The Role of Intuition, Time and Timing in Developing Business Relations: A Research Note

Jan-Åke Törnroos
Abo Akademi University

Laurids Hedaa
Copenhagen Business School

INTRODUCTION

In the network approach, the market is treated as sets of connected actors who constitute the key players for exchange and value creation. The playground is formed by a group of companies by their mutual resource and activity constellations through interactive and ongoing cooperative relationships that create value for the partners in the actors-set (Gulati et al. 2000, Möller et al. 2004, Parolini 1999). Stability and change, power-dependencies, social and business interaction and the embedded nature of the actors in the web are other important characteristics of business networks (Håkansson and Snehota 1995, Ford 2001, Granovetter 1985, Halinen and Törnroos 1998).

A key approach in business management and marketing literature has always been to look at practical managerial viewpoints. An important issue in most decision-making models and theories about strategic management, including business market management, is based on a single firm's (or actor's) perspective. It deals mainly with 'we' and 'the others', or the firm versus the "environment" (Ansoff 1965, Hamel and Prahalad 1994, Porter 1979).

The interaction and network approach to business management and marketing poses challenges to this classical perspective. Managing business in relational webs has in many studies been presented from one focal actor's perspective, acting as a part of a network structure with interdependencies with other actors in the marketplace (suppliers and customers notably). Coupling heterogeneous resources between corporate actors is a complicated issue since the notion of 'management' should be handled in a novel way when studying relations between semi-autonomous business actors. Firms acting together with overlapping boundaries should therefore include the relational dimension presenting the set of actors as a whole. It can be hard, in many cases, for one key actor to actually 'manage' relationships in networks. Can we instead focus on 'co-management', or 'network management', or just 'coping'? A key question is who is managing whom, how and within what areas/functions in relational webs? (Håkansson and Snehota 1989, Forssström 2005). Another issue in relation to this is the role of time in management and decision-making. It is not only what to do or how to interact, but also when it is the right time to act and make decisions. Further how does one actor affect other players of the business net? When living in a turbulent and quickly

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1 Corresponding author. Abo Akademi University, Henriksgatan 7, FIN-20500 Turku, FINLAND. Email: jtorroo@abo.fi
changing world, the role of timing becomes extremely important. Making decisions as a participant in sets of connected exchange relationships in business needs to be made having the relational and connected nature of these relations in mind. How do strategic decisions of a company affect others who are directly and indirectly connected to the value-creation process in the business network where a company is active? Making choices, considering the role of timing and understanding event structures, a priori, is a pre-requisite for accurate decisions. Classical fact-seeking, rational decision models might be insufficient in such situations (Mintzberg 1976). Can we move beyond these stepwise rational models?

One issue, which has been taken to the fore in management and decision-making literature and in many other fields of research, is the role of gut feel, or intuitive decision-making (Agor 1986, Mintzberg 1989, Parikh 1994, Sjöstrand 1987). We attempt here to conceptually relate these issues together because we feel that there exist a gap in the literature connecting time and timing, intuitive decision making and the business network approach.

An intriguing and problematic situation resides when looking at management and when companies are forming “hybrids” with other firms through sets of connected value-relations. Being able to handle and relate to others in a common, relational manner is an intriguing challenge. It is our impression that decision-theory in management and marketing literature has not handled this specific issue to a notable degree (Mintzberg 1976, Webster 1994, Porter 1979, 1985, Hamel and Prahalad 1994). A slightly different view has been put forth in articles having a strategic network viewpoint (Håkansson and Snehota 1989, Gulati et al. 2000, Jarillo 1988, Thorelli 1986). Of these, Mintzberg (1976) deals explicitly with intuition, but from a focal decision-makers perspective. The others deal with business networks and strategy, but with limited consideration of intuition and/or time and timing.

Another question is to note different perspectives on management. Classical models are usually based on stepwise, fact-seeking and quantitatively oriented decision-making tools. Calculative rationality has been the dominating way to look at strategic issues and decision-making in companies. Another, very different perspective is the intuitive decision-making process. These two views can also be combined as does Sjöstrand (1997) and Erat and von Krogh (2000). Intuition is a way for managers to deal with uncertainty in relation to our environment. In the management literature, intuition is sometimes related to emotion and in other cases to a cognitive or even a pre-cognitive phenomenon (Sjöstrand 1997). According to Sjöstrand, intuition refers to something which is related to cognition and emotion simultaneously. It is therefore a “gut feel” about how to go on with the coming time as a decision-making tool in companies. Intuition is, however, a slippery concept and hard to define. “It can be stretched to mean almost anything, from innate instinct to professional judgment to plain-old common sense” (Bonabeau 2003, p. 117).

The purpose of the paper is to study the role of intuition, time and timing in managerial decision-making from a business network perspective. The following issues are addressed in the paper. First, we give a conceptual perspective about time and timing in business networks as a basic point of departure. Secondly, we present a conceptual
overview of intuition and intuitive decision-making in connection to time and timing in business networks. Finally, we present our thoughts about how intuitive decision-making can be of use when developing and forming business-market relationships for mutual value creation.

The paper is conceptual in nature and looks at the role of management in business networks by including time and timing (the temporal dimension and the impact of events) into strategic decision-making as well as the structural, or spatial (actor-network) dimension. It deals in a central way with intuition-based decision-making in connection with a business network approach. The paper results in proposals for tackling strategic issues in network management.

The paper starts with a section dealing with time and temporality, especially the concept of timing in relationships. Thereafter, a section dealing with the concept of intuition connecting it to corporate decision making. This section will deal with four dimensions: the adaptive, the social, the temporal and the strategic dimension. A discussion and further implications for research and practice conclude the paper.

TIME AND TIMING IN BUSINESS NETWORKS

The network approach to marketing uses temporally loaded terms and vocabulary. The use of theoretical constructs and the relation to applied research, theory and models is taken to the fore using time, timing and events to understand business networks (Törnroos and Hedaa 1997, 2002).

The network perspective to business marketing implies that connected relationships are both stable and changing, and actors are temporally and spatially embedded socially constructed entities. Forces internal or external to the focal network, often predetermined by interacting actors, can cause change processes to materialize. Both internal (intra-net forces) as well as outside-network forces (extra-net related) form sources (or causes, ‘roots’) for business events to come into play. When noting this, we are also aware of the problem of network boundaries – defined by participant actors or observers, for example through their ‘openness’, as being tight or loose or by delimiting them by certain type of actors. The boundary problem is tackled here by treating the key business-counterparts of a focal firm in its business network relationships as the “internal” network, and placing all other identifiable actors as extra-network related.

Time is defined in different ways in the management and marketing literature as well as in philosophy and social sciences. Three specific ways of dealing with temporality include e.g. linear time, relational time and the notion of time as events (Halinen and Törnroos 1995, Halinen 1998, Hedaa and Törnroos 2002, Medlin 2004). The first linear, chronological time, viz. “the arrow of time” is usually treated as a “Western” discrete time construct starting from a point and going in one direction from the past through the present into the future in exact intervals. The notion of relational time treats temporality as an interchange between the present, the past and an anticipated future (Halinen and Törnroos 1995). Treating time as determined by social events and hence forming
trajectories/chains of connected relational “stories” of occurrences over time is the third viewpoint to time (Hedaa and Törnroos 1997, 2002).

All kinds of “surprises”, i.e. non-expected events “where common sense fails” (Casti 1994), are often engines for change in business including business-to-business networks. The inherent characteristics of these types of forces have been hardly noted in the network approach to marketing. The critical incident technique comes close to highlighting temporally specific events that have caused change (Flanagan 1954, Edvardsson and Luukkonen 1996, Hedaa, 1997), which is predominantly applied to service marketing research.

The notion of process and connectedness between actors include temporality (as well as a spatial dimension). In order to understand marketing phenomena in business networks this issue has to be considered. Concepts like exchange episodes, interaction processes, network development and evolution, and network change presuppose temporality in the applied models and theories of the approach. One might strongly argue that deeper insights about temporality inherent in these concepts are regrettably absent in actual theoretical and empirical research (Easton 1995). Longitudinal empirical studies in business marketing exist however (Forssström 2005, Halinen 1994, Liljegren 1988, Lundgren 1991, Rosson 1986, Salmi 1995). There is still room for development of temporal perspectives in connection with business network research and applied methods (Halinen et al. 2004, Medlin 2004). As Pettigrew (1985) notes in his Process-Context-Content model, the theories and subject area under investigation as well as the content of the study context should be in tune with each other. This means that by using temporally laden terms, the methods and theories should follow suite. Our review shows that the applied approaches in business network research have seldom combined different temporal perspectives in their studies.

Relationships between actors constitute the basic concept for understanding networks in business-to-business contexts. Interactive relationships form the glue for networks to exist. Relationships are developed over time and indicate temporality through a developmental series of events. It takes time to establish, enhance, strengthen and develop business relationships. Change processes and ending relationships are also temporally embedded, i.e. they relate to other events and may be part of event structures in relationships. Various types of events become a tricky issue to handle when companies are connected and have interdependences with each other through mutual investments. When relations are breaking up or a supplier gets into trouble, it may affect many other actors in the developed business network. The consequences can be direct or indirect depending on the position of the actor in relation, the visibility and understanding of the cause, and where the events are located in the network. The event-temporality seems therefore to be a promising avenue for developing an understanding of the temporal dimensions of business networks.

The event-concept has been used as a way to look at how time is experienced by humans in social settings. Events have been defined as: “Something that happens: occurrence” or “To happen: outcome” (Merrian Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 1993, p. 401). Furthermore, an event has been described in the following way:
An event is an outcome of acts or changes caused by nature. Events have two sources. One source is Man, the other is Nature. Man-made events may be intended or unintended. The actors can see events in a business network perspective as temporally specific outcomes of performed acts (Hedaa and Törnroos 1997, p. 7). One has also to consider that new actors may enter into a network by performing specific acts and that previous actors might exit from networks. “Outsiders” may step in and “insiders” can be forced to get out or exit networks for various reasons. The reasons can be based on unintended or self-created (intentional) events (Hedaa and Törnroos 1997). Since events are always connected to previous events, constituting networks of events, the following concept has been developed:

Event networks (EvNs) are time-based connected event relationships. Connected events are seen as forming streams of time-based relations through which events in time-space impact on relationships between business actors. Actor networks and event networks are therefore developing simultaneously to form business networks in and over time and in and over space (Törnroos and Hedaa 1997, 2001). Being able to use the concept of event networks should also constitute the role of timing, i.e. the moment when decisions are favorable or appropriate in time-space (so-called kairotic moments).

A definition of timing is the “selection or the ability to select for maximum effect, the precise moment for beginning or doing something” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 1993). Timing is a situational time-concept, which relates to a discernible event in a stream of other events in time-space in order to achieve intentional outcomes. In a business network context, timing is defined here as confluent event trajectories in a network of interrelated events. Timing can have both chronological and intentional contents (or more precisely a continuum with both absolute and intentional meanings) (Chung 1999).

This view of time uses events appearing in time-space as constituting parts. The event concept is used here as a way to look at time as event streams in a business network context. We are postulating that events form sets of temporal networks (Event networks, EvNs) co-existing with the “spatial” dimension of networks (actor networks) consisting of actors and their relationships with other business actors in the relational landscape. The contextual and situational setting is framing the way temporality and spatiality come to terms in this specific setting (Chung 1999, Hedaa and Törnroos 1997, 2002).

It should be somehow possible to detect forthcoming events when dealing with intuition and time taking event streams from the past into consideration. Can this be done without the formalized logical steps as in most rational decision-making models? Intuitive management and timing are closely intertwined. It is exactly the moment of opportunity, the immediate sensing of cues, and imagination of possible futures that are critical for developing value activities between business actors. Sensing and immediate recognition of potential relationships (nodes/actors connected in space) in the market for the future (the time-element) form the core issues impacting on intuitive decision-making and relational-web formation. The concept of intuition and decision-making is explicated more closely in the following section.
INTUITION AND INTUITIVE DECISION-MAKING

Intuition is a concept which has attracted a lot of interest mainly within philosophy although considerably less in psychology. Concerning philosophy, writings from Socrates and Plato, Kant and especially Henri Bergson can be noted (Henden 2004). Going through the ideas put forth by all of these would require a lot of space. A main issue in the philosophical treatment of intuition is that it is a part of thinking having discursive and analytical elements. In philosophy, intuition is treated as real and rational and being both prior to and superior to the discursive, rational logic. In philosophy, the intuitive state of mind is “balanced, unified, non-discriminating, coherent and pure. It is multi-dimensional and it integrates ideas, archetypes and forms. Discursive thought in philosophy is seen as relative, incomplete and fragmented” (Henden 2004, p. 47).

In psychology, another view is presented. Intuition is seen as fragmented, unconscious and biased automatic processing. Carl Jung has to a notable extent been dealing with intuition, but otherwise very few psychologists have been occupied with it. Here we concentrate on looking at how the concept has been used within management research in order to focus more closely on the contextual setting of the paper.

In management studies, intuitive decision-making has gained an increasing amount of interest (Eneroth 1990, Klein 1999, Mintzberg 1976, Parkhe 2004, Sjöstrand 1997). Reasons for this can be many. The business environment has changed considerably in the last decades due to de-regulation of markets and globalization, new and rapid technological change, new types of risks and the inability to predict future directions. Also intense competition causes problems in decision-making through ‘rational’ reasoning (Erat and von Krogh 2000). Intuition refers in many texts and in different articles to ‘instinctive knowledge, immediate cognition or feeling’ about something related to daily life and forthcoming events, or part of common sense heuristics in making decisions in different ambiguous situations. Intuition deals with acting in a way that feels right without knowing or having the ability to explain why, or without a rational sense making process guiding managerial action. Intuition deals with instinct and beliefs. Intuition is about arriving at good decisions without the classic “reasoning power” (Mintzberg 1976, Parkhe 2004, Sjöstrand 1997).

Figure 1. Left-Right brain
Source: www.brainchambers.com/evolution/brain.html

[Image: www.brainchambers.com/evolution/brain.html]
As previously noted, many other ideas exist about intuition. Intuition is the “capacity to integrate and make use of information coming both from the left and the right sides of the brain” (Agor 1986). In this definition, both brain sides are considered, meaning that intuition deals with being able to use both a rational (left brain) and a more holistic, synthetic faculty (right brain) in order to make accurate decisions (Mintzberg 1976) (Figure 1).

In a paper dealing with intuition from a social cognitive neuroscience approach, it is claimed that implicit learning processes are the cognitive subtract of social intuition. “Phenomenologically, intuition seems to lack the logical structure of information processing. When one relies on intuition, one has no sense of the alternatives being undertaken” (Lieberman 2000, p. 109). Gigerenzer et al. (1999) are referring to this phenomenon as ‘fast and frugal heuristics’ or ecological rationality. Fast and frugal heuristics employ a minimum of time, knowledge and computation to make adaptive choices in real environments. Decision-makers rely more on correspondence than coherence criteria in making choices, i.e. they rely less on general, logical consistency than on domain specific, adaptive criteria. Lieberman (2000) claims that research has suggested that our behaviour can be rule-like and adaptive without a concomitant conscious insight into the nature of the rules being used. It can therefore be considered intuition as the subjective experience associated with the use of knowledge has been gained through implicit learning. In the neuroscience approach, intuition is treated through three different levels, a social (intuitive social action and cognition), a cognitive (implicit learning), and a neural (basal ganglia) level (Lieberman 2000, p. 109).

Carlson (1997) introduces the concept of prolepsis, i.e. presupposing future action based on past action in order to create present action. He assumes that instead of being propelled by discrete events of the past, one is drawn into a meaningful future. Hedaa and Törnroos (1997) similarly talk about present events being past or future loaded, respectively. In film making, a flashback technique (analectic) is often used to better understand the present scene, and flash forward (proleptic) to give meaning to or create expectations about scenes to come in the movie. These and related concepts and issues are considered in the next section.

**Time and intuition**

The temporal element can be found as a central one in definitions of the concept. Through intuitive “knowing”, time and especially timing and events comes to the fore. Sensing the coming is a key issue when talking about intuition in general and intuitive decision-making in particular. It is at the heart of intuition to be able to imagine the future based on accumulated experience from the past and pattern recognition in the present to make good decisions at a specific point in time and in a specific situational context.

One out of four unexpected qualities of inspirational leaders was that “They rely heavily on intuition to gauge the appropriate timing and course of their actions. Their ability to collect and interpret soft data helps them know just when and how to act” (Coette and Jones, 2000).
Additional definitions having a temporal dimension include the following:

"Experiences which the individual is unable at a certain point in time to articulate or communicate intersubjectively in an explicit linguistic form. The difficulty is assumed to be due to vagueness in the configuration of the experience, and/or to the absence of any concepts appropriate to the relating and communicating of certain impressions in traditional ways" (Sjöstrand 1997, p. 17).

Sjöstrand relates the concept of intuition to "tacit knowledge" which to him is close to our notion of intuition in management and decision-making. "Knowing more than we are able to tell relates to accumulated experiential knowledge and professional competence in decision-making. Sjöstrand argues that intuition relates both to cognition and emotion. An intuitive path is referring to 'what somehow seems right' (p. 17).

"Intuition depends on the use of experience to recognize key patterns that indicate the dynamics of a situation" (Klein 1999, 31).

Klein discusses intuition in situation-based decision making where patterns can be subtle and people cannot describe what they noticed or what explicitly could be described as being typical for a specific situation or event where a decision was made. He continues: "Skilled decision makers know that they can depend on their intuition, but at the same time they may feel uncomfortable trusting a source of power that seems so accidental"

In Klein's (1993) book an example of premature infants in hospitals makes the point quite clearly. In this example it is shown how experienced nurses can detect if something is wrong with the infant babies and can start medication immediately, whereas younger inexperienced nurses cannot detect this and rely on the technical devices more in their decision making.

Time and temporality is a key issue when defining intuition as a process. Intuition is "A process consisting of accessing the internal reservoir of cumulative experience and expertise developed over a period of years, and distilling out of that response, or an urge to do or not to do something, or choose from some alternatives again, without being able to understand consciously how we get the answers" (Parikh, 1994).

The spatial dimension

Decisions take place in specific contexts where actors and existing relations in business settings meet and interact. The temporal dimension should therefore be complemented with the spatial context and structure of actors (nodes connected through links, bonds, and ties). This forms a spatio-structural (actor) network where decisions are made. Changing the spatial configuration of the existing 'relational map' can usually be made recognizing why a decision causing change is timely, and imagining (intuitively) the consequences it will bring. The 'spatial' is always related to the timing/temporal dimension, and vice-versa.
To sum up. Intuitive decision-making deals with a sense-making precognitive process at a specific moment in time based on previous experiential knowledge, pattern recognition, acquired skills and an ability and courage to act. It is contrasted with classical rational decision-making models (RDM) of problem identification and definition of objective functions, and stepwise evaluation of possible alternatives, aiming at utility maximizing choices. Intuition is also characterised by ‘immediate knowing without reason’ in concrete settings. We feel confident that this will happen when we feel sure that we are acting in an appropriate manner, but we cannot understand or explain our direct sense of why this is the case. Intuitive decision-making (IDM) takes place in a specific situational context and for a specific purpose, i.e. under norms of ecological rationality. Previous events and experiences, the current situation and context and the coming time (sensing forthcoming event trajectories) are important to note. Decisions are always ‘future loaded’ (toward an unknown and unknowable future), and we have expectations about future outcomes (the event outcome space). Timing is closely connected to intuitive decision-making. Having the feeling about what to do and when to do it are closely intertwined in kairotic moments.

INTUITIVE MANAGEMENT IN BUSINESS NETWORKS

Intuitive decision-making and relationships

In this section of the paper we move into the interaction and network approach concerning relationships in business networks. A basic question is: when do we need intuitive decision-making being a company embedded in a business network?

The future is unknown and unknowable. Information is rarely or ever given – instead we must search for information: cues, indicators, reasons, knowledge embodied in the surrounding environment (including our network of relationships), socially distributed memory, spanning friends, experts and human artefacts such as libraries and the internet. Rationality is bounded and limited for accessing information (Simon 1957). Time and intellectual resources are also limited. In addition, we must apply a stopping rule: when to stop looking for more information.

March (1971) proposes the following notion: “It is fundamental to modern theories of choice that thinking should precede action, that action should serve a purpose, that purpose should be defined in terms of a consistent set of pre-existent goals, and that choice should be based on a consistent theory of the relation between action and its consequences” (p. 255).

March’s creative alternative is: (1) to treat goals as hypotheses; (2) to treat intuition as real; (3) to treat memory as an enemy; and (4) experience as a theory. “Each of these procedures represents a way in which we temporarily suspend the operation of the system of reasoned intelligence. They are playful” (p. 263).

Rationality may be seen only as the surface part of our total cognition below which we find intuition. According to Henden (2004): “intuition is the ontological foundation for any normative theory of rationality. The last century’s “advances in decision-making
tools of operations research and management science, and the technology of expert
systems have not applied to the entire domain of decision making” (Simon 1987). Sub-
consciousness is what’s left when we go behind rationality or regress to our cognitive
foundations, which assist us in filtering bits of information: interesting to trivia and for
relevance (cognition may be seen as the art of focusing on the relevant and deliberately
ignoring the rest).

Intuition is strongly present when unexpected events suddenly take place, which has a
direct bearing on the value-based activities in the network we are embedded within.
When hostile takeovers from close collaborators suddenly come to the fore, or when new
regulations affecting the core value creation are implemented, or when your key
supplier experiences a strike or an earthquake, societal groups or competitors cause new
and unexpected situations, then rapid and creative (fast and frugal) decisions might be
needed, supported by intuitive decision making.

Another situation where the role of intuitive skills comes up is when we (alone or
together with some of our network partners) want to change the configuration of the
network. This is the case, for example, when a company is seeking additional partners
for an existing business network and/or try to get connected with new actors. Intuitive
decision skills are needed combined with empathy in order to engage a mutual selection
process. Intuition should be combined with imagination in order to be able to ‘see’ or
‘portray’ how the network will develop in the future, and what possible connections
(direct and indirect) and change processes will materialize.

There are three critical viewpoints in this type of decisions. The first is to be able to
identify companies that can create mutual value for existing companies related to the
focal net. The second viewpoint is to be able to sense the evolving resource
complementarities a new network configuration will bring. The third is to make one self
sufficiently attractive to allow a mutual selection to take place. This notion is closely
related to the idea of the “strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973) that leads to better
exploration for new players and possible creation of network constellations and
configurations that were not thought about before.

Corporate strategy deals with three basic situations when handling business
relationships and networks. The following questions about relationships seen from a
strategic perspective can be noted: How should a firm deal with existing relationships?
A company embedded in a network is not “managing alone” but have to deal with
others who aim to manage relationships as well. How to relate to those actors we would
like to have business relationships with but who are not ‘accessible’ for some reason or
another. Firms who already have manifest positions in other business networks are
‘occupied’ and hard to approach for mutual value creation. How to get a better picture
of those existing actors in the relational business landscape who we are aware of but do
not have enough knowledge about, and for some reason or another, at present do not
want to be directly connected to, even if invited. How to be able to detect so-called
‘invisible potential actors’ in the relational landscape. Those actors exist as potential
partners but we are not able to trace them or their potential value as partners in the
current situation (the weak-tie notion) (Törnroos and Strandvik 1997).
Intuition and imagination is needed especially in the two most "remote cases". In the following, we aim to develop this aspect of business networks a bit further in relation to strategy.

The concept of network horizon can be used as a stepping stone for the discussion here. The concept of network horizon deals with how managers are mentally constructing their outer limits of relationships with other business actors. The network horizon is a mental delimitation towards outside actors (Anderson, Håkansson and Johanson 1994). The concept of "network pictures" have also been used which is a mental map of relationships of business people concerning their business relationships and the firm itself (Ford et al. 2004, 195).

As stated above, networks are dynamic spatio-temporal structures that evolve and change over time. The dynamic aspect sets the network in motion through events that cause change in the relational landscape of the firm. A company needs to continuously deal with change being embedded in a web of actors, especially with their key counterparts. As a consequence, networks emerge through interaction and are formed and transformed over time. Networks also change and are reconfigured through experienced, actual and expected events in relational time. Relational time affects the network horizon through past, present and future temporalities. The spatial dimension has also been noted by Gulati et al. (2000) as follows: "the location of firms in inter-firm networks is another important element of competition, since competition is more intense among actors who occupy a similar location relative to others but is mitigated if actors are tied together" (p. 204). A specific network context may be intimately intertwined, developing over time and create new and often extended network horizons of the involved managers. The notion of ‘kairotic time’ i.e. sensing and grasping the emerging time-network-space and exploiting favourable event trajectories connecting a firm in its relational web may be emphasized when dealing with intuition, time and timing in business networks.

**Intuition and timing in business network decision-making**

In the current business environment, firms have developed interwoven threads of business relationships with suppliers, customers and service providers. Firms have developed value networks and resource dependencies between interacting companies (Gulati et al. 2000, Parolini 1999, Thorelli 1986). The global nature of business with rapid change and new competitive forces and new players entering motivates rapid and timely decision making.

In this situation intuitive decision-making, which is holistic and instantaneous may be a fruitful way to deal with network complexities. Here issues directly related to timing are explored a bit further. The issues presented in the following are tentative thoughts and should be explored more in detail. Some managerially focused topics to consider for further inquiry are grouped into four distinct categories: (1) the adaptive dimension; (2) the social dimension; (3) the temporal dimension; and (4) the strategic dimension.
The adaptive dimension

Mutual adaptations are important for the exchange partners for continuously maintaining and improving their relationship-fit for co-production and development, e.g. in new competitive situations, or when technological change is needed for more competitive value activities between the counterparts. When is the right time to ‘tune our current business relationships’?

Intuition and timing also deals with co-cognition and co-emotion, aligned through communication. Being able to sense how well actors can work together and create value through social capital formation and development, here understood as “mutual understanding and mutual benefit” (in the future) is the key issue (Baker 1994). Which relations should a company invest in and how should they work together, i.e. what is the mutual adaptation potential for the future?

The social dimension

Being able to sense the role of commitment, trust and social capital formation needed for relationships to evolve in a positive manner is a basic issue to consider here. What key people and positions, and which relational norms are important for future business and personal networking?

Boundary spanners in interacting companies occupy representational roles and values – more or less aligned with personal roles-sets and individual values. Hence, boundary spanners occasionally may suffer role conflicts and role ambiguities. Mutual understanding of these realities of social and professional life is often a precondition for maintenance and development of productive relationships. This is a calling for empathy and general social skills.

The social dimension also depends on relationship quality in terms of image and reputation stemming from not only our own behaviour, but also from the conduct of our exchange partners. What concrete image value do we get by being related to certain key persons in the marketplace? How should we position ourselves in relation to them?

The concepts of ‘weak-ties’ (Granovetter 1973) and ‘weak signals’ (Ansoff 1984) have been noted as being key inputs to intuitions about the value of innovative bridging, and important events determining initial conditions for chaotic ‘systems’, where things may get out of control. Weak signals are events that are small, under the surface, unnoticed, overlooked, but may announce big evolutions. How can we identify and enter new innovative network arrangements through social capital and interpersonal relationships, and make these into value activities?

The temporal dimension

Timing and temporal impressions in and through relations is concerned with exploring for the future potential value certain business actors possess, and the potential positive event trajectories which open up through exploitation and reconfiguration of current...
relationships. How can we orchestrate and/or reconfigure our current position and develop a better network position?

Timing in networks deals with decisions affecting existing and potential relationships at a specific moment by intuitive sensing and exploiting the up-coming opportunity structure. How can we imagine, and when should we engage in potential relationship-time-space?

How should we combine the past experiences and value mechanisms with the expectations of new and evolving value-systems and constellations?

**The strategic dimension**

Relationship constellations and co-evolution involve the configuration of the network over time. Strategy should be able to trace those events and processes that are forming future developments of business and the positions of the connected actors therein. What event trajectories and networks positions will materialise in the future, and how should we participate in the emergence of novel value-creating networks?

To be able to sense and imagine time dependent complementarities between actors in networks and the resources they control, and actual and potential abilities to cooperate is a key issue when establishing and developing relations between organisations consisting of for example, different systems and managerial decision-making cultures. When is the right time for firms to connect with specific, complementary resources for developing successful business relationships?

Confluence and co-construction concerns with streamlining of business and other processes between business partners in order to co-create value and operational fit between them. This issue is concerned with how mutually aligned networking strategies can and should be developed in order to cope with future value activities in the set of relationships of the network.

Positioning (of the company) in the network and developing position horizons (and being able to sense them) is a key issue concerning strategy.

Duality and mutuality in management relates to the area of overlapping or connected businesses of the counterparts and how they should co-ordinate these relationships embedded in a business network.

Opportunity structure and relationship potential deals with noting the opportunities of developing existing relationships and/or finding new connections and resources of actors for the development of new relationships and business opportunities.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Intuition has been studied in relation to human decision-making in organisations (Mintzberg 1976, Parikh 1994, Sjöstrand 1997). In business marketing management, it
seems still to be in its infancy. Business market management deals with inter-company settings and value-creation processes between companies and professional business people. While business market management and marketing, including strategic issues, have moved into a more relational stream of understanding and economic-based models have lost ground, the role of social competencies combined with imagination in dealing with complexities in the marketplace seems to have gained ground. In this situation, intuitive decision-making might play a more pronounced role than previously.

Intuition has many different characteristics that we have elucidated in this paper. First, intuition is a human cognition that is non-rational and does not include pre-determined steps of action. Intuitive decision-making is immediate and cannot be explained by the use of prevailing, stepwise rational reasoning.

In addition, intuition is something that relates to (pre-) cognitive processes and emotionality. Understanding what takes place in the right brain, and what we can expect without being able to logically arrive at conclusions in the left brain is one characteristic relating to intuition. To some extent, intuition is also related to experimentation, learning processes, pattern recognition and accumulated experience that some people in specific situations can make use of. While reason and logic may be oriented toward problem solving, intuitions are seeking and exploiting opportunities. Intuition, in business network terms, relates to the ability to see how the position and role of a firm might be developed in the future for positive value creation possibilities.

The role of ‘network space’ is also a part of intuitive decisions. When a firm is positioned in a web of relations with other firms, the position and the web of connected actors exist in space through relations, connections, bonds and ties that keep the business actors together in networks. This is an outcome of previous activities and events.

Time and timing is closely connected to the intuitive decision-making process. In a business network setting, timing is needed in order to find a favourable ‘kairotic’ moment for forthcoming business opportunities. Relating to potential new partners or reconfiguring current relations and visioning future event trajectories form a key issue concerning intuitive decisions in business network settings. The notion of event networks and past and future loadedness form a part of this. Time and timing, and the opportune (kairotic) moment is a part of network decision-making where we feel that intuitive people can have a better outcome of their decisions than only fact-seeking managers. Facts only exist in the past (Figure 2).

Management in networks and the role of intuition is an intriguing issue. Managers strive usually to have control of the firm and its relations to key counterparts. In reality this can be very hard to accomplish. Non-controllable events and actors “outside” the core business, and the network horizon, might interact and create unforeseeable and negative events. Intuitive managers have a more developed sense of transforming potential weaknesses into innovative opportunities. They should also be able to understand how new actors enter the scene and how to deal with them.
Figure 2. Key aspects of intuition and decision-making in an organisation.

Dimensions related to timing and intuitive decisions and potential favourable outcomes for further inquiry include the following points:

Table 1. Three dimensions for relationship development and managerial issues for handling relationships in business networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADAPTIVE DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>complementarities and mutuality 'tuned' and aligned relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL DIMENSIONS</td>
<td>'carrying-value' and representational role of actors commitment, trust and social capital formation timing and temporal sensing co-cognition, co-emotion, communication social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS</td>
<td>timing in networks, sensing identifying kairotic moments confluence in event-trajectories past and future loadedness of events event networks and actor network connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS</td>
<td>role, position and network horizons 'weak-ties' and 'weak signals' duality and mutuality in management opportunity structure and relationship potential network embeddedness</td>
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