews have been criticized for not being scientific enough and too objective (Kvale, 1997: 268). However, the aim with the interviews carried out was mainly to provide information about the relational -and the cognitive dimension of social capital. Therefore, the emphasis was on how the person interviewed framed and understood the issues and events and the research method can therefore be seen as suitable in the specific case (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 475).

2.5.3 Documents as sources of data

To get additional data to the observations and interview and thus a depth in the collection of data, information from documents were added. These documents gave a bigger understanding about the specific case and the necessary knowledge about the activities that the third party is organizing each year. The emphasis was on both documents that had not been asked for from the author herself but just available and ready to use and material that is more specific was also asked for and kindly provided by the Manager at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce. In other word, the complicated part for the author was not to collect this information but to interpret the meaning of the material (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 554). The reason for also using this information was that it complemented the two other methods used and gave additional information that was not possible to gain through the empirical observations or the interviews.

The material taken into consideration was mainly organizational documents some of these were public domains and others were not. The documents came mainly from the website of the Swedish Chamber in the Netherlands (the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, 2011), the Swe-Cham magazine[1], other information sent to the members for instance newsletters, invitations and other handouts. Anyway, as already mention the problem with this kind of information is not to get the access to it but is rather the credibility and representativeness when analyzing the information (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 556). With this in mind, the author tried to get access to information not just available within the chamber of commerce but also information from the companies within the network. However, to narrow done the amount of information public documents and mass media outputs were used as a less important part. Because it´s very likely that the documents are written from a certain point of view and not representative for how the different actors perceive the situation in which they are involved, the organizational documents have in line with the ethnography observations mainly been used to get more information about the structural dimension of the social capital.

2.6 Choices of the overall theoretical framework

For the purposes of this study, the author applied Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) organizing framework. The main reason for this choice is that its offers a reasonably comprehensive conceptualization of social capital that accommodates major concerns of the extant literature (Mauer & Ebers, 2006: 263). Furthermore, the fact that the framework combines different researchers opinion also provides a wide perspective of the concerns relating to social capital was further a reason why this framework was chosen.

The framework is useful since it clarifies the dimensions of social capital and considers these factors in terms of the structural, the relational and cognitive dimensions of social capital

[1] A yearly magazine published of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce

(Nahapiet and Ghoshal's, 1998: 243). In different from many other researchers are Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) providing a framework that is despite the topics sometime intangible line a relatively clear-cut model, possible to use in reality. This provided the structure of the outline of the thesis and the framework together with complemented theories deriving from the major concerns were utilized to interpret and analyze the data from the interviews, observations and secondary sources. The choice of complementing articles to the "Social capital framework" was made to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. In order to fulfill this aim, both articles that supports and criticizes Nahapiet and Ghoshal's view have been used. For the author of this thesis it was important to get a good base to build the literature review on, namely Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998). On the other hand, it also was important to get a broader view of the topic and not rely too much on just one source. Therefore, the empirical studies of the network infrastructure were added.

When reviewing the literature, articles concerning the third parties role were rather hard to find and other terms such as "broker" and "dealer" were used for what the author of this thesis refer to as "third parties". However, for the purpose of this study, the term "third party" is used and additionally were some of the empirical studies within the field added to gain more information about the role of third parties. The choices of the empirical studies are made with the aim to get complementing and more diverse knowledge that derive from the reality and practical experience of the role of third party. To gain a wider knowledge the author has reviewed many different articles that have provided a wide knowledge base. Out of this knowledge base have five main studies that are considered the most relevant when describing a certain area been selected and used. The areas covered are: why networks form, the structural and geographically spread, structural holes and good ideas, the identification of the broker and smart business networks.

The framework and the empirical studies are further explained in the "Frame of reference" and in the end of that that section the strengths, shortcomings and theoretical standpoint are discussed further.

2.7 Choices of literature

In this thesis, the literature analysis was intended to justify the research question and build the research design (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 94). In the process of collecting the relevant literature, the author began looking for articles concerning networking. The author realized early on the wide extent of the research within this field and the results show that networking has been studied in a number of fields within social science. These including: economic and regional geography; organizational behavior; sociology; operations management; political economy; entrepreneurship and small business; technology management; marketing; and, strategic management (Pittway et al, 2004: 141).

According to (Backman, 1998: 149) there are mainly three kinds of search methods that can be used when collecting information; consultation, manual search and data based research. The author of the thesis has used all of this during the process of developing the literature review. Firstly, in consultation are the discussions, written or oral, with different experts such as supervisors or professors in the specific field included (Backman, 1998: 150). The consultation was used in the beginning of research process as the author contacted researchers, lectors and previously students with the purpose to gain an overview of the topic. This was done even before the author of the thesis got her supervisor that could give additionally advice. Using this strategy helped to find the main theories and the social capital framework and provided the first structure of the thesis. However, to just use the consultation was not enough and therefore the following two approaches were also used.

Secondly, as the research area was defined, a "Manual search" was used for a more specific and systematic search of additional information. Backman, (1998: 150-151) states that examples of this method can be research overview, reference lists, book references or searching for books. However, the author had a few relevant theories in mind when starting the work and this helped to identify some key words that served to define the boundaries of the chosen research area (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 107). On one hand the literature review can help to identify methods and gives information about how previous studies have been performed. On the other hand, they can also show shortage in earlier research (Backman, 2008: 29). Due to this, during this phase the author also identified the gap in the literature when examining the role of third parties in the network infrastructure.

Finally, the process of collecting the relevant theories ended with the most systematic method: "Data based search". When having identified the keywords the "Web of science" was also used when extending the literature and this helped to find the central work and also the latest research within social capital. Additionally, the main database that has been used for this is the "Business Source Premier" and the key words that were used in the beginning were "social networking" and "social capital" which gave 9141 and 12102 hits. Essentially, the keywords gave a lot of hits and therefore the keyword: "role of third parties" (2601 hits) was added. The added keyword gave a smaller amount of information to work with and the feature "times cited" work in the database was also used to see what studies that have shown to be important regarding to other researchers. In order to gain a deeper understanding, after having finishing the first part of the general literature review the author also reviewed specific empirical studies on the role of third parties, which gave beneficial knowledge regarding how to carry out the collection of the empirical information.

However, the author would also like to stress some of the drawbacks with using the approach described in this section when collecting the data. The fact that a qualitative approach is being used gives the consequences that researcher, is a part of the research instrument and can to a certain extent include own assumptions and stereotypes when reading what other researcher have stated within the research area. Therefore, it's important that the researcher is open minded and considers different opinions when reading the literature (Backman, 2008: 57). Finally, the author bore in mind the importance of that the literature reviews was made with the purpose to answer the questions. Therefore, the author has tried to show synthesis, integration, and analysis in order to not just provide a quick summary on the literature (Backman, 1998: 67).

3. Frame of reference

3.1 Introduction the theoretical frame of reference

The frame of reference offers the reader an understanding of previous literature as a background for investigating the role of networking and social capital. The literature within the field of networking includes perspectives from both a sociological and business perspective. More specifically, in this thesis the focus is on social networking and the combination and exchange of social capital to the creation of new intellectual capital. The frame of reference is divided into two parts: the general theories followed by some of the empirical studies within the field.

The chapter starts with a short summary of the historical development of network theories. It followed by an explanation of the social capital framework and a deeper explanation of social capital as well as intellectual capital from different researchers' point of view. The first part ends by explaining some of the theories on the combination and exchange in the process of creating intellectual capital. In the second part, what the author consider the most relevant empirical studies will be explained.

3.2 The field of networking

The network concepts are based around relationships between entities such as organizations and people, and the properties of networks studied relate to the structure of these relationships. Contradicted to the classical economic concept that sees the market as a homogenous collection of identical suppliers and buyers, the networking approaches focus on relationships rather than on attributes and on structured pattern of interactions rather than on isolated individual actors (Scott el al, 2008: 1). In other words, economic actions are "embedded" in networks that are built upon personal relationship. Granovetter and Swedberg (2001: 11) state that a network is "a regular set of contacts or social connections among individual or groups. The networking approach helps to overcome the conceptual trap of atomized actors as well as other one-factor theories that are too simplistic to account for reality. In addition, this approach is taken in this thesis. The reason for this is that the concept of networking is very close to empirical reality and the author believes in line with Granovetter and Swedberg, (2001: 11-12) that its use thereby prevents conceptual errors common in mainstream economic theory.

The literature within the field of networking provides, according to Pittway et al, (2004: 145-146), two major reasons for why business-to-business networks form. The first focuses on the resource requirements of firms where they are persuade to make network relationships with other firms as a way of obtaining access to resources they lack (Ahuja, 2000: 425). The second view argues that the opportunities to establish links tend to reflect prior patterns of inter-firm relationships. From this view, a firm's ability to develop network relationships with other firms is consequently based on its existing relationships and network capability (Granovetter, 1985: 1360). Summarizing, a lot of the literature shows that the most common reason for establish networks is to gain access to new or complementary competencies, technologies and markets (Coles et al. 2003: 53).

3.3 Different kinds of capital

While there are several reasons for why business-to-business networks forms, the focus in this thesis is on the role of capital. Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises as economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money. Cultural capital is convertible under certain conditions into economic capital can be institutionalized in the form of educational qualification. Finally, social capital is made of social connections and it is under certain conditions convertible into economic capital (Granovetter & Swedberg, 2001: 98). More specifically, in this thesis the central focus is how the social capital facilitates the creation of intellectual capital by affecting the conditions necessary for exchange and combination to accrue (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 250). Consequently, the author aim to look at the process as this is where the third party has their role when providing benefits to the network.

Essentially, the topic of capital is broad but one of the areas that have been highly attractive for academic research is the field of social capital (Scott et al, 2008: 21). The discussion has been extensive in the scientific literature since the mid-1980s, when Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1988, 1990), and Burt (1992) offered their seminal contributions to explaining the concept and many different conceptualizations of it have been used in previously research, (Mauer & Ebers, 2006: 263). Social capital is not an individual possession as many other kinds of capital but is instead jointly owned of those who are connected by social ties (Glover & Hemingsway. 2005: 389). Consequently, social capital has potential value because it provides an opportunity for actors to access information and resources in their social network (Mauer & Ebers, 2006: 262). In other words, firstly, social capital lies in the persistent social ties that enable a group to constitute, maintain, and reproduce itself. Secondly, it also allows group members potential access to resources held by others in the group, for instance enabling an individual to increase financial capital or information, expand embodied cultural or informational capital. Thirdly, enhancing social capital can provide institutionalized cultural capital by ties to organizations that bestow valued credentials and honorifics (Glover & Hemingway, 2005: 389).

Scott et al (1998: 21) states that the conceptual basis of social capital is the fact of membership that Bourdieu (1986: 248) explains as “a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintanceship and recognition”. Bourdieu also points out that these relationships can exist both in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchange that help to maintain them. Further, they can also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name and by a whole set of instituting acts. However, the network of relations is the product of the endless effort at institution that is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting and useful relationship that can secure material or symbolic profits (Granovetter & Swedberg, 2001: 103).

3.4 The Social capital frame work

Despite the substantial understanding we have now about the attributes of organizations as knowledge system, we until until 1998 lack a coherent theory for explaining them. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 242) aimed for a theory that could explain how business could gain what Ghoshal and Morgan (1996: 14) called “the organizational advantage”. The authors therefore developed a theory that is rooted in the concept of social capital and that integrates some of previous researchers studies. The theory’s overall focus is the interrelation between social and intellectual capital. Firstly, the authors define social capital in terms of three different dimensions. Secondly, they describe in their article how each of these dimensions makes it possible to create and exchange knowledge. Thirdly, they also argue that organizations can develop a high level of social capital in all dimensions (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243).In what the following these thoughts and other author´s opinions will be elaborated further.

3.5 Defining social capital

As social capital and intellectual capital are the keystones in Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) theory for the understanding of the network perspective, it is necessary to explain these further. As, already seen the concept of social capital has been used in a range of different situation. However, the author made early on the choice to use the definition from the “Social capital framework” in this thesis: “Social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from, the network of relationship possessed by an individual or social unit” (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243). The reason for choosing this definition in comparison with others is because of the fits to the aim of the thesis to examine the third parties role of exchanging and combining the resources in the existing network. More specifically, in the case of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce is seen as what is called the “social unit” and that is further an argument why this definition is kept throughout the thesis.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 243) assume that when explaining social capital is it important to consider this from three different dimensions; the structural, the relational and the cognitive dimension of social capital. Granovetter (1985: 504) has discussed the structural embeddedness, which concerns the properties of social system and the network of relations as a whole. He argues that most behavior is embedded in the network and that this accounts for much of the order and (disorders) that can be found in both markets and firms. In the chosen framework, the term “structural embededness” is referred to “the overall pattern of connections between actors” (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 244). Burt (2000: 10) has also contributed to the structural dimension and has identified four characters of inter-personal networks: network size, network density, and network constraint and network hierarchy. Burt has also touched this in his book from and states that is about whom you reach and how you reach them (Burt, 1992: 12).

In opposite, “relational embeddedness” is the personal relationship people have developed with each other through the history of interaction. In the chosen framework, relational embeddedness refers to the relations people have that affects their behavior. More specifically, “relational embeddedness” is referred to those assets such as trust, trustworthiness, norms and sanctions, obligations and expectations, identity and identification created and leverage through relationship(Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 244).

The cognitive dimension is the third dimension of social capital and used for those resources providing shared representations, interpretation, and systems of meaning among parties

(Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 244). Shared understandings and cognitive schemes qualify as social capital for mainly two reasons. Firstly, to communicate and interact effectively with persons, actors have to invest in learning and understanding. Second, this investment creates an asset that has a potential value, because a shared language and shared meanings enable actors to gain access to the information and resources of their social relations, which they could not obtain without the investment (Mauer and Ebers, 2006: 264). As illustrated, social capital can take many different forms but to summarize they all have two characteristics in common. First, they all constitute to some aspect of the social structure and second, they facilitate the actions of individual within the structure (Coleman, 1990: 302).

3.6 Defining intellectual capital

There is already an established stream of research that identifies and elaborates the significance of knowledge processes as the foundation of the organizational advantage (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 243). For instance, Eisenhardt and Santos (2000: 40) discuss the knowledge base view (KBV) that considers knowledge as the most strategically and significant resource of the firm. According to this view, if the knowledge is heterogeneous the knowledge base can give advantages and superior corporate performance among firms (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2000: 1). Organizational learning is seen as the foundation of the knowledge-based view where learning can be defined as: the process by which new information is incorporated into the behaviour of agents changing their pattern of behaviour, and possibility, but not always, leading to better outcomes (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2000: 5).

In this thesis, the Frame of reference is focusing on the creation of social explicit knowledge and social tactic knowledge of organizational advantage. The social explicit knowledge represents the shared body of knowledge; personify for instance by scientific communities and often regarded as the most advanced form of knowledge. Whether the social tactic knowledge is embedded in the social and institutional practice and that resides in tactic experience enactment of the collective (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 247). In other words, social tactic knowledge is linked to individuals and is very difficult to articulate but as knowledge is explored and put into actions and social justified it might be coded and made more explicit into message that can be proceed as information (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2000: 3). The reason for focusing on these two kinds of "collective knowledge" in this frame of reference is because "collective knowledge is secure and a strategically significant kind of organizational knowledge" (Spender, 1996: 52). An alternative would have been to take the individual knowledge into to a higher consideration but this was not seen as vital as the purpose of the study was to examine the collective intellectual capital created within the network.

Intellectual capital is in this thesis referred to as "the knowledge and knowing capability of a social collectivity, such as an organization, intellectual community or professional practice" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 245). The reason for also involving this in the in this thesis is because of the clear parallel to human capital which holds the acquired knowledge, skills and capabilities which make it possible to act in new ways. The Social Capital framework also follows the stream explained above but is in different from other studies trying to explain the actually exchange and combination of intellectual capital. Concerning intellectual capital especially two issues are important to consider; first, the different types of knowledge that can exist and second, the issue of level of analysis in knowledge processes (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 245-246).

As the discussion above shows, knowledge is a complex area and a wide range of different views and perspectives can be discussed. However, when discussing the knowledge created in the examined network, is not the focus on the certain kind of knowledge or outcome but as the next section will show rather on the process of combination and the exchange of intellectual capital. This is also in line with the new approach of knowledge that goes beyond seeing knowledge as a resource that can assume tacit or explicate forms (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2000: 4). Brown and Duguid (2001: 209) also follow the new approach of knowledge and are in their research pointing out that codification of knowledge can be very different from the working practise. With the meaning that a firm´s knowledge base is not a property that fall within boundaries and because of this, the knowledge could more easily flow out of firms than move smoothly within it. Because of this, to overcome the challenge to undercover the innovative potential the organizations should according to Brown and Duguid (2001: 209) use a dynamic strategy rather than coordinating it around conventional routines.

3.7 Combination and creation of intellectual capital

As already mentioned, the main view that is developed in this frame of reference is that social capital facilitates the creation of intellectual capital by affecting the conditions necessary for exchange and combination to accrue (Nahapiet and Ghoshal,1998: 250). This is in the specific thesis seen as the process of networking. A relevant question to ask is therefore: How is then this being done? When answering this question the approach of Schumpeter (1934) and Ghoshal (1996) and believe that this is being done mainly through two processes; combination and exchange. In other words, the pattern of linkage and the relationship built through them are the foundation for social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 250).

The main argument is that the structural dimension influences the development of intellectual capital. Anyway, the structural dimension might also influence the other dimension such as the relational and cognitive dimensions of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 251-252). With this in mind, in what is following will the process of combination and the exchange of intellectual capital be explained. The structure of the “Social capital framework” can be seen in appendix 1.

3.8 The three dimensions

3.8.1 The Network structure

The fact that the social structure of relations in which a person is embedded presents opportunities and constraints for behavior is agreed upon by many network analysts as well as social scientists (Andrews, 2005: 355). The fundamental assumption in the social capital theory is the network ties provide access to resources. One of the main resources gained by a network is the information benefits or in other words, “who you know” decides “what you know” (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 252). Coleman (1988: 98) is one of the researchers that have examine the gathering of information and he notes that collecting information is costly and the access to a network can reduce the time and investment for finding the right information.

Furthermore, it is the ties in the network that constitutes the channels for information transformation. For instance, density, connectivity, and hierarchy are all features associated with flexibility and the facilitation of information exchange through their impact on the level of contact they provide to network members (Ibarra, 1992 & Krackhardt 1989). One of the most famous researchers that have discussed the role of "loose ties" is Granovetter (1973: 76) and he argues that lose ties tend to link people from different groups together whether stronger ties rather tend to be concentrated within particular groups. This aspect of diversity is very important when it has shown that significant progress in the creation of intellectual capital often derives from bringing together knowledge from different sources and disciplines. In other words, networks and the structure represent different facts of social capital that influence the range of information that can be accessed (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 252). It is also important to point out that the social capital that is developed in a certain context such as ties, norms and trusts can also most of the time be transferred from one setting to another and through this affect the pattern of social exchange. This means that an organization created for one aim might provide a source of valuable resources for others different purposes (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 253).

3.8.2 The Relational dimension

According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 254), the relational dimension influences mainly combination and exchange in three ways. These are access to parties, anticipation of value and motivation of parties to engage in knowledge creation through exchange and combination. A wide extent of research shows that in relationship that are high in trust, people are more willing to engage in social exchange in general and most specific in cooperative interaction (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254). For instance, Mitsztal (1996: 10) has observed that trust can both give access to people for exchange of intellectual capital and increase the expectation of value through such exchange. In this process, there is a two-way interaction between trust and cooperation; meaning that trust is a lubricant facilitating cooperation and cooperation breeds trust. This can lead to the development of generalized norms of cooperation and this can in turn increase the willingness to engage in social exchange (Putnam, 1993: 167).

Furthermore, norms of cooperation can establish a strong foundation for the creation of intellectual capital. Coleman (1988: 104) argues "where a norm exists and is effective, it constitutes a powerful though sometimes fragile form of social capital". Obligation is also connected to the relational dimension and can be defined as "a commitment or duty to undertake some activity in the future" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 255). Coleman (1990: 302) distinguishes obligations from generalized norms with the difference that the former is viewed as expectations developed within particular personal relationship. Also Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998: 255) agree with this and believe that in the creation of intellectual capital both the obligations and expectations as well as the motivation are influencing the access to parties for the exchange and combination of knowledge. The same authors agree with the common view that “there is no such a thing as a free lunch” with the meaning that exchange brings with it expectation about future obligations.

The last thing involved in the relational dimension is the identification which is referred to as “the process whereby individuals see themselves as one with other persons or a group of people”. This might be the results from the membership of the group or through the fact the group operates as a reference group. In this sense, identification acts both as the anticipation of value and achieved through combination and exchange as well as for the motivation to combine and exchange knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 255).

3.8.3 The Cognitive dimension

Many scholars agree that innovation often occurs through combination of knowledge and experience and meaningful communication is an essential part of the process and requires at least some sharing of context between parties. According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 253) this sharing can be built up through mainly two ways; through shared language and codes and through sharing of collective narratives.

Firstly, language has an important part function in social relations because it’s used as the resource by which people discuss and exchange knowledge. As long as the people share the language this facilitates the ability to gain access to people and hence the information. On the other hand if the language and codes are different, this keeps people apart and blocks their access (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 253). Secondly, language influences our perception as codes organize the information into perceptual categories and provide a frame of reference for observing and interpreting the environment around. In line with this a shared language provides a common conceptual apparatus for evaluating the likely benefits of exchange and combination within the network infrastructure. Anyway, as already mention in order to develop such concepts the different parties must have some overlap in knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254). Additional, there is not just the language that influence the combination and exchange but also shared myths, stories and metaphors have shown to be important. The shared narratives within the network enable the creation and transfer of new interpretation of events and this also facilitates the combination of different forms of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254).

3.9 Introduction the empirical frame of reference

The second part of the literature review will provide the reader with the knowledge from some of the empirical studies carried out within this research area. The aim with the section is to give an overview of some of the previously studies that later on when analyzing the data will be compared and analyzed with the case study made in this thesis. Pittway et al, (2004: 160) in their article “Networking and innovation: a systematic review of the evidence” mention the four most important articles that have examined the role of third parties in the network infrastructure. The author of this thesis finds two of these beneficial and suitable for this study because the first articles well done examination of the reasons why networks forms and the benefits of third party and the second article´s interesting input regarding the structure and geographical spread of the network.

The other articles mentioned in Pittway et al´s (2004) article were not really up to date since Pittway et al's study was carried out 2004 and consequently from the present author's point of view not considered representative for the latest literature within the field. Because of the changes in the business environment during the last years the author of this thesis found it necessary to add Burt article from 2004 discussing the importance of structural holes to create good ideas. Two more recent articles from Dutch researchers: Kirkels and Duysters (2010) and Van Heck and Vervest (2007) were added to benefit from empirical research discussing different areas under the field of networking. The relevance of these five articles and their contribution to this study will be further elaborated in the following sections.

1. Hanna and Walsh 2002 - Why network forms

The first article was found through Pittway et al´s literature review and has also been cited in many recent studies (Thorgren et al (2009), Miller et al (2007), de Jong &Marsili (2006)). The article is made by Hanna and Walsh (2002) and discusses the reasons why network forms and is from the author´s point of view a representative article for this research area as it discuss many relevant topics such as innovations, competences and the importance of trust.

Hanna and Walsh (2002: 201-202) is in their paper "Small firm networks: a successful approach to innovation?" consider the trend of inter-working between small firms. The authors argues that co-operation in a network gives the small firms the possibility to deliver complex subassemblies and maintain their competitive position. Furthermore, it can also help the small firms to be both innovative and minimize the costs that small firms otherwise rarely will be able to update its portfolio without collaboration. More specific, the empirical study investigates three network brokers in Denmark, Italy and the USA that were funded by the government with the aim to facilitate co-operation between small firms (Hanna and Walsh 2002: 202). The question that is raised in their paper is if the small firms involved in these networks are looking for innovation or the possibility to achieve the business targets? To answer the question the authors are looking at the network from the third parties role and have conducted semi-structured interviews with three network brokers in order to explain why networks form and what factors that make them successful (Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 204).

The findings show, that the broker whose income was paid by the small firms, was very successful in market the firms' expertise and facilitate the co-operation among the firms within the network. This was accomplished through the ways that the broker brought in new orders, coaches new members and the broker was the reference point for both members and the potential customers (Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 204). This is also essential for sharing the ideas between partners in order to examine the possibilities for combining resources.(Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 205). One conclusion to be drawn was that "maintaining the balance of skills within the network is essential to its success"(Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 204).

Furthermore, it was also shown that more than one firm had to be able to trade the same competence but not too many or the membership will lose some of the benefits (Hanna and Walsh 2002: 204). The main requirement for any co-operation proposal was the assessment if the reason for the firm involve is partnership oriented or social oriented. In addition the size of the firms was also shown to be important and the firms with at least 20 employees and a turnover around 2 million British pound was argues to be the appropriate resource to network successfully (Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 205). The trust was also seen to play a significant role and especially if one firm is larger than the others and the broker main task is to build this trust. A key element for the third party in this process is to always remain the independent outsider and this is especially important as the soft issues tend to make or break the network. It was also shown that a broker that had previously had his own company had a unique insight into the factors that persuade the small firms to co-operating (Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 205).

2. Grotz and Braun 1997 – Structure and geographically spread

The second article "Territorial or trans-territorial networking: spatial aspects of technology-oriented cooperation within the German mechanical engineering industry" is complementing the first article and is bringing more focus on different structural environments and examines the relevance of viability of innovation-oriented networks of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). Despite the fact that this article is written in the year of 1997 does the author still see it as up to date as it discuss the important topic about the access to other regional that is also interesting and highly important to consider when looking at the network examined in this thesis.

The authors have in line with the first discussed article carried out in-depth interviews with SMEs of the engineering industry and with regional innovation consultants. The main conclusion is that weak ties and innovation-oriented relationship are more spatially restricted than generally assumed. In fact, the access to interregional contact networks is seen as much more important (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 545).

The finding show that the important weak ties are still based in traditional supplier-customer relationships and in general regional exchange of knowledge and information is more connected the general business issues. Furthermore, the regional co-operation that aims to overcome size problems is very limited and the local environment seems to be important for gathering information whereas innovation and technology-oriented information tend to be more common in interregional networks (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 554-555). Due to these findings, the access to interregional networks is getting much more important as the firms cannot longer rely on their regional economy. In fact, it also shown that the innovation and information behavior is not that different between different regions and the differences can rather be find on the products that the physical location (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 555).

Even more important, the empirical example also shows that it's difficult to encourage the development of integration unless a basic structure is already established. For instance, this structure should include important expertise, skills, finance as well as a socio-cultural and institutional infrastructure. The authors also stress the importance of a long-term perspective in the local network infrastructure and to create this can take much longer than five years (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 555).

3. Burt 2004 – Structural holes and good ideas

The third article is written by Burt (2004) and has gained a lot of attention in recent research (Evans & Lambiotte (2009), Kossinets & Watts (2006), Centola & Macy (2007)) and is in line with Grotz and Braun (1997) also looking at the structure of networking. The hypothesis in Burt's (2004: 349) article "Structural holes and good ideas" is "that people who stand near the holes in a social structure are at higher risk of having good ideas". To examine this hypothesis, the author draw on data describing 673 mangers that ran a supply chain for one of the largest electronic companies in America, the data collected was background data as well as network data (Burt, 2004: 359).

The evidence show, that there were numerous opportunities associated with brokerage. The managers were also rewarded for brokerage as the compensation, positive performance evaluations, and promotions were given to managers who brokered connections across structural holes (Burt, 2004: 386). In fact, people who have relations that cover the structure holes between groups have an advantage in detecting and developing new ideas (Burt, 2004: 389). Furthermore, the result also proved that mangers with a network that spanned structural holes were more likely to express their ideas and share them with others. In line with this, there should be evidence of brokerage being associated with good ideas and in fact, there is. Burt article provides detailed study of processes by which information arbitrage occurs. For instance, it is argued that the people with connection across structural holes have earlier access to different kinds of information and interpretation and this gives them a competitive advantage in seeing and developing ideas. The creativity that is generated is not born of genius but is rather creativity as an import-export business with the belief that an idea seen as routine in one group can be valuable somewhere else (Burt, 2004: 388).

Moreover, this shows that there is a market for the information exchange within the network entrepreneurs and the evidence of their work is that valuable new ideas in any one specialty are often a familiar concept in some distant specialty (Burt, 2004: 388-389). Finally, and of great importance, the results have implications for creativity and the reproduction of social structures in which ideas emerge (Burt, 2004: 387).

4. Kirkels and Duysters 2010 – Identification of the broker

The fourth article has until now not gained the same attention from other researchers as the other three but is consider very relevant as it is carried out in the same environment as this study. Kirkels and Duysters (2010: 375) study is focusing on SME networks and high-tech companies in Southeast Netherlands. The aim with the study is to identify the main brokers in this environment. In spite of the fact that the study is not looking into what the broker actually does, the article gives one of the first empirical contribution to the discussion about the issues of brokerage in SME networks (Kirkels and Duysters, 2010: 384). The study also investigates if specific characteristics are associated with these brokers. Different from previously studies, Kirkels and Duysters (2010: 376) study is quantitative and is focusing on broker identified in an actual network. The authors also states, since they are not limited to a certain sector or broker that the research enables to generate knowledge about brokerage in general. In line with this, the result of this study can be relevant also for other industries in the Netherlands (Kirkels and Duysters, 2010: 383).

The main empirical results shows that the most influential brokers can be find in non-profit organizations and the science sector and have long track of experience in their branch. Brokers were otherwise many times seen as taking too much time and effort and still the involved parties are dissatisfied. (Kirkels and Duysters, 2010: 383). It was also shown that the people in the field seemed not interested in discussing finance but foremost the practical support such as valuable contacts and innovation related information with the third party. More specific, the research implies that the SMEs should most likely get involved in projects in the non-profit or science sector. The investment should also be in the connection with branch experience people with a broad knowledge base. However, the study is also beneficial for non-profit consultant point of view as they often have problems in proving their success (Kirkels and Duysters, 2010: 383).

It is also important to mention that the authors have excluded the foreign subsidiaries in the network as a way to narrowing done the research. The foreign subsidiaries are many times more innovative in comparison to domestic firms. The reason for this is that based on the knowledge transfer from associated companies in addition to local knowledge and this fact can make the foreign subsidiaries into an important partner (Kirkels and Duysters, 2010: 383).

5. Van Heck and Vervest (2007) – Smart business network

A researcher that the author of this thesis got the chance to listen to during one of the events writes the fifth article: a network dinner, organized of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce at Rotterdam School of Management. The article "Smart business networks: How the network wins" is discussing the characteristics of "Smart business networks" and also how digital network has become a reality (Van Heck &Vervest, 2007: 29). The authors are in their article giving examples of companies such as Amazons and Skype and are showing the strong network effect in these platforms. In other words, one of the first points made in the article is that networking today is driven by technology and this creates what the authors call new business network approaches where business network insights are combined with telecommunication capabilities (Van Heck &Vervest, 2007: 32).

Van Heck &Vervest, (2007: 32-33) points out some critical steps in the development of these networks. The first step is "to develop a profound understanding about the functioning of business network". The second step is "to develop a comprehensive understanding of the expected smartness of the business network". Furthermore, the keystones that are found in smart business network are the ability to "pick, plug and play" business processes to be able to meet the specific aims. In short, the success factor in the smart business network is to quickly connect and disconnected with the other actors. The quick connect requires the ability to find the members that can together fulfill the goals. On the other hand, to quickly disconnect is seen as more complex and how this should be done have to be agreed upon while the members are still active (Van Heck &Vervest, 2007: 34). The conclusion of the author is that the traditional network approach lacks the ability of a fast" pick, plug and play" to meet specific requirements. The basis of the new network approach is to allowed the people to act individually according to the joint rules in the network and this is what van Heck &Vervest, (2007: 36) define as "own business logic" of the network. The overall conclusion provided in the last article is that companies must develop and act smart within the network infrastructure and this means for companies foremost to act smarter than competitors (Van Heck &Vervest, 2007: 32).

3.10 Strengths, drawbacks and the theoretical standpoint

The key conclusion drawn from reviewing the existing literature is that the networking approach has during the last decades gained more attention since it has helped to overcome the shortage of the one-factor theories that are too simplistic to explain reality. As discussed, Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998: 256) argues that the parties own the social capital jointly and this creates a relationship with no exclusive ownership rights for individuals. However, as the resources are located within the structures and processes of social exchange the social capital is also influenced by the factors shaping the evolution of the network. Because of this standpoint, this author believes that the theories discussed above are suitable to use for examining the role of third party within the chosen network. Many of the theories are consistent with the resources-based view as they highlights the competitive advantage of organizations as based in their unique constellation of resources (Nahapiet and Ghoshal's, 1998: 260). This is also in line with the opening statement discussed already in the introduction that networks are important since they provides the knowledgebase to be able to find the required resources (Kirkels&Duyster, 2010: 375).

One of the strength with the main framework chosen is that it provides the foundations of a visible structure that can be used to guide the actors that want to build or extend their network and hence their stock of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal's, 1998: 262). The author of this thesis has not found previously studies applying the "Social capital framework" when examining the role of third parties in the process of networking. For the benefit of comparison, it could beneficial to judge this study against other studies carried out with help of the same framework to compare similarities and difference when examining the role of third party. Nevertheless, the author does not see the lack of articles as a drawback but rather as a possibility to provide new knowledge to the third party in the process of networking.

The author added specific empirical studies to the general theoretical frame of reference and these will give insight and provide a more concrete feeling of how the third party can improve their work. The five articles, as seen, all add different information that will be useful in the empirical analysis. Hanna and Walsh (2002) article will be used when discussing why the network has formed and the factors that make a network successful. The second article: Grotz and Braun 1997, will be used when focusing more on the structure of the network and since the conclusion of their article is that weak ties and innovation–oriented relationship are more spatially restricted than general though the geography of the structure will be analyzed further. The third article of Burt (2004) "Structural holes and good ides" shows that the people that have relations that covers the structure holes have an advantage of having good ideas and been arguing around consider the role of third party. The fourth article: Kirkels and Duysters (2010) is in opposite from the other articles focusing on how to identify the broker in the same environment as where this study is carried out and this will give additional value to the study. Finally, the article by Van Heck and Vervest (2007) will also be used when in the end analyzing how “smart” the examined network is when consider the criteria discussed in the article.

All together, the “Social capital framework” and the five empirical studies are considered relevant to use as guidelines in the thesis for the examination of the role of third party in the process of networking and will therefore be used in the empirical analysis.

4. The Data collection and analysis

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 2, the methodology used in this thesis, in order to answer the research question, was based on an interpretivist philosophy. With this in mind, the author thought it is necessary to explain and analyze the data collection as this has in many ways affected the outcome of the thesis. This chapter starts with explaining the research process with the purpose to give the reader an idea of how the study was carried out. This is followed by the respondent selection and sampling techniques and an analysis of the author's participant observations. In addition, the practical explanation of the qualitative interviews and the access problems are examined from a critical point of view. The chapter ends with an explanation of the interview guide.

4.2 Research process

The research process of this work can be dived into three parts; firstly, the preparation in the library at Umeå university, collecting the information and understanding the literature. The second part, making the observations during the period of work at the Swedish chamber of commerce and holding the interview with the chosen people in Amsterdam and finally the process of analyzing the information and finishing the work.

During the first weeks, the author was reviewing the existing literature and engaging with what others has written in the area of research. Backman, (1998: 66) is arguing that to review the literature is one of the most important step in the traditional research approach. The author had in the beginning of the research a few references in mind and these helped to identify a few key words that defined the boundaries of the research area. This research relied on careful reading of journals, books and reports in the first phase (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 107). During the literature review, the author also formulated a suitable research question for the specific case. In the beginning, a very open-ended question was formulated with the risk in mind to collect to much data (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 83). However, the question was refined during the research and revised to fit the specific case better. The first phase finished with a complete frame of reference that was later used when analyzing the collected data.

Secondly, during the research process it became clear to the author that interviews alone would not generate the depth of data required to fully understand and investigate the third parties role within the network infrastructure. The reason for this was that that more data was required regarding the structure and cognitive side of the network and this was harder to receive through the interviews. Therefore, participant observations as well as qualitative analysis of text and documents were used to provide a way to explore how the network operates. These were carried out during the time the author worked at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and helped the author to gain awareness and an understanding of the situations of respondents. The essence of ethnographic research or participant observation is that it allows qualitative researchers to get "inside the minds" of those being studied to understand the values, meanings, motivations and logics which direct the actions (Curran and Blackburn, 2001: 113). In meantime, interviews were arranged with people within the existing network from February until June 2011. In addition, secondary sources were taken into account during the period of work at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce. Finally, during May the author was evaluating and analyzing the empirical data with the help of the literature review and the chosen framework. This resulted in the conclusion that will be provided later on in the thesis. Figure 3 shows the research process in three steps.

Figure 3, The Research process

4.3 Explanation of the observations and the access problems

The author of the thesis spent five months at the Swedish Chamber and was during this period taking note, about the members, their communication and interaction with each other that were summarized in the end of each week in order to find a pattern of the work and behavior of the third pattern. Brief notes were taken directly after observing something interesting and the author tried to be as discrete as possible to not make the studied people self-conscious. One of the key steps in the ethnography is to get access to the settings that are relevant to the research problem (Bryman and Bell. 2007: 444). In the specific case this was not a problem since the author, through the internship, was engaged in the regular interaction with people in their daily life, which opened up the possibility to carry out this research.

The empirical observations were performed during administrative work at the Swedish Chamber´s office such as notes taken of the daily work and the contact with the members. Furthermore, observations were made during mingling, events and company visits. The aim with these observations was both to gain insight of the third parties tasks but also about the members' behavior, relations and the different actions taken. To gain better insight in the communication within the network was also a vital part during the author's observations. The author took, in line with Bryman and Bell (2007: 460), into consideration to observe at different times of the days and of the week. In addition, the conceptual factors, such as the behavior in different locations, was also observed but to a narrow extent. The purpose of doing this was to gain the most coherent picture as possible. The author finished her observation in the beginning of May and had by then about 15 pages of notes taking from different events and meetings. The data was summarized and categorized in to the three dimensions of Social capital and this resulted in 5 pages that can be found under the section "the empirical observation". More, specific the choice to make participant observations brought a wide range of data and was therefore considered appropriate as it contributed to insight to the analysis around the problem statement that had not been possible to gain through just interviews. This data could be about issues that the people did to mention or by purpose left out during the interviews. Qualitative research, based on observations requires understanding and cooperation between the researcher and the participant (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003: 106). This understanding was gained through the fact that the author tried to get as close as possible to the research objective. One of the drawbacks of being so close to the research object could have been that the author after a while started to recognize things as normal and stopped taking notes about some things that were consistently happening. This was something that the author took in to consideration and sometimes the same observed things were written done again in order to make sure that no pattern was taken for granted. Furthermore, the author also assume that if another researcher would have done an ethnography within the same case the result would probably not have been the same and this is also something that should be kept in mind. To overcome this shortcoming, the author has tried to not make any analysis of the data during the collecting process and has kept the data as unsoiled as possible.

4.4 Respondent selection and sampling techniques

As already mentioned, the purpose of the study is to develop theories, not to test them and therefore, convenient sampling is appropriate. In short, in convenient sampling the case is selected because it is suitable for enlightening and extending relationship and logic among constructs (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 27). Many of the issues concerning sampling are more or less equally for both ethnographic research and qualitative interviews therefore, in what is following the process and concerns regarding the sampling techniques will be discussed together (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 497). Convenience sampling can be considered a kind of strategic sample, because the researcher involves the people that are out there, and who have relevant insight into the phenomena under study. The researcher may also add more people to the sample depending on what kind of information that is needed to answer the research question. In this method is it not important how many people that are involved and how they are similar or different from each other but the important part is to find a pattern of the research objective and to explain this (Frost, 1997: 108-109).

The sampling was carried out in several steps. Firstly and as stated earlier, the studied network was chosen because of the fact that the author was doing an internship for the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands. The author was already before leaving Sweden getting in touch with the General Manger of the business network with the request of selecting the specific network for this study. As this was seen to be beneficial to the Swedish Chamber and to the purpose of the thesis, the selection of the specific case was easy to make. The third party within this network was also known to be very active which facilitate the work to identify the role of the third party in the network infrastructure.

Secondly, the author discussed with her Manger the selection of companies suitable to interview in order to answer the research question. The author did not set up any criteria for what kind of company to involve in the interview and before she had spent some time in the environment where the study was carried out. Instead, this was decided after some weeks working for the Swedish Chamber and depended on what kind of members companies that in combination would provide the most holistic picture of the network. As the table shows, in appendix 2, the chosen companies are both Swedish/Dutch, larger/smaller and are found in a wide range of industries. In most of the qualitative studies is it important to get the biggest possible variety within the sample, but with not too many “extreme” or “irregular” people (Frost, 1997: 105). In line with this, the author together with her manager was choosing both Swedish and Dutch companies, smaller and bigger companies and companies from different branches.

Thirdly, the respondents for the interviews were selected from the chosen companies and the persons asked to participate in the interviews are registered as the companies contact person for each of the chosen member companies. These are the persons from each company that has most contact with the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and were therefore seen as suitable persons to choose as the respondents for the interviews. According to Frost (1997: 110) it is the time and cost together with the purpose of the study that decides how many respondents to select and how many interviews that should be done in qualitative research. The exact numbers of respondents were in the end not showing to be that important but rather to remain a high quality on each interview that was performed.

In contrast to quantitative methods, where a statistic sample most of the time is done before beginning the study, the sample and statistic criteria in a qualitative study can change during the process (Backman, 2008: 59). In line with this, the selection of the respondents explained above was being done after the author had made observations for some weeks. Summarizing, the most important part in the respondent selection was to make sure that the data gained from the respondents was suitable to answering the research question. A table with the final selection of respondents and the date and time of the interview is shown in Appendix 2.

4.5 Explanation of the interviews and the access problems

The two research methods; interviews and observations differ from each other and were in the specific thesis complimenting each other in a very good way. First, the observations, tended in practice to be very much a like a conversation and could be based on just a single or a few questions that were asked very freely (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 474). This research method was mainly used spontaneously when the author got the chance to talk to people within the network. The semi-structured interviews on the other hand were shown to be more structured and the researcher had a list of questions, or in other words an interview guide, with the specific topics to discuss (Frost, 1997: 19). During the research process 7 qualitative interviews were performed and these were also complimenting the empirical observations since these kind of interviews are more focused and helped to address more specific issues that can be seen in the bracelets when looking at the interview guide (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 479)

Bryman and Bell, (2007: 481) argues that interview is very much a two-way process and this means that both parties are gaining something beneficial out of it. In line with this, in the email sent to the participants (see Appendix 4), the author explained that the study will later on be used of the Swedish Chamber for marketing and improvement processes and that their contribution therefore will be beneficial for both the Swedish Chamber and the members.

Interviews are often concerned with how the people are thinking, acting and feeling and in this circumstance are it important to direct the discussion with the interview guide in mind (Frost, 1997: 34). In this case is it important that the researcher is listening carefully and that the questions are not seen as questioning from the interviewee's point of view (Frost, 1997: 36). With this in mind, the author started the interview by introducing herself and the purpose of the interview. This was followed by a small talk to gain a good connection and thereafter the actually interview could start. Many of the interviews begun or were followed by a "company visit" which allowed for a more relaxed conversion with the respondent and enabled the author to develop an "overall feeling" of the organization. Which interviews that included a company visit can be seen in Appendix 2.

Research also shows that the environment where the interview is hold also influences the outcome of the interviews. As Frost (1997: 41-42) explains; it is important that the environment is good for holding the interview. Furthermore, Frost explains a good environment as a place without interruption and that the respondent is feeling as comfortable as possible. All the interviews were carried out at the companies' offices as this was seen as most convenient for the respondents. The environment was most often quite and the participants had taken time for attending the interviews. It happened very seldom, that the respondents got interrupted and if it happened did they fast get back to the interview question. The respondents were actively taking part in the interviews with long and elaborating answers were they often gave concrete examples from their own experience of the network. The respondents understood most of the questions easily and the author did not often have to explain and repeat the question again.

4.6 Interview guide

Already during the development of the literature review the author started to think about questions to include in the interview guide. The aims with these questions were to provide the author with information to answering the research question addressed in the beginning of the thesis. Since the author was carrying out semi-structured interviews and also empirical observations the interview guide was also kept in the authors' mind during the observations in order to gain the right data needed for answering the research question.

The interview guide was conducted and structured with help of the "Social capital framework". The three dimensions; Structural, Relational and Cognitive - provided in the beginning the headings for what questions to ask. However, the questions were all related to the main purpose to answer the research questions. It is also important to mention that the questions were in the reality not shown to be as structured as listed in the literature guide. Further some of the questions gave information to more than one dimension. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 3 and is structure under the following headings:

1. Background
2. The structural dimension
3. The cognitive dimension
4. The relational dimension
5. Added value

Background: The background questions were important as they provide the context and elicit mainly the structural dimension of social capital. Furthermore, the author also saw the aim with the background to provide information about the already existing social capital within the network. This was important data to add to the author's empirical observations that had been done during the first weeks at the chamber.

Structure: Additionally, under the structural dimension, questions were added in order to identify more in detail how the relationship and ties between people were structured. The questions asked provided information about the density, connectivity and hierarchy within the network.

Relations: The questions under the relational dimension had the main aim to identify how the relationship between the actors look like in the network therefore were questions about trust, norms, obligations and identification asked. To also ask questions about specific shared myths, stories and metaphors in the network were used to get a more precise and descriptions rather than a general opinion.

Cognitive: The question about building a shared meaning was where the focus was under the cognitive dimension as there can be value gained through learning and sharing meanings. In order to gain answers about this was questions regarding topics such as shared codes, language and narratives asked.

Benefit: Finally, interview questions under the last section were instead of asking directly about the knowledge rather focusing on what people had learned from the other members of the network. This provided an idea of what kind of value that was gained from the relationships or in other words what new intellectual that was created. Overall the "Social capital framework" was holistic enough to create an interview guide that could bring knowledge to be able to answering the research question and this structure was also facilitated the process of structuring the data and later on the analysis.

4.7 The process of empirical analysis

As, will be seen in the next chapter, transcripts and notes are raw data of research and cannot provide explanations. Therefore, the author had to make sense of the collected data by sifting and interpreting the collected material (Pope et al (2000: 114). The author started her analytical process, in meantime as the data was collected. In the beginning, the empirical observations and the secondary data were building the foundation of the analysis and that answers from the interviews were used to build up the statements. This is called a sequential or interim analysis and allows the researcher to go back and refine questions and pursue emerging avenues of inquiry in further depth (Pope et al (2000: 114).

The step from the empirical observations and the empirical analysis is clearly shown as the author firstly, in the empirical observations provided the data in a static way without showing how the third party is actually influencing the process of network. Secondly, in the analysis the data was analyzed from a process perspective were the contribution of the third party gained the focus. The frame of reference helped to guide the analysis and the author has as far as possible tried to build up the opinions with theoretical as well as empirical theories. It is impossible for the researcher to not add a particular perspective to the research objective under the study. Nevertheless, the author has as far as possible tried to “let the text talk” without putting in a meaning that is not there (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003: 106).

The relevant data for each category was identified through a process called comparison, where each item was checked and compared with the rest of the data to establish analytical categories (Pope et. Al, 2000: 114). Nevertheless, the author made sure that the theories were not followed to strict and all tried to come up with her own explanation in order to give new contribution to the research about the third party in the networking infrastructure. This approach required a coherent and systematic approach from the author where the different kinds of collected data were combined.

The author wanted to give all respondents equal space in the analysis and all interviewees answers have therefore been taken into the analysis. When the empirical analysis had started to gain shape, the last interviews were used to get additional data about aspects that were unclear or not explored enough. This way of working gave the author a holistic view of the case and she assumed when the seventh interview was done that she had enough data in order to answer the problem statement.

The author decided to summarize the analysis in a table to give the reader of the thesis the opportunity to easily see the evidence emerging from the analysis. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007: 29) state “A separate table that summarizes the evidence for each theoretical construct is a particular effective way to present the case evidence”.

5. Empirical observations

In this chapter the empirical data collected during the author's work at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce will be presented. The data is structured under three sections: Background, Participant observations and Qualitative interviews. The background will mainly include the secondary sources that will bring the understanding of the network to the empirical analysis. The second section will provide the data collected through the participant observations and this process has progressed during the events and activities organized of the third party. Finally, the third section will give the qualitative data with the respondents' answers from the interviews. The background will first be provided and the data in the following sections will be divided into three dimensions of social capital: Network structure, Social dimension and Cognitive dimension.

5.1 Introduction to the background

The background provides the reader of the thesis with an overview of the Swedish Chamber and the necessary information to understand how the organization is structured to reach the mission of the business network. The parts that will be explained are the overview of the network, the mission, the administration, the program and the communication and media strategy. The author will also introduce some of the terms used within the network that she also will come back to in the following two sections. An overall structure of the network can be seen in figure 4.

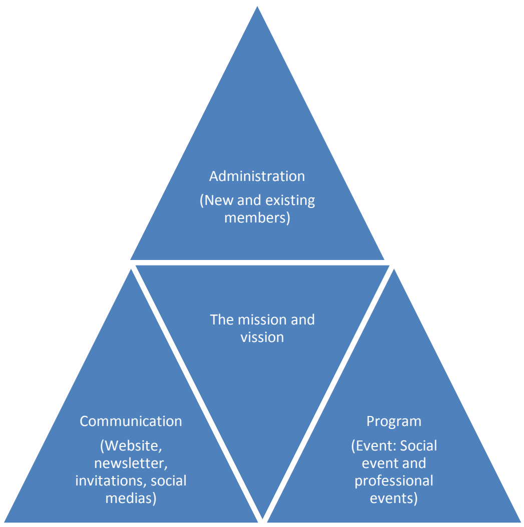


Figure 4, The structure of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce

5.1.1 Overview of the network

The Swedish Chamber is an independent, non-profit networking organization founded in 1960. The organization is funded entirely by its members and the revenue is generated by activities arranged by the Swedish Chamber. The Swedish Chamber is open for Swedish and

Dutch companies in the Netherlands with a relation to Sweden, Swedish products or services. Currently 157 company members are registered within the network ranged from multinational companies to single entrepreneurs. Within the companies, the contact persons that most of the time is attending the organized events, ranges from CEO to CFO, HR Manager, Market Manager, Sales Manager or responsible persons for the business contacts with Sweden.

Next to the Swedish Chamber a Young Professional Club – Junior Chamber Club (JCC) was established in 2006. JCC is open for Swedish persons in the aged 25-35 working in the Netherlands or for Dutch persons in the same age working in a Swedish company or with another relation to Sweden. Furthermore, JCC is led by a committee and has about 100 members (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce). The JCC has many things in common with the Swedish Chamber but the structural, relational and cognitive dimensions are found to be very different and would require its own study. As a consequence, the contribution of the third party to JCC is not taken into consideration in this thesis.

5.1.2 The Mission

The Swedish Chamber differs from the Swedish Trade Councils as it does not work with consultancy regarding trade issues related to import and export but rather serves as a network organization (Swedish Trade 2010). More in detailed the mission with the network is to**:**

- To provide a business and social platform and to facilitate business opportunities within the network
- To promote business between Sweden and the Netherlands and between the member companies within the Swedish Chamber
- Create and promote a Swedish - Dutch business network
- Generate and maintain profitable business contacts for the Swedish Chamber of Commerce (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce, 2011)

The member companies pay a yearly member fee depending on how many employees the company has and is in return getting access to the Swedish-Dutch business network, the Young Professional (JCC), the possibility to host events and they receive invitation to the Swedish Chamber’s events and activities.

5. 1.3 The administration

The Swedish Chamber is run by a General Manger; policy and operational responsible for the running of the organization and approximately 4-6 Swedish interns every year. The interns are assisting with administrative issues and are also attending all the events. During the spring of 2011, one of the interns is assisting the General Manager in event managing, marketing, PR and office administration as well as in the production of the digital newsletter and is also keeping the website updated. The second intern is in charge of running the Junior Chamber Club (JCC) including organizing events and taking care of the administration of the JCC. Since the start 2006, has the Swedish Chamber invited 23 trainees to work at the office in Amsterdam. The aim with the office is to reach out and serve the members in the best possible way by arranging events, providing marketing opportunities and introduction to new business contacts and opportunities.

The Swedish Chamber is governed by the Boards of Directors supporting the business network in various ways. The Board is elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. The Board exists of twelve members from some of the larger Swedish companies for instance IKEA, SCA Packaging, Iggesund Paperboard, in the Netherlands and also some of the Dutch member companies as Heussen and Rotterdam School of Management. The Ambassador of Sweden in the Netherlands, Mr. Håkan Emsgård, is the honorary chair man of the Board. The Swedish Chamber also includes a Board of Recommendation and five honorary members that all have been a part of the business network for many years. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in April each year. During this meeting is the information provided regarding the audited financial statement and an overview of the year's events and the organization is also given in an annual report.

5.1.4 The Swedish Chamber of Commerce program

One way for the Swedish Chamber to reach out to their members and create and deepen relationships is through the program with activities which includes professional and social events. The Swedish Chamber’s aim with these activities is to offer its members an opportunity to network with small, midsize and multinational companies from different industries. Some of the events that are organized are networks luncheons with prominent key-note speakers as well as seminars to exchange knowledge and experiences. Another event that is coming back regularly is “Company presentation” where the member companies get the chance to present their businesses. Also study visits are organized to different companies or organization and once a year is a Study trip to various regions of Sweden are organized. Additional to this, cultural and social events are held, for instance traditional Cray fish dinner, Midsummer and Lucia celebration.

5.1.5 Communication and Media

To reach out with the information to the members a clear “Communication and Media strategy” is defined by the Swedish Chamber’s management and Board and accomplished by the manager. Today, the number of contact persons receiving invitations to the Swedish Chamber’s events, news and information is around 300 persons. The members are informed by different kinds of media mostly depending on the kind of information and event that is addressed. The Swedish Chamber wants with the communication strategy to ensure that the right target groups are reached with the accurate message. Experiences have shown that the best way to acquire and maintain new contacts is through the members’ involvement in the Swedish Chamber's networking events. These events also provide the members with an opportunity to influence and increase their exposure in the network by attending, hosting or sponsoring an event. The media used are the website, digital newsletter, digital or printed newsletters and innvitions, an annual magazine and social media as Facebook and Linkedin (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010). Because of the fact that all these media are used in different way will each media be explained separately in the following section.

1. Website

The current Swedish Chamber’s website (www.swedishchamber.nl) was launched in January 2009 and is used for keeping the members updated of all events and news of the Swedish Chamber and to information about new and existing members. The website is also used for keeping the members informed about other thing that is going on in the Netherlands that people with connection to Sweden can be interested of. The website has a special section for members with a log-in function. With help of this function is it possible to access to contact information to the other members of the Swedish Chamber and to digital register for the events. It´s also possible for the member companies to make advertisement or put other information on the website which has many frequent visitors (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010).

2. The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Digital Newsletter

The Swedish Chamber’s digital newsletter: “Swe-News” is distributed to all company members, contact persons, other Chambers in Sweden and worldwide about eight times a year. The purpose with the newsletter is to gain interest for the Swedish Chamber’s website with short articles in the newsletter and a direct link to the website for more information. This method also increases the hits on the website which can be used for marketing purpose when selling advertisement on the webpage. The newsletter also gives information about the new members that have joined the network and the member companies have the possibility to publish advertisement in “Swe-News” (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010).

3. Invitations

As already mentioned, supposedly the most used way to acquire and maintain new contacts is through the member’s involvement in the events. To provide information about these events invitations to the Swedish Chamber´s and JCC events are sent digital and sometimes with a printed support letter. The layout of the invitations is important and the information is sometimes sent on colored or thicker paper to gain the members attention. Flayers with invitations are also being handed out during the events to inform about the next or the upcoming events (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010).

4. Annual Magazine

Once a year, the Swedish Chamber’s magazine is published with news and interviews of the member companies and the Swedish Chamber. The magazine is used both to inform new possible members about the business network and its activities but also to keep the existing members informed about the past events and the member activities. A member list were all the companies are stated is also a part of the magazine and new member companies are presented as well as the Patron companies. Additionally, some of the Managing Directors of the member companies are interviewed about the latest trends. The entire magazine had for 2010 the theme “Innovation and sustainability” and was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Swedish Chamber. The magazine shows a touch of Sweden and the Swedish Chamber´s work in the Netherlands (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010).

5. **Linkedin and Facebook**

For some years, Linkedin and Facebook are also used to keep the members informed about the latest news and the events are announced through these media. The Linkedin group is exclusively used for the members of the Swedish Chamber with about 100 members and the Young professionals (JCC) has a Facebook group where almost everyone in JCC is a member. The use of Social Medias for marketing purpose has just started and is going to be used more frequently as a way to reach out to the members and to attract new members (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce Magazine 2010).

5.2 Introduction to the participant observations

This section will provide the reader of the thesis with the participant observations. The observations have been done through looking at the network from three dimensions: the structural, the relational and the cognitive dimension. The author has as far as possible tried to support her observations with examples that are observed from mainly watching the different members within the network. As, already mentioned, the data will be presented under the three headlines to facilitate the empirical analysis in the next section. Under each section are also three or four theoretical terms used that have guided the collection of the data.

5.2.1 The Network Structure

1. **Density**

When taking a closer look at the network, there are 156 members to be found and about 261 contact persons registered within the network who all receives the information and invitations that are sent from the Swedish Chamber. Approximately 70 % of these companies are Swedish or have Swedish mother companies and 30 % are Dutch companies. The member companies are located all over the Netherlands with the area around Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague as the predominantly areas. The smallest number of member companies is located in the Northern part of the Netherlands. A few companies are also located in Belgium, Sweden or in other European countries (The Swedish Chamber of Commerce). According to the author’s observation, one group of members of the business network is attending the events no matter of the geographically location of the events. The other members are taking into consideration where the event is held and prefer some geographically locations better than others. As the Swedish Chamber´s program shows, the organization tries to arrange events at different geographically locations to provide the opportunity for everyone to attend the arrangements.

When observing the business network it is obvious that the members get access to each other through the events. The first contacts are created at the events and some companies are then calling the office for more information or contact details. Even though the office is open and possible to visit was it during the author’s time working for the network few people visiting without notice and most of the meetings are booked in advance. When looking back at the meetings held, it is clear that the Manager of the Swedish Chamber most often visit the companies´ office to make it most convenient for the members of the business network.

2. Hierarchy

The statistics shows, that in the Swedish Chamber most of the companies found are middle sized and larger companies. At the moment, 15 of the members are ZZP companies[2], these were not allowed in the Swedish Chamber before but have now the possibility to sign up for a membership with a reduced member fee. These companies are according to the author´s observations foremost becoming a member with the aim to gain more Swedish business contact or because they want to start to export to the Swedish market. Of the member companies 29 of these are Patron companies, most of them larger multinationals, signifying their support of the Swedish Chamber's activities. For this group is a special program realized often in co-operation with the Swedish Ambassador in the Netherlands. This group has according to the General Manger, increased each year, since the patronship established in 2004. The authors observations shows that this group receives a lot of attention and there logotypes are found on the Swedish Chamber's banner, website and sometimes in other advertisements. According to the author's observations, the Patron companies are also attending many of the events and are active in talking to other members and sharing their experiences. Notable is also that most of the Patron companies are large international companies with a Swedish mother company in common but most of the contacts persons that are attending the events have a Dutch or other foreign background.

3. Connectivity

The network also includes the relationship with the other Nordic countries´ Business Clubs. The General Managers of the Swedish, Danish and Finnish Chambers' of Commerce have meets twice a year where they keep each other updated about the latest news and the future events. At least once a year, each of the Nordic Business Clubs should also arrange one event to where they can invite the other countries members. The author of the thesis, was attending one of the Nordic meetings with an open atmosphere where the wish to share the common experience was easy to identify during the discussions. The Swedish Chamber has the most active network when looking at the numbers of events organized each year and is the only business network with its own office that is working full-time with supporting its members. The same collaboration as between the Nordic countries is also seen between some of the Swedish organizations in the Netherlands for instance between the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, the Swedish Trade Council, the Swedish Embassy and Visit Sweden. The Swedish organizations have in line with the Nordic Business Clubs meetings a few times every year to share each other's experience and the different agendas.

Even though the members explain, when the author has been asking them, that they appreciate the business events more than the social events; the statistics show something else. Information from the Swedish Chamber shows that the social events are the most popular with the traditional Lucia Celebration as the most appreciated event with most people attending. Most of the members are, according to the internal statistics from the Swedish

[2] Dutch term for companies with only one employee

Chamber, attending 1-2 events each year and almost 25 % are so active that they attend 3-5 events a year. Nevertheless, one fourth of the members are not attending any events and these people are according to the General Manger not active at all. It is obvious according to the authors observations that the members attending one event tend to also participate at the following event.

5.2.2 The Relational Dimension

1. **Trust**

The relational dimension of the business network shows that the sharing of experience during the events is very good and the interest for the other members' knowledge and experience is large. The author thinks that this was especially possible to observe at the events organized with the purpose to create a discussion about a certain topic for instance "The Coach Pub" and "Networking dinner". These events have been structured more like seminars and workshops where for instance during the Coach Pub the members got the chance to coach each other in a structured way with help of a moderator. During the networking dinner was also a presentation about network being a bridge to certain topics that were discussed and experiences were shared about Social Medias and the benefit of Facebook. The participant observations showed that the members were actively taking part in the discussions during these events that also spontaneously continued after the end time. On these events, has the Swedish Chamber tried to get a balance of more experienced people and younger people with new insights. Additional emails with a remainder of the event were sent to some of the members to receive this mix of people. The sharing of experience was made in a non-competitive way and the discussion sometime got very deep. On the other hand, the sharing of knowledge and experiences between the companies is true to a certain extend and the author of the thesis has not managed to observe any concrete discussions about business co-operation. Nevertheless, the author has heard from the members that when regular discussing is turning into more serious plans, those are being discussed between fewer people and outside the meeting platforms organized by the Swedish Chamber.

2. **Obligations**

The obligations are very high within the Swedish Chamber and it´s possible to observe a constantly change of business cards. When asking the members if the members are keeping their promises most of them agree that that this is true to a wide extend. The obligation from the Swedish Chamber´s office to their members is also very high and the office is after each event sending out the contact details to the members that have requested that information. The obligations from the Swedish Chamber to the members are also maintained through that the office makes sure that it always provides what states in the invitation. That the Swedish Chamber's finical and administrative obligations are fulfilled get approved by the Board and also yearly at the Annual General Meeting. The General Manger is very open with the information to her Board members and the transparency in the business network makes it possible to recognize that the obligations are completed in the way that was decided.

3. Norms

The transparency also characterizes the norms and attitudes within the business network. More concrete, the norms are, from the authors observations, based on typical Swedish values such as corporate social responsibility, Sustainability and Environmental thinking. These values establish a strong foundation and the topics can be observed in the discussions during the events. The observations during the author's attendance in lunches and dinners shows that the environment is most of the time formal influenced of the norms for how to run businesses. Nevertheless, the discussions also include a touch of humor and self-reflection where the members like to share their stories and happenings.

4. Identification

It is also clear that the identification to the Swedish Chamber is most obvious between the Patron companies that have a certain relationship to each other and to the Swedish Chamber. This close relationship can be seen as the patrons often relate and give examples about each other during the discussions at the events. That the Patrons are identifying themselves with the business network is also possible to see from their high attendance during the events were they through the participation give priority to the Swedish Chamber. The author did not get the chance to attend any of the events organized specific for the Patron companies but have heard and understood through concrete examples from the events that the trust, norms, obligations and identification between the members at these events are very strong.

The identification bringing the members together is also increasing on the social events such as the Swedish traditional holidays as this are exclusive in this network and not possible to experience in other network that not has Sweden as the common link. The fact that members also bring their partner to these events creates a deeper relation and consequently also increasing possibilities to identify with other members.

5.2.3 The Cognitive Dimension

1. Communication

The cognitive dimension was the most difficult dimension to observe in the Swedish Chamber due to the wide ranch of members. The cognitive side of the members is also closely linked to the personality and depends on which members were observed and in what kind of settings the observations were carried out.

According to the author's observations, the different native languages within the business network were not seen as a problem as English most of the time is the used language. When listings to the members' discussions are many of them related to Sweden and this is often the starting topic that later leads to other discussions. The cognitive dimension of the Swedish Chamber also includes the communication between the Swedish Chamber and its members.

At the moment, the approach that the office uses is mass communication where the Swedish Chamber sends digital and paper invitations to all members registered on the invitation list. The members also receive one or two reminder about the event the week before or the same week as the event will be held. The other media used to reach the members of the Swedish Chamber are described more in detailed under the section about the background. During the author's time in the Netherlands, did some members mention that the Swedish Chamber is sending out too much information and this is not appreciated from all members because they do not have time to read everything. Other member told the author that they do not like the huge amount of paper used.

2. Shared codes

The author has paid a lot of attention to the culture differences when making the observations of the Swedish Chamber. What the author found was that the cultural differences within the network were not shown to be as big as the author would have thought and it was not possible to observe that these influenced the business network in a specific way. On the other hand, the culture differences are something that people like to discuss during dinners but are nothing that can be seen as a barrier for the communication but rather something that brings the members together within the network. When the author observed the culture of the network is it clear that Sweden is the common link for the members and this is what is gaining the most attention. The Swedish link includes shared code and many of the members were proud of the Swedish connection and want to maintain their roots. The specific culture that is also a shared code within the network is characterized by transparency as all members in their discussions are open and willing to share the knowledge and experiences.

3. Narratives

Besides the shared language and codes within the network, the author has tried to see if the members have any shared narratives such as myths, stories and metaphors that could facilitates the process of networking. The first thing the author observed was that the Patron members have some common myths and stories from their meetings that provide powerful means such as experience from company visits that they have attended together. The second thing the author observed was that the members joining the study trips to Sweden have also more common stories and experiences from the study trips that bring the members together. The observations done regarding the narratives are on the other hand just common for sub group within the Swedish Chamber. When looking at the entire network, the author has observed that the common narrative is also created through the members' link to Sweden that has been discussed under the section above. During the author's internship at the Swedish Chamber, it was easy to recognize that the traditional Lucia celebration is something that almost all members has as a main narrative and this tradition is creating stories and metaphors, about for instance the great Swedish food, that the members discuss during the other events.

6. Qualitative interviews

6.1 Introduction

In the final section the answers from the interviews are presented. The focus has been on the respondents' opinion of the business network. The answers will be presented separately under each person's name and company in order to keep them apart and highlight each person's opinion about the network. The qualitative interviews are following the same structure – Network structure, Social dimension and Cognitive dimension - as the presentation of findings from the participant observations and these headings can also be found in the interview guide. Additionally, has also a section for improvement been added that will be used later on for the secondary purpose of the thesis to provide suggestion for improvement to the third party.

6.2 Interview BNConnect B.V, Mr. T.H.J Hoefman

The first interview was held with Mr. T.H.J Hoefman, CEO of BNConnect B.V, which is providing new corporate energy services such as Led lamps. Mr. Hoefman became a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in 2008 and joined the network with the purpose to gain more Swedish business contacts. Mr. Hoefman is an active member as well as a Patron[3] *of the Swedish Chamber and is attending a wide ranch of events each year.*

1. **The Network structure**

Mr. Hoefman considers that the most important task of the Swedish Chamber's office is to act as a connecting factor between the members and to organize various business events where the members can meet and share their experiences. These events are, according to Mr. Hoefman most beneficial if they are organized in different settings and hold by companies from different sectors and branches. In the near future, Mr. Hoefman would also like to organize a company presentation of his own in order to create even more business opportunities through the network. Mr. Hoefman own networking approach is to actively search for new business contacts within the network

Mr. Hoefman thinks that the balance between smaller and larger companies within the network is relatively good, but he also mentions that larger companies have more power than smaller enterprises. He thinks that some of the smaller companies might be intimidated by the prominent role of the multinational Patron companies. This could give the smaller companies the feeling that their contribution is less important to the network. On the other hand, the fact that Mr. Hoefman is the owner of a smaller company has not been a problem to him as he has a lot of experience and competence from working with larger companies.

[3] Companies supporting the Swedish Chamber of Commerce's goals and activities

Mr. Hoefman regards the fact that the Swedish Chamber is a non-profit organization as something positive and this helps the Swedish Chamber to be neutral. Overall, he believes that the Swedish Chamber is a successful independent outsider in the process of networking. The fact that the Swedish Chamber managed to provide prominent keynote speakers such as Mr. Victor Müller, CEO SAAB is adding value to the network. To Mr. Hoeffman social events such as midsummer are of less importance but he realizes that those events are a good way to create trust and a way to get to know each other under more informal circumstance. He has participated in various study trips to Sweden organized by the Swedish Chamber and explains that these trips create excellent possibilities to meet new business contacts and to exchange mutual business experiences. The informal atmosphere characterizing these trips in combination with business presentations is also something that Mr. Hoefman believes describes the Swedish Chamber of Commerce very well.

2. The Relational dimension

According to Mr. Hoefman, the Swedish Chamber offers a transparent business culture which explains the nice atmosphere within the network where people can exchange business experiences and create new business opportunities. He also mentioned that a strong point in the Swedish Chamber of Commerce network structure, compare to other business networks, is that the members are not only creating business contact but they also build a genuine social network. Mr. Hoefman does not see any competition between the companies in the network and think that the reason for this is that most of the companies are active in different industries. The only competition he could think of within the network might be found between companies such as SAAB and Volvo that are competing in the same branch.

3. The Cognitive dimension

A binding factor within the network is that all members have a business connection to Sweden. According to Mr. Hoefman this is very important and brings the members closer together. This is also the reason why the business culture differences between the companies within the network are much smaller compared to outside the network. When asking Mr. Hoefman what he thinks about the possibility to share and exchange experiences within the network, he thinks there is room for improvement. In his view it’s of course a matter of communication and trust. Mr. Hoefman believes in a transparent network organization without hierarchy where you meet regularly gives the most value for everyone.

4. Improvement

When asking about how the Swedish Chamber can improve, their services for their members, Mr. Hoefman has a clear answer and says: “The Swedish Chamber could fulfill a role as an intermediary between the government and co-operate companies”. As it is today, there is a big gap between the government and the cooperate companies and according to Mr. Hoefman this causes unnecessary problems. Another though from Mr. Hoefman was that the member companies of the Swedish Chamber could co-operate in creating a platform for social responsibility and support for instance charity organizations or to share knowledge about sustainability.

6.3 Interview Inter IKEA Systems B.V, Mr. Ehsan Turabaz

The second interview was held with Mr. Ehsan Turabaz, Manager International Sales Department Inter IKEA Systems B.V in Delft. Inter IKEA Systems B.V has been a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce since many years. Mr. Turabaz is an active member and according to him the membership is important to maintain the Swedish roots. Mr. Turabaz believes in the importance of networking and personally he is connected to 22 different organizations.

1. The Network structure

Mr. Turabaz complements the organization of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and according to him the office most important task is to organize events. In important task is to attract prominent high level key note speakers from politic and industrial fields. Additionally, Mr. Turabaz is very enthusiastic and impressed that the Swedish Chamber of Commerce Board of Recommendations includes: Mr. Jeroen van der Veer **(**Chairman of the Board of ING and Philips and non-executive director at Shell), Mr. Michael Treschow (Chairman of the Board of Unilever and Ericsson) and Mr. Björn Skala (Former Ambassador of Sweden in the Netherlands and finds most beneficial for this kind of business network organization. Above all, Mr. Turabaz is positive to the social events that the Swedish Chamber organizes such as the traditional Swedish Lucia celebration. These kinds of social events give the members the chance to meet and get to know each other under informal circumstances which is beneficial both for both business and pleasure. Mr. Turabaz for himself does not need the Swedish Chamber of Commerce directly for business reasons but to maintain the Swedish roots and this is also a way to promote the IKEA brand and according to him also other companies are joining the Swedish Chamber because of the same reason.

When asking Mr. Turabaz about the balance regarding the mix of the sizes of the member companies, he is satisfied with the spread and explains that the Swedish Chamber includes both larger international, middle size and small companies and these are all complements each other in a good way. He explains that he also, as a representative from a large international company, has a responsibility to help and support smaller companies. Networking is according to Mr. Turabaz about give and share experiences. Mr. Turabaz believes that the fact that Swedish Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization also adds value and helps the Swedish Chamber to be independent.

2. The Relational dimension

From Mr. Turabaz point of view, the Swedish Chamber is a transparent and open business network which makes the members enthusiastic to support the network. Mr. Turabaz also points out that the members, when joining the Swedish Chamber, know what they get; the invoice is sent before the event and the invitation clearly shows what is included in the price. Mr. Turabaz finds the Swedish Chamber a non-hierarchic organization with very easy access to all the members and board members and a very nice atmosphere. This is also significant for the office, where the General Manger Ms. Gerlagh as a network coordinator of the Swedish

Chamber makes a great job also in managing the trainees who are very open and welcoming as well. The informal and friendly approach by the office is also something that Mr. Turabaz appreciates.

3. The Cognitive dimension

Mr. Turabaz explains that the common focus of the members of the Swedish Chamber is Sweden, which provides the members with a mutual identity. When asking about the culture differences, Mr. Turabaz does not recognize any, all though the member companies are of different nationalities. He would not have seen them as a problem anyway as the members have a mutual business focus. During the interview, Mr. Turabaz makes several comparisons with the Swedish Chamber and the IKEA organization and the importance that both have Swedish business focus: “the Swedishness”. To promote the “Swedishness’ is adding value to both the Swedish Chamber and to the IKEA organization. When it comes to sharing information and exchange experiences within the network, Mr. Turabaz thinks it’s a question of trust and always depends on the personal contact. In Mr. Turabaz opinion, the atmosphere within the Swedish Chamber business network encourages to open relations and to share information.

4. Improvement

When asking about how the Swedish Chamber could improve their services for their members, Mr. Turabaz points out that according to his opinion, the Swedish organizations in the Netherlands should all benefit from an increased co-operation, and this will add an even higher value to the network. In the current situation, Mr. Turabaz thinks that the different organizations operate too much separately which leads to a waste of resources. In line with this, he would also like to see a closer co-operation between the Nordic countries since this would extend the network with new contacts.

Additionally, according to Mr. Turabaz too many activities are organized each year and the members do not have the time to attend them all. Instead, Mr. Turabaz would like to suggest to the Swedish Chamber of Commerce to organize fewer events, for instance six per year to increase the quality even more. He is also suggesting that the Swedish Chamber of Commerce conduct a member survey in end of each year to ask the members about the opinion of the events and the job being done during the last year. Mr. Turabaz also believes that this will increase the commitment of the members even more and give them a possibility to influence and improve the quality of the Swedish Chamber.

6.4 Interview Iggesund Paperboard, Mrs. Ann-Charlotte Runn

The third interview is held with Mrs. Ann-Charlotte Runn Manger Human Resource Iggesund Paperboard. In addition, Mrs. Runn is Vice Chairman of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Mrs. Runn is an active member since 2004 and sees the possibility of sharing and sharing of knowledge and experience as the main benefit of the membership.

1. The Network structure

According to Mrs. Runn, the most important task of the Swedish Chamber is to create a business platform where people can meet and exchange knowledge and experiences. The most beneficial events to facilitate this exchange are the business events, according to Mrs. Runn. In Mrs. Runn´s opinion it is important to keep the focus within the network on business. In line with this, she thinks that the study visits where the members are invited to a company to see the operational side is much valuated. To gain insights about how other companies handle things as logistics and their HR is something that Mrs. Runn thinks is interesting and inspiring and therefore would like to see more of those.

When asking about the spread between the different sizes of the member companies Mrs. Runn is very satisfied: "It is a good spread and the fact that we also have almost all the larger Swedish companies as members of the Swedish Chamber is very impressing". The smaller companies are also adding value to the network and are from her opinion more willing to co-operate. Mrs. Runn considers the Swedish Chamber's office position as objective in the process of networking and it is not influencing the members in a certain way when asking for business advice or connections.

2. The Relational dimension

When asking Mrs. Runn about what kind of contacts that can be received through the network her answer is business contacts. Furthermore, according to Mrs. Runn the Swedish Chamber offers the unique opportunity to share branch experiences without any competition. Personally, she values the possibility to meet with competitors in very informal way and to discuss issues which are on everyone agenda. According to Mrs. Runn this transparency and cooperation make the Swedish Chamber different from other business networks. She continues with concluding that the Swedish Chamber business network is very flat and she does not see any hierarchy on the contrary all the member companies have the same power and the same possibility to influence the network.

It is the link to Sweden and the interest of improving their business that the members have in common and the culture differences is not a problem. The Swedish and Dutch culture is very similar and all members of the network have the same focus. The only differences she can think of is the fact that Dutch people in generally are more directly in their approach and business always comes first and the part to get to know each other during a "fika"[4] is coming later.

Mrs. Runn meets other members of the business network at the events she also believes in the importance of maintain the relations and she is doing this by phone calls and emails. Overall, the level of trust and sharing of knowledge is very high within the network a reason for this could be that the Swedish Chamber is a non-profit organization and not an industry or a competitor. Mrs. Runn is also active in the Swedish Church in the Netherlands and always receives a positive support from the member when discussing church matters. However, to maintain this trust and sharing of information, Mrs. Runn points out the importance of

[4] The Swedish word for coffee break

keeping your commitments and networking is all about giving and taking and to support each other. Furthermore, she thinks that the members of the Swedish Chamber are very pro-active and explains that there are no members waiting to get “fed” within the Swedish Chamber.

3.The Cognitive dimension

Mrs. Runn enjoys the process of networking and believes that the communication is “priority one“ to be successful. Therefore, to stay connected is the only way to remain the contacts and to avoid losing your relation. Mrs. Runn is trigged of the interaction within the network and that one thing often leads to another.

Mrs. Runn believes that the business contacts achieved from the Swedish Chamber are above all beneficial for Iggesund Paperboard and not just for her personally. When summarizing the value that the Swedish Chamber is adding to the members the main thing is the opportunities created to meet prominent Swedish and international business leaders and representatives from the politics. This gives Mrs. Runn and other members a unique opportunity to meet and greet with for instance Mr. Victor Müller, Mr. Michael Treschow and even the Crown Princess of Sweden.

3. Improvement

When asking about how the Swedish Chamber can improve, their services for their members, even more, Mrs. Runn thinks that by increasing the number of member companies the value of the network would also increase as well as the business opportunities. However, it’s important that the network is not becoming too big. Another important factor is circulation and the possibility to meet new people and get new ideas. Mrs. Runn believes that the members are satisfied with the Swedish Chamber and she thinks it is unique that she has not yet received a single negative reaction from any of the members about their membership. Some members that have cancelled their membership have mostly done so because of the economic situation in the company and not because they were unsatisfied with the network.

6.5 Interview SCA Packaging de Hoop, Mr. Henk Lingbeek

The fourth interview was held with Mr. Henk Lingbeek Managing Director SCA Packaging de Hoop at their factory in Eerbeek. The visit also included a factory tour of one of the world’s larger paper mills. Mr. Lingbeek became a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce about seven years ago and is attending approximately 3-4 events each year. Mr. Lingbeek was asked to join the Board of Directors of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce by the previous Chairman to represent SCA with activities in The Netherlands on different business sectors.

1. The Network structure

Mr. Lingbeek believes that the main reason to become a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce is because of the business network possibilities. The main task of the Swedish Chamber’s office is to successfully offer the members a platform for these network possibilities. The Managing director of the Swedish Chamber: Ms. Gerlagh is a master in this process, according to Mr. Lingbeek. The events that Mr. Lingbeek sees as most beneficial are the events are the business related events with a clear link to Sweden. The events that are arranged for the members of the Swedish Chamber by the Swedish Ambassador in the Netherlands and the co-operation with key note speakers from the Dutch government and senior business managers are very valuable to support business activities between companies in Sweden and The Netherlands.

When asking about the balance between the sizes of the member companies within the network Mr. Lingbeek concludes that this is quite good. Many of the larger Swedish companies are represented and many international companies as well. Furthermore, he thinks that it is an advantage that a good balance exists between small companies and ZZPs and larger companies. In many other business networks this balance between large sized companies, consultants and ZZP-ers is not correct, but is nothing that Mr. Lingbeek has experienced in the Swedish Chamber so far.

Mr. Lingbeek finds the question about how the fact that the Swedish Chamber is a non-profit organization influences the network difficult. When turning the question around, he assumes that if it was a profit-driven organization, it would have been more difficult for the larger companies to explain why they should become a member. In the current situation, the Swedish Chamber can be seen as a very neutral organization and brings business contacts together without any strings.

2. The Relational dimension

Mr. Lingbeek has a wide experience of networking and is involved in many organizations and he is also member of the Dutch Paper industry federation and acts as chairman of a midsized Competence centre focusing on innovation and R&D. Mr. Lingbeek achieves new business contacts by attending different events and is maintaining them through phone calls and e-mails. In the process of networking, Mr. Lingbeek mentions as an example the possibility to invite the members to your own company for a study visit or a company presentation.

Mr. Lingbeek is in fact planning to invite the Young Professionals of the Swedish Chamber to a company presentation next fall. He believes that this would be a beneficial interchange for both the Young professionals, SCA and specifically SCA Packaging de Hoop. This would give the SCA/SCA Packaging de Hoop the possibility to meet new potential employees and provide the company with new ideas and in return give the Young professionals the knowledge and experience about a world leading company in the paper industry. The senior members have already been invited a number of years ago to a very successful presentation at the SCA Packing de Hoop. Mr. Lingbeek has mainly received business contacts through the SCoC-network but has also made some new friends that he also meets privately.

3. The Cognitive dimension

Mr. Lingbeek sees the relation to Sweden as the common factor of the members of the Swedish Chamber but h does not recognize any culture differences between Dutch- or

Swedish memers. Mr. Lingbeek thinks that the transparency within the Swedish Chamber is very high and especially between the Patron companies were various issues of common interest has been discussed very openly at more than one occasion. Overall, the members of the network are very keen to share experiences without fear of competition, according to Mr. Lingbeek this is due to the high and professional level of the members. As an example he mentions that the members exchanged experiences during the economic crisis. One reason why this is working so well is because the members have a similar business culture and the same approach about sharing knowledge and this also helps to create trust. Another important benefit for the members is that the Swedish Chamber promotes all member companies and everyone has the same power and access to the business network. Mr. Lingbeek believes that SCA Packaging de Hoop benefits from being a member but is also for him personally he finds it fun and supporting his personal development.

4. Improvement

When asking about how the Swedish Chamber of Commerce can improve to serve their members better is the answer that it would be beneficial if more members would actively take part in the network. How to solve this problem has been discussed many times at the Swedish Chamber board meetings Mr. Lingbeek find for instance that the study trips to Sweden brings the participant members closer to each other and more committed to the Swedish Chamber activities. An excellent program with well-known and interesting key note speaker is also something that brings added value to the network and more members to the events. Mr. Lingbeek also finds the office in Amsterdam too small and even though the office is doing a fantastic job with the available resources Mr. Lingbeek would like to suggest an increase of personnel. Ms. Gerlagh is doing a terrific job for the Swedish Chamber but the organization is also very vulnerable with just one employee in case something would happen.

6.6 Interview Heussen, Mr. Nils van Dijkman and Mrs. Stina Lindmark

The forth interview was held with Mr. Nils van Dijkman partner/owner and Mrs. Stina Lindmark attorney-at-law at Heussen attorneys. The Dutch law firm Heussen, has been a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce since 2005 but both Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark were members of the Swedish Chamber also through their former employers. Mr. Van Dijkman is the Chairman of the Board since 2008, and attends almost all the events organized by the business network.

1. The Network structure

Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark consider the business opportunities offered from the network as the main reason to become a member of the Swedish Chamber. Mrs. Lindmark thinks that the office´s most important role is to act as a central point and support the members within the business network. She explains further that Ms. Gerlagh knows who is who in the Netherlands and can always identify whom to contact for a certain reason.

Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark think that all kinds of events that the Swedish Chamber organizes are important but Mr. Van Dijkman highlights the events with the Swedish keynote speakers. The value is created by the opportunity to listen to the experience and direct insights from Swedish businesses. He explains that the contacts achieved from the business network are both business and social contacts. According to Mr. Van Dijkman, when it comes to networking it is necessary to contribute before the benefits appears and the members have to be active in order to benefit from the network.

Both Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark are satisfied with the mix of large and small companies in the network and according to Mr. Van Dijkman, all the larger Swedish companies are involved in the Swedish Chamber. The large and the small companies can create value together by sharing their contacts and experiences. In line with this, none of the respondents can see a hierarchy in the Swedish Chamber other than the formal hierarchy with the Board of executives. Mr. Van Dijkman explains that it had been a disaster if the Swedish Chamber of Commerce had been a profit organization. The current situation offers benefits to the members and the Swedish Chamber is not there to gain own benefits but to serve others. Mr. Van Dijkman believes that a profit seeking organization could create an undesirable competition between the companies within the network.

2. The Relational dimension

When asking what the mutual factors are for the members of the network, both respondents mentioned the interest for Sweden and an informal atmosphere. Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark both agree when looking into the network that no visible culture difference can be found. On the other hand, Mrs. Lindmark recognizes the differences business wise and this is due to the fact that Dutch people are from a historical perspective, more use to trading. From her opinion the Swedish people are more trustable in negotiations. However, these differences cannot be found in the Swedish Chamber. Mr. Van Dijkman develops this thoughts further by explaining that the reason for this might be that there are no typical Swedish or Dutch people involved in the network but according to him the members meets somewhere in the middle. The different native languages cannot either be seen as a problem, but Mr. Van Dijkman appreciates that Swedish is still the used language in the network. The sharing of knowledge is also facilitated by the fact that the network is transparent with outgoing members that want to share their knowledge and experience to others. On the other hand, Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark believe that a competition between some of the companies can be found in the network but this is nothing that is affecting the business network negatively.

3. The Cognitive dimension

Mrs. Lindmark believes that it is the fantastic group of people in the Swedish Chamber that helps to create the nice environment within the network. Also the organization behind the Swedish Chamber has a responsibility in creating the trust and this can be done through consistence that is created through keeping the promises. Mr. Van Dijkman explains that the members are proud of their network and especially the excellent events organized during last year. The members of the Swedish Chamber like to share and talk about their great experiences from the events and the business network´s good reputation is spread also to people outside the network. Mrs. Lindmark states that the distance to Sweden is decreasing through the Swedish Chamber and this is beneficial for the members that will remain in contact with their home country.

4. Improvement

Finally, when discussing how the Swedish Chamber can improve, the first thing that Mr. Van Dijkman states is that it would benefit from getting more members to the events. Another thing would be to work more creative and for instance use the Social Medias in a better way. Mr. Van Dijkman and Mrs. Lindmark agree that the main improvement would be to co-operate closer with the Young Professionals (JCC). Today the groups are separated and a natural way to solve this problem would be to encourage the Young Professionals to become members of the Swedish Chamber when they are passing the age limit for the membership in JCC. Mr. Van Dijkman explains that events like “speed dating” and “coach pub” also create opportunities for the members to meet and share experiences. It is through these events possible to recognize the value that the members, from different age groups, can bring to each and contribute to each other’s network.

6.7 Interview, MummyMug B.V Cecilia Thorfinn

The sixth interview was held with the founder and Managing director Mrs. Cecilia Thorfinn, owner of MummyMug B.V. Her company offers a hot drink solution that ensures safer environment for children. Mrs. Thorfinn received an invitation to become a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, after having published an article in “Svenska klubbens” newspaper, attending her that the Swedish Chamber is welcoming ZZPs into the business network.

1. The Network structure

Mrs. Thorfinn appreciates the recognition of ZZP companies and the action taken of the Swedish Chamber to give the opportunity to the ZZP companies to become a member of the business network. Mrs. Thorfinn thinks that the main benefit created from the membership is the possibility to get inspiration and contact with other business people. Mrs. Thorfinn gets access to the other members at the event. She explains further that she at every event meets new people and finds it very positive that new ideas constantly are brought in to the network. The entrepreneur likes all kinds of events but highlights the company presentations and certainly last year’s Gala dinner with the Crown Princess of Sweden. As an owner of a small business, she finds it useful to attend company presentation such as Loyens & Loeff seminar about the latest update on fiscal and corporate law developments. It had been too expensive to attend these meetings without the Swedish Chamber and therefore not possible for a small businesses.

Mrs. Thorfinn is satisfied with the spread of the different sizes of the companies in the Swedish Chamber and finds the larger companies important for the financing of the business network. Mr. Thorfinn does not observe a certain hierarchy in the network and states that it might be there but it is nothing that she has experienced. She is impressed of the great interest and encouragement that are shown from larger companies and explains that a reason might be that other members also dream about having their own business. According to Mrs. Thorfinn, the Swedish Chamber facilities a platform for exchange of contacts but very independent and does not influence the members to think in a certain way as other organizations might do. Mrs. Thorfinn thinks it is obvious that the Swedish Chamber should be a nonprofit organization as the aim should be a create contacts and not to create profit.

2. The Relational dimension

MummyMug B.V is still in the startup phase and her product is not yet fully developed. Therefore, Mrs. Thorfinn explains that she does not do as much networking as would be possible. Nevertheless, she believes that the business network later on can help her to distribute the product. In line with this, the entrepreneur thinks that the business network is most beneficial if the business is established and has already developed its product or service. Mrs. Thorfinn finds the social events nice but has unfortunately not had the possibility to attend that many as there is other events organized at the same time from other Swedish organizations. Mrs. Thorfinn would in the future like to attend the study trip to Sweden as she believes that this kind of arrangement give the members a special connection to each other and also the opportunity to create business contacts in Sweden. She believes that there are most often long-term relationships built within the network and thinks that the Swedish Chamber is more established and is showing a more long term perspective than some of the other Swedish organizations in the Netherlands.

3. The Cognitive dimension

According to Mrs. Thorfinn, the connecting factor for members in the business organization is the connection to Sweden and the fact that the members are proud of their roots. According to her it is not possible to recognize any direct culture differences within the business network. Mrs. Thorfinn, does most of the time, use all three of her languages depending on what person she is speaking to and believes that the different languages spoken in the network cannot be seen as a problem. She thinks it is good that the presentations are held in English and sees it overall very natural that all languages are used. In comparison to for instance the Swedish choir where she likes that everything is in Swedish is it not as important in the business network as the environment is more international.

The motivation to share experience is very high and she explains a genuine dialogue where people are nice and friendly to each other but she has not observed any concrete discussions about business agreements. She also states that the members are careful what they are sharing and it would according to her be stupid to share everything.

4. Improvement

When asking about how the Swedish Chamber can improve, their services for their members, does Mrs. Thorfinn’s suggests a mentorship between small and larger companies. This would not just be beneficial for the smaller companies but also for the mangers from larger companies. She believes that this kind of exchange would not just give financial benefit but people would also get a kick from contributing to others. Furthermore, a mentorship could also clear the gap between the smaller and the larger companies.

Another suggestion from Mrs. Thorfinn would be to provide an event where the smaller companies get the chance to explain and pitch themselves for the other member companies. Finally, according to Mrs. Thorfinn the Swedish Chamber has a clear profile that they should remain but the social events should be done in cooperation with the other Swedish organizations such as Svenska klubben, Svenska kyrkan and Svenska-Holländska Föreningen.

6.8 Interview, Swedish Trade Council, Mr. Andreas Rentner

The last interview was held with Mr. Andreas Renter, Trade Commissioner at the Swedish Trade Council in the Netherlands. The Swedish Trade is a member company of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and a close partner when facilitating the interchange between Sweden and the Netherlands and Sweden promotion. Mr. Rentner represents the Swedish Trade since 2007 and attends the Swedish Chamber's Board meeting as a special invitee as well as some events every year.

1. **The Network Structure**

Mr. Renter thinks that the main reason to become a member of the Swedish Chamber is because of the exchange of experience that is created through networking. The Swedish Chamber´s role in the process of networking is to ensure that the events provide a high quality to the members. According to Mr. Rentner, this is mainly done by offering good speakers and constant exchange possibilities of new knowledge. During the events, it is also vital that recent topics are discussed as the possibility to gain new information attracts the members to the events. Mr. Renter appreciates the business events most. The value received depends on the business topic, and not on the kind of people attending. He believes that both the business events and the social events are important and according to him, both businesses oriented and social relation are created through the business network. Mr. Renter explains that the Swedish Chamber provides him with recommendations of possible companies for co-operation and this sometimes turns in to new business opportunities.

Mr. Rentner is satisfied with the mix of the sizes of the companies within the Swedish Chamber. Nevertheless, he points out that it is easier to recognize the larger companies and especially the Patron companies as they receive the most publicity and have the best financial capacities. On the other hand, the smaller companies can bring in other questions to the business network and are therefore important for the Swedish Chamber as well. The smaller companies can also become new client to the Swedish Trade. Overall, Mr. Rentner thinks that the business network shows continuality and a long-term perspective and many of the members of the network are very loyal and have been members for a long time. Mr. Rentner, does not see a certain hierarchy within the Swedish Chamber, but states that the board includes only larger company and this can bring a certain hierarchy to the business network. The fact, that the Swedish Chamber is a non-profit organization is something that he appreciates and makes the network work for covering the costs rather than for making a high profit.

2. The Relational dimension

Mr. Rentner gets access to the other people at the events and meeting but receives also new contacts through dialog with Ms. Gerlagh. He thinks that the cooperation between the Swedish Chamber and the Swedish Trade is very good but could also improve, and this could create benefit to both organizations. The motivation for sharing of knowledge is high and shows transparency where the exchange is both about giving and taking. According to Mr. Rentner, the trust perceived from the members to the Swedish Chamber is easy to recognize and this is created through the well-organized structure. The business network fulfills the agreements by sending information early and this also creates trust. Mr. Rentner summarizes that the trust is received through a long-term perspective, continuity, interesting presentations and he thinks that the Swedish Chamber has succeeded with all this. The business network has learnt to stick to the popular event but also tries to improve.

3. The Cognitive dimension

Mr. Renter thinks that the factor that brings the members of the network together is the "Swedishness" that can be seen as the foundation of the Swedish Chamber. He explains that the SCC has been able to merge the Dutcheness into Swedisness, or the other way around, in a good way. Mr. Rentner thinks that the office has a main part in this success and Ms. Gerlagh is doing a great job and involves the right people that are representing the business network very well. Mr. Rentner cannot come up with and specific culture differences within the network and that there are different languages spoken cannot either be seen as a barrier. Overall, Mr. Renter explains that the Swedish and Dutch people are always working pretty well together. The members of the network openly share their experiences and the Swedish identity is clear when looking at many of the members. Mr. Rentner believes that the Swedish identity creates a feeling of belonging and/or security for many members and is a good way for the members not to cut all the bands to Sweden.

4. Improvement

Mr. Rentner finds it rather difficult to say how the Swedish Chamber could improve to serve their member better but one way might be through working narrower and for instance make direct investments to some groups of members.

As, every network, the Swedish Chamber could also create a higher value through new members, and he explains that Swedish Trade uses "success case" that can be used when trying to get new members to the business network. He believes also that the Swedish Chamber and the Swedish Trade could cooperate in the work to attract new members. Overall, to maintain the close cooperation between the Swedish organizations and to focus on interesting issues together is important. Mr. Rentner explains that the Swedish Chamber could add value to the Dutch companies through bridge the culture differences between the two nationalities. The business network could also bridge the gap between the smaller and larger companies through working with more matchmaking between the member companies.

7. Empirical analysis

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author of the thesis collected data will be analyzed with the aim to investigate the contribution of third party´s within the network infrastructure. For this purpose, the author´s frame of reference will be used to give guidance through the analysis. The analysis will be based on the author's interpretation of her participant observations, the qualitative interviews and the secondary sources of data from the time worked for the Swedish Chamber of Commerce.

In the previous chapter, each dimension of social capital was discussed separately but will now be consider from the process of combination and exchange and the focus will be on the third party's contribution in the creation of intellectual capital. Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998: 250) explain that social intellectual capital is created mainly through two processes; combination and exchange and the relationship built through them are the foundation for social capital. This will now be considered, from the perspective of the third party, with the purpose to answer the addressed research question. Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998) study has a theoretical contribution but the author of this thesis will now give new insight to the research about a third party by examine how this works in reality. More specific, as seen in figure 5 the dimension of "The network structure" is linked to the third parties capability to access parties for combination and exchanging intellectual capital. "The relation dimension" is mainly supporting the third parties in creating motivation to combine and exchange intellectual capital. Lastly, "The cognitive dimension" facilitates the anticipation of value through combining and exchanging intellectual capital. Finally, to fulfill the second purpose of the thesis the author is in the last section providing her suggestion for improvement to the examined case. As the processes are all linked to the combination capabilities of the third party, this is discussed in the last section of the chapter. The empirical analysis is summarized in table 1 and the third parties most important characteristics are stated and these will be explained further in this chapter.

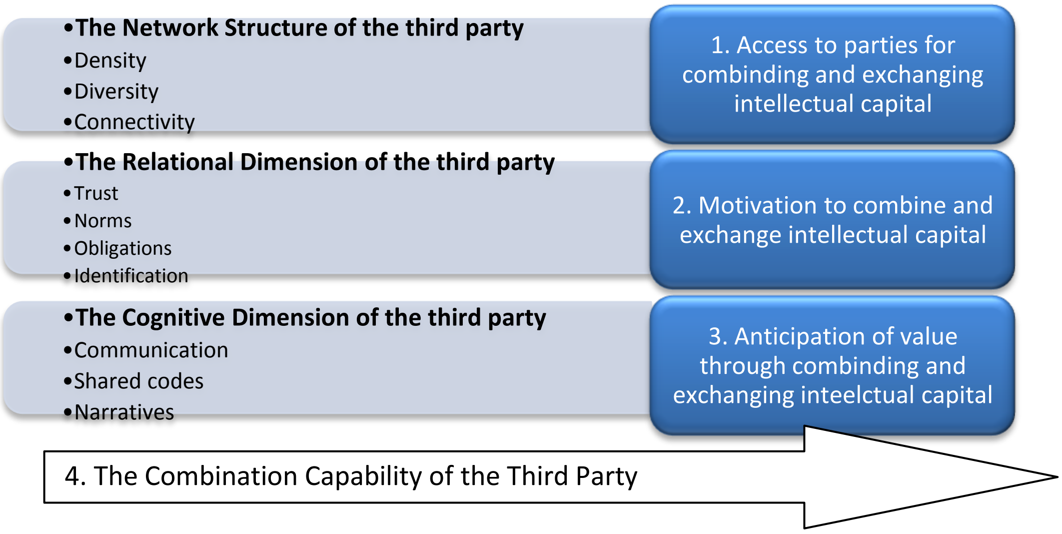


Figure 5. Shows how the dimensions of social capital turn into processes

Table 1, How the contribution of the third party is provided in the network infrastructure

Social capital →	**Combination and exchange of intellectual capital** →	**Intellectual capital**
The Network structure of the third party	**1. Access to parties for combining and exchanging intellectual capital**	New intellectual capital created through combination and exchange
Density	Relations created built upon both strong and weak ties, Transparency, Neutral role of third party, A Special relation to the Patrons	
Diversity	Diversity of the companies regarding size and geographically location, Flat hierarchy, Spread of power, Third party acts as a hub	
Connectivity	Facilities the possibilities for the members to meet through event, Connect people to each other and then "pulls back", Social events connects people to each other	
The Relational dimension of the third party	**2. Motivation to combine and exchange intellectual capital**	
Trust	High on trust, the members know what they get in advance, Non-profit organization helps, Non- competitive relations, Giving and taking	
Norms	Typical Swedish norms, Based on values such as sustainability, CSR and environmental thinking, Create the strong foundation	
Obligations	Giving and taking, Constant interchange, Transparency, Keep promises	
Identification	Created through the link to Sweden and the traditions, i.e. the Lucia celebration, obvious between the Patrons	
The Cognitive dimension of the third party	**3. Anticipation of value through combining and exchanging intellectual capital**	
Communication	No cultural difference, similar language, mass communication, In formal communication, Friendly atmosphere	
Shared codes	The link to Sweden, Traditions, The Lucia celebration, Social events	
Narratives	The link to Sweden, Previous events, Business experiences , The study trip and Patron dinners creates common stories	
Improvements of the third party	**4. The combination capability** -Bridge the gap between the government, other Swedish organizations and the members - New and more active members -Closer co-operation between the Swe-Cham and the Young professionals -Combining the physical and technical network -Sending out a member survey	

Summary:

The data collected shows that the Swedish Chamber of Commerce provides an attractive platform where the members of the network can meet to combine and exchange their knowledge and experiences in the creation of new intellectual capital. The third party has succeeded through taking the role of an organizer that provides the platform for networking.

As the author's observations of the network show, the third party is in the specific case the "connecting" factor or the "inner circle" with the companies around responsible for taking the action. Empirical examples show that it's difficult to encourage the development of integration within a network unless a basic structure is already established (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 555). The third party has during years of work and improvements managed to create the important know-how, skills and finance as well as a socio-cultural and an institutional infrastructure and this facilitate the members' process of networking. According to the author, the office with General Manager Ms. Gerlagh as the connecting link can be seen as the most important part of the structure of the third party. All the respondents from the interview also agree that she has succeeded in managing everything around the business network as well as the trainees. As table one shows, the third party has also developed a high level of social capital when consider the Relational and Cognitive dimension. Glover and Hemingway, (2005: 389) explain that social capital allow group members' potential access to resources held by others in the group and this access is actually what the third party has succeed to create in the examined case.

In the examined case, it is clear that "The network structure" primarily influences the creation of intellectual capital as it in various ways helps to access the actors for the combination and exchange. The well-developed network structure in the Swedish Chamber indirect also facilitates the other dimensions of social capital such as the third parties contribution in the creation of motivation and anticipation for combination and exchange of intellectual capital. Nahapiet and Ghoshal, (1998: 243) argue that organizations can develop a high level of social capital in all dimensions and this is also possible to see in the Swedish Chamber when looking at table 1.

Finally, the author believes that despite the boundaries such as headlines used in the analysis that it is important to keep this holistic view in mind when analyzing the contribution of the third party to the network infrastructure.

7.2 Access to parties for combining and exchanging intellectual capital

One of the first and foremost important assumptions in the social capital theory is that the network ties provide access to resources (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 252). This is also the case in the Swedish Chamber but the third party does not work with any direct match making but is rather with the different ties to many kinds of actors providing the members with the access to different resources. The literature shows, a key factor for the third party to facilitate the process of networking is to remain the independent outsider and the importance is based on the fact that it is the soft issues that most of the time make or break the network (Hanna and Walsh, 2002: 205). In the specific case, Mr. Lingbeek explained that the third party is providing the members with the contacts and is than “pulling back” with the meaning that the actors has than the responsibility to make something out of the contacts. Mrs. Runn also expresses this by saying that the members of the Swedish Chamber are not used with getting “spoon-feed” but are rather very pro-active.

A remarkable characteristic in the Swedish Chamber of Commerce is the fact that the network is a non-profit organization. Mr. Hoefman and Mr. Turabaz think that the fact that the third party is a non-profit organization influences the network and they agree that this has helped the Swedish Chamber to be the independent outsider. The main empirical results in Kirkels & Duysters (2010: 375) study shows that the most influential brokers can be find in non-profit organizations and had a long experience in their branch. The broker in the more profit oriented organization was otherwise seen to take too much time and effort in order to make a higher profit and still the involved parties were dissatisfied. Mrs. Thorfinn states that the Swedish Chamber should be a non-profit organization as the purpose with the network is to create contacts and not profit. Consequently, the fact that the examined third party is non-profit organization has helped to overcome this addressed problem and has helped to develop a trust from the member companies for the third party. Mr. Dijkman assumes that the risk if it had been a profit organization could be that it develops a competition between the network and the companies.

The structure of the network is there to facilitate the interchange between the members and researchers analyze in their studies the ties between the members of the network. According to the author’s observations of the business network can “loose ties” be found as the members are from a wide range of industries and meet each other relatively seldom. Nevertheless, also the “strong ties” can be found within the Swedish Chamber and mainly between the Patron companies. Granovetter (1973: 76) states that “loose ties” tend to link people from different groups together whether stronger ties rather tend to be concentrated within particular groups and this could then be confirmed in the examined network. This kind of diversity within the Swedish Chamber is according to the same researcher very important when evidence shows that significant progress in the creation of intellectual capital often derives from bringing together knowledge from different sources and disciplines (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254).

As, the secondary data showed, the structure around the specific network also includes other Swedish organizations and the other Nordic countries Business Clubs and this brings further diversity of knowledge to the business network. Even though these organizations are located outside the examined network they to bring connections that extend the Swedish Chamber with business opportunities. Research notes that collecting information is costly and the access provided from the third party to other network can reduce the time and investment for finding the right information. Coleman (1988: 98).

When considering the diversity within the Swedish Chamber both the sizes of the companies and the geographically spread are important to examine. Firstly, as the secondary data and the author’s own observations showed there are mostly middle sized and larger companies that can be found in the Swedish Chamber. Anyhow, the respondents at the interviews agreed that there are satisfied with the spread between the sizes of the companies in the business network.

Hanna and Walsh, (2002: 205) shows in their study that the size matters and firms with at least 20 employees and a turnover around 2 million British pound was argues to be the appropriate resource to network successfully and this would then also be true for the examined case. Mr. Lingbeek made an interesting statement when discussing this, he thinks that it is an advantages that there are not too many small companies and ZZPs that are mainly participating in the network because they are looking for more business. Mr. Hoefman also made his statement on the same issue and sees the problem in that some of the smaller companies could be intimidated by the prominent role of the multinational Patron companies. This might give the smaller companies the feeling that their contribution is less important to the network. On the other hand, Mr. Rentner explains that the smaller companies are bringing in other questions to the network and their input is also important. In other words, the mix between the sizes of the companies is crucial to remain to get a spread of different knowledge and this can therefore be seen as an important task for the third party. The fact that the group of Patron companies is increasing also change the structure of the network. According to the author, if the structure in the beginning was seen as a pyramid with a big base and narrow top is it now moving the opposite direction that could in the long run also influence the role of the third party and its contribution to the business network.

Secondly, when consider the geographically spread within the network, the data showed that most of the companies were located in the Western part of the Netherlands and around the bigger cities. Nevertheless, member companies could be found all over the country and the interregional spread between the companies that are attending the events can be seen as rather good. In fact, the access to interregional contact networks is seen as much more important than what was previously known (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 545). The reason for this is that the regional cooperation helps mainly to overcome the size problems that cannot be seen as a problem for most of the companies in the network. The sharing of innovation and technology-oriented information tend to be more common in interregional networks. One could argue that the larger companies would benefit of an increased geographically spread whereas the smaller companies gain the benefit from economic of scale also from regional cooperation. However, research shows that jointly would all member companies get advantage from the access to interregional networks as the companies cannot longer relay on their regional economy (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 554-555). Thirdly, that the third party has succeeded in the role of getting a relatively good balance between the sizes and the geographically spread can be seen as a success factor because as Hanna and Walsh state (2002: 204) "maintaining the balance of skills within the network is essential to its success".

No matter the different ties, is it clear through the author's observations that the members get access to each other through the events organized by the third party. The respondent are all very satisfied with the event as Mr. Rentner states the Swedish Chamber sticks to the good events but is also constantly improving. Mrs. Thoifinn explains that she meets new people at every event and that this brings new ideas into the network. In the business network it is interesting to consider the difference between the business-related events and the social events organized by the third party. All respondents, except of Mr. Turabaz states that the business events are more important than the social events but the statistics shows something else. The number of participant on the social events is higher compare to the more business oriented events. This is something that the third party has to consider and from the author's interpretation could the third party benefit from combining the Swedish traditions with business related issues.

7.3 Motivation to combine and exchange of intellectual capital

Considering the relational dimension of the network, the frame of reference suggests that the relational dimension influences mainly the combination and exchange within the business network in three different ways. These are through the Access to parties, Anticipation of value and Motivation of parties to engage in knowledge creation through exchange and combination (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254).

Firstly, according to the author's observations and the interviews answer the trust within the network can be consider very high and this creates access to other people**.** This is especially characterizing the relations between the Patron companies were they share the experience and for instance, during the financial crises, discussed their common problems. Nevertheless, as Mr. Hoefman states, it is important to remember that trust is not created just though titles and the fact that the members are working for a large company but also has to do with personality.

Mrs. Runn stated that this kind of trust is something that has to be built up and she was during the interview coming back to the importance of fulfilling the promises and to the fact that networking is all about giving and taking. As Putnam, (1993: 167) explains it is a two-way interaction between trust and cooperation; trust creates cooperation and cooperation return trust. This can lead to the development of generalized norms of cooperation and this can increase the willingness to engage in social exchange (Putnam, 1993: 167). This is closely linked to fulfilling the obligations that also has to be there and gives access to exchange and intellectual capital. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 255) state that in the creation of intellectual capital the obligations and expectations as well as the motivation are influencing the access to the other members. The third party has succeeded in creating an open atmosphere within the network where the members can share experience without the risk for creating any harm to the companies. Mr. Rentner summarized the success by saying that the third party has created trust by a long-term perspective, continuity and interesting presentations. Hanna and Walsh, (2002: 205) point out the importance of trust and states that this is especially important if one firm is larger than the others and the broker main task is to build this trust and this is also shown in the examined case.

Secondly, that the third party has managed to create an environment where the members are very active and the anticipation of value is clear within the business network. Mr. Hoefman and Mr. Lingbeek both talk about organizing company presentation and sharing their experiences with other members and the values is also created through this actions. The members that are investing in the network through their time or other support are also receiving the most value. In other words, the third party has an important responsibility in supporting the members to invest in the network as this will provide value later on. Mrs. Thorfinn thinks that the relations created within the business network are long-term relations and according to her the Swedish Chamber is more established and shows a more long-term, perspective than other Swedish organizations in the Netherlands.

Many of the respondents at the interviews came back to the fact that the members should have nothing to hide in an environment such as the Swedish Chamber and the third party. Therefore, the third party can gain benefits through keeping today's transparency within the business network. Research approves that in relationship that are high in trust, people are more willing to engage in social exchange in general and most specific in cooperative interaction (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254). This trust is also possible to see when looking at the members' opinion about the third party. During the interview the member did express their thankfulness for the third party and Mr. Turabaz discussed it more in detail and said that the Swedish Chamber always fulfills obligations and this creates deeper relationships.

Thirdly, the motivation to share the knowledge is also very high within the business network and Mrs. Runn explains that the unique part in the Swedish Chamber is that it's possible to meet the other companies and to get a feeling about them without having to share any company secrets. The members are bringing value to each other and creativity can in the network be seen as an import-export business with the belief that an idea which is seen as routine in one company can be valuable somewhere else (Burt, 2004: 388). The openness within the examined network is also characterizing the norms and attitudes that from the author's observations are based on typical Swedish values such as Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability and Environmental thinking and these establish a strong foundation in the network. These values were also, according the observations, most obvious between the Patron companies that have a certain relationship to each other. Within the relational dimension of the network is it also important to create identification where the individuals can see themselves as one with other persons or a group of people (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 255). The common link to Sweden is something that the third party is working with actively and this has helped to create the identification to other members in the network.

When discussing the relations during the interviews between the member companies within the network, respondents jointly assuming that there is no competition seen within the network and Mr. Hoefman explained that the reason for this is that most of the companies are based in different industries. On the other hand, as the observations showed and as Mr. Lingbeek stated, when it's time to talk about more business related issues these are most of the time being done outside the organized platform. In other words, the interchange starts within the platform provided by the Swedish Chamber but the actually value or outcome is harvested outside the network. The ties, norms and trust that is created of the third party is also possible to transfer from one setting to another and through this affect the pattern of social exchange. This can result in that even though the organization is created for one purpose the network can provide a source of valuable resources for others different purposes as well (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 253).

7.4 Anticipation of value through combining and exchanging knowledge

Research shows that for an interchange to appear communication between the members is required and is built upon mainly two keystones: shared language and codes and through sharing of collective narratives (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 253). Communication has been one of the main things that the author has looked at when analyzing the cognitive dimension of the network. The communication in the specific network can be divided into two parts: the communication between the members and the communication from the third party to the members.

Firstly, when looking at the communication between the members the culture differences are something that the author in the beginning planed to pay attention to when observing the Swedish Chamber. This was during the observation not seen to be that notable. Mr. van Dijkman explains that the reason for this could be that there are not typical Swedish or Dutch people involved in the network but the members of the business network meet somewhere in the middle. The different native language was not either something exceptional as English most of the time is the used language. When looking deeper into the language can, as the author's observations showed, a relatively formal approach is found between the members but this is gets more informal over time as they get to know each other better.

Secondly, the current approach that the Swedish Chamber uses to reach its members is mass communication where the third party tries to reach everyone with the same message through traditional or digital Medias. This is an improvement area, where the third party could get better by customizing its information and adapt this to the members' needs. The third party has an important role in combining their technical network such as the communication on the website and through social media with their physical network such as the events and activities organized. Overall, the fact that the network has a jointly language in common is requisite in order to reach the members and research also shows that a shared language facilitates the ability to gain access to people and through this also information. On the other hand if the language and codes had been different could this have kept the people apart and blocked their access to each other (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 253).

For the interchange of information to work smoothly this also requires a shared context within the network. In the examined network, it is clear that Sweden is the common link for the members and as discussed within the relational dimension this brings the members together in the business network. Mauer and Ebers, (2006: 264) explain that a shared language and shared meanings, such as what we have seen in the Swedish Chamber, allow actors to gain access to the information and resources of their social relations, which they could not obtain without the investment. More specific, to gain access to the new resources also requires an investment from both the third party and the members of the business network. Mr. Lingbeek and Mrs. Lindmark both mentioned that the trust is also received because of the high professional level of the members but also because of their similar attitudes about networking. There statements show how closely linked the cognitive dimension is to the social dimension discussed earlier.

The common narrative such as shared myths, stories, metaphors are also created through the members' link to Sweden that already has been discussed under the shared codes. As the observations showed the traditional Lucia celebration is a great example that shows who a Swedish tradition is creating shared narratives that also are shared during other times of the year. According to the respondents, the study trips to Sweden can create common stories that the members can discuss at other settings. Research shows that the shared narratives within the network are important as it enables the creation and transfer of new interpretation of events and this also facilitates the combination of different forms of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254). Mrs. Lindmark explains that the distance to Sweden is decreasing through the Swedish Chamber and this is beneficial for the members that will remain the contact with Sweden. Mr. Rentner thinks that the link creates also a feeling of security and this help the people that do not want to cut their bands to Sweden.

7.5 Combination Capability

When analyzing the combination capability of the third party it is important to consider if the parties within the examined network have overlapping knowledge. Because as research shows in order to develop the value of the interchange the different parties must have some overlap in knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254). Eisenhardt and Santos, (2000: 1) are two researchers that agree on this and if the knowledge is heterogeneous can this give advantages and superior corporate performance among firms.

This overlapping knowledge can be found in the examined case in the fact that the members are active in a wide range of industries. This is also provided by the fact that the Swedish Chamber includes Dutch companies and Swedish subsidiaries. Research states the foreign subsidiaries are many times more innovative in comparison to domestic firms and this can give new insights to a business network. According to Kirkels and Duysters (2010: 383) the reason behind this is the knowledge transfer from associated companies in addition to local knowledge and this fact can make the foreign subsidiaries into an important partner in networking. In other words, to provide a network with members with different knowledge is an important task for the third party. When asking about the added value that the third party brings to its members are the jointly answer from the interviewed that the network brings access to good speakers and people that the members without the network would not get the chance to meet. Mrs. Runn explains that the network gives access to meet prominent key note speakers such as Mr. Victor Müller and Mr. Michael Treschow but also the opportunity to meet the Crown Princess of Sweden. On the other hand, some improvement can also be done when looking at the connection across different people and when examining the combination capability of the third party.

Firstly, the third party could increase the benefit to the members by serving as an intermediary between the network and the Dutch government but also between the Swedish organizations in the Netherlands. Research states that this is highly important and that the people with connection across, what in the research is called structural holes, have earlier access to different information and interpretation and this gives them a competitive advantage in seeing and developing ideas (Burt, 2004: 388). In other words, if the third party could be better in filling the gap between the network and other interesting actors with other knowledge and experiences this would give the members of this business network new advantage.

Secondly, when discussing the combination capability, most of the people connected to the network believe that the third party could add value through getting new and more active members to the Swedish Chamber. Firstly, to get more active members is not an easy task for the third party but Mr. Turabaz suggests that one way would be to organize less events and keep a really high level on the events organized. To create a circulation and the possibility to meet new people on each event would also get more people to the events as the chance to get new ideas always will be there. More specific, Mr. Rentner explains that one idea could be to work with “Success cases” where good examples can get new members interesting of the business network. Secondly, to gain new members could be accomplished through a closer co-operation between the Swedish Chamber and the Young professionals (JCC). To always recruit the Young professionals that have past the age limit for JCC, would create a constant stream of new members and member companies. The younger members might not necessary be more active but could provide new insights and ideas to the business organization. The author also believes that the third party would benefit through combining the technical and physical platform and could through this ensure that the right target groups are reached with the accurate message. Van Heck and Vervest, (2007: 32) explain that networking today and in the new business network approaches business networks should be combined with telecommunication capabilities. This could more actively be used both in the process of gaining new members but also in the communication with the already existing members. Because as Burt, (1992: 12) explains networking is about who you reach and how you reach them.

Thirdly, the third party could also improve the combination capability through sending out a member survey in end of each year. This will give the third party a hint of where the organization has to improve in order to provide a higher value to the members. Furthermore, a survey could also increase the commitment of the members and give them a possibility to influence and improve the quality of the Swedish Chamber. Summarizing, all the things discussed in the last section will also improve the third party capability to quickly connect and disconnected with the other actors which is in the smart business networks seen as a success factor (Van Heck & Vervest, 2007: 34).

8. Conclusion

This thesis investigates the contribution of third parties to the members within the network infrastructure. Since the world surrounding the organization is becoming more complex organizations have to consider networking to access the required resources (Kirkels & Duyster, 2010: 375). Third parties, such as networking associations, can have a main part in the process to find partners and/or resources which most often gives positive benefit to the members of the network. Previously research show a lack of knowledge about the combination and exchange of activities that the third party carries out and it's unclear how these actions are affecting the people and consequently the companies involved in the network (Pittway et al, 2004: 160).

With this as a starting point, the purpose of this thesis was to increase the understanding of networking and especially the third parties role in the networking infrastructure. In addition, the study soughs to answer the research question: *How does the third party provide benefits to the members within the network infrastructure?*

In the case analyzed, evidence is found that the third party has succeeded in its role to provide a business and social platform that facilitate the process of creating business opportunities for the members of the business network. Furthermore as table one summarizes the contribution of the third party is very high and well-balance when consider all the three processes mention in the combination and exchange of intellectual capital. The contribution of the thesis is that it recognizes three main factors through how the third party in practice is providing value to its members:

Firstly, the third party access actors within the network for combining and exchanging knowledge through a well developed network structure (Grotz & Braun, 1997: 555).

Secondly, the third party is creating anticipation and motivation between the members for the sharing of knowledge and shows also that investment and action is required to receive value (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998: 254).

Thirdly, the third party bridges the gap between different actors with various kinds of knowledge (Burt, 2004: 388).

The thesis also contributes by presenting the factors in which the third party can improve the work to create and deepen relationship and most of the improvement are interlinked to the combination capability of the third party.

- The third party would fulfill an important need in the role as an intermediary between the government and cooperate companies and also between the network and other Swedish organizations in the Netherlands (Burt, 2004: 388).

- The third party would add value to the network by getting new and more members to the network (Eisenhardt and Santos, 2000: 1).

- The third party part would give more benefit through a closer co-operation between the Swedish Chamber and the Young professionals.

- The third party would add value through combining the physical and technical networks and through this be more customer centric in their communication (Van Heck and Vervest, 2007: 32).

- The third party would improve their work through sending out a member survey in end of each year.

The author believes that if the third party takes these factors into consideration, the process of the combination and exchange can be facilitated and it would be possible to create a higher value to the business network than the third party already does today.

As the interviews showed, all respondents of the study were also involved in other networks and this shows the high competition among networks today. This competition can be find between networks rather than the companies and this gives consequences for the third party. In other words, the third party also has to compete against other networks and has to give the members more value than the members can receive from other networks. More concretely, according to the author the third party has to focus on what makes this network unique and the respondents at the interview are all mention things as the common link to Sweden that the network is less strict about business and the opportunity to meet under less competitive circumstance. These are all unique factors, in which the third party has succeeded.

The author has noticed a shortcoming of the study and this is that the three dimensions of social capital have been considered separately. In fact this is not true in reality; the considered dimensions of the social capital are all interconnected and also influence each other over the boundaries drawn in this thesis. Therefore, to provide a more holistic view of the contribution of third parties, additional investigation would be beneficial to both consider how each dimension influence the other dimensions and how they are correlating with each other. Furthermore, the author of this thesis has focused on how the third party contributes to the network infrastructure but what the outcome is has not been consider and this would also be interesting to investigate further. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of this study create also possibilities for further research that can add additional value to the contribution of third party in the network infrastructure.

9. Quality of research

9.1 Research quality

The author has in order to provide a certain quality of the thesis considered issues as generalization, reliability, validity and the credibility that all are critical issues related to the quality of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 423). As, the study carried out exists of a qualitative research strategy the author added the qualitative criteria “credibility” in order to receive a deeper analysis of the quality of the research.

Firstly, what has to be considered is the generalization matters related to a smaller sample (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 423). The fact that the author has focused on a single network and carried out seven interviews makes it not possible to draw a conclusion regarding other network and this can be seen as delimitation of this thesis but has on the other hand made it possible to examine the chosen case more in depth. Secondly, the problem with generalization is also closely linked to the reliability of a study that shows if the study would have resulted in the same conclusion if another researcher would have carried out the same study (Bryman & Bell (2007: 40-41). The author decided during her work to carry out in-depth interviews but to also take the opportunity to complement these with observations of the chosen network and secondary data. It is the author’s view of the collected data that is shown through the analysis and in the conclusion and the study can therefore be seen as highly subjective and therefore hard to replicate. Nevertheless, the author has done her best to express how the study is carried out in detail to give someone else the chance to reproduce the study. How the practical issues influenced the studies was seen as so important that these even got their own chapters: the practical method. When discussing reliability, Bryman & Bell (2007: 410) refer to the external and internal reliability. The external reliability is the problematic to meet the criterion and the internal reliability explains the degree to which the interviewers have the same opinion to what is explained. To receive a high level of reliability the author tried to make sure that she had enough evident for a certain behavior before making any statements to the data. The author was also asking additional questions to the respondents to make sure that she had understood the answer correctly. The interviews were after the transcription sent to the research objectives before the analysis started for confirmation of that their opinions were mentioned properly. Thirdly, the author has also considered the validity that means that the author has examined what she said she was going to study (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 410). To gain the highest possible validity the author was through the thesis making sure that she kept the research question and purpose in mind and the chooses and assumptions throughout the thesis are done based on these.

Finally, some researcher believe that to consider reliability and validity are not enough when carrying out qualitative research and therefore the term credibility is also added which shortly means that the interview is carried out using “good practice” (Bryman & Bell, 2007: 411). This kind of “good practice” has the author showed through a well planned research process where every assumption and decision is well considered and motivated throughout the entire thesis. A high level of credibility is also received through that the author has been well prepared for the interview and have had good knowledge about the companies and this has also improved the quality of the data collection. Saunders et al (2009: 321) agrees that a high level of knowledge about the research objective and the settings around reduce bias and increases the reliability of qualitative research. How this good practice is exposed in this thesis will be discussed further under the next section.

9.2 Ethics

The ethics issues have been consider during the entire research process and this has also been seen as highly important due to the fact that the study was carried out within a real organization. The author wanted during the study to make sure that she was not causing any damage for the research objective. Kvale (1997: 105) also agrees that the ethical issues – such as consent, confidentially and privacy - should be considered from the planning stage to final word in the conclusion. From the author's point of view, these ethical issues are foremost important to consider making sure that the right picture is captured of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce.

Firstly, consent is about informing the respondent about the benefit and drawbacks of participating in the interview. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study in an email that was sent to the respondents before the interview. In the email was it clearly stated what the study was going to be used for and how this would be beneficial. Before the interview was carried out the author did explain the purpose again in order to make sure that everything was clear for the respondent. Secondly, regarding the confidentially that deals with the respondents integrity, the author was considered to make the research objects anonymous in the thesis by not mention their names (Kvale, 1997: 107-109). This was in the end not being done as all the respondents agreed to have their own and the company's name stated in the thesis. The author herself saw the possibility to state the name in the thesis as a strength and this would also make it easier if other researcher wish to replicate the study. Thirdly, the privacy was also kept during the interview and the changes that the respondent wanted to have made after reading through the interview were being done to remain the respondent's privacy.

Last but not least, the author has during her entire work made a clear statement that it is her own words that are used and not someone else. When using other researchers studies or opinions are sources used and clearly mentioned in the thesis. Before the printing of the thesis, the interview respondents and the General Manger of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce have made their approval. The reason for doing this was that the author wanted to make sure that she had understood the respondents' opinion when their answer the interview questions. The risk with taking the respondent opinions in to consideration could have been that they wanted to change things afterwards that did not sound good enough. Fortunately, this has not been the case in this thesis and the changes being done after the approval have mainly been the spelling and the authors chose of words. Finally, in the end the author is fully responsible for the eventual errors that could be found in the thesis.

10. Further research

In the last chapter of the thesis, the authors will share her suggestions to other scholars and provide ideas of directions for further research. As research most of the time leaves more questions than answers the following issues could be valued to examine when bringing new insights into the studies about the third party in the process of networking.

Firstly, the author has in this thesis been considering the three dimension of social capital separately and this can be seen as a limitation of this study. Also Naphaiet and Ghosal (1998: 261) agrees that it would it be of interest to examine the interrelationship among the dimensions. This study gives a hint of the correlation of the Structural, Relational and Cognitive dimensions of Social capital when examining the role of the third party but it is not clear in what ways that the three dimensions are supporting or conflicting with each other in the process of building up the intellectual capital within the network. For instance, it is seen in the examined case that the network structure probably influences the other dimension but how and in what extend are not taken into consideration. The dimensions should therefore in further research jointly be taking into account. Further studies would when examining these together provide a more holistic view of the third party and this would add value to the research. In line with the first suggestion, further research should also take more factors from each dimension into consideration and it would also be interesting to examine the negative consequences of social capital as some element of social capital might be antagonistic rather than supportive and dues not beneficial in the process of creating a positive outcome. Secondly, the authors focus in this study has been on the process behind the creation of intellectual capital rather than what kind of outcome that is actually created. In other words, what has actually been provided and the value of this has not been measured. Further research should therefore examine what kind of knowledge that is actually achieved in the process of networking when using a third party. In this thesis, a qualitative study has been carried out and it has not been possible to measure the closed triple relations. As Kirkels and Duysters (2010: 384) mention, in order to make progress in this area it would be interesting to use quantitative research and measurement to bring new insights to the research area.

Current researchers, for instance by Professor Eric van der Heck, that the author got the opportunity to listen to at Rotterdam School of Management, are discussing the main value provided from networking. van der Heck explains that the value is not created within the network but rather outside the platform for the interchange and what this value is would be interesting to consider in further research. Finally, the author of this thesis will leave these suggestions to other researchers to continue the research about the third party in the network infrastructure.

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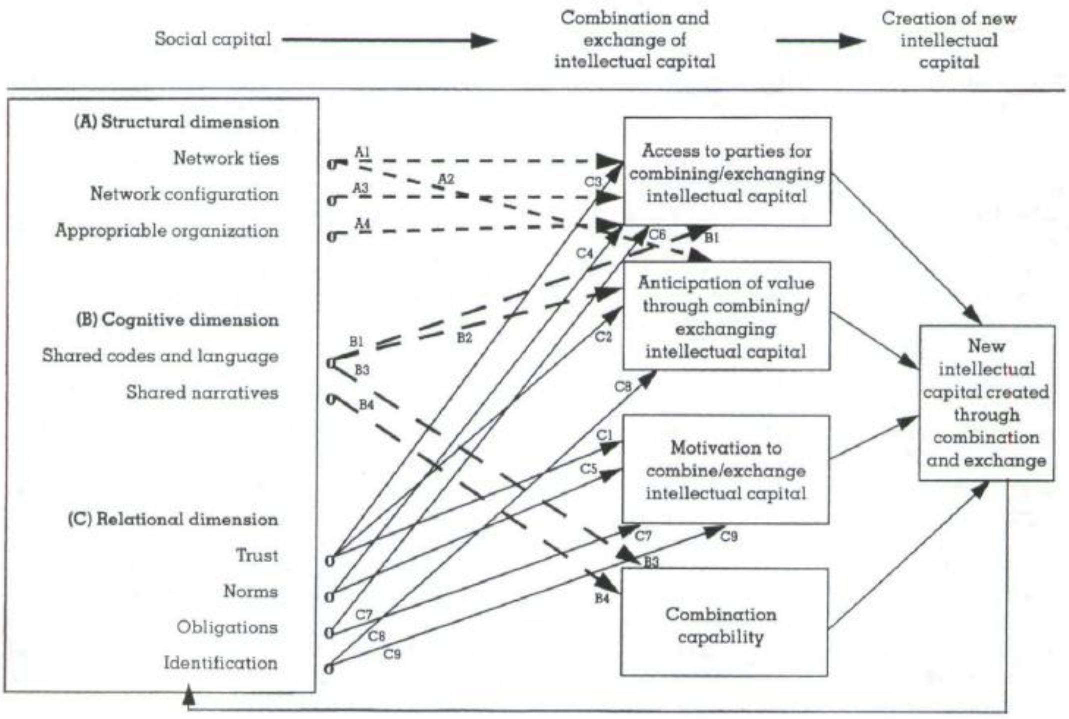
APPENDIX 1

The Social Capital Framework

FIGURE 1
Social Capital in the Creation of Intellectual Capital



The Social Capital Framework, Source: Napiet and Ghoshal 1998: 252

APPENDIX 2

Overview of the Qualitative interviews

Date	Place	Respondent	Category	Company visit
11 AM May 3	BNConnect	Mr. T.H.J Hoefman	ZZP, Dutch, Energy	No
10 AM May 4	Inter IKEA	Mr. Ehsan Turabaz	Multinational, Swedish, Furniture	Yes
2 AM May 5	Iggesund Paperboard	Mrs. Ann-Charlotte Runn	Multinational, Swedish, Paper	Office visit
2 PM May 6	SCA Packing de Hoop	Mr. Henk Lingbeek	Multinational, Swedish, Paper	Yes, including paper mill
3 AM May 12	Heussen	Mr. Nils Van Dijkman, Mrs. Stina Lindmark	Mid-size, Dutch, Law firm	No
12 PM May 17	MummyMug	Mrs. Cecilia Thorfinn	ZZP, Dutch, Special kind of mug	No
5 PM May 19	Swedish Trade Council	Mr. Andreas Rentner	Organization, Swedish, multinational	Office visit

APPENDIX 3

Interview guide

Introduction:

- Background and purpose of the study

- Request for being anonymous?

Basic information about the company:

I. Legal form of business

II. Number of employees

III. Types of product/service offered

IV. Connection to Sweden

V. Years of being a member in the Swedish Chamber of Commerce

VI. Number of events attended each year

VII. Number of employees active within the network

1. Background (Base of social capital)

What are the main reasons to become a member of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce?

What do you think is the Swedish Chamber of Commerce office most important responsibility within the network?

What kinds of events are most interesting to your organization?

Does your company has a strategically approach to networking? And if so, how does it look like?

2. The structural dimension (Density, connectivity, hierarchy)

What kind of contacts/relations can you gain through the network?

What do you think about the balance within the network regarding the size of the companies?

What are the advantages from a network with smaller/ larger companies?

Are the relations created through the network mainly short or long-term relations? What is the reason for this?

How do you perceive the hierarchy within the network?

How does the fact that the Swedish Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization affect the network?

3. The cognitive dimension (Shared codes, language and narratives)

What kind of common features can be find when looking at the members of the network?

How are the members of the network different native languages affecting the network?

Can you see any shared myths, stories and metaphors within the network? Please give some examples.

4. The Relational dimension (Trust, norms, obligations and identification)

How do you gain access to other people within the network?

How is the motivation of sharing knowledge and experience within the network?

Explain how you perceive the trust within the network.

Do you in your business cooperate with other companies in the Swedish Chamber of Commerce? If yes, was the original contact gained through the Swedish Chamber of Commerce?

5. Created value (New intellectual capital)

What does the Swedish Chamber of Commerce add to you as a member?

Does the network give you financial benefits?

How can the Swedish Chamber of Commerce network improve in order to serve your organization better?

APPENDIX 4

Email sent to the respondents

Dear Mr/Mrs,

My name is Elin Lundström and I am doing an internship at the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands during the spring of 2011. At the same time, I am also writing my Master thesis in Business Networking with a focus on the Swedish Chamber of Commerce.

My study will be used by the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for marketing and improvement purpose and has the aim to examine the members' benefits of being a part of this kind of organization. I am therefore kindly asking you to participate in an interview with questions about the network. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and I will come to your office during the time that suits your agenda the best.

Please let me know if this would be possible and if so, I kindly ask you to give me the soonest date and time that would work for you. For confidentially reason it is possible to participate anonymously in the thesis.

Thank you for taking your time to read my email.

I am looking forward to hearing from you,

Kind regards,
Elin Lundström