

PREFACE

This book investigates the management of social capital processes as they are accomplished-understood, experienced and shaped-by owner-managers. The aim of the book is to develop a deeper understanding of the management of social capital processes, to achieve a greater congruence between real-life perspectives and experiences and social capital literature.

The book argues that social capital is situational, and in the economic situation the theory has been bounded by rational choice framing assumptions. The research problem is that claims for the universality of the economic way of looking at life, and for looking at social capital processes are over-stated. Predicated on this insight the research investigates economic notions of rationality, and low and non-rationality, as well as their interdependence in the management of social capital processes.

The research follows a qualitative approach for data collection, with flexible pre-coding to guide the research where to look, while retaining an inductive openness to emergent data.

The research population is drawn from SME owner-managers in the service and retail sectors, who were researched over two years using semi-structured interviews, observation, and by researcher participant observation.

The research presents a number of contributions to knowledge. First, the research offers an in-depth, single source review explicating the meaning of the economic form of social capital, with reference to its intellectual antecedents, conceptual debates and key theoretical authors.

The second (emergent research) contribution is to identify the significance of ethics and autodidactic reading for managing social capital processes.

The third (theoretical) contribution argues for an expanded social capital perspective, beyond the prevailing and over-confident rational framing assumptions, and also for a new holistic ontological understanding.

The fourth contribution is to identify a number of generic processes that can guide the management of social capital processes.

Paul C. Manning