English Abstract

In a response to the complexity and the dynamics of today's business environments, the management teams of many single enterprises have chosen to either join or create strategically led, *interorganizational corporate networks*. But the number of cases in which a network management authority is confronted with crises or processes that have the potential to endanger the existence of the coalition is rising, along with the increased diffusion of corporate networks and their ongoing phases of operation.

The thesis elaborates this aspect of *endangerment* by conducting an extensive empirical study in the environment of a multi-national innovation consulting network which has recently gone through a severe crisis. A pan-European distribution of 1,380 questionnaires throughout the network, containing 170 items each, yielded 202 complete responses and a return rate of 14.6%. Empirical evidence subsequently suggests that crisis processes in corporate networks can be characterized by means of their *multiple typologies* and can be traced back to *common causes*. The distinct effects of these processes show up on the level of the network partners, the level of interorganizational relations and the level of the network as a whole.

The ultimately developed terminology of a *network crisis* incorporates all three levels by defining this as a multiple and simultaneous endangerment of dominant company objectives in a majority of the network partners. The endangerment impacts are asymmetrically distributed and appear to be dependent upon the contribution of preferences of each partner to the commonly shared network objectives. At the same time, the network crisis endangers established forms of network specific social capital on the levels of interorganizational relations and the network as a whole. The endangerment in this case stems from the gradual destruction of constitutive trust elements in network specific social capital constructs.

In a further differentiation, the term *network failure* as a cumulative failure of both network coordination forces - market and hierarchy - is introduced as a prerequisite of a network crisis. The constitutive characteristics are complemented by the necessity for an interpretative momentum and the typical elapse description of a network crisis as a *Sharp Rise and Long Decline*. Additionally, the causes, courses and effects of network crises are further investigated.

The incompatibility of a single enterprise crisis management with the requirements of a strategic network is then characterized by defining network management as em-

bedment of hierarchical coordination into the horizontal systems of negotiations. Both the processes of autonomous self-coordination between network partners and the establishment of suitable framework conditions have to be considered in interorganizational crisis management. With these premises, a 'draft of interorganizational crisis management under best conditions' is conceptualized in the format of an *idealistic management prescription*. The conceptual arrangement is divided into the areas of operative and strategic crisis management.

Given the increased external crisis resistance of a corporate network, the shift to internal causes is emphasized for the purposes of a *transaction-oriented operative crisis management* with a special focus on the aspects of relational and performance risks related to single network partners. For the purposes of *context-oriented, strategic crisis management,* the establishment of a *strategic preparedness*, in the sense of network-wide crisis anticipation and crisis prevention, is then discussed as an indispensable requirement. The existence of trust within the network is described as a prerequisite for the implementation of strategic crisis management measures.

The concluding part of the concept underlines the necessity for complementary measures amongst the *network partners.* The awareness of network specific risks, the maintenance of a permanent exit option together with updated costs of exit, and the change in contributed preferences over time to collective goal setting are discussed as major elements. Generally speaking, network partners have to align their measures with the intended effects on their reputations, which in turn determine that they are perceived by other partners as an attractive counterpart within the network.

To underline the practical implications of the concept, the thesis then discusses a resulting *mix of adequate management tools* for both fields of network crisis management, with nine tools being evaluated in an exemplary manner. The work concludes with a critical investigation of a generalization of the presented terms and concepts beyond the configuration of a knowledge-intensive service network.

KEY WORDS • strategic network • consulting network • network management
• network crisis • crisis management