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" Structural Dynamics and Intentional Governance
in Strategic Interfirm Network Evolution "

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to shed light on the drivers underlying the role and scope of intentional governance of the structural dynamics of whole interfirm networks. Prior research has distinguished networks that are emergent from networks that are orchestrated. While empirical studies have shown situations in which the role and scope of intentional governance of whole interfirm networks has changed in time, and there is a growing interest regards the endogenous drivers of network dynamics, the dimensions that influence intentional governance of network structure dynamics and the way this is carried out remain still to be elucidated. In order to pinpoint these drivers, we leverage the models of network structure dynamics elaborated within research conducted at the intersection between network research and complexity science to propose a multilevel interpretive framework that clarifies the role and scope of intentional agency at different structural levels of interfirm networks. Our framework advances a twofold conceptual contribution: on one hand, we tackle the change in the role and scope of intentional governance of network structures in both evolutionary phases of network evolution (i.e., the early stages and the later stages). On the other, we see the network of formal ties resembling the accelerating network model, while the network of informal ties being akin to the scale-free (or truncated scale-free) network model of complex networks theory.

Keywords: Governance, Interfirm network, Network dynamics