Interpersonal interaction is one of the defining characteristics of professional life. Interaction can be a source of information, resources, referrals and work satisfaction. Given its omnipresence in today’s work environments, the question rises whether professionals are able to build and shape productive work relationships themselves. What strategies and perceptions do professionals have and what kind of information is important to them in building and shaping these relations? This thesis explores the phenomenon of human agency in various professional contexts. It particularly studies how and why freelancers and entrepreneurs network and how management professionals deal with intuition in task-related interactions. This thesis’ focus on the subjective micro-foundations of interpersonal interaction offers a non-linear, time and context dependent perspective on relational development. The acknowledgement that professionals are guided by beliefs, intuitions and at times unclear motives when engaging in networking behaviors, selection processes and professional interactions, makes reality less predictable and rational than currently thought of. The findings put human agency in context and call for more research that acknowledges the subjective, emergent and interdependent nature of interaction. The practical relevance of the findings includes understanding networking behaviors, getting in touch with intuition at work and its role in various social processes.

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Mariëtte Kaandorp (1985) has conducted her PhD studies at VU University. She holds a Master’s degree in Economics and a Bachelor’s degree in Econometrics and Operations Research. Prior to her PhD studies she held multiple positions as a consultant. Her main research interests include philosophy of science, employee well-being, innovation and the careers of gifted and sensitive professionals.