

Firm Boundaries through the Perception of Management

ABSTRACT

In this paper we are not concerned primarily with crossing of the boundaries of the firm but rather with what the boundaries are, or could be, and where they are. Our point of departure is that boundaries of the firm are matter of perspective we take on the firm. We will look at how the boundaries can be conceived dependent on different perspectives taken on the firm in economics and management. We will then explore where they are perceived to be by those who act as the management of the firm. We will finally discuss the first empirical data collected in a more extensive working research, aiming to describe the firm boundaries as they are perceived by its management.

1. THE POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Why be concerned with the question of the boundaries of the firm? There is a plausible argument that the way in which one sets the boundaries of a complex phenomenon will affect the theories that explain the phenomenon (Hayek 1964). Business firms, and broadly speaking economic organizations in general, that are the object of theorizing of economists and management scholars, are such a complex phenomena.

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For quite some time the question of the boundaries of the firms has been absent from the academic debate. It has been considered solved in a satisfactory and convenient way by defining the boundaries of the firm as given by the “property rights” that is by limits of ownership and contract. Such a way to define the boundaries of the firm has a long and proven tradition in economics and several merits. It yields univocal clear-cut dividing line between what is the firm and what it is not; what is inside the firm and what is outside the firm. Furthermore, it is consistent with the focus on exchange transactions that is the transfer of the ownership and its economic consequences for the firm. It provides a neat dividing line between the firm and market and has been instrumental in development of the theory of the firm and to some of the alternative explanations of the origins of the firm (e.g. Coase 1937, Williamson 1975).

More recently however, among management scholars and to some extent among economists close to the management perspective on the firm, there has been some debate on the shortcomings of this way to draw the dividing line between the firm and its context, despite all the merits of this way to conceive the boundaries of the firm. The issue of boundaries has been raised in particular in two streams of research in economics that can be labeled (Foss 2005) the “knowledge based view of the firm” (e.g. Kogut & Zander 1992, Conner & Prahalad 1996) and the “organizational economics” respectively (e.g. Williamson 1975, Demsetz 1991).

It is when the management perspective is taken that the definition of boundaries based on ownership appears more problematic. The reason is that the management perspective in fact requires the possibility to distinguish the organizational variables that can be controlled (i.e. on which influence can be exercised) from those that are outside the possibilities of control (influence). The management perspective is therefore primarily concerned with “boundaries” to influence, that is with the line that separates can be managed from what cannot be managed. Several streams of research in the management perspective have observed that the “boundaries of influence” indeed do not coincide with the “boundaries of the ownership”, which is, those of the property rights.

In other words, it has been observed that, on one hand ownership does not necessarily translate into control and, on the other hand, that ownership is not a condition for exercising some degree of control or influence. We can find such a stance in particular in two areas in management research. The first is the research concerned with business strategy (Conner & Prahalad 1996, Hammel 2000, Vicari 2000, Parolini 1996). The second is the research concerned with business markets (e.g. Ford 2001, Selnes 1998, Hakansson & Ford 2002, Ford et al. 2003).

Looking back at the arguments used to question the traditional, clear-cut conception of boundaries based on property rights, it appears that the concern with boundaries in management research is related to the attention to the issue of resources. In the strategy field the knowledge based view of the firm develops in parallel with the growing acceptance of the so called resource-based view of business strategy and in the field of business markets grows from the empirical research centered on industrial markets and technological innovation. Indeed the resource dimension appears clearly to take the center place in both streams of research.

In both of these research traditions that focus on the resource dimension of the firm two facets of the resource dimension of the firm are emphasized. The first, widely accepted perhaps because traditionally explicitly present in the neo-classical theory of the firm, is that every firm appears to be a distinctive collection of complementary, heterogeneous resources. The second facet, perhaps less explicit but nevertheless underlying the line of reasoning, is that any firm is actually producer and provider of resources for others. The very existence and survival of the firm depends thus on this providing resources valued by others. This latter facet of resources is to some extent hidden in the neo-classical economic tradition as it assumes substantial homogeneity across firms and thus focuses on the existence and survival of the firm being linked to the differential performance in providing the (homogeneous) products – here resource elements.

Firms are thus conceivable as a resource imbedded entity in which different specific resource elements converge and in which specific resources (from the perspective of others in the firm's context) originate. This double face of the resource dimension in the firm has rarely been

systematically explored but implicitly readily accounted for. Yet, it has been hinted rather early in the management field, in particular in the notion of market as an organized behavioral system (Alderson 1957). In fact it is somewhat difficult to find in both neo-classical economics and most of the management studies a more systematic discussion of what is a resource. When the resource concept has been explored on a more abstract level, as for example the Austrian school of economic (e.g. Kirzner 1972) and in management (Hakansson & Snehota 1995) it appears difficult to separate the resource concept from that of knowledge. The Austrian school refers frequently to the frame of ends and means and defines “resource” as any kind of perceived means to an end. The argument is appealing and yields the notion of resource as any element perceived by the economic actors as instrumental for achievement of desirable ends. Contemporary research on business strategy takes a similar stance when emphasizing the importance of “intangible resources” such as know-how, trust and like. This stream of research argues strongly that these intangibles are important, if not the most important, resource elements a firm makes use of because of their specificity. It is the specificity of the resource collection of the firm that underlies its capacity to differentiate its performance (which is the type of resources it provides to others). It is often said that ours is nowadays a knowledge economy and that knowledge resources are among the critical resources for the development of the firm that can be conceived as a “knowledge node”.

Opening the issue of firm’s resources in this way brings into the picture another aspect. The specific resource set necessary for the firms operations can never be entirely “owned”. At best it can be acquired but has to be continuously replenished. The specific resources necessary to the operations of the firm are at any given time largely “external” – they are available outside the firm. They need to be acquired or in other ways accessed and activated. The specific set of heterogeneous resources needed by the firm is dispersed (or distributed) in the context of the firm and owned or variously controlled by other actors in the context of the firm. Such a view of the resource problem common in the management research is not entirely new. This idea has roots in the argument of Hayek about the role of market relationships with regard to the elements of knowledge dispersed

among various individuals (Hayek 1945) and becomes a common point in the knowledge based view of the firm.

A related issue is that the set of resources that characterize the firm is not a given but a relative and evolving entity. Not only is the resource set needed by the firm a collection of specific complementary resource elements, it is never a given but continuously evolving. If we accept the notion of bounded rationality of the management the set of resources that characterize the firm is relative to the extent that it reflects the images of external resources and of the firm's internal resources (Penrose 1957:31) that define the "productive opportunity set" of the firm as seen by entrepreneurs. Such a set is subject to change as the perceptions that management holds are changing. This ushers in the picture what might be called the socio-cognitive aspect of the resource problem that economics tend to steer away from because it introduces the kind of complexity that makes the problem difficult to handle analytically on a more aggregate level. In the management perspective, however, it cannot be so easily avoided since it is clearly linked to the performance differential of the empirical firms – or perhaps better of the business enterprise.

Considering the need to acquire or access resource elements controlled and owned by others question becomes whether it can be achieved and to what extent it can be achieved through market transactions. That brings us to the issue of relationships. Some resources can be acquired and transferred to the firm by means of market transactions. Other resource elements, in particular the intangible resource elements, are more problematic in this respect. They cannot be transacted but can be used as they are activated and mobilized. Here we encounter the notion of business relationships – broadly conceived as interactions between economic actors (Richardson 1972). Relationships to other actors in the context of the firm represent not only the interaction necessary to carry out transactions but also in itself a means to access various resource elements of which use can be made. Therefore, to the extent the resource set constitutes the core of a firm's operations the relationships through which they are acquired and accessed are part of the firm. Firms and markets are made of relationships. As all institutions, firms can be conceived as being made of a pattern of

relationships linking individuals, organizational units, functions, that allow for exchange of information, link various activities and tie competences to meaningful entity. Similarly markets can be conceived as a network like pattern of relationships among individuals and organizations that serve the purpose of exchange. This follows from taking the institutional perspective and the consequent concern with relationships.

The transactional and the relational logic are not mutually exclusive rather they are complementary. The relationships are means for carrying out exchange transaction and some kind of resource exchange are the scope of most relations that compose institutions. In the market and firm context relationships without the purpose of exchange in this broad sense don't make much sense.

The relational perspective on the firm and on the market brings us back to the issue of the interface and boundaries between the two. Once the firm and the market are conceived in terms of relationships the interface between the two has a relational dimension. This makes sense in particular in business (inter-organizational) markets where the relational texture connecting organizations is particularly coarse-grained. The relational conception of the firm – market interface is the object of interest in this paper. Compared with the transactional perspective that offers a clear notion of boundaries given by the property rights, the relational perspective makes the conception of boundaries more problematic.

2. RELATIONSHIPS AND FIRM BOUNDARIES

If we accept the idea that the relationships which tie the company to other actors (or stakeholders) are at the same time part of each of these actors and of the company space, we should consider whose property is the relationship. For instance, the relation tying the company to an independent research centre is a means to access and mobilize valuable resource elements and can

generate a number of important consequences for the firm – such as new products, new patterns, new processes. Ownership of these elements can only partially be defined by contract. It is impossible to specify under a written contract all the values that flow through the relationship and that can generate values for the firm.

At this point the question is who, between the company and the research centre, owns the relationship, considering that what is shared can not be considered fully owned by each single partner but neither can it be considered detached, not owned by anyone. In any case it becomes very difficult to define a “share” of the ownership or relative share of the influence. The fact that we can not quantify the level of ownership of the relationship does not necessarily mean that the relationship does not belong to anyone of them. Any of the parties to the relationship can or cannot leverage it for the own advantage.

One way to overcome the problem is not to consider the pure meaning of ownership, in the sense that someone owns something even if he's not the owner from a legal point of view (i.e. owner by property or contractually): in fact a partner can gain something through the relationship independently from the degree of ownership (i.e. owner by property or contractually): a partner can gain something through the relationship independently from the degree of ownership (Willer, 1985; Dyer & Singh, 1998). For instance, a company can own a patent but could not be able to obtain any positive results from it. On the other side, the same company can combine different elements of know-how coming from all the suppliers' system and use it in new projects and products obtaining an added value (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Henderson & Clark, 1990)

If we compare the two situations – with or without ownership – we could argue that there is not any given correlation between the level of ownership in the relationships and the expected generated value for each of the parties involved. Furthermore, any relationship should be considered as a “living body” and as for anything dynamic what really matters is not the specification of who is the owner but the consequences of interaction in time. The consequences of interaction will reflect

the trust and the reciprocal willingness to cooperate and adapt to each other (Fiocca, 1993; Castaldo, 2002).

As a consequence we can have two different kind of companies, in terms of how they are developing through their relationships. We can have a so called “closed company”, a company not using any relationship for own interests: it can be considered “closed” since it is unable to interact with its environment and its stakeholders. Even if it can be very efficient and able to produce and maybe to sell products, it is limited in its capacity to make use of external resources beyond the transactions. In a continuously changing environment, one must suppose that sooner or later this kind of company will encounter difficulties to adapt and evolve. On the other side, there are what might be considered the “open companies”, those that are able to identify, attract and eactivate external resources through their set of relationships (Hakansson & Snehota, 1989; McEvily & Zaheer, 1999).

This implies that the degree of openness of the company with respect to its relationships is an important aspect of the company management. The capacity to manage relationships will affect the set of external resources the firm can make use of and thus stands as a critical factor in the development of the firm over time.

From a boundaries definition and design perspective, the open company could be also named “extended”, but the two words “opened” and “extended” are not perfect synonymous. “Open” means that any resource can come in or go out and give the impression that a company is continuously reshaping itself due to these dynamics. “Extended” focuses on boundaries, which are by definition larger than the ones of the closed companies, *ceteris paribus*. When we consider the definition of the company, having in mind boundaries (in our context from opened to extended) we’re implicitly defining the set of incoming resources enriching it.

For the resource management perspective, it seems better not to limit the extension of the company but to manage the potentiality of openness.

Relationships are not anonymous. They are enacted by individuals whose ability to be opened to the external environment varies. In a business enterprise individuals are part of a function, a business unit or a division, and have an assigned role. The role assigned tends to direct the attention and the perceptions of the individuals. In a simple situation, focusing on a single company, three levels of analysis should be considered: individuals, function (business units, divisions, project teams, etc...), company as a whole¹ (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998; Doney & Cannon, 1997).

As a consequence, relationships are not objectively definable. Their importance and priorities depend on the perception of a single individual (function or company), who is managing it.

Moreover the perception of importance and priority changes continuously and it's influenced by external factors and by the reciprocal behaviour of the partners.

Our field research represent a first attempt to sketch the set of relationships which surround a company².

3. FIELD RESEARCH

¹ The same kind of analysis could be enlarged from a single company perspective to any form of companies aggregation (alliances, joint-ventures and so on), or at an industry level and/or considering the network of companies, districts, etc...

² The company we investigated is Datalogic, an Italian multinational company based in Bologna. It is the largest European manufacturer and one of the largest in the world of bar code readers, mobile computers, and RFID systems. Datalogic's product range covers hand-held and fixed-position bar code readers using both laser and CCD technologies. Datalogic's offer also includes mobile computers for data collection. Furthermore, through its subsidiaries Escort Memory Systems (California) and Informatics (Texas), Datalogic provides RFID solutions for the entire supply chain with a leading position in the automotive sector, electronic manufacturers and warehouse management systems. In addition, with the recent acquisition of Laservall, the Group has entered the laser marking sector. The company is directly present in Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the U.S.A. In order to promote its products and improve the quality of its service to all its customers, Datalogic has developed a wide network of partners in over 40 countries, selected and qualified in order to offer services and solutions up to the highest level in the industry

The Authors express great appreciation to Mr. Roberto Tunioli, CEO and Vicepresident of Datalogic, to all the managers who have been interviewed and to Mrs. Laura Conti for the precious assistance in organising the two days of interviews.

In February 2006 we interviewed³ 11 Datalogic managers, belonging to different functions and business units, from purchasing to R&D, from engineering to after sales services, plus four general managers and some business units managers.

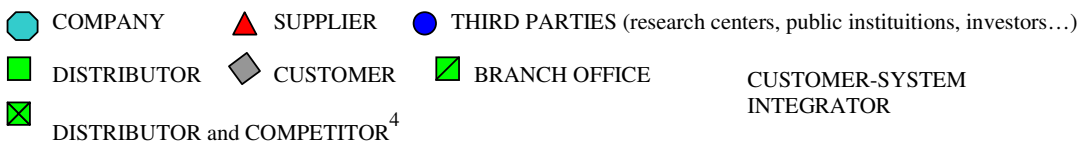
The research was developed through personal interviews (each of them lasting 30-40 minutes), based on a semi-structured questionnaires (*see attachment 1*), focused on the following:

- a. In-depth description of the three relationships the manager in its task position (functional or business unit), perceives as the most important ones. The “importance” has not been previously specified by the interviewers, but left to the personal interpretation of the interviewed.
- b. The feeling about perceived importance of the company by the relational partner, in order to have subjective evidences of the level of reciprocity.
- c. The perception of risk about losing the relationship and the perceived difficulties to substitute it.
- d. A broader list of fundamental relationships the company has. At this point we asked the functional/business unit manager to have an “helicopter view” and, while answering these questions, to put him/herself in the general management position.
- e. At the end we asked each interviewed to draw the net he/she considers more important and “close” to him/her task-organizational environment.

Here below we reproduce the webs of relationships designed by the managers interviewed.

Please note that:

- the different counterparts’ typologies are identified as follows

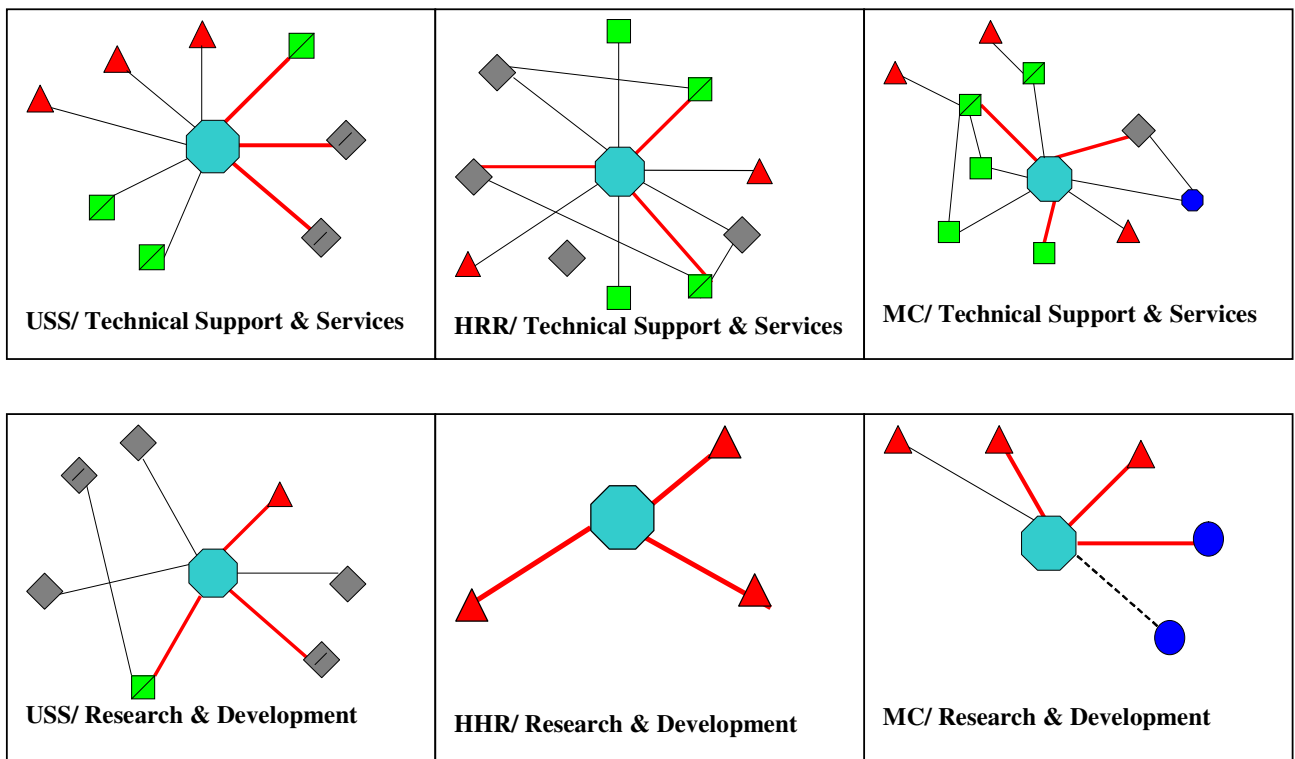


³ Interviews were made by the authors of this paper and by Francesca Guenzi and Francesca Uggeri, Master students in Business Administration, Catholic University of Milan, as part of their thesis dissertation research.

⁴ Some distributors quoted develop themselves some product lines which in some cases can compete with Datalogic.

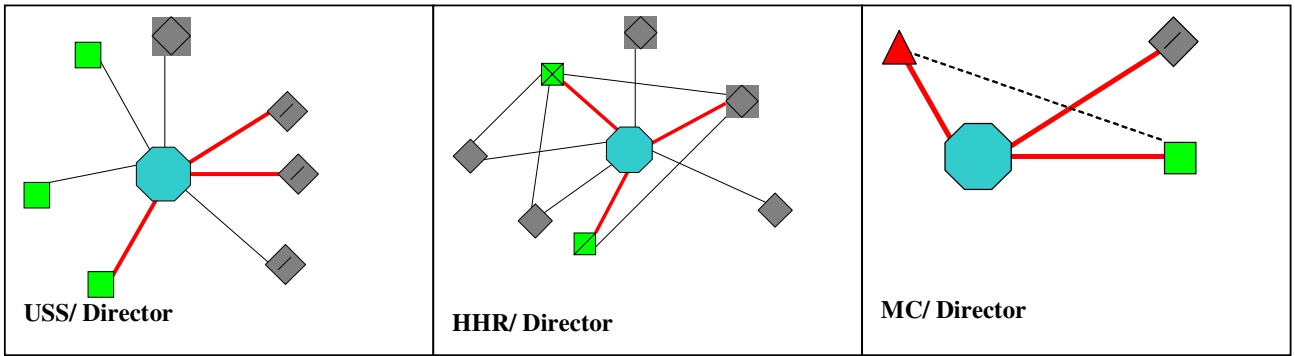
- the lines linking the counterparts are red when the relationship was considered fundamental by the manager, both for the functional role and the company as a whole; with the dotted line we describe the “potential” relationships that are going to be developed in near future.

Even if our research can be defined “seminal”, we can pinpoint some considerations about the different perception of the main relational linkages in connection with the specific functional role⁵.



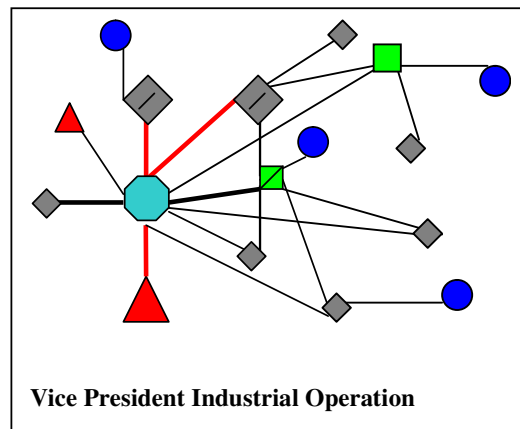
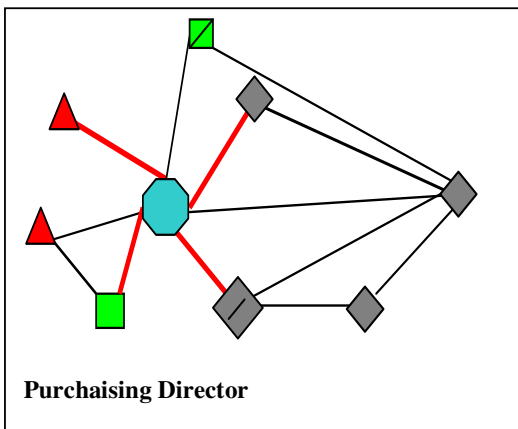
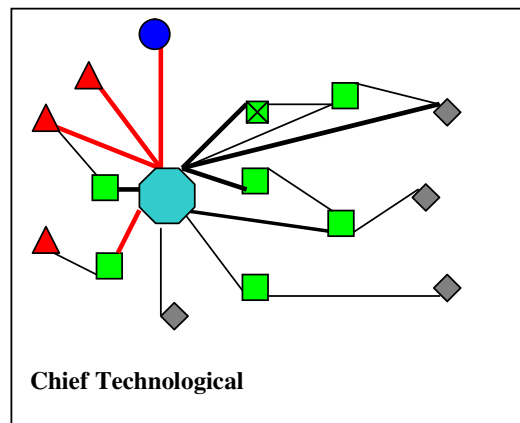
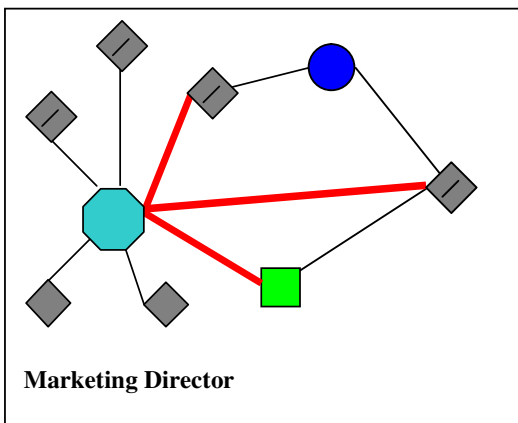
The functional managers designed a simple net of relationships focused on their main counterparts: technical functions underlined the relationships with customers and distributors, operating downstream the value chain, while R&D managers pointed out the priority of suppliers interpreted as “champions” facilitating co-engineering processes.

⁵ The same kind of functional managers were interviewed in the three business units belonging to the division “Data Capture”, the one representing the core business for Datalogic.



Business unit directors adopt a broader view, that anyway stressed the higher importance of customers or intermediate customers (as we can interpret the distributors and the system integrators) among all other relationships.

These main evidences can be discussed in comparison with the company boundaries identified by the general managers, that have a more complex view of main relationships, even if they continue reflecting the functional bias seen above: the 10 main relationships quoted in the interviews were almost the same, but their relative importance was differently evaluated by each one.



4. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FINDINGS

The empirical data collected so far are but a first step in a more extensive research we plan to undertake. While not final and very much “in-progress” they allow us to draw a few remarks also as a starting point for future research and more in depth analysis.

With regard to the perception of importance and the priorities described by Datalogic Management two considerations can be made. On one side, several of the interviewed managers agreed on quoting the same actors (stakeholders) as the focal relationships both for their function and for the company as a whole. In this specific firm it has been the distributors, system integrators and the end users. This evidence could be interpreted as a result of a broad agreement about what really matters for the success and development of the company, among managers in charge of different departments and presumably having in mind different priorities and interests more related to their specific tasks.

On the other side, some evident differences exist, proved by a number of single quoted relationships. These can be interpreted in different ways: first, in a negative version, as a lack of common body of interest and intentions; in a second perspective, this result can be viewed as the evidence of a natural diversity in perception and as a right interpretation that what is important for the function and task represented by the respondent. Variety in this respect can be seen also important for the company as a whole. In some way, we could argue that a “good” company is composed by a set of stable, normal and shared relationships to which they must add new patterns in an exploratory and experimental way.

If the company stays only on the obvious and traditional relationships, one can argue that the company will behave in the well-known territories only, probably more profitable at least in the short run, but probably not able to provide a real advantage for tomorrow. For instance, if the company wants to accomplish the challenge of developing new and unknown relationships, the degree of risks increases but even the degree of innovation and potential results.

A traditional view of the integrated and coherent company considers variety in perceptions of management as misalignment and thus as a clue of mismanagement. We would argue that varying perceptual maps of relationships are sign of inability of management to cope with business relationships. Rather we would argue that variety in the perceptions held by the single managers represents a potential. Diversity in this sense is a requisite of development.

At the other hand a company cannot be a mixed “puzzle” of business and functions it requires some unifying integrating force to sustain the idea of an actor intelligible to others. This force is conceivable as shared values commonly agreed by all persons and structure of the company. Tentatively these values can be grouped into four elements:

1. *freedom*: any real relationship among two or more partners should be based on freedom. In fact, if a relationship lies on freedom, all partners perceive that they can obtain more profitable chances through the relationship, while the perception of “captivity” definitely reinforce the feeling that the relationship is underperforming in terms of obtainable benefits.
2. one of the component of freedom is *transparency*, which can be considered a behavioural way of managing the relationship through a correct use of information and communication. Any relationship must be seen in its dynamics and if one of the partner has in its experience a lack of correct information (in complete misleading...) he should expect for the future that the same use of communication can be repeated. As a consequences he/she will defend he/her position, probably behaving with a lower degree of transparency. The final result is a continuously misunderstanding among the partners which will destroy any willingness of cooperation and adaptation.

3. *agreed behaviour and languages*: any relationship is based on communication which can unite or pull away the partners. Above all in the first stages of the relationship, when reciprocal knowledge can not be based on experience the partners should develop a sort of “blind trust” which is usually based on behavioural moves where the correct use of communication is fundamental.
4. *dynamics*: everything is changing over time; each of the partners is subjected to a certain level of dynamism. The environment, in which they’re embedded, is characterized by dynamism too. If the partner should maintain and develop a certain relationship might be able to develop capabilities of dynamic adaptation; he/she should not be neither too fast, neither too low, compared to the speed of his/her partners. Any misalignment in terms of speed will break the relationship sooner or later

These values appear to reinforce the relationships which tie the company to other actors in its context and at the same time assume the function of an organizational glue that makes different functions and individuals involved in the company to a coherent entity.

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ATTACHMENT 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Which are the 3 relational partners (in importance order) you consider critical for the development of your functional activities?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

C. 1st RELATIONAL PARTNER:

1) Short description of the partner:

- Supplier
- Final customer
- Distributor
- Other

Specify:

* * *

- Producing / manufacturing company
- Company of service
- Other

Specify:.....

2) How long has this relationship lasted?

- a) < 2
- b) 2 – 5
- c) 6 – 10
- d) more than 10

3) a) How many people of the _____ are involved in the relationship?
Name

.....

b) How many people of your functional staff have contacts with _____ ?
Name

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

c) how many people you are personally in contact with?

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

4) How much "close" to the counterpart your functional staff feels? (from a technological, cultural, social, common values point of view)?

1= very far from the partner
5= very close to the partner

Very far 1 2 3 4 5 very close

5) a) Which are the main benefits deriving from the relationship for your function?

.....
.....
.....

b) Which are the main sacrifices (costs) necessary in order to maintain "alive" the relationship?

.....
.....
.....

c) Which consequences the possible break of the relationship would imply?

- None
- Administrable
- Serious
- Very serious

d) In case of break, how much difficult would the substitution of the relational partner be?

- Impossible
- Much difficult
- Difficult
- Easy

6) a) Which are in your opinion the main reasons for the counterpart to work with you?

.....
.....
.....

b) In your opinion, which importance the counterpart gives to this relationship?

1= no importance
5= high importance

no importance 1 2 3 4 5 high importance

C. 2ND RELATIONAL PARTNER:

7) Short description of the partner:

- Supplier
- Final customer
- Distributor
- Other

Specify:

* * *

- Producing / manufacturing company
- Company of service
- Other

Specify:.....

8) How long has this relationship lasted?

- a) < 2
- b) 2 – 5
- c) 6 – 10
- d) more than 10

9) a) How many people of the _____ are involved in the relationship?
Name

.....

b) How many people of your functional staff have contacts with _____ ?
Name

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

c) how many people you are personally in contact with?

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

10) How much "close" to the counterpart your functional staff feels? (from a technological, cultural, social, common values point of view)?

1= very far from the partner
5= very close to the partner

Very far 1 2 3 4 5 very close

11) a) Which are the main benefits deriving from the relationship for your function?

.....
.....
.....

b) Which are the main sacrifices (costs) necessary in order to maintain "alive" the relationship?

.....
.....
.....

c) Which consequences the possible break of the relationship would imply?

- None
- Administrable
- Serious
- Very serious

d) In case of break, how much difficult would the substitution of the relational partner be?

- Impossible
- Much difficult
- Difficult
- Easy

12) a) Which are in your opinion the main reasons for the counterpart to work with you?

.....

.....

.....

b) In your opinion, which importance the counterpart gives to this relationship?

1= no importance
 5= high importance

no importance 1 2 3 4 5 high importance

D. 3rd RELATIONAL PARTNER:

13) Short description of the partner:

- Supplier
- Final customer
- Distributor
- Other

Specify:

* * *

- Producing / manufacturing company
- Company of service
- Other

Specify:.....

14) How long has this relationship lasted?

- a) < 2
- b) 2 – 5
- c) 6 – 10
- d) more than 10

15) a) How many people of the _____ are involved in the relationship?
Name

.....

b) How many people of your functional staff have contacts with _____ ?
Name

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

c) how many people you are personally in contact with?

.....

How often?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than monthly

16) How much "close" to the counterpart your functional staff feels? (from a technological, cultural, social, common values point of view)?

1= very far from the partner
5= very close to the partner

Very far 1 2 3 4 5 very close

17) a) Which are the main benefits deriving from the relationship for your function?

.....
.....
.....

b) Which are the main sacrifices (costs) necessary in order to maintain "alive" the relationship?

.....
.....
.....

c) Which consequences the possible break of the relationship would imply?

- None
- Administrable
- Serious
- Very serious

d) In case of break, how much difficult would the substitution of the relational partner be?

- Impossible
- Much difficult
- Difficult
- Easy

18) a) Which are in your opinion the main reasons for the counterpart to work with you?

.....
.....
.....

b) In your opinion, which importance the counterpart gives to this relationship?

1= no importance
5= high importance

no importance 1 2 3 4 5 high importance

* * *

Now please, think about the company in general and not only your function

E. Which are, in importance order, the 10 relational partners you consider more important/critical for the company activities?

- 1).....
- 2).....
- 3).....
- 4).....
- 5).....
- 6).....
- 7).....
- 8).....
- 9).....
- 10).....

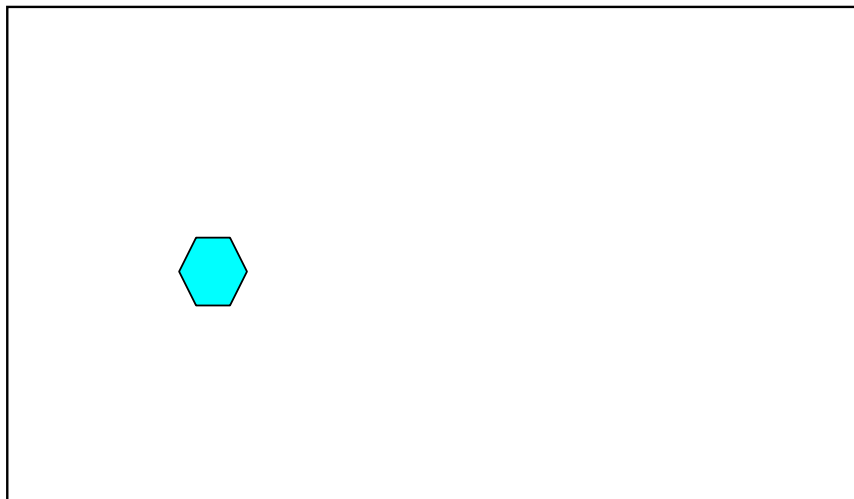
F. Through these relational partners has the company entered in touch with other actors (customers, suppliers, other) that it did not know before or it didn't previously develop relationship with ?

- a) YES
- b) NO

If yes, can you explain if an indirect advantage derives from the relationship? Which kind of advantage?

.....
.....

G. Could you please roughly draw the relational net of the company?



- COMPANY
- SUPPLIER
- THIRD PARTIES (research centers, public institutions, investors...)
- DISTRIBUTOR
- CUSTOMER
- BRANCH OFFICE
- CUSTOMER-SYSTEM INTEGRATOR
- DISTRIBUTOR and COMPETITOR