

# Cet article n'est pas consultable en ligne.

---

## Back to the distinction between strong and weak ties: the emergence of the weak tie potentially strong

Marc Lecoutre 1, \*, [@](#) , Pascal Lièvre 2, \*, [@](#)

1 : ESC Clermont - CRCGM EA8349 (ESC Clermont) - ESC Clermont

4 boulevard Trudaine 63000 Clermont-Ferrand - France

2 : Université d'Auvergne - CRCGM (UdA - CRCGM) Université d'Auvergne - Clermont-Ferrand I : EA3849

28 Place Henri Dunant - 63000 Clermont-Ferrand - France

\* : Auteur correspondant

---

### Abstract :

An abundant literature in the study of organizations relies today on the distinction between strong ties and weak ties that Granovetter has proposed in 1973. This distinction based on an "intuition" of the author has been used without discussion in the literature. We report on the use of this distinction. We bring out a partition between studies that are committed, on one side, in a microscopic approach centered on the degree of closeness between individuals, and, on the other, in a macroscopic approach based on transitive ties. We propose to deepen this issue of the distinction between strong ties and weak ties through a case study about the mobilization of social networks in situation, as part of project teams. Retaking Granovetter's analysis of the strength of ties, we show that his definition of the weak tie is paradoxically that of a tie that answers, which is the essential property of a strong tie. We are thus led to distinguish three types of ties: strong ties that actually feel obliged to answer, weak ties that are potentially strong, and weak ties that do not answer. In conclusion, we propose a table, in line with the seminal work of Granovetter, integrating the microscopic and macroscopic approaches, and this new type of tie. This structuration makes it possible so to extend the Granovetter's research program, regardless of debates on the respective merits of strong ties versus weak ties.