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"C2 and Agility"

Interpersonal Trust in Multi-Organisational Endeavours: Temporary Frames through Social Networks

Topic 2: Networks and Networking[1]

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Abstract
Interpersonal trust, often described as key for successful endeavours, has mostly been researched experimentally or using field data from limited timeframes. I base this paper on a yearlong longitudinal case study of a temporary multi-organisational operations headquarters that examines how individual staff members adapt to the particularities of the social interactions in the staff. By combining participating observation, semi-structured interviews and one survey, I find that interpersonal trust seems to remain largely non-problematic despite conflicting cultural enactments. I also find that individual's social networks display different characteristics depending on the individual's permanent organisational affiliation. Based on my findings I firstly propose that staff members may maintain interpersonal trust across organisational borders by developing temporary interpretative frames in order to make sense of the unique aggregate of cultures. Secondly, I propose that this is done through processes involving the individual's temporary and staff specific social networks. I relate my suggestions in the form of a model add-on to the Mayer, Davis and Shoorman's (1995) model of trust.

Key concepts
Interpersonal trust, temporary multi-organisational endeavours, organisational legitimacy, interpretational framing

1. Introduction

Multi-organisational endeavours bring together a number of cultures in which assumptions, norms and values over time have fostered their members in their ordinary environment and established, encouraged and supported certain behaviours (Whithener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998). This has shaped individual's interpretative frames that help them to make sense of others actions and decide how to respond (Elliot, Kaufmann, Gardner and Burgess, 2002). When unfamiliar and culturally different groups of individuals interact, these groups are likely to have very different perspectives on mission means and ends (Bland, 1999, Okros, 2007). In this context, formally defined hierarchical structures and staff member roles are likely to be interpreted and enacted differently depending on the individual's cultural background, the staff's cultural composition, the operational context and the personal influence of strong leaders. In the face of the resulting dynamics, the individual's interpretative frames may no longer "fit" and judging other's trustworthiness becomes difficult. In this paper I propose that staff members in multi-organisational temporary endeavours may cope with this trust problematic by creating temporary

[1] Alt. Topic 3: Information Sharing and Collaboration Process; Topic 4: Collective Endeavors

interpretative frames to make sense of their unfamiliar environment. I also propose that the staff specific social networks may be involved in such a process. I relate my propositions to Mayer, Davis and Shoorman's (1995) model for trust in the form of a model add-on, specific to multi-organisational temporary endeavours. I support my propositions with findings from a longitudinal study of a temporary multi-organisational multinational staff, conducted in 2008-2009.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this article, the key concepts are defined as follows:

- *Multi-organisational temporary endeavour* – a collaborative effort limited in time and space, with a specific hierarchy whose members are also associated with permanent organisations.
- *Endeavour-specific hierarchy* – a formal set of personal roles and relations defined by normative and to all members available documents on command and control processes specific to a particular endeavour.
- *Endeavour-specific social network* – the informal personal roles and relations that co-exist with, and within the frame of, an endeavour-specific hierarchy.
- *Interpersonal trust* – "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to control or monitor the other party" (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995, p. 712).
- *Interpretative framing* – the mental mechanisms in social interaction that help participants define how others' actions and words should be understood (Bateson, [1954] 1972, in Oliver and Johnston, 2000), make sense of a situation they find themselves in, to find and interpret specifics that, to them, seem central to understanding the situation, and to communicate this interpretation to others. (Elliot, Kaufman, Gardner and Burgess, 2002).

3. Theoretical Base

Interpersonal trust

With the perspective that trust is as psychological state (Lewis and Wiegert, 1985) in the form of an expectation of beneficent treatment from others in uncertain or risky situations (Foddy et al., 2003, in Yuki, Maddux, Brewer and Takemura, 2005), trust is typically not a conscious consideration for the individual until she becomes aware of risk. According to this view, trust is called for, and becomes a conscious consideration, in situations where another person has the potential to gain at one's expense but can choose not to do so (Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994, in Yuki et al., 2005). Trusting people does not necessarily mean *knowing* them. Trust between individuals with no previous shared history may instead be based on *transfer*; meaning that trust in an unknown target may be influenced by trust in associated subjects, such as a well reputed individual, organisation or firm (Granovetter, 1985, and Strub & Priest, 1976, in Doney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998, Stewart, 1999). Bart Noteboom (2006) further suggests that individuals can be trusted based on the trustworthiness of the collective entity they stem from, providing that these individuals properly represent their organisation's values and adhere to rules of trustworthy conduct. (Noteboom, 2006, see also Möllering 2006). Similarly, trust in an individual can be based on her membership in a *group* or *category*, while *role based trust* refers to their role in a network (Kramer, 1999). Meyerson et al. found that swift trust is often centred around, and bounded by, each individual's competent and faithful enactment of a critical role in their network. Conversely, they also found that out-of-role behaviour could breed distrust (Meyerson, Kramer & Weick, 1996).

Social Networks

Atkinson and Moffat (2006) propose that formal hierarchies are based on *rule*s and co-exist with informal networks that are based on *interpersonal trust*. According to Provan and Kenis (2007) networks are a form of social organisation which is more than the sum of the actors and their links. They suggest that one of the main tensions in network governance is between *internal legitimacy* and *external legitimacy*. Internal legitimacy requires that members see the networks' interactions and coordinated efforts as justifiable and fruitful. External legitimacy is about meeting external expectations so that outside groups see the network as an entity in its own right. External legitimacy can thus help to reinforce the commitment of network participants. Another property of social relations on which effective norms depend is what Coleman (1988) calls *closure*; members are interconnected so that no member can "get away with foul play" - social control is exercised through reputation.[2] Organisational structure also shapes informal networks in organisations. Certain members, known as *bridges*, link together the different networks to which they are associated. Actors who are performing these bridging roles are likely to know more and have greater influence in the larger, multi-organisational hierarchy than others. The ties between actors in organisational and interorganisational networks may change as actors come and go (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve and Tsai, 2004).

Interpretative framing

Gregory Bateson suggests that social interaction always involves interpretative frameworks by which participants define how others' actions and words should be understood (Bateson, [1954] 1972, in Oliver and Johnston, 2000). Elliot, Kaufmann, Gardner and Burgess (2002) explain how actors create such interpretative frames to make sense of a situation they find themselves in, to find and interpret specifics that, to them, seem central to understanding the situation, and to communicate this interpretation to others. Burgess et al. find that normally, actors are not aware of how they frame a situation, but may become conscious during negotiations, when creating arguments to support one's own point of view. Oliver an Johnston (2002) point out that *frames,* individual cognitive structures that orient and guide interpretation of individual experiences, are distinct from *framing* which is a behaviour by which people make sense of both daily life and the problems that confront them. *Frames* are thus the map that guides people in deciding how to act and what to say and *framing* as the interactive process of talk, persuasion, arguing and contesting that constantly modifies the map.

4. Proposed Model

In an earlier paper we suggested that multi-organisational temporary endeavours whose members are new to each other are likely to build a starting capital of interpersonal trust through transfer, and that such transfer may relate to how network members (trustors) perceive the legitimacy of the organization to which others

[2] If A violates norms in interaction with B and C, A cannot be successfully sanctioned by B and C in an open structure, i.e. if B and C have no direct relation. If the structure on the other hand is closed B and C can collaborate and exert social control over A.

(trustees) are associated (Ekman and Uhr, 2008). We formulated these relationships in the following model:

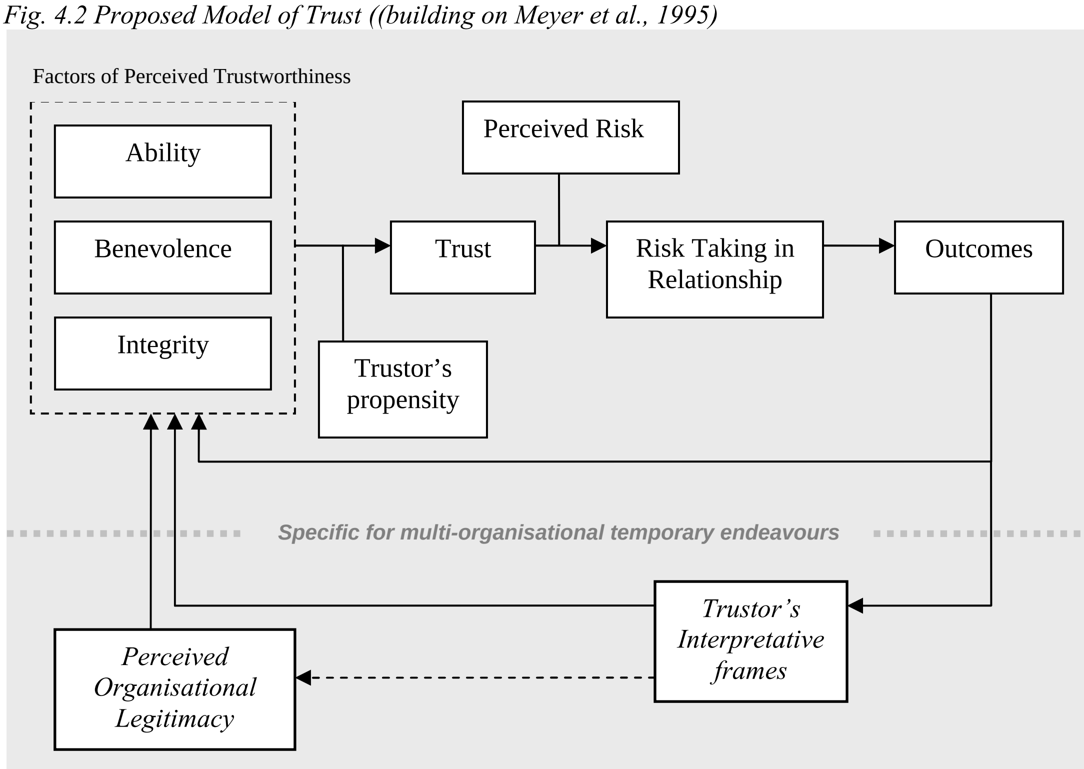
Figure 4.1 Model of Starting Capital of Trust (Ekman and Uhr, 2008)

Perceived organizational legitimacy → Starting capital of interpersonal trust
Conflicting interpretative frames → Erosion of legitimacy/trust or modified frames

In this paper I further develop this model in two aspects. I suggest that in the context of a multi-organisational temporary endeavour, such interpretative frames may be temporary and endeavour specific as well as linked to social networks. Secondly, I relate my developed model to the Mayer et al (1995) model of trust in the form of an add-on, specific for multi-organisational endeavours. I specifically suggest that:

- In multi-organisational temporary endeavours, relational risk taking[3] outcomes that to the individual make less sense than expected may in that individual trigger the creation of temporary and endeavour specific interpretational frames that help the individual to judge other's trustworthiness.
- Such endeavour-specific interpretational frames are created through processes involving the individual's endeavour specific social network(s).

Fig. 4.2 Proposed Model of Trust ((building on Meyer et al., 1995)



[3]Risk *taking* is not to be confused with the *willingness* to take risks, which is an outcome of trust. It is not necessary to take risks in order to trust; a willingness to be vulnerable is sufficient. To actually *take* risks is going a step further –it is taking trust to test, which is necessary to be able to assess and reassess trust. If the outcome of such a test does not meet expectations, trust will be adjusted according to Meyer et al., (1995). I instead propose that the individual's tool for making sense of the situation, the interpretational frame, may be adjusted or replaced.

My proposed model connects to the Mayer et al. (1995) Model of Trust (Fig. 4.2; Mayer et al's original model above the dotted line and my proposed model add-on below the dotted line).[4]

5. The Object of Study

The object of study is a strategic level temporary, multi-organisational and multinational military staffs that was set up in 2007 exclusively for a particular operation. At the time, the staff concept was new had never before been put to test for such a long period (1 ½ years) or undertaken such a challenging operation. As a result, the staff had to deal with a string of unfamiliar and unforeseen problems. It was divided into nine separate branches and a number of special functions. Most of the staff members, some 130 individuals from 25 nations, had never worked together before. These were mainly military professionals of all ranks and came from all services; Army, Navy and Air Force. The working language was English, but only 13% of the staff was English native speakers. The size of the national contributions to the staff reflected the size of the national fielded troop contributions. This meant that of these 25 national staff contributions, five were substantially greater than others. Together, these five nations made up 67% of the total staff [5] and provided the key senior staff members, such as the Operations Commander, the Deputy Operations Commander and the Chief of Staff. The observations and interviews were made from the staff's fifth month of activation to the end of its activation period. At the time of the survey, the staff had been activated for a year and most of the staff members had been rotated at least once. Subsequently, at the time of the survey some staff members had spent several months in the staff while others had just arrived.

6. Methodology

Combination of qualitative and quantitative methods

I triangulate data by combining qualitative and quantitative methods. These methods are *semi-structured interviews, participating observation* and a *questionnaire based survey*. I gather support for my partly qualitative approach from Liefooghe and Olafsson, (1999), who suggest that studying social aspects of groups of individuals includes analysing shared beliefs, attitudes and a shared frame of references, which are more suited to research using a qualitative approach.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews is a suitable data gathering method when studying beliefs, attitudes and frames of references by exploring people's experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2002). I used a purposive rather than random selection of interviewees with the aim to provide a representative selection of the population in the staff of study (Silverman, 2000). I prepared a two-page interview guide that explained the background and aim for the interview as well as how the data would be stored, used and disseminated. The guide introduced eight direct measure questions (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007). My initial comprehensive guide seemed to hinder rather than help interviewees, which caused me to develop a considerably shorter and less

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[4] Although the model add-on consists of two parts; *Perceived Organisational Legitimacy* (Ekman and Uhr, 2008) and *Trustor's Interpretative Frames*, only the latter part is discussed in this paper.

[5] In the following, these five are referred to individually as nation *Blue, Green, Red, Black* and *White* and, as a category, referred to as *Major Five.* The remaining 20 nations are referred to individually as nation A-T (designation randomly selected) and, as a category, referred to as *Other Twenty.*

detailed guide. I also found a detailed text on data storage and interviewee integrity less important than expected. Instead, staff members often agreed to being interviewed based on their "feel" for me. A total of 20 interviews were initiated. Of these, two staff members declined to be interviewed, one for private reasons and one with reference to his central position in the staff. The interviews lasted 45-90 minutes. They were recorded, transcribed and copied to interviewees for approval.

Participating Observation

I had good opportunity to make observations of the staff. I served in the staff for eleven consecutive months as a desk officer in one of the branches. I worked closely with eight other nationalities and had regular contact with the majority of the other branches, categories and nationalities. I made regular structured notes[6] on observations and conversations immediately following the observation and revisited the notes a couple of days later to allow for mental processing. For this paper I have used observational data collected over a ten-month period.

Personal Bias

In order to minimise the influence my personal bias and epistemological stance might have on the qualitative aspects of my methodology, I over time formulated my beliefs and value base linked to my professional history in a memo. Prior to the write up of this paper a close colleague reflected on this memo and discussed her reflections with me in depth. This, I believe, helped deepen my understanding of where I come from and increased my awareness of how this could affect my data analysis.

Questionnaire-based Survey

My early interviews and observations led me to a number of initial tentative conclusions. To pursue these I conducted a questionnaire based survey with the aim to investigate individual staff members' perceptions of three social dimensions; *task related networks*, *regular social groups* and *information flow* in the staff. The questionnaire contained six respondent attribute questions [7] and 14 questions on personal staff experiences. To verify that respondents were likely to associate as desired, I tested the questionnaire on a pilot group of respondents prior to the survey and interviewed a second group after the survey. The response alternatives (five per question), designed based on observations and interviews, were adjusted after feedback from the pilot group. Immediately following an announcement in the daily morning brief,[8] a total of 125 questionnaires were handed out. Over a period of one week 108 completed were collected, giving an 86% response rate.

7. Observations, Interviews and Survey Results

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part I describe a case of social interaction that illustrates this paper's main theoretical concepts - *organisational legitimacy, interpersonal trust interpretative frames* and *social networks* – and refer the case development to my proposed trust model add-on. In the second part I present my survey findings and relate them to my other data as well as to theory.

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[6] Notes were structured into a table with provisions for *date, location, observation, initial reflection, subsequent reflection* and *document reference*.

[7] Rank, age, gender, nationality, number of previous missions and time spent in the staff.

[8] The repondents were also informed a week in advance through email of the purpose of the survey and their integrity as respondents (remaining anonymous and participating voluntarily).

I find this particular case suitable for several reasons. Firstly, it developed over a period of three months and therefore has more validity than an event more limited in time. Secondly, it actively involved twelve[9] individuals including me, divided on two different branches, A and B. Those involved were thus few enough for me to observe as individuals, but many enough to smoothen individual personality effects on how the case developed. Thirdly, the case had high visibility in the staff and the individuals were likely to expect that the outcome could reflect on their reputations, which in terms of trust theory would increase the personal risks involved. Fourthly, the behaviours I observed indicate that trust evolved and that both groups expressed their interpretive frames. Supporting interview quotes refer to similar cases in the same staff and in the same timeframe, but not necessarily to the *same* case.

7.1 Illustrating Case - The Plan

A group of six individuals in Branch A (A-group), which coordinated the development of a set of strategic plans, tasked Branch B to produce one of these plans. This particular plan, eventually to be briefed to the Commander, was subject to a number of constraints which made it a challenge. It was also commonly seen as one of the most important plans for a certain phase of the operation. In branch B, a group of six individuals (B-group) was tasked to produce the plan. A- and B-group together had eight nationalities represented. Of *Major Five*, nation Green and nation Blue was represented in both groups and nation Black was represented in B-group. B-group immediately protested against the “impossible constraints” but was overruled. B-group started to plan taking the constraints into account. After a week, B-group had produced a branch-internal draft that they saw as the best realistic option but that did not meet the constraints. Before the draft was made public outside B-branch, A-group was discreetly informed by other national colleagues in Branch B and started to visit B-group to “make sure that the Commander’s intent was met”. A-group also wanted electronic access to the draft. B-group defended their draft and was reluctant to release it electronically. A series of formal and informal meetings and discussions followed in which the conflicting perspectives of both groups on what should be produced were confronted with each other. The group members also discussed these conflicting perspectives internally and with staff members outside the groups. Over a period of several weeks during which the plan developed, the interaction gradually came to involve more members of both Branch A and B. At this stage, also representatives from Branch C and D began to participate for those aspects of the plan that related to their particular areas of responsibility. Gradually the polarisation of perspectives seemed to soften and “controlling” visits by A-group became less frequent, even though both groups in essence maintained their perspectives. The languge used in the interaction between the groups also shifted from being dominated by the term “you” to also include the term “we”. Eventually a version of the plan was agreed on by both groups and jointly briefed to the Commander.

In the following I analyse different aspects of the case from the perspective of this paper’s main theoretical concepts - *organisational legitimacy, interpersonal trust interpretative frames* and *social networks.*

[9] The number varied over time due to other tasks, leave etc, but individuals remained largely the same. Two positions were rotated during the development of the case, one in each group.

A Starting Capital of Trust

The act of A-group tasking Branch B to produce the plan and B-group starting to plan taking into account the "impossible" constraints did not necessarily include any elements of trust. Some would even suggest that the military system of normative staff procedures defuses the need for trust – legitimate staff members in a rule-based hierarchy instead gives a sufficient level of *confidence*. This perspective would suggest that, firstly, A-group *had no choice* but to task Branch B, which conversely *had no choice* but to start planning and, secondly, both groups could be confident that all involved had the appropriate skills and qualities to complete assigned tasks satisfactory.

> *"For me each person is here because his state, his army, his chief wanted each person to be here, so each person has a legitimacy first to be here and then it seems that the (staff) works well, so it means that that people prove their legitimacy to be here."* (2nd Lieutenant, nation Blue)

A perspective allowing for trust would paint another picture. Since A-group was ultimately responsible for the plan and the outcome of the plan was likely to reflect on all involved, A-group could be seen to assume some form of risk when tasking external others. Conversely, B-group assumed some form of risk when spending valuable staff working time on what they initially saw as a pointless exercise. The fact that tasking and planning actually did take place would then suggest that both sides were willing to take these risks, which in turn would require an element of trust. Since none of the staff members had worked closely together across the branch boundary, and the two different groups were mainly from different nationalities and expertise, the two groups were in working terms largely unfamiliar to each other. In terms of trust, they were then likely to have a limited capital of trust based on shared history or category (Kramer, 1999). Instead, a *starting* capital of trust based on third parties (Granovetter, 1985, Noteboom, 2006), a perception of faithful enactment of roles (e.g. Meyerson et al, 1996) or staff hierarchy related organisational legitimacy (Stephenson and Schnitzer (2006) may have existed.

> *"… (you) start somewhere (with) quite high (trust), because you all have a rank, you have a position, your country trust you so why should I not?* (Major, nation S)

Trust Becomes Problematic

Also the development that followed could be seen from two perspectives, a pure trust perspective and an alternative, frame oriented, perspective. According to the first perspective, e.g. Mayer et al. (1995) would suggest in accordance with their model that when A-group started to visit B-group to "make sure that the Commander's intent was met", A-group had engaged in a risk taking with B-group (tasking). This risk taking resulted in negative outcomes (draft plan not meeting the constraints) that changed A-groups perception of one, or all, of B-groups trust attributes, which in turn reduced their trust for B-group. A-group enacted their reduced trust by increasing their controlling behaviour towards B-group (visiting). Conversely, B-group, when defending their draft and being reluctant to release the plan draft electronically, could be seen to have gone through a similar process, enacted in attempts to minimise their vulnerability to A-group. According to the Mayer et al. (1995) model, both groups' trust for each other would then have eroded. Based on my observations and interviews, I suggest that this perspective is too general, as it does not take into account the social particularities of the temporary multi-organisational endeavour environment. An alternative interpretation could instead be linked to Yamagishi and Yamagishi, (1994, in Yuki et al., 2005) perspective that trust did not erode but changed from *unconscious* and *unproblematic* to *conscious* and *potentially problematic*.

> *"…until you have experience working with those people and you know where they are coming from and what their personality is and what their, what drives them, you know, then you can make a decision on whether or not to trust them."* (Major, nation Green)

In other words, instead of eroding, trust was brought for to the table for a rewrite. The criteria for judging trustworthiness had to be redefined to work in this particular staff environment. I suggest – and it is here that I diverge from the Mayer et al. (1995) model of trust – that in this case there is a need for an additional tool, a tool that enable the individual to redefine her criteria for judging trustworthiness. For such a tool I turn to theory on interpretative frames.

> *"… For everybody has clearances, everybody has some kind of rank which means he is able to do basic things, but sooner or later, to get more efficiency you have to establish a rapport with people and build up trust and this is what brings work, let's say the high level results* (Major, nation Black)

Temporary Endeavour Specific Interpretative Frames

In the following series of meetings, in which both groups formulated and communicated their conflicting perspectives, they could be seen to communicate their *interpretative frames,* the result of the individual's interpretation of what was said and done. Frames reflect the level of sense that the own and other's perspective make to the individual. In this case, both groups framed their perspectives very differently (Table 7.1.1) [10]

Table 7.1.1 Illustrating Case Interpretative Frames

	Description of ***own*** *perspective*	*Description of the* ***other's*** *perspective*
Branch A	"Execute Commander's directives" "Fulfil Commander's intent"	"Play it safe", "Pretend problems and later pretend to fix them in order to look good"
Branch B Plan Group	"Suggest the best feasible option" "Provide expert opinions, tell the truth"	"Unrealistic", "Yes men", "Eager to please", "Asking for a dream factory"

According to interpretative framing theory, the frames in themselves would not change the A- and B-group's way to interpret and make sense of the situation – frames are only the printed static roadmaps. The frames needed to be communicated between the two groups to set in motion a process of change which would update, or create new roadmaps (Oliver an Johnston, 2002).

> *"Sometimes distrust gets created, people maybe just don't understand how certain things are done in different countries."* (Colonel, nation Yellow)

[10] There was a multitude of formulations and not all were as polarised as those presented in table 7.1.1. As the case developed, both groups also tended to generally use less strong words. However, the frame process towards "streamlining" was not a smooth process. The strong initial wordings resurfaced several times when the staff internal pressure increased temporarlily.

Interpretative framing theory also suggest that framing occur between individuals with differing perspectives and result in modified frame content. I further suggest that in the social contexts of multi-organisational temporary endeavours, framing may also occur between individuals with the *same* perspective and result in new frames that are temporary and specific for the endeavour in which they are developed.

> *"… to try and understand others action where you don't, you interact with them…and if you need confirmation on a particular point clarification you discuss with others you make relationships whether it be in a formal manner or informal manner to…. try to understand an action or actions of the team, or indeed by yourself.* (LtCol, nation T)

Social Networks

While the interpretative frames where communicated in the interaction between the groups, these frames were reflected upon to a greater extent before and after in group-internal dialogues as well as in group-external dialogues with other staff members, members who shared the same perspective or were neutral. These dialogues often expressed attempts to understand the other side way of reasoning. This to me suggests that for staffs like this, social networks play a greater role in the framing process than reflected in current framing theory. Based on this, I propose that in the context of temporary multi-cultural endeavours such as this staff, temporary frames are likely to at least partly develop through processes in the individual's social networks with "friendly" dialogue partners.

> *"Having people you can talk to outside work, to sort of debrief yourself, discuss what happened during the day and get things out of your system, makes a great difference…to understand." (LtCol, nation E)*

With the case above, I have attempted to illustrate this paper's main theoretical concepts and my proposed model add-on. In the following I present the finding from the survey conducted mid-term of the study.

7.2 Questionnaire Based Survey

In order to gather additional data for my initial tentative conclusions, I conducted a questionnaire-based survey mid-term of the study. Since the outcome of the survey in combination with other data caused me to revise my tentative conclusions, the results of this survey lack the necessary validity and reliability to provide any real support to my final proposals. However, I find them still useful as a basis for a further discussion.

As mentioned earlier, I clustered respondents in two groups. The first group consists of respondents belonging to nationalities represented in the staff by four members or more. This group comprises five nationalities and is labelled *Major Five* with nation Blue, Green, Red, Black and White. This group contains 67% of the survey respondents. The second group comprises the remaining twenty nations, labelled *Other Twenty,* containing the remaining 33% of the respondents. The attribute data on *nationality* and *time having worked in the staff* proved more useful for the analysis than *age, gender* and *number of previous missions*.[11] The results also

[11] There are several reasons for this. The respondent age distribution is heavily bathtub shaped – made up by young non-commissioned officers and older commissioned officers. These

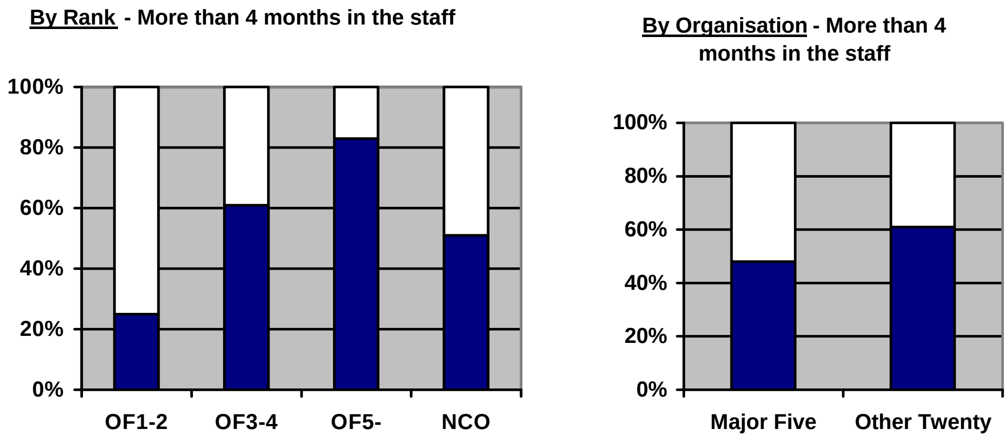
suggested clustering the respondent attribute *time having worked in the staff* in two groups; *less than four months* and *more than four months*.[12] The questions on staff experience proved to be functional and repondents appear to have generally answered openly and honestly. However, judged by feedback after the survey, questions that related to national dimensions (national working meetings and national interests) seem to have been treated cautiously.

> *"…yes, there is an informal unofficial network pushed by the Commander, and yes, it goes against military culture, where you are to use the official channels, but it goes with the job. However, when filling in the questionnaire, it was somehow a semi-official document, so then the official version came forward*." (Senior NCO, nation Green)

Population Characteristics

Almost half of the survey population consisted of Majors and LtCol's (OF3-4), with Lieutenants (OF1), 2nd Lieutenants (OF2) and Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) providing equal shares of the remaining half. Despite general national rotation policies of 2-6 months, several staff members were in reality assigned to the staff for the full period of the operation. Thus, more than half of the respondents had worked in the OHQ for more than four months. The rank and nationality distribution for these "long-termers" (Graph 7.2) indicate that lower ranking officers served for shorter periods than others, including NCOs. Although it appears that officers from *Major Five* have generally slightly shorter stays than others, this tendency stems from a frequent rotation of the category OF1-2 belonging to the dominating nation in *Major Five*. Senior Major Five officers on the contrary had longer stays than others.

Graph 7.2.1 "Long-termers" by Rank and Organisation



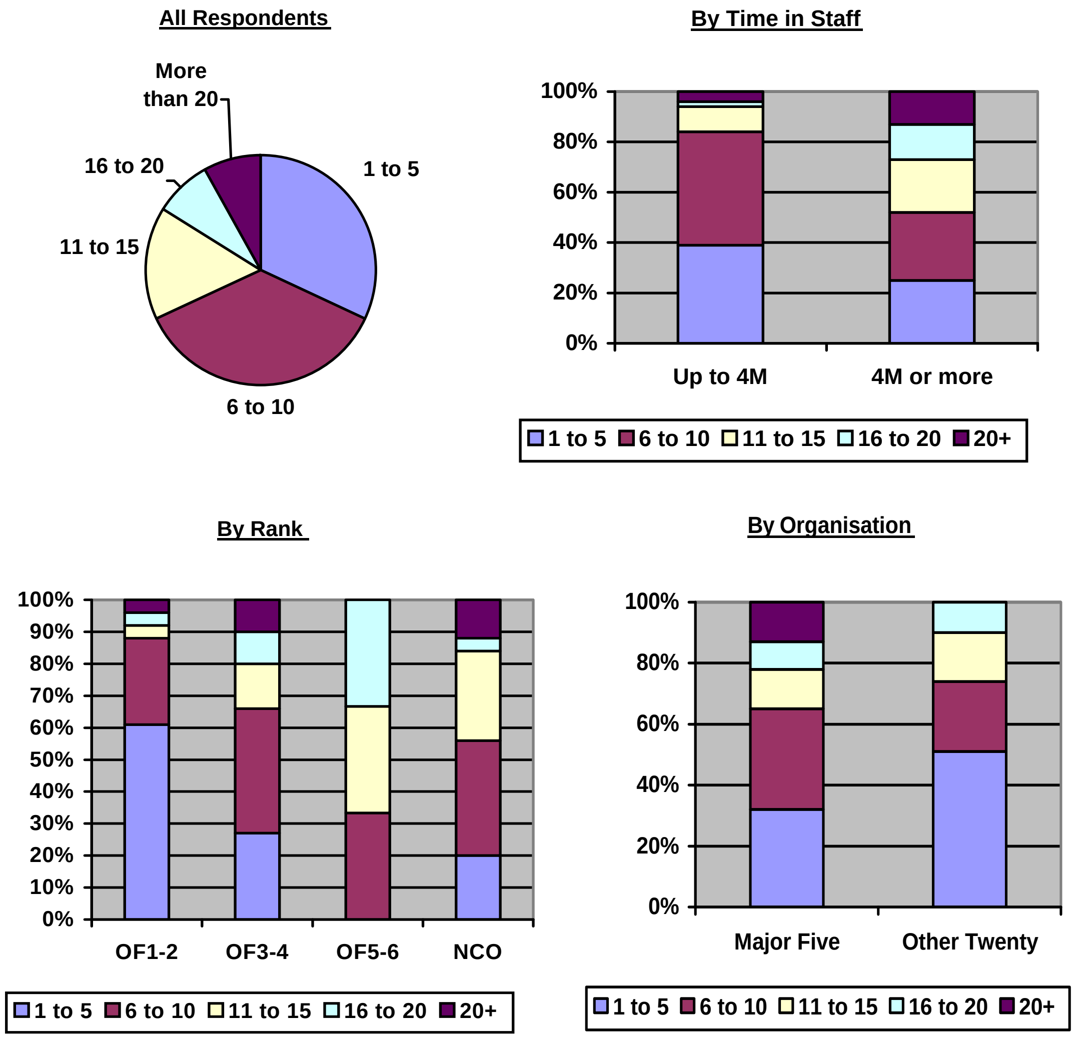
categories are thus comparable. The gender attribute was only provided by one third of the respondents. The number of previous missions attribute is not useful since the concept has turned out to have different meanings to different nationalities.

[12] In general, respondent groups with less than four months in the staff did not differ significantly from each other in any of the dimensions presented in this paper, whereas these groups taken together showed marked differences compared to respondent groups with more than four months in the staff.

Duty Related Social Network

Respondents were asked how many staff members they contacted regularly (daily) in order to complete their tasks and also how many contacted *them.* On average, respondents indicated 6-8 contacts in each direction.[13] The number of contacts seems to increase with rank and with time, even beyond having worked for several months in the staff. This seems logic, as with time staff members should become more knowledgeable on staff structure and procedures. It is however interesting to note that this development does not seem to slow down with time. I speculate that this could indicate that respondents needed time to learn how this staff worked. If this was the case, then question becomes why. I return to this in the discussion.

Graph 7.2.2 Duty Related Social Network – Daily Contacts (one direction)

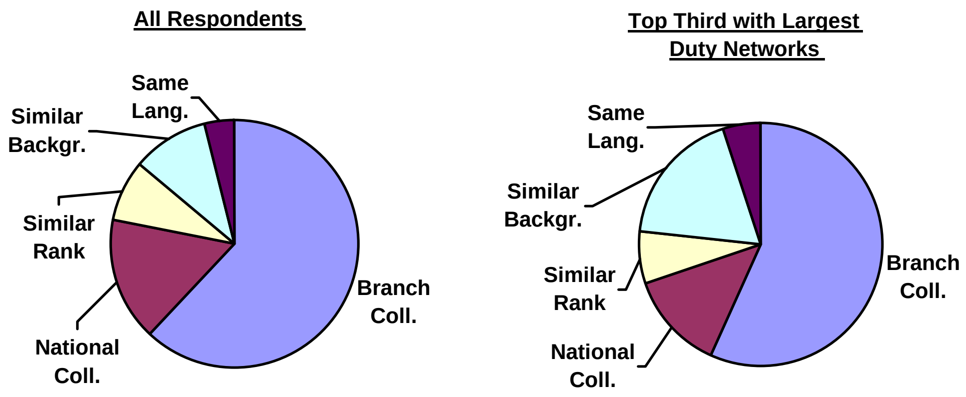


[13] Respondents tended to answer similarly for both incoming and outgoing contacts – over 80% ticked the same box or deviated only one degree. When deviating, respondents almost always indicated more incoming contacts than outgoing.

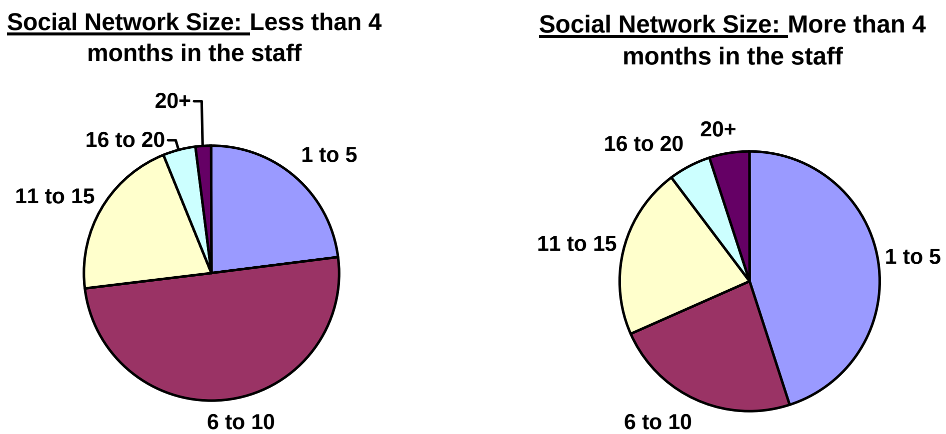
For respondents belonging to *Major Five*, the number of contacts is generally higher than for Other Twenty *(Graph 7.2.2)*[14] which makes sense considering the potentially greater national network for these respondents.

Respondents were also asked to specify the *category* they have most contact with during working hours. The dominating answers were “branch colleagues” and “national colleagues”. It appears that with time, repondents slightly reduce in-branch contact and instead increase contact with colleagues with similar background. This gradual change continues even beyond four months into working in the staff. The third of the population that indicated the largest duty related networks (number of outgoing and incoming duty related contacts) indicated the “similar background” category more often than population average (Graph 7.2.3).

Graph 7.2.3 Duty Related Social Network – Category



Graph 7.2.4 Non-Duty Related Social Network - Size



In other words, the initial contact spheres are dominated primarily by people within the same area of responsibility as well as physically close, secondly by people sharing the same culture, language and organisational affiliation. Over time the second largest group becomes staff members similar in terms of expertise rather than nationality. However, since this transition is not significant it seems that initial

[14] The exception of NCOs may be explained by their particular roles; a majority of these serve as branch administrative support.

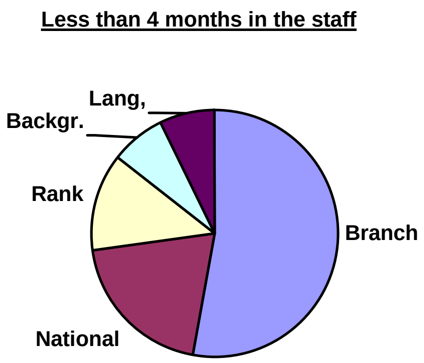
contact patterns seem to "hold" over time, which could be an effect of a highly formalised hierarchy – i.e. new staff members only have to adhere to predetermined contact patterns instead of developing their own.

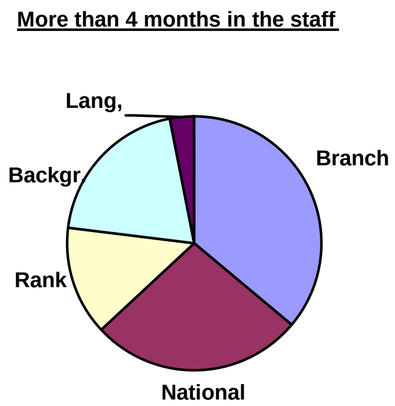
Non-Duty Related Social Networks[15]

Respondents were also asked to specify to what categories their social groups belong. Two categories stood out in the responses; branch colleagues (38%) and national colleagues (32%). National colleagues were thus significantly more prominent in non-duty related networks than in duty related networks but, unexpectedly, not the most prominent group. Linked to this, one question was included to find indications on trusting behaviours - respondents were asked in which category they seek advice on *general* issues. Respondents indicated that they turn mainly to branch colleagues regardless of point in time (Graph 7.2.5). Taken together, this could be an indication of a characteristic specific for this staff; an unusually strong orientation towards branch identity:

> *"So, if you'd asked me before I came out here; who would I be … socialising with on a daily basis, I would have said; (nation Green), because we tend to hang out a lot together, that has been my experience in other missions, …That is not the case here… Everybody tends to go for lunch or coffee brakes with the people they work with. That is a positive thing. I don't know why it is different here from other mission areas or what has caused that… dynamic." (Major, nation Green)*

Graph 7.2.5 Trusting Behaviour - Source for Advice





Information Flow

Respondents were asked to indicate the easiest way to quickly get *reliable* information. Two of the response alternatives[16] described common sources in which information was made available to others (information push), whereas the remaining

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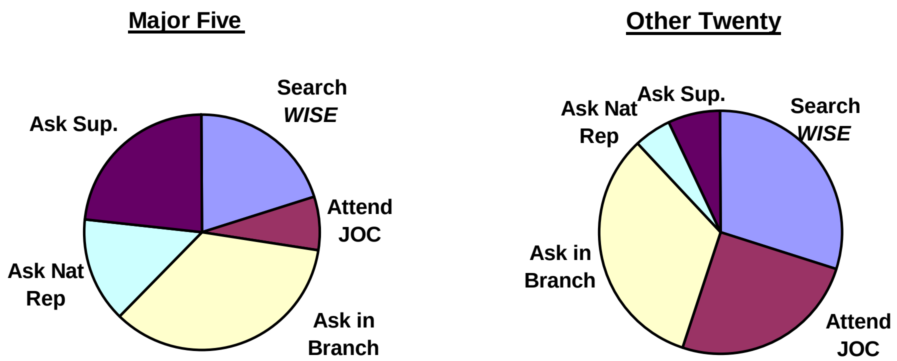
[15] My perspective is that whereas duty related social networks exist primarily to enable to staff member to fulfil their duties, non-duty related social networks exist primarily for other reasons. These networks may origin from, link or contribute to duty and their members may overlap, but in essence they are different.

[16] "Search WISE", the staff Intranet, available to all via individual work stations for all members, and "Attend JOC", meaning the daily Joint Operations Center daily morning update, in which the Commanders took part and all branches shared information on latest developments. This morning update regularly attracted 60-70 staff members to attend in person, more than three times more than formally required, in a room intended for half that number, despite the fact that the "JOC update" was broadcasted live on widescreens in all branches.

three alternatives required asking others (information pull). Interestingly, the groups *Major Five* and *Other Twenty* answered clearly differently. Whereas respondents from *Major Five* preferred “pull-alternatives” (73%), respondents from *Other Twenty* preferred “push-alternatives”. In other words, the latter group of staff members preferred alternatives that did not require identifying and contacting a suitable staff member (Graph 7.2.6). This could be seen as a support for the previously presented notion that being a member of *Major Five* brings richer networks, which makes it more likely that the key staff member for any particular issue is a member of those networks. I speculate that while all categories have access to the “push-sources”, informal interaction within strong national groups also provides its members with more qualified information[17] Taking into account that meeting participation seems to be equal between national groups, this could indicate that the level of situational awareness corresponds with the level of representation in the staff, i.e. *Major Five* nationals, are simply more updated than others.

> *“All critical… decisions and such, they suddenly just drop into your face without… any open debate or…working group…again this very obvious, that information is withheld and it is being processed somewhere else and decided and then it is delivered as a response in the staff… if you don’t succeed in the meeting then you have your national meeting in the evening, when everyone else has gone home. And discuss. Which is very disturbing. Now, if you have an agreed organisation… why then, as a nation, continue to have your own meetings in the evening and discuss what has already been decided?”* (Colonel, nation R)

Graph 7.2.6 Easiest Way to Quickly get Reliable Information Updates



National Interests

Linked to the above, the survey included one question on how often the respondent considered national interests. The reason for this was that this issue had emerged repeatedly during my interviews preceding the survey:

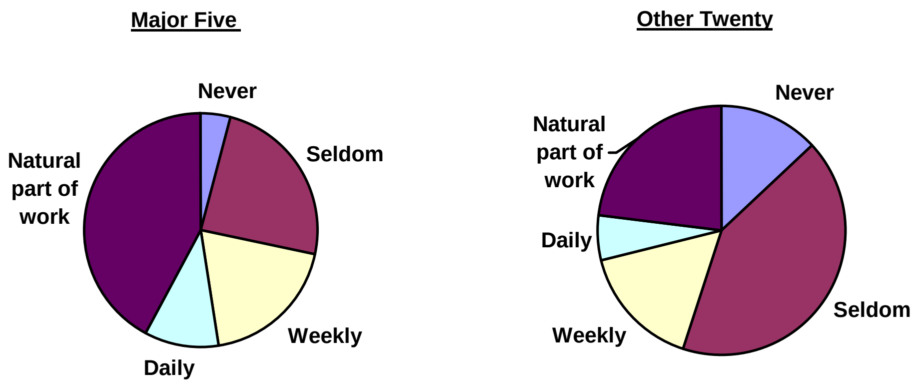
> *“Yes well, every member state is coming here with his own political interest and, of course, there is a common interest in doing the mission but the way we want to do that and the feedback we intend to have personally, of for our country, or for our service, yes, this will be conflicting more or less… I don’t think that is has significant impact when you are at the tactical level. Here we are playing at the*

[17] For example more timely, more accurate or better filtered information, or information from domains that are not available to others.

political level so, yes, the game is different… because, yes, I am a multinational but I am also (Blue national) in the staff." (LtCol, nation Blue)

Interviewees were in general prepared to discuss national interests, but not necessarily comfortable to do so – expressions such as "…*this is no secret, but*…" emerged repeatedly. The survey responses seem to support my notion that this is a common phenomenon. A full 36% found it a natural part of work and a further 27% considered national interests at least weekly (Graph 7.9). These are surprisingly high figures given that respondents may have considered this survey question slightly sensitive. Also there is a difference in responses between the groups *Major Five* and *Other Twenty* – for repondents from *Major Five* the awareness of national interests seems to be significantly more prominent. Intuitively this would make sense, since this group had significantly more troops in the mission area as well as their nationals in the top management. These respondents could thus be more biased towards considering national interests than others.

Graph 7.2.7 Frequency of Considering National Interests

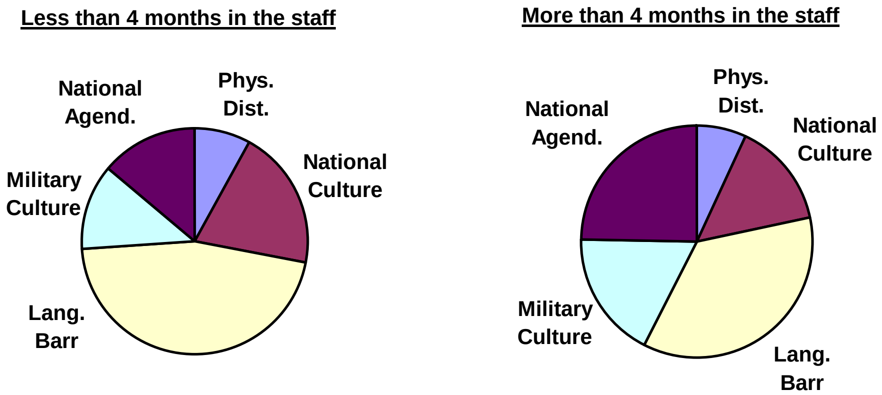


"…there's no stronger national agenda than your own … I don't think it impacts on the efficiency. It's just there, it's just always there. Of course you are paid for through national chain, you of course have to be receptive and support your own national agenda. If you don't you're going to have issues along the way. It's just there." (LtCol, nation Red)

Working difficulties

With the purpose to find keys to the responses provided in other questions, a control question asked respondents directly what they saw as the main reason for working difficulties in the staff. This seems to have been the most difficult question as seven respondents choose not to answer. For those who did, the overall picture is that language barriers create most problems but that also national agendas, military and national cultures are problematic. With time in the staff, respondents seem to have become more concerned about national agendas and less concerned about national culture and language (Graph 7.10). Although these changes are not significant, it raises the question why national agendas seem to become more problematic with time. I speculate that rather than staff members changing their ways to frame national interests, it may take time for newcomers to actually notice the phenomenon. The share of the staff members that actually find national interests *problematic* may however be constant or even diminishing over time, possibly through changed or temporary interpretative frames.

Graph 7.2.8 Sources of Working Difficulties



Discussion

> *"…and then it hit me, ok; this is how things get done here, this is how I get information through… I should have understood the multinationality better…but I was rather open when I came…"* (Colonel, nation E)

This paper is the result of a change of direction. I initiated the case study with the expectation to find indications different from those I have presented here. I expected that permanent common characteristics (in this case nationality) would be clearly stronger factors for social interaction than temporary common characteristics (e.g. working in the same branch). I further expected that time having worked in the staff environment would be reflected in growing non-duty related social networks rather than diminishing. I finally expected that enacted national interests would for others be detrimental to trust, both in terms of trust for the enacting individual as well as trust for her national category. This was not the case. Instead indications contradicted my expectations which led me to explore new lines of thought. As a result, this paper attempt to contribute with a tentative proposition for trust theory development that hopefully may carry enough substance to motivate further exploration. In the following I revisit my findings and propositions and suggest possibilities for such further exploration.

Trust appeared non-problematic for the majority of staff members that I met. This does not necessarily mean that these staff members trusted other staff members, merely that they seldom considered trust actively. This was despite the unfamiliar social context, the newness of the staff concept, the challenge of the mission, the language barriers and a small number of particularly strong, purposeful and cohesive national social networks. I gradually came to see two main perspectives on these national networks. The first and dominating perspective could be expressed as seeing national networks as a non-problematic, useful and perfectly normal part of a multi-organisational staff. The second and less evident perspective could be expressed as seeing national networks as slightly inappropriate and systematic means to parallel and influence staff procedures for national interests. I expected staff members with the latter perspective to express less trust, or an eroded trust, for those associated with these networks. Neither this expectation was met and only in a few cases did staff members actually speak in terms of general distrust or a general lack of trust. Instead, trust was often expressed in pragmatic terms:

> *"There is always distrust concerning national issues and intentions. Generally you accept that everyone is pulling in not the same directions … I think there is an understanding, an acceptance, because everyone has a bit from their national point of view… "* (Colonel, nation Yellow)

Another expectation was that newcomers would in general be searching for structure and direction in the staff for one or two weeks, at most. Instead, several dynamics seems to have continued even beyond four months in the staff. Taking into account that with time, duty-related social networks seem to grow whereas non-duty related networks seem to diminish, I speculate that this could indicate two interacting processes; a frame-oriented process on the individual level and a procedure-oriented process on the staff level. The individual level process would be the one proposed in this paper; the creating of temporary frames to make sense of unfamiliar situations in order to judge others trustworthiness. The staff level process would be the evolving of functional staff procedures, linked to the newness of the staff concept, culture and language barriers and the string of unfamiliar and unforeseen challenges that the staff had to deal with. If such a combination of processes did exist it could perhaps explain why social dynamics seem not to level off after a while – the context to which the individual tries to adapt is in itself adapting.

My key finding is that interpersonal trust seem to have remained non-problematic to most staff members. This is despite a combination of factors that made social interaction difficult and individuals actions hard to predict, such as a new and untested staff structure, unfamiliar staff colleagues, strong social networks and, to a lesser extent, a perception of national interests being pursued. Recognised models of trust seem to struggle to explain this phenomenon of maintained trust despite difficulties to judge trustworthiness.[18] Based on my findings I firstly propose that staff members may maintain interpersonal trust across organisational borders by developing temporary interpretative frames in order to make sense of the unique aggregate of cultures. These frames may be specific for this mission or modified earlier frames. I would suspect that the more inexperienced the staff member is, the more likely she will develop a new frame. Conversely, senior experienced staff members may already have a number of temporary frames from earlier operations, which may fit fairly well and only need slight modifications. The point here is that the frames are temporary – when the mission is over the frame is stored. The change of ways to interpret and make sense of situations is not permanent. Secondly I propose that such framing is done through processes involving the individual's temporary staff specific social networks. This does not oppose recognised framing theory, which suggests that framing is done when individuals face conflicting frames, but adds the dimension of the individuals social network for reflective processing.

There are substantial limitations in this paper. Since I began the longitudinal study with different expectations, my methodology was designed to capture different data than presented in this paper. Specifically, the questions I asked in the interviews and surveys, and the observations I noted initially, provided data that are irrelevant for the tentative conclusions and theoretical propositions presented in this paper. These

[18] The closest would be Meyerson, Kramer & Weick (1996) Swift Trust model, but since this model excludes formal bodies for sanction and control and does not take into account cultural heterogeneity, the influence of organisational social networks and the multiple loyalty such affiliations brings is not taken into account.

therefore thus lack support from triangulated data and rely mainly on personal observations and unstructured as well as unrecorded interviews. There is thus a need for a focused and systematic data gathering tailored to this new direction. Firstly, linking to the Meyer et al. (1995) trust model, there is a need to verify that individuals in similar staff settings actually perceive that they take relational risks and that the outcomes of these risk takings does not meet their expectations. Only then will it be meaningful to investigate if such outcomes lead to trust being affected directly[19] or via interpretational framing processes. Secondly, if robust support for such framing processes can be found, then there is a need to find *when* these processes occur – in the confrontation between conflicting frames or in the interaction between individuals sharing the same, or similar, frames. For this I believe that the combined methodology that I have used in this paper may be basically sound, but that the questions asked need to be redefined and relevant data gathered from at least two different but comparable staff settings. However, I also believe that only further field studies may not be sufficient to provide convincing support for my propositions. I would also look for more quantitative and experimental methods to be able to test them thoroughly. A possible way forward for such testing could be micro-world studies.

[19] via the three factors of perceived trustworthiness

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