



Where Research Comes To Life



LAPPEENRANTA
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

TBRC Technology Business
Research Center

P.O.Box 20, FI-53851 Lappeenranta, FINLAND

Tel. +358 5 621 6655 Fax +358 5 621 6699

www.tbrc.fi



Where does inter-organizational trust reside?

An examination of the nature of trust in inter-
organizational settings

Risto Seppänen
Lappeenranta University of Technology/Technology Business
Research Center

Motivation to the study & research gap

- Previous research on trust in inter-organizational context has provided controversial and ambiguous results
- A fundamental challenge in extending trust as an individual-level phenomenon to organizational level of analysis:
 - Defining the subject and the object of trust has taken place at both individual and organizational levels
- *Can an organization be both the subject and the object of trust?*

Trustor-trustee conceptualizations

Trusted party (trustee)

		<i>Trusted party (trustee)</i>	
		Individual	Organization
<i>Trusting party (trustor)</i>	Individual	Individual → Individual	Individual → Organization
	Organization	Organization → Individual	Organization → Organization

(Adapted from Janowicz & Noorderhaven 2006)

Methods

- **Qualitative research approach & explorative research strategy**
 - **Focus group interviews**
 - Utilization of group dynamics
 - 22 interviewees in 4 groups
 - **Individual interviews**
 - Deepening and clarifying of the findings of Fg-data
 - 6 interviewees
- **Template analysis**
- **Atlas/Ti software**

Results and conclusions

- Both individual and organizational levels of trust coexist in inter-organizational relationships
- The subject of trust (the trustor) is always an individual
 - Key boundary-spanners diffuse their perceptions in organization
- Both counterpart individuals and the whole organization are objects of trust (the trustees) in inter-organizational relationships
 - The order and formation of individual and organizational trust was not clear, however



Thank you!

Risto Seppänen
risto.seppanen@lut.fi