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NETWORKS, ORGANISATIONS AND MEN:
CONCEPTS AND INTERRELATIONS

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Key words: gender, social networks, organisations, men, masculinities, homosociality

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Networks, Organisations and Men: Concepts and Interrelations

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Abstract

Research on men's networks and homosociality in and around organisations can produce knowledge on organisational power relations, and contribute to the efforts to promote equality in working life. The search for a conceptual framework to study these issues arises in this paper from my ongoing work on men's social networks and gendered power in and around organisations.

Men give each other social support through networks in which formal and informal relationships intermingle, but networks are also contexts of competition and oppression, and of construction of masculinities that are in hierarchical relations with each other and with femininities. For studying the networks men have with each other in work organisations I suggest a broader starting point that contextualises these homosocial networks with men's other personal relations, and integrates different perspectives deriving from social network analysis, critical studies on men and organisational studies.

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The growth of international interest and research on gender relations in organisations has been considerable during the past 25 years. After decades of gender absence in organisational studies, several scholars have brought up the fact that gender matters in organisations and that it is therefore important to gender organisational analysis¹ (Mills & Tancred 1992; Savage & Witz 1992; Wahl 1992; Halford & Leonard 2001). During this development there has, however, been only scattered interest in gendered social networks in organisational contexts. The relevance of both gender and social networks in organisations and management has been recognised in research, but usually separately. In both these areas of research and otherwise, even less attention has been paid to men's gendered social relations. Bringing together these issues in study of men's social networks in and around organisations can open new important insights into organisations and management, and especially to the field of gendered organisations.

This paper derives from my ongoing doctoral research project that examines *men's networks, gendered power and organisations*. In my men's networks study the construction and dynamics of men's social networks and the gendered power – access to opportunities, positions and resources – that is gained and held through these networks is analysed from the point of view of organisational studies and critical studies on men. The key research questions of the project are:

- Do men's networks structure and gender organisations, and if so, in what ways? What is the relationship between men's networks and gendered power?
- What are the forms and structures of men's networks? How do men's networks function, for what purposes do they exist, and how do men link to them?
- How are masculinities and relationships between men constructed in networks and organisations, and what is the role of homosociality in these processes?

In this paper I look into some intersections of approaches that may provide a basis for understanding men's networks in and around organisations. The diverse disciplinary and subdisciplinary approaches discussed here have produced varied empirical knowledge on men's gendered networks. Though I pay special attention to the homosocial relations men have with each other in work organisations, I suggest a

¹ In this paper I use the words 'gender' and 'structure' not only as nouns, but also as verbs.

broader starting point that contextualises these relations with men's other personal relations, and integrates different perspectives for approaching men's networks in and around organisations. In the following sections I shall look into areas of research on social networks, organisations, gender and other issues relevant for framing the subject. Finally, I try to position my study by suggesting one route to map some of the conceptual jungle.

1. Networks and social network analysis

As with many other concepts, 'network' has been used in many occasions and frameworks in many meanings that are not necessarily in accordance with each other. With the rise of discussions around information society, *information networks* with both social and technological aspects have become an increasing area of interest (Savolainen 1998, Uotinen et al. 2001). In social studies of science and technology *actor-network theory* has brought humans and non-humans into same categorisation as 'actants' in processual networks of mutual dependence, influencing and strengthening of positions (cf. Law and Hassard 1999); in an actor-network, an act is linked together with all of its influencing, interlinking factors (Hanseth & Monteiro 1998).

Another set of discussions has evolved around *business networks*. What has been called industrial networks or 'markets-as-networks' theory has paid attention to the nature of economic activity consisting of more than detached transactions, i.e. of more constant linkages between actors (cf. Axelson & Easton 1992). In relation to organisational studies, while the studies on business networks have primarily focused on inter-organisational networks and studies on *communication networks*² have looked at intra-organisational networks (Rogers and Kincaid 1981, 96), research done on *social networks* has looked into both kinds of linkages.

Social network analysis arises from the structural approach in the social and political sciences. This approach rejects the *a priori* "categories of actors, forms of action and roles that can be shown intuitively to correspond to groups, events and relationships"

² With communication networks I refer here to studies on interpersonal and organisational patterned communication flows (cf. Rogers and Kincaid 1981, 79-83), distinct from discussions around information and communication networks and technologies.

(Berkowitz 1988, 480). It has also criticised the use of network as a loose metaphor to describe several kinds of phenomena. Instead, the different streams of the structural approach focus on the patterned relationships that constrain interactional processes between social actors. Categorisations and clustering can only emerge from observed patterns of interaction and exchange; social classes consist of particular positions within a structure. The structural approach suggests, in addition, that social changes are based on structural changes. Roles, statuses, norms, values and sanctions, for example, are by-products of changes in relationships between individuals, groups and organisations (Wellman & Berkowitz 1988; Berkowitz 1988; Castrén 2001).

Network ties can consist of and be utilized for several things, such as exchanging goods and services, information exchange, different forms of support (financial, emotional, helping), companionship, liking and respect as well as demands and obligations (Wellman & Berkowitz 1988; Salancik 1995; Mattila & Uusikylä 1999). As such networks have aroused diverse social network studies. Communication has been suggested to be the essential quality of network relationships; many concerns in communication network analysis (Rogers and Kincaid 1981) and social network analysis overlap.

The basic idea of network analysis perspective is that social structures can be represented as networks, that is, as sets of *nodes* (social system members varying from individuals and groups to nation-states) and sets of *ties* connecting the nodes (Wellman & Berkowitz 1988). The focus can be on networks as wholes or on personal, egocentric networks. Egocentric networks have sometimes been distinguished from categorical networks (e.g. collegial networks in organisations) (Lonkila 1999). Network ties between nodes can be studied with different methods and instruments gathered under the title network analysis.

Network analysis is appropriate for analysing relational data, i.e. the contacts, connections, group attachments and meetings that relate agents to each other. The sources (questionnaires, interviews, observations, texts etc.) set no limit for using network analysis; it is the type of data that determines whether or not network analysis can be applied (Scott 1991; see also Johanson et al. 1995). Graph theoretic,

sociometric and algebraic notation schemes are often used for describing and presenting social network data (cf. Wasserman & Faust 1994, 69-91).

Network analysis has been criticised for its inadequacy as an overall research strategy: it needs to be supported by other perspectives. Critics have pointed out that social network approach often ignores the characteristics of the actors and their environments, the factors that have led to the interaction, and the substance of the relationship. When the focus is on finding explanatory structural patterns, new or weak ties may be unnoticed. *Structural determinism*, as an implicit model in some network studies, lifts the compelling network above the cultural and political discourses and individual intentions: ‘social consciousness’ and culture are explained with social networks. In *structural instrumentalism* social action is given explanatory significance, but the individual may be seen as an overtly rational utility maximiser. *Structural constructionism* has instead tried to bring together culture, agency and structure (Emirbayer & Goodwin 1994; Lonkila 1999; Castrén 2001). The notion of configurations has been used to avoid the mentioned problems of the network approach. It implies that ‘the social’ hinders and empowers in form of configurations (such as networks), which are unstable and changing by nature, and open to cultural influences (Castrén 2001). Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994; Emirbayer 1997) have emphasised the need to move from “‘snapshots’ of social structure” towards an approach that would pay attention also to 1) the cultural structures (discursive frameworks and cultural idioms) that constrain and enable action alongside network structures, 2) human agency, the capacity of social actors to change and reproduce cultural and network structures, and 3) historical mechanisms leading from one network configuration to another.

2. Networks and organisations

The relationship between concepts of ‘network’ and ‘organisation’ is a complex one. According to Nohria (1992) the importance of network analysis in studying organisations arises from two rather different perspectives: Firstly, almost all organisations are in important respects social networks, and secondly, organisations’ environments can be seen as a network of other organisations. It seems that the bifurcation of focus between intra- and interorganisational networks has been central in research of organisational networks. Moreover, inter-organisational networks have

gained much more attention than intra-organisational networks (Johanson 1999; 2001). Nohria continues that actions of actors in organisations can be best explained in terms of their position in networks of relationships, and as networks constrain actions, actions in turn shape networks.

There is a major expansion in research literature within organisation and management studies on the growing importance of networks, networking and network organisations. Though this is in some ways a long-established trend, this recent emphasis is in part driven by the continuing and changing impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the technological and social aspects of networking through ICTs (Wellman 2001). In some cases this growing interest in networks within organisation studies is linked to debates on the possible, though contested, movement from ‘modern’ to ‘postmodern’ organisational forms (cf. Nohria 1992). Thus, for example, Thompson (1993) has summarised such suggested new organisational forms and structures as:

- Decentralisation
- Federal organisation: central business functions disaggregated to small independent units
- Initiative, drive and energy coming from the parts, not the centre
- Firmly anti-hierarchical: flat organisations achieved with, among other things, ‘downsizing’ and shrinkage of middle layers which results in narrowed status differences, more effective and direct ways of communication, and lower costs
- Networking: informality, equality and horizontal links
- Breakdown of bureaucracy.

One label that has gained a lot of popularity in analyses of these ‘postbureaucratic organisations’ (Thompson 1993)³ is the network organisation. In relation to modern bureaucracies, network forms of organisations are suggested to be better adaptable for

³ Thompson’s summary on features of postmodern organisations is followed by his rigorous critique towards postmodernist notions of societal context and death of bureaucracy within it. To point out the misinterpretations of organisational changes and especially the over-estimation of lessened hierarchy, Thompson brings up many counter-trends, among others, the new extensive electronic monitoring and integration opportunities, the exploitation of small firms by larger companies through franchising and subcontracting, and task-based rules being replaced by, not flexibility, but decision-rules (tight job and task specifications, standardised products) and behavioural rules (recruitment, selection and screening-on on basis of cooperativeness, adaptability and self-discipline) (Thompson 1993).

complex, turbulent environments. Integration across formal boundaries in and of the organisation characterises the network organisation and lays the structural bases for “interactions of problems, people, and resources” (Baker 1992, 398). This vertical, lateral and spatial integration involves varied social relations from task-related communication and advice-exchange to informal socialising, promotion decisions and other. Burt (1997) has stated that shift from hierarchy to network organisation is procedural and, before all, from formal to negotiated informal coordination. Structural changes are by-products of this process. Burt’s research strategy to cope with this change in organisations lays on the notion of social capital: strong correlation within the organisation between relative success and network constraint – the extent to which the success of the management depends on social capital – characterises a network organisation. Insights into cross-organisational managerial networks have been provided by studies on interlocking directorates (cf. Mizruchi 1996).

The problem of organisational boundaries and organisations’ relationships to their environment has been tackled in many ways. The environment may be seen in three ways: 1) as a residual category (including everything in the society that concerns the organisation); 2) as consisting of multiple and multiform organisational networks; or 3) as not really existing, but with society being made up of organisations, bureaucracies, the market *qua* organisation and ‘organisations without walls’ (Strati 2000). With the last mentioned concept Strati makes an attempt to capture the dynamics of organisational tasks invading people’s personal life through multiple, imprecise memberships in ‘worlds’ (such as ‘world of fashion’) and through processes of giving meaning to organisational actions. On the other hand, it has been suggested that work organisations are a vast arena, where people have their most direct relationship to their society, and because of that it is reasonable to study the society *in* organisations and their everyday life (ibid).

In studying networks and organisations, several attempts have been made to overcome the division to structure and action/agency. A central way of trying to solve the problem of organisation–environment relations has been to abandon the conceptions of organisation as a group of people or as a structural entity or as the structure of the interrelationship between the entity and its environment, and instead to see organisation as a *process of organising*. The above-mentioned notion of ‘actor-

network' is another example: it tries to cross the distinction between network actors and their connections (Breiger, fc.). 'Processes-in-relations' has been used to refer to what network analysis focuses on (White 1997), and 'structure-in-process' points to organizational order and its legitimacy being negotiated, i.e., being based on action and interaction of the organisation's subjects (Strati 2000, 96-98). Calás and McGuire (1990) have approached interorganisational networks by focusing on networking activities. They see network-relations as socially constructed on-going processes creation and reproduction of certain organisational forms. Instead of counting interorganisational networks as static, instrumental and functional by nature and looking for universal patterns in them, Calás and McGuire propose that network structures are situational products of dialectics between symbolic action and power relations.

3. Organisations and gender

Interest in issues of gender in organisations dates back at least to the 1970's (Acker & Van Houten 1974; Kanter 1977; Feldberg & Glenn 1979; MacKinnon 1979). Also contemporary feminist and other gender researchers have produced much research on women's work, both vertical and horizontal segregation of working life, and women in management (Adler & Izraeli 1994; *Women and Work* 1999; Aaltio-Marjosola 2001; Wirth 2001). There are cross-national studies on the gender gap in power elites of business and political life (Epstein & Coser 1981; Vianello & Moore 2000). Quite a lot of attention has been paid to gender structures and construction of gender in work organisations (Wahl 1992; Eriksson 2000). There has also been linking of general gendered approaches and the study of gendered patterns of networking and mentoring in organisations (Travers & Pemberton 2000). In Finland the issues of gender equality in working life and men and women in power in organisations has been studied from the statistical point of view (Veikkola 1997; Lehto & Sutela 1999; Pulkkinen 2000). Gender policies and gendered practices in organisations have sometimes been studied (Rantalaiho and Heiskanen 1997; Hearn, Kovalainen and Tallberg 2002) as well as gendered organisational cultures and 'doing gender' in organisations (Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996; Korvajärvi 1998), but seldom men's practices or patterns of their social relations in organisations.

Acker (1991) has argued for several reasons why theorising gender and organisations is important. She sees organisational practices and processes playing an important part in the gender segregation of work, in income and status inequality, as well as in production of individual gender identities (especially for men's part) and cultural images of gender. Acker's framework classifies interacting processes through which "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (ibid. 167). The processes include 1) construction of divisions along lines of gender; 2) construction of symbols and images linked to those divisions; 3) interactions along and across lines of gender; 4) production of gendered components of individual identity; and 5) implications in processes of creating and conceptualizing social structures. As result of these processes in organisations, *gendered organisations* occur and are reproduced.

A different view on gendered organisations has been taken by Britton (2000), who discusses critically, but constructively, three ways of seeing organisations and occupations as gendered. Firstly, organisations can be seen inherently and essentially gendered; this has applied especially studies on bureaucracies. Also Acker (1991) has seen gender as a "constitutive element of organisational logic" (ibid. 168). Britton states that this view does not give room for social change nor for testing the theory as 'ungendered' organisations do not exist and organisations cannot be more or less gendered than others. Secondly, in what Britton calls the 'nominal approach', gendering is a question of numbers: occupations or organisations are feminised when female-domination occurs. This often oversimplifying approach conflates sex with gender. Thirdly, studies have paid attention to the hegemonic symbolic, ideological and discursive aspects of gendered organisations, or in this case mostly occupations. Here Britton emphasises the importance of contextualising the gendering processes and distinguishing between the levels of analysis: cultural construction of organisation or occupation may be rigid though on individual or interactional level processes of reflection and resistance would be strong. Britton suggests that "meaningful organizational change might be better served [...] by trying to identify and understand the factors that give rise not to ungendered organizations but to less oppressively gendered forms" (Britton 2000).

4. Men's networks and organisations

General discussion

For many centuries, men, masculinity and men's powers and practices were generally taken-for-granted. 'Gender', when noticed, was largely seen as a matter of and for women. Men were generally seen as ungendered, natural or naturalised. This is now changing to some extent; it is much less the case than even fifteen years ago (Brod 1987; Connell 1987, 1995; Hearn 1992). Still, the state of research on men varies in different countries, and much of the available information on men is provided by sources and research that do not study men as men (Hearn et al. 2003).

The range of studies that has evolved regarding men specifically has been multidiscipline, done under different labels and with varying societal and political intensions. The idea of 'critical studies on men' serves as a more appropriate framework for studying men than the ambiguous term 'men's studies' (studies *by* men, *on* men, or *for* men?). Critical studies on men include a feminist or profeminist commitment, and they base on the tradition of feminist studies. Also gay studies have been a relevant part of theorising and research around men. Critical studies on men view men in an explicitly gendered way in the context of gendered power relations (Hearn 1998a, 1998b). In other words, as has been often emphasised, it is important in studying men, men's practices and masculinities to look, not only at men and men's relations, nor only at relations between men and women, but at the gender system as a whole (Connell 1995). This means first of all that men of different age, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status etc. are not treated as a single category of men, but seen in complex relations to each other. Secondly this means that men's issues should not be dealt without the aspect of power and men's domination over women – though seeing gender only as a social structure of men's domination over women is simplistic (Connell 1987).

The limited amount of work devoted specifically and explicitly to men's practices in working life and especially to men in powerful positions suggests that there is immense scope for extending critical gender analysis in the study of work, organisations and management (Collinson and Hearn 1996; Hearn et al. 2003). Much research on gender relations in organisations has not considered the gendering of

women and men in organisations with equal thoroughness. Concern has been expressed on that the growing literature on men and masculinities has not paid sufficient attention to certain influential dynamics and their effects: “[T]he planet’s fate may well depend on how men act in certain organizations, such as in the military, science labs, multinational corporations, state bureaucracies and supranational institutions” (Martin 2001, 588).

Some critical research has been done on men and masculinities in organisations and managements (cf. Cheng 1996; Collinson 1992; Collinson and Hearn 1996). The centrality of paid work for men’s identity, status and power, and the nature of organisations as sites of workplace power relations and construction of gendered subjectivities have been acknowledged in these studies among other things. Empirical studies on men in organisations have often concentrated on men in subordinated positions. The dynamics between multiple masculinities and different forms and locations of work organisations have been noted (Collinson & Hearn 2004).

Homosociality

From the point of view of the research in progress, an important, though seldom used and developed set of concepts is related to the homosocial bonds between men. Men’s homosociality has been approached by both sociological and social psychological (Kilduff & Mehra 1996; Wharton & Bird 1996) as well as textual and literary studies (Sedgwick 1985; Soikkeli 1996). Lipman-Blumen (1976) and Kanter (1977), as well as their critiques, offer key elements for analysing men’s networks and organisations. In the following these issues will be looked into in more detail.

In her groundbreaking article *Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles* (1976) Jean Lipman-Blumen defined homosocial as “the seeking, enjoyment and/or preference for company of the same sex” (ibid. 16). Men’s interest in men as well as women’s exclusion from men’s arenas is based on men’s power over and women’s lack of resources. Lipman-Blumen sees men deriving satisfaction for all other needs than, in most cases, sexual needs from men. Homosocial order is reflected in division of income, in division of labor in the family and in exclusion of women from political and law enforcement bodies and sports. Still, Lipman-Blumen sees also the marginalization of those men not capable or willing to meet the standards of

homosocial world. Similarly to Remy (1990), Lipman-Blumen locates a tension between family based on heterosexual relationship and men's homosocial activities: both are striving for men's resources. Lipman-Blumen's theory is problematically based narrowly on sex role theory and on idea of exchange and needs determining social order.

Both Bird (1996) and Lindgren (1996) have paid attention to how norms of being a man are constructed and preserved in homosocial interaction and practices. Bird locates homosocial processes that maintain three hegemonic masculinity ideals: emotional detachment, competitiveness and sexual objectification of women. Lindgren puts the very same elements into an order. In her study on doctors and nurses she interprets the subordinating talk on women among male doctors as a strengthening ritual of ideals. In a group of men with similar experiences, competition arouses these synchronised rituals that result in ideal masculinity, in relation to which men aim or are compelled to calibrate their personal manhood. Respect is shown by not showing emotions. Lindgren sees the shared relation and resistance to superiour powers and the possibility to work on one's masculine identity as the basis of homosocial attraction⁴.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter has in her study *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) analysed social relations between men in management of a large business conglomerate. According to Kanter, scientific management is infused with masculine ethic that is carried out in practices of *homosexual* and *homosocial reproduction*. *Social homogeneity* is striven for because common language and shared experiences make communication and co-operation more fluent and predictable. Homosexual reproduction refers to practices that exclude women from managerial posts, as senior managers appoint their 'own images'. This process of replicating management reinforces "the belief that people like oneself actually deserve to have such authority" (ibid. 63) as well as assumptions that managers will be male breadwinners; correspondingly women are excluded from senior management because of their assumed conflicting loyalties between home and work. Homosocial reproduction refers to processes by which certain managers and men are selected and differentiated

⁴ The dynamics and preference of single-gender situations and spaces among men has been discussed also elsewhere (Rehn 1999; Collinson 1992).

according to their ability to display appropriate social credentials. Social homogeneity of male managers may lead to exclusion of both women and many men.

Collinson and Hearn (1995) and Witz and Savage (1992) both provide sympathetic critiques of Kanter's homosexual/social reproduction. Collinson and Hearn argue that these concepts demonstrate the complex unities (homosexual reproduction) and differences (homosocial reproduction) between men and masculinities in management, but Kanter fails to address the question of asymmetrical power when she de-genders power by explaining need for homogeneity in management as tackling the uncertainty inherent in managerial work. Collinson and Hearn emphasise that attention should be paid to the interrelations, overlap and mutual reinforcement of power relations and practices, unities, networks, and vertical and horizontal differences between men and between men and women. They suggest that asymmetrical power relations can be revealed by research studying such issues as men in senior positions and their networks, women's experiences in management, discrimination in recruitment, paternalism, and extensive informality in routine interactions between men managers (*ibid.*; see also Collinson and Hearn 1994).

The term *male homosociability* used by Witz and Savage (1992) represents both the way in which women are dispossessed of corporate power and the way access to organizational power is decided between men. Witz and Savage find Kanter's use of word homosexual misleading, as "it is *heterosexuality* which structures organizations, and within which men establish both their difference from women – as they simultaneously forge a male homosociability – *and* their power over them" (*ibid.* 51). Roper (1996) on the other hand criticizes term male homosociability for suppressing the aspects of desire and prefers Sedgwick's concept *homosocial desire* that "captures the ambiguities between the 'social' and the 'sexual' in men's networks" (Roper 1996, 213). Concept brings up in formally heterosexual settings a category of intimacy that may occur, as in Roper's material, as "high levels of energy" that flow from "the chemistry being right" (*ibid.*). (See also Husu 2001, 332-334.)

Fratriarchy

The idea of gendered power that men's networks entail is well expressed in such popular concepts as "old boy network" or "hyvä veli verkosto [good brother

network]”. The concept of *fratriarchy* has sometimes been used pointing to the power held by “brotherly” groups and alliances of men (Soikkeli 1996, Veijola & Jokinen, 2001) or pointing to the very basis of democracy and societies based on it (Derrida 1997). It has been noted that fraternity, deriving from the ideals of French revolution, has been central to socialism and nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberalism, and the modern civil society has been said to be based on fraternal order (Pateman 1989).

Though the idea of fraternity points to bonds between equals and to centrality of horizontal relations, the organisational forms of brotherhood are still characterized as selective (criteria, rules, borders), competing-orientated and hierarchical (Bay 1995). These kinds of practices are often documented in ethnographies of male-dominated organisations, like the systems of selection (resisting, testing, complaining about, adapting) among firefighters for both new procedures and new probationers (Baigent 2001, 138-9). Martin (2001) has made a distinction between mobilising contesting and affiliating masculinities: instead of men acting in concert only to distance and differentiate themselves from others by showing superiority, obtaining control over others, or obtaining benefit from work done by others, men also align and connect with others in ways that benefit self, others or both.

Fratriarchy as a theoretical concept and as the other form of androcracy (‘rule by men’) in contrast to patriarchy has been discussed by Remy (1990). He emphasizes the critical aspects of concept: Fratriarchy refers to such configurations of men that involve displays of gender domination. Analysing fratriarchies brings out the conflicts that structure men’s lives, and the conflicts between duties towards family and fraternities, or more broadly, conflicts between patriarchal and fratriarchal order. Though fratriarchal duties, practices and social orders can often be seen supporting patriarchy as part of it (Soikkeli 1996; Tallberg 2003), studying also the contradictions between the two orders can bring out the complexity of relations among men.

Gender and networks

Many of the studies that have brought together gender and networks have been looking at the differences between women’s and men’s networks. ‘Homophily by gender’ has been used to refer to a relationship pattern of similar nodes more likely

having relationships with each other than dissimilar nodes⁵. Studies on workplace relations have shown that formation of cross- and same-sex ties is affected by both social structural factors (gender composition at the workplace, status distinctions etc.) and personal dispositions (Straits 1996). Same distinction has been referred to with terms ‘induced homophily’ (as result of availability of similar alters) and ‘choice homophily’ (as result of preferences for interaction) (Ibarra 1997). Studies that have looked at the managerial networks and co-worker ties show that men’s social networks are more homophilous than women’s (Straits 1996; Ibarra 1992, 1997). It seems that in managerial levels of business organisations in particular, as both men and women network mainly with men, the dynamics of networking have a different basis: for gaining social capital men follow the logics of homosociality and women the logics of heterosociality⁶.

Instead of merely looking at the differences in women’s and men’s networks, could gender be thought of as network? Smith-Lovin and McPherson (1993) have suggested something of kind. They see the stability of gender differentiation arising from network relations and structural positions, which affect perceptions, beliefs, resources and contingencies. Homophily by gender directs men and women into different social worlds through the life course starting from childhood networks. Positionings in networks affect perceptions, beliefs, resources and contingencies linked to gender. Smith-Lovin and McPherson importantly emphasise the historicity of networks as well as the differing organisational contexts generating networks and being modified by the networks. They also stress the complexity of networks, which often get narrow presentations in network studies that concentrate on only one type of relation (exchange, friendship, certain kind of communication etc.). With ‘hypernetwork’ authors refer to the interlinkages of organisations created by individuals of a certain organisation.

Aside from the fact that Smith-Lovin and McPherson (1993) open up important perspectives to the role that socialisation contexts and networks in different life-

⁵ The term ‘homophily’ comes very close to the discussions around homosociality (Lipman-Blumen 1976; Kanter 1977; Collinson and Hearn 1995), homosociability (Witz and Savage 1992) and homosocial desire (Sedgwick 1985; Roper 1996).

⁶ Bird (1996) has criticised Lipman-Blumen’s theory on homosociality for leaving heterosociality (i.e. nonsexual attractions for members of the other sex) untheorised.

historical periods have in sustaining gender inequality⁷, their study includes some problems. The view of their study seems to rest on the bipolar understanding of gender and does not give much for analysing gender structures and processes among women or among men. When Smith-Lovin and McPherson start by saying that “[i]n one sense, it is impossible to have a network theory on gender” (ibid. 223), they notice the tension between the idea of homophily by gender (or homosocial[bi]lity) and network approach. Still they leave undeveloped the possibility of approaching gender that is offered by the more strictly ‘anticategorical’ network view. Instead of looking at networks of similar nodes (women or men), one could analyse the relationship between two orders: the social classes deriving from the occupation of particular positions within a network structure, and the sex division. This comparison would provide structural information on gender relations. By taking men’s egocentric networks as the starting point, special attention could be paid to the men’s network practices and gendered power⁸.

5. Social support, friendship, emotions and humour

Several other areas of research have dealt with issues that are relevant for studying men’s social networks, such as literature on social support and friendship patterns (Duck & Silver 1990). Much of this work has been done in non-organisational settings, for example communities (Wellman & Frank 2001). Networks and social capital gained through them can be supportive and have positive effects on one’s wellbeing (Hyppä 2002). Still, an important conceptual distinction is one between social networks and social support: people with whom one associates (social network) do not always offer tangible (social) support (Lazarus & Folkman in Seymour 1999, 46; see also Cohen & Syme 1985). This distinction offers a critical stance on men’s networks but it also shows the ambiguity and contradictions of men’s relationships to each other: Men give each other social support through networks, but networks are also contexts of competition and construction of masculinities that are in hierarchical relations with each other and with femininities (Connell 1987, 1995). Do men network with each other for gaining social support, and what is the price they are

⁷ Jackson (1990) brings up a similar view when he discusses the continuum of formal and informal men’s organisations from boarding schools and scouting to pub culture and football terraces.

⁸ When looking at networks of men (taking men as a social category), another possible concept combining the two starting points has been provided by Harrison White: ‘catnet’ refers to social organising which is result of people both *categorising* themselves in the same way and having regular interaction, *networking* with each other (Alapuro 2000).

willing to pay for the support? Who are the ones in men's networks getting support and what is the role of those men in networks who do not get support? Key feature in the dynamics of men's networks seems to be the tension between on one hand, social support, and on the other, competition and oppression and the practices (also of violence) linked to them.

Men's relations give structure to organisational culture in the form of networks. Often it seems that organisational cultures include practices based on silent agreement and relations of trust between men (see Hearn 2001). These practices maybe problematic in relation to equality in organisations in general, and in relation to other problems, such as corruption, sexual harassment or bullying. The dysfunctional consequences of networks may be considered as violations against the surrounding organisations or society. Dynamics, practices and social structures linked to these violations, such as 'rules of rule breaking' (Lyman 1987), 'codes of silence' (cf. Caproni 1997) and 'tacit agreement and understanding', need thorough analysis.

Taking men's networks as a starting point of research means that informal relations and friendship have to be observed. Both friendship and gender can be seen as social constructs that vary historically. Therefore there is a need to study social forces shaping friendships and the gendered patterns and practices of friendship, although there is as significant variation within genders on how friendships are structured as there is between them (Nardi 1992). Challenges for men's companionship may come from societal changes (Sherrod 1987) as well as from the discrepancy between men's social relationships and myths of male friendship (Hammond & Jablow 1987). It has been provocatively suggested that modern corporate structures require cooperation and competition between men as the primary actors in working life, but not bonds of solidarity or loyalty. Emotional needs are fulfilled in the family, and friendship between men is left somewhere between homophobia, leisure time activities, and fantasies of ideal friendship as responses to discontents inflicted upon men by the prevailing circumstances (ibid.).

Both organisations and men's relations with each other involve tensions between competition and collaboration/support. One way to analyse these tensions is to look at the emotions associated to competition and support. It has been said that organisations

(relative to more private domains) and men (relative to women) have been mostly constructed 'unemotional' in both studies on men and in academic and organisational discourses (Hearn 1993). Though there may also be such conventional expectations as that men should not display certain emotions publicly, there is, according to Hearn, in these kinds of discourses and statements a danger of ignoring the social mediation of the categories of 'men' and 'emotions'. Emotions as social and ideological constructs are open to interpersonal negotiation and to individual and organisational determination. Like emotions, the mental and physical states that are one aspect of emotions are differently socially constructed according to contexts, situations and both personal and organisational life histories. Being or not being emotional may be a way of showing, continuing, contradicting changing or reducing male dominance (ibid.).

In men's networks also humour may play an important role. Humour can be seen as currency, as one medium of exchange in men's networks. It may serve as a way of giving social support or shaping friendships, as a major force in social inclusion and exclusion, as rule governed aggression, and in many other ways. Many studies on humour bring up the questions of power and resistance. Mulkay (1988) has stated that humour may seem to condemn and disrupt existing social patterns (e.g. political humour), but on a more fundamental level it works to maintain the social structures that lay the basis for it. Lyman (1987) has looked into the role of humour in male bonding. He sees joking as a "social relationship that suspends the rules of everyday life in order to preserve them" (ibid. 150).

Contents, mechanisms and dynamics of humour involve relevant gendered aspects. The idea of both men's bonding and humour as providers of freedom from other social ties and responsibilities comes up, but is also problematised in studies on men and organisations. Collinson (1992; see also Collinson and Collinson 1996) shows how in a lorry-producing factory the discourse of male shop-floor workers, kept up by swearing, masculinism and explicit joking relations, serves as an expression of personal power and significance. The low value of shop-floor workers poses a problem of identity for the men and the problem is tangled with feminisation of management and office workers. This is allowed by the management as a way of control to keep the tension/attention away from the hierarchical relations. Symbolic

expressions of male sexuality (like sexually aggressive talk or pornography) are sometimes allowed or encouraged the same way in organisations to build cohesion and alleviate stress (Acker 1991).

6. Gendered networks of men in and around organisations: the contribution?

The possible approaches to the three main concepts discussed above – networks, gender and organisations – and their interrelations are numerous. This affluence does still involve gaps in theorising as well as clashes to be overcome between areas of research. In the following I shall first, as an attempt to clear the air buzzing with terms, shortly summarise and suggest seven possible, overlapping ways to look at how the three concepts can be and how have they been seen in relation to each other. After that I discuss the way the three concepts come together in the ongoing men's networks study from which this paper derives. I shall argue for taking egocentric networks as the starting point of the study, locate how gender studies can complement network approach, suggest considering gender as a 'logic', and finally reflect on how studying men's networks as homosocial practices fits into the discussions around postmodern organisations.

Organisations, networks and gender can be seen

- 1) as *structures* that constrain and enable action. In this sense they are separate from each other and have their own logics. They direct social action in distinct ways that compete with each other and may clash with each other.
- 2) as *action*, that is more or less directed by structures. Focusing on networking, gendering and organising emphasises the nature of the phenomena as processes and practices.
- 3) as intermingling *dynamics*. Organisations, for example, can be seen as essentially gendered so that no organisational phenomenon can be analysed satisfactorily without considering its gendered aspects.
- 4) as *variables*. Different models may be compiled by taking each as 'independent variable' explaining others: changes in gender divisions or other dimensions of the gender regime as well as changes in the network structure of organisational members or organisations may be seen as explaining features of the organisation in question. As in the first approach, the 'variables' are taken to be comparable.

- 5) through each other as *models* or *metaphors* in different levels. Gender can be seen as an organised order or as organising processes. Organisations can be grasped as networks, and organisation can be seen existing as a part of or in the environment of network of organisations. Furthermore, networks and social divisions (such as based on gender, class, ethnicity, language, age etc.) may be seen creating the informal organisation existing parallel to the formal/official organisation (Morgan 1997, 186-196), which is an important feature in literature relevant for this study.
- 6) as *approaches to the society* (network society [Castells 2000], gendered society [Kimmel 2000], ‘clan society’ of organisations [Strati 2000]).
- 7) as *contexts* for each other. Contextualising may involve different layers and different uses of the concepts. While studying networking or gendered practices on individual or network level, certain organisation or the network society can be providing the context and background against which the phenomenon is analysed.

Studying men’s networks can mean at least two things: the focus is either on *ties between certain men and other people*, or on *networks that construct of ties between men*. Following Lonkila (1999), the distinction between personal (egocentric) network (interconnections between an individual and her ‘alters’) and categorical network (e.g. men’s network in an organisation) raises the question about the unit of analysis. For studying men’s networks, personal networks provide a starting point that includes all social ties and meshing spheres of men’s life and does not isolate men’s mutual organisational interaction from its social context. It has shown to be important to consider the inter-dynamic effects of overlapping ties and multiplex social participation (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994).

As Lonkila continues, personal networks “allow for combining the analysis of existing network *structures* with social *processes*” (Lonkila 1999). There may be need for clarification about how to deal with the ‘more structural’ side of networks (kinship, co-worker ties, interlocking directorates etc.) and the ‘more processual’ side of networks (giving support, exchanging goods and information etc.). Still, I suggest that these have to be analysed jointly by studying men’s networks as homosocial practices.

Focusing at men's networks provides a new perspective on gendered organisations. By building on Acker's (1991) gendering processes, primarily on interaction and construction of divisions along and across gender lines, the structural perspective on network patterns can be reinforced. Further support for including analysis of cultural and agentic aspects to network analysis may be provided by critical research on masculinities (Carrigan et al. 1985; Connell 1995; Hearn 1996). The way of studying men and masculinities by focusing on gender relations and on masculinities as configurations of material and discursive practices structured by gender relations (Connell 1995; Hearn 1996) has unelaborated linkages with arguments of structural analysts, according to which "social categories (e.g. classes, races) and bounded groups are best discovered and analyzed by examining relations between social actors" (Wellman & Berkowitz 1988, 3). These links mean looking at the dynamics between the configurations of practices and discourses named masculinities and the network structures of the actors involved in constructing and reconstructing these masculinities. This bridging also narrows down the gap discussed in critical studies on men between the theorising on masculinities on the one hand, and men, their experiences, lives and activities on the other.

One of the main theoretical oppositions relevant in the men's networks study is the dialogue between network analysis and other approaches in social sciences. Discussions around such social divisions as gender, class, ethnicity, age etc. are about *divisions*, about social positions and separation, about 'what comes in-between people'. Network approaches, on the other hand, often seem to be about the opposite, about the *connections* and linkages between 'nodes' – though not always so much about what it is that connects the nodes, but about the structure of the relations⁹.

Still, divisions or systems of separation can also be seen as kind of bonds in at least two ways. On the one hand, to follow the same logic of separation connects those who are separated. On the other hand, social divisions are also about sameness (shared experience, meanings, attributes, positions in structures etc.) among the members of a

⁹ The contrast between divisions and connections is presented here in a straightforward manner for the purposes of the paper. Social divisions, such as class and age, are often seen as *social relations* instead of emphasising the divisional features. Different social divisions also differ from each other in form as dynamics of oppression (cf. Hearn and Parkin 1993).

certain social class. Gender, together with other social divisions, makes distinctions between people, primarily according the man-woman/masculine-feminine bipolarity, but the other side of the gender-coin is that there are also aspects that make, for example, men a 'gender class of men' (Hearn 1994).

To talk about gender as a social structure may cause confusion in relation to network approach. Network analysis suggests that structures are revealed with analysis of social network patterns, and these structures can be illustrated as networks. Whether or not that is possible or reasonable in the case of gender remains to be seen. For the purposes of studying men's networks and gendered power in and around organisations, I suggest considering gender as a logic of *both* social division *and* social connection. Logic does not here refer to philosophy or cognition, but to the social logic that systematises discourses and practices. Unlike structure, logic gives room for resistance and illogicality. Taking gender as a logic reserves the notion of structure for its more strict use as reference to patterns of social network relations. Aspects of this 'gender as a logic of division and connection' can be traced in social network structures and in how positioning within these structures allocates power. For studying gender as a logic personal networks serve a view to both homo- and heterosocial logics of men's networks.

As an approach to organisations, the analysis of egocentric networks of certain organisation's members comes closer to the ideas of organisation without walls (Strati 2000) and hypernetwork (Smith-Lovin and McPherson 1993) than to the perspectives on intra- versus interorganisational networks. Egocentric networks include intra-, inter- and non-organisational ties. What is with this emphasis lost in the focused information on certain type of organisational ties is gained in the comprehension of dynamics of intermingling gendered bonds and their role in organisational life. Approaching organisations through personal networks comes close to the studies of dynamics and inconsistencies between formal and informal organisational structures (Rogers and Kincaid 1981, 96), but problematises the distinction with the help of theorising on network organisations versus organisations that can be characterised as more hierarchical and bureaucratic. Although the unit of analysis is the egocentric network, the analysis of processuality is in the men's networks study mainly restricted to the analysis of the organisational network; origins of the personal networks or life

histories of the 'egos' are not in main focus. Instead, the time-period of observation is taken as a sample of the ongoing 'life' of the organisational network as a configuration that interconnects the personal networks.

The basic assumptions in discussions around network organisations raise interesting questions in relation to men's networks and homosociality. Vertical, lateral and spatial integration in organisations and across their borders as well as the shift towards informal coordination and the growing importance of social capital among management increase the centrality of personal networks. It may be that in changes from more to less bureaucratic forms of organisation gender as a logic gains more importance in how organisational relations of coordination, cooperation, recruitment etc. are configured, and men's homosocial practices become more central. Studying men's network structures and practices may contribute the discussions on nature of change in postmodern organisations by bringing the questions of gender and power to the discussions on network forms of organisations. Furthermore, in all the various ways discussed in this paper, research on men's networks and homosociality in and around organisations can produce knowledge on organisational power relations, and contribute to the efforts to promote equality in working life.

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