

Reconstructing Self and Status:

A Sense-Making Perspective Among Globally Mobile Individuals

Dan Ha Le

danha.d.le@utu.fi

Turku School of Economics, Finland

Research Interest/ Focus

Social status (social position):

“relative position in a **hierarchy**, **membership** in a social group, and **socially defined function** in an organized group”

(Benoit-Smullyan, 1944, p.151)

- social, economic, political dimension
- complex social relationships

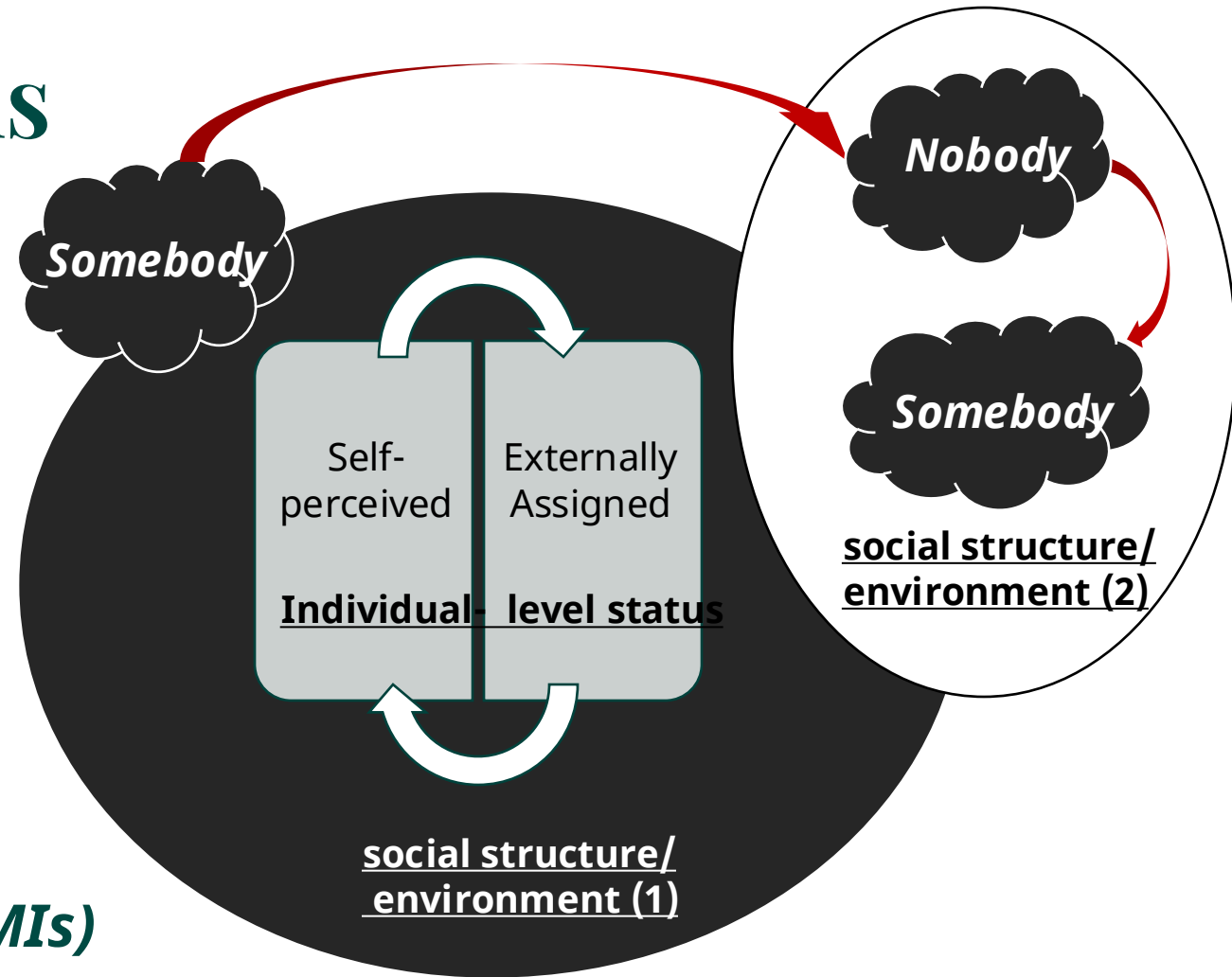


Fig. 1: Status in the Global Mobility Context

“How do globally mobile individuals (GMIs) make sense of and reconstruct their status and identity as they move across different social structures/environments?”

A Sensemaking Perspective

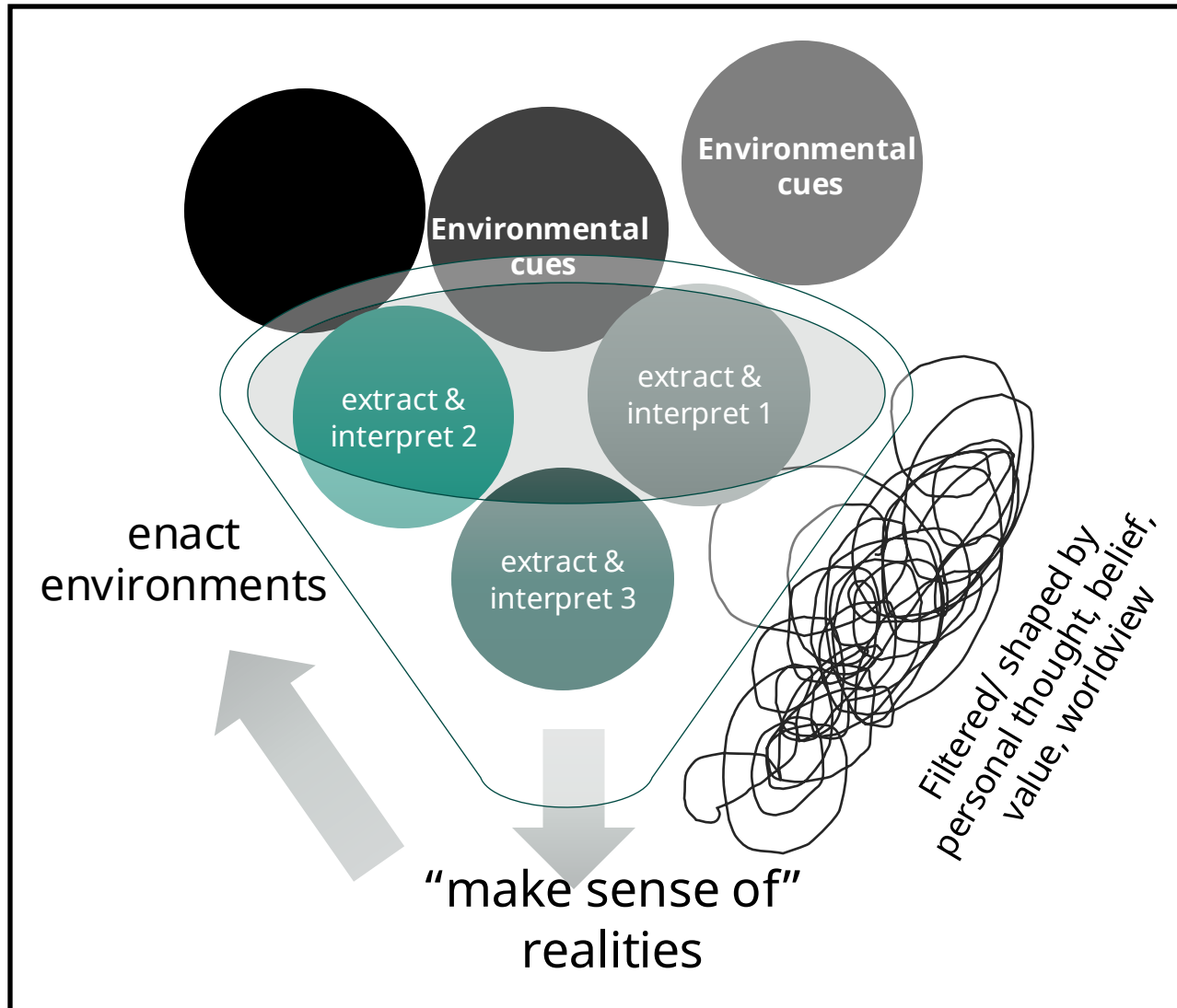


Fig. 2. A sensemaking process (Brown et al., 2015)

- processes by which “people **generate** what they **interpret**” (Weick 1995, p. 13)
- sensemaking is what everyone does everyday to construct ‘realities’ and continuously make sense of him/herself in relation to others and internal + external social worlds (Brown et al., 2015)

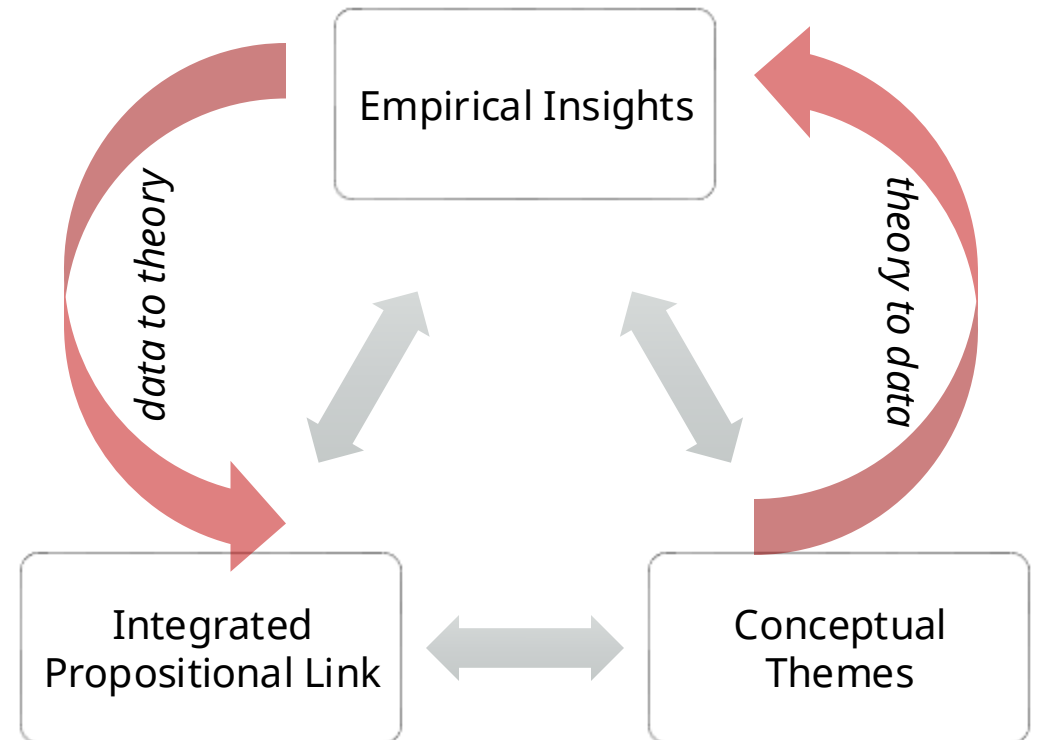
explanatory power

Interpretive, qualitative study

- Data collected via 52 semi-structured interviews with 47 GMIs
- Reflexive Thematic Analysis (*Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2023*)
- Abductive reasoning (*Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021*)

Epistemic alignment logic

- Iterative back-and-forth movement between data and theory
 - to identify emergent themes
 - to develop new empirically-grounded conceptual understanding
- **Not descriptive:** Data drives theorizing, not illustration.



Findings

Tension	between self-perceived and externally ascribed status <ul style="list-style-type: none">• self-perceived status: drawn on educational and professional credentials (individual attributes)• externally ascribed status: shaped and constrained by hierarchical, racial, cultural, and linguistic stereotypes
Ongoing processes of (re)construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identity and status are interwoven, never stable or never-ending• fluid and continuously constructed via agency and structure dialectics (tensions, contradictions, negotiations, and changes)
Enduring inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• process and outcomes of (re)constructing self and status shaped by stereotypes, colonial legacies, and enduring global power asymmetries• people of colors ≠ white, privileged American or European nationals

Theoretical Contributions

Identity and Status Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• context-dependent concepts• status dissonance as a catalyst for identity (re)construction process• foregrounding active efforts individuals invest to interpret, negotiate, and reconcile status tensions
Sensemaking Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sensemaking is not purely an internal and subjective process, but• it is also conditioned by power asymmetries, institutional hierarchies, and cultural stereotypes• sensemaking as input for change (<i>not just to interpret environmental cues/ signals but as a basis for action</i>)

Future Research (in multinational workplaces)

Areas	Examples
Structural influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To investigate how organizational culture, policies, and practices enable or constrain the identity and status work of GM employees
Comparative studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To examine differences and contributing factors in status dissonance, identity and status work among locals vs. GMIs, as well as among expats, returnees, migrants, digital nomads, and others, such as flexible/ short-term assignees
Longitudinal and multi-level perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To track status and identity evolution across mobility phasesTo integrate individual sensemaking with macro-level organizational and cultural forces to capture the complexity and dynamics of status work over time

Get inspired.



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