

**BI Norwegian Business School**

**Using enterprise social media for knowledge  
sharing in bureaucratic settings:**

A case study on how power and political activities influence  
sensemaking processes

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**Abstract**

In response to the call for more research on intra-organizational usage of enterprise social media, and the insufficient addressing of how power effect knowledge sharing in organizational life, this thesis adopts a sensemaking-approach in order to capture power-dynamics that influence deployment of enterprise social media-technology. The aim of the thesis is to explore how power and political activities influence employee's sensemaking processes for how to utilize enterprise social media as an arena for knowledge sharing. Based on a case study consisting of eight in-depth interviews conducted in a Norwegian public sector organization, power and political activities are examined through (1) managerial activities and (2) coworker influences. The authors find that vision and goal setting, implementation and training issues, and top management and middle management's presence and engagement (or lack thereof) lead to divergent sensemaking accounts for whether enterprise social media as a knowledge sharing arena is accepted or resisted. This leads to a negotiation where employees mainly adapt the system to fit with established practices. It is found that a lack of trust in coworkers lead to people withholding contributions, and that discouraging activities from a minority of employees augments interpretations of enterprise social media as an unsafe and down-prioritized knowledge sharing arena – a topic that warrants further investigation. Lastly, it is found that a perceived lack of need to expand social networks in order to solve tasks reduce enterprise social media's role as a knowledge sharing arena. Accordingly, this thesis provides insights into the largely unexplored area of how enterprise social media tools can facilitate for knowledge sharing inside organizations.

*Key words:* knowledge sharing; practice-based approach; enterprise social media; power; political activities; sensemaking; sensegiving

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The last decade has seen the rise of social media technology rapidly transform ways we humans communicate with each other (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). We share ideas, pictures and comments on global social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube which through its easy user interface, broad reach and fast pace has contributed to set agendas for a variety of public discourses (Asur & Huberman, 2010).

Concurrently, the progressively complex and dynamic environment accompanied with the knowledge era – where knowledge is considered as perhaps the most valuable resource for gaining competitive advantage – has forced organizations to reassess how to best manage the valuable but intangible resource of knowledge (Quinn, 1992; Skok & Kalmanovitch, 2005). As a result of this, organizations have increasingly begun to experiment with social media technology as a solution to the problem of coordinate knowledge (Yehuda, McNabb, Young, Burnes, & Reiss-Davis, 2008). As the omnipresence of social media technologies find their way into organizational life, it is imperative to gain better comprehension of how they may empower and restrict knowledge sharing (Gibbs, Rozaidi & Eisenberg, 2013; Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013).

Most studies on the topic of social media within organizational contexts have been scrutinized through the lenses of technology usage and computer-related communities (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013) or as a marketing tool (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013). Yet, social media's impact on internal organizational life still remains in its infancy among scholars within organizational studies (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013; Riedl & Betz, 2012; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). As of today, research on organizational use of social media indicate that it may help facilitate for better knowledge sharing through increased awareness and connection between virtual workers (DiMicco & Millen, 2007), and locate relevant content and expertise (Brzozowski, 2009). However, as the success of social media platforms is to a large extent dependent upon human issues rather than technological, thinking of technology as a panacea is an utopian assumption that is likely to fall short (Gibbs, Rozaidi & Eisenberg, 2013; Newell, Robertson, Scarbrough & Swan 2009, 55).

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Whereas traditional bureaucratic organizations provide organizational members with clearly defined pathways for communication and rules through the hierarchy of command (Newell et al., 2009, 70), enterprise social media (ESM) contrast this principle by being innately built on a more egalitarian structure (McAfee, 2009, 207). Although social media technology by itself cannot transform a bureaucratic organization into an egalitarian structure (Newell et al., 2009, 70), this type of technology neglects the institutionalized vertical and horizontal boundaries within organizations (Kaiser, Müller-Seitz, Lopez & Cunha, 2007; McAfee, 2006), and facilitate for multiple voices (Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013). This implies that management loses some of its power to control the rhetorical discourse (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012; Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013). Hence, Newell and colleagues (2009, 157) speculate that one of the major reasons why many organizations have not yet turned to Enterprise 2.0 solutions is due to the reduced managerial control and the avoidance of risking employees vocalizing negativity.

Research on implementation of ESM state that people's expectations attached to the tool can often be confusing, with ambiguity related to targeted goals of improved productivity or more effective knowledge management (Riedl & Betz, 2012). Nevertheless, several questions remain open. How will management and employees interpret such flat and open systems? Will the social media tool mirror the traditional organizational hierarchy, or will management and employees embrace the openness of communication that ESM can provide?

## **1.2 Research question**

Amid those who have installed Enterprise 2.0 technology there have been conducted very little research concerning its relationship to descriptions of work processes and values and norms embedded in the organizational culture (Riedl & Betz, 2012). Preliminary findings indicate that utilization of ESM for knowledge creation can result in a sensemaking gap between the novel work forms and more traditional work forms within organizational hierarchies (Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Riedl & Betz, 2012). In addition, research with respect to how power directly affects knowledge sharing is of today limited (Liao, 2006; Renzl, 2008), and there is a call for papers that examining how power affects individuals' perception of knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010). Based on these ideas, we believe that the increasingly omnipresence of social media in contemporary society make

organizational adoption of ESM an important research area. We therefore choose to investigate ESM because we believe the tool will impact the way people discuss, share and collaborate within tomorrow's workplace. In response to the call for more research, the aim of this master thesis is to enrich the current field of organizational learning by investigating the following research question:

*How does power and political activities influence organizational member's sensemaking for how to utilize enterprise social media for knowledge sharing?*

### **1.3 Outline of thesis**

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter introduced the topic and its relevance for the field of leadership and organizational psychology. In order to answer the proposed research question, chapter two will provide a theoretical background of relevant literature. Here, the concepts of knowledge sharing, ESM, power and politics, and their relation to sensemaking will be scrutinized. Taking a practice-based approach to knowledge, we look into how knowledge sharing can be achieved via ESM-technology, as well as the most relevant barriers preventing this process to be accomplished. We also define enterprise social media and review its role within knowledge sharing activities. Lastly in this chapter, we present the concepts of power, politics and sensemaking and how these are entangled with knowledge sharing activities in ESM. In chapter three we present the case organization in which the data material was gathered. Here we also give a brief description of the organization's implemented ESM technologies. We then describe the methodological framework and research design that guided our data collection, before chapter five gives a careful description of how these data were analyzed. In chapter six, we structure our findings and subsequent discussions into two overarching themes, whereby each theme contains four sub-sections. In the last three chapters of the thesis we will first propose how our study may have implications for practice, then underline its limitations and directions for future research, and finally, offer a conclusion.



## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1 Knowledge sharing

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

To improve overall organizational performance it is insufficient to exclusively rely on hiring people with the right knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wang & Noe, 2010). Organizations must also consider how to efficiently exploit existing resources inside its own boundaries (Damodaran & Olphert, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; March, 1991; Spender & Grant, 1996) so that members in need of knowledge can learn from those who have (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002; Damodaran & Olphert, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Hinds, Patterson, & Pfeffer, 2001; Wang & Noe, 2010). To achieve this knowledge sharing process, organizations therefore need some sort of coordination of activities (Kogut & Zander, 1996). Nonetheless, to talk about how people can learn from each other and partake in knowledge sharing activities suggest a need to conceptualize knowledge, and if and how it can be shared and coordinated.

#### 2.1.2 A practice-based approach to knowledge

Researchers within the field of organizational learning distinguish between two distinct perspectives: a *cognitive perspective* and a *social perspective* (Chiva & Alegre, 2005). The cognitive perspective surmises an ‘economic lens’ whereby learning is best understood as an individual’s acquisition of explicit knowledge through formal education (Filstad & Blåka, 2007, 26). Here, knowledge is perceived as something that an individual possess (Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Hayek, 1989). This perspective has received critique for neglecting aspects of socialization, organizational- and cultural dimensions (Filstad & Blåka, 2007, 26), including power and politics (Newell et al., 2009, 13). In contrast, the social perspective, also called *the practice-based approach*, bases its premise on knowledge as fluid and fluctuating due to ongoing negotiated communication between people (Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Filstad & Blåka, 2007, 27).

Central to the practice-based approach is that knowledge and language do not perfectly mirror reality, but are means of handling changing environments (Lave & Wenger, 1991, 37). We argue that adopting a practice lens on knowledge is most fruitful for our study, as this perspective involves considerations of power in

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that individuals come together and negotiate and construct their understanding of the world through social interaction (Gherardi, Nicolini & Odella, 1998), and thereby negotiating the control over resources.

Learning, then, occurs on a micro-level as a result of development in situated identities, evolving through participation in everyday practices (Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Contu & Willmott, 2003). Taking a practice-based approach, knowledge can more easily be shared between people of homogeneous character in terms of practice because of relatively shared meaning system (Newell et al., 2009, 155-156). Successively, ESM can function as an echo chamber, where tight linkages between people with similar points of views and skills are fostered (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013). In doing so, ESM may enable the development of what Lave and Wenger (1991, 42) termed *communities of practice* (CoP), which is regarded critical for organizational learning, innovation, and knowledge sharing; (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Filstad, 2014b; Fulk & Yuan, 2013). Yet, colleagues may share practices and expertise despite having little social interaction, such as when working geographically dispersed through the use of information technology tools. Brown and Duguid (2001) termed this formal collaborative form of settings as *networks of practice* (NoP), and it is argued to facilitate for a social arena that supports overlapping CoP's (Filstad, 2014b).

### ***2.1.3 Defining knowledge***

According to Sandhu, Jain and bte Ahmad (2011) organizational competitive advantage is maintained by keeping its knowledge in a good and effective manner. Whether or not knowledge can be conceptually distinguished from information is still debated among researchers (Wang & Noe, 2010). However, this study follows Davenport and Prusak's (2000, 5) definition of *knowledge* as:

“a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insights that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers”.

Knowledge can be distinguished into two forms of knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Polyani, 1967, 4). These forms have critical differences when it comes to the potential to be collected and distributed, codifiability and mechanisms for transfer, and methods for acquisitions and accumulate knowledge (Lam, 2000). *Explicit knowledge* is regarded as something that can be captured,

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codified and stored (Lam, 2000). Sharing knowledge between individuals across time and space, then, is uncomplicated (Ipe, 2003). In contrast, *tacit knowledge* is grounded in personal experience deriving from involvement in a specific context, action, and commitment. Thus, tacit knowledge is personal and therefore difficult to communicate and formalize (Nonaka, 1994). Ipe (2003) argues that because tacit knowledge is developed through experience, communication becomes complicated, as one is dependent on the individual possessing the specific knowledge. Hence, tacit knowledge is considered to function as obstacles for effective knowledge sharing between individuals in organizations (Ipe, 2003).

#### ***2.1.4 Defining knowledge sharing***

The degree to which a knowledge management initiative becomes successful depends on knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010). The term *knowledge sharing* refers to the process whereby individuals and groups can share experiences with each other (Argote & Ingram, 2000) in order to either create new knowledge, or exploit existing knowledge in an improved fashion (Christensen, 2007). This involves an individual's sharing of knowledge and practices (Lin, 2007), that aim for helping and collaboration with others to develop novel ideas, solve problems, or implement procedures or policies (Barson, Foster, Struck, Ratchew, Pawar, Weber, & Wunram, 2000; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Cummings, 2004; Pulakos, Dorsey & Borman, 2003). Hence, it is important to note that knowledge sharing is distinguishable from knowledge transfer. While knowledge transfer encompasses the translation of tacit- into explicit knowledge, knowledge sharing implies the tacit- to tacit knowledge exchange (Christensen, 2007).

Viewing knowledge through the lens of a practice-based philosophy entails that we regard all knowledge as having both explicit and tacit elements (Hislop, 2002). Whether or not ESM technology can facilitate tacit knowledge sharing between people is still debated among organizational researchers (Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013). Taking a practice-based approach, the idea that knowledge sharing may occur through information technology has historically been limited to explicit knowledge (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011, 14). However, the rise of social media technology is argued to enable the sharing of tacit knowledge in addition to explicit knowledge (McAfee, 2006; Newell et al., 2009, 156). Although interactions via IT-technology may be less rich as face-to-face,

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supporters of IT-mediated tacit knowledge sharing claim this is possible by the provision of an arena where employees can freely express personal opinions and ideas, and nurture dialogues between experts (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

### ***2.1.5 Barriers for knowledge sharing through IT-technology***

To successfully manage the process of knowledge sharing is one of the most challenging parts in knowledge management implementation (Lee & Ahn, 2005). Firstly, knowledge sharing is a demanding process both in terms of energy and time (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2003). Second, reviews on knowledge sharing literature identify a broad range of key factors which further complicate the matter: culture and working climate, individual motivation to share, the nature of knowledge, and opportunities to share (Ipe, 2003). As follows, taking a holistic view shows that potential barriers to knowledge sharing encompass individual-, organizational- and technological domains (Cabrera, Collins & Salgado, 2006; Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Gupta, 2008; Riege, 2005; Sveiby, 2007).

Within the technological domain, barriers mainly center upon aversion towards the IT-system, which are often rooted in low levels of experience and familiarity with the technology (Riege, 2005), and expectations of what the tool can provide (Cabrera, Collins & Salgado, 2006). On an organizational level, barriers are associated with organizational structure, internal competition between units, misalignment between overall organizational strategy and knowledge management strategy, and poor informal and formal environments (Riege, 2005). Knowledge sharing barriers on an individual level involve limited time available, demographic differences, poor language and grammar skills, underdeveloped social networks, and absence of trust (Riege, 2005).

#### *Trust and knowledge sharing*

The concept of *trust* is identified as a paramount element of knowledge sharing and has therefore attracted most attention by organizational researchers (Wang & Noe, 2010). Prolific collaboration and ability to share knowledge between individuals and departments are based on a trusting relationships, which is linked together through perceived abilities and engagement based on authenticity (Dodgson, 1993). Trust is not only the basis for knowledge sharing, but it is also considered to be the most difficult thing to accomplish (Filstad & Hepsø, 2009).

According to Luhmann “a system requires trust as an input condition in order to stimulate supportive activities in situations of uncertainty and risk” (1988, 103). People may therefore face situations where the outcome is unknown and where damage overshadows possible benefits (Newell & Swan, 2000).

## **2.2 Enterprise social media**

### ***2.2.1 Historical background: from static to social intranets***

Knowledge sharing is often considered the most significant aspect of knowledge management (Gupta, 2001). Newell and colleagues (2009, 6) understand the term *knowledge management* as specific practices, tools and strategies that management apply so that knowledge can be a resource for the organization. Such systems can be labeled Knowledge Management Systems (KMS), and is intended at facilitating the provision of necessary knowledge to the right employee at the right time (Newell et al., 2009, 145). Perhaps the most significant KMS tool that has been utilized to facilitate knowledge sharing within organizations is the intranet (Hendriks, 1999). Intranet is defined as a network system designed to promote communication and collaboration among dispersed workers within an organization (Lai, 2001; Lee & Kim, 2009). Intranets can be scrutinized through two lenses, either *technically* or *functionally* (Masrek, Abdul-Karim & Hussein, 2008). While the first perspective focuses on the technical features linked to hardware and software, the functional perspective - which is the perspective taken in this study - is directed towards the user and the services he or she can be provided by the technology (Newell, Scarbrough & Swan, 2001).

From its beginning in 1995, intranets have progressed from being a document organizer into a more complex organizational tool in line with the technology of Web 2.0 (Martini, Corso & Pellegrini, 2009). The term ‘Web 2.0’ was initially used in the beginning of the 2000s to depict the emerging trends of a more interactive and social Internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In contrast to the first generation of Internet, content and applications in Web 2.0 are to a much greater extent created, published and modified by end-users in an ongoing collaborative, open and decentralized fashion (Boulos & Wheeler, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Such user-generated content include blogs, web forums, social bookmarking sites, photo and video sharing communities, podcasts (Harris & Rea, 2009) as well as social networking platforms which can combine several features

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(Agichstein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis & Mishne, 2008). These features have caused people to interact in new ways (Newell et al., 2009, 156).

### ***2.2.2 Defining enterprise social media (ESM)***

Recently, social media technology has begun to be incorporated as a component of organizational intranets (Huang, Baptista & Galliers, 2013; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013). An organization that embraces and utilizes such up-and-coming social software solutions within its own boundaries or between firms and customers is what McAfee (2006) coined the Enterprise 2.0. The terms Enterprise 2.0, Social software, The social internet, The digital workplace and Enterprise social media are all labels given internal collaboration tools that involve functions of the Web 2.0 movement (Pettersen, 2012). For the purpose of our study, we use the term *enterprise social media (ESM)*, which Leonardi, Huysman and Steinfeld (2013, 2) loosely define as a digital “platform upon which social interaction can occur”.

### ***2.2.3 Enterprise social media tools***

ESM as an umbrella term may encompass several tools that differ in forms and capacities to facilitate knowledge sharing. As this present study scrutinizes a particular case, with its specific ESM tools, we find it useful and necessary to present readers with an overview of the most relevant ESM tools for our study.

*Social networking sites (SNS)* are platforms where employees instantly can interact through discussion forums and messaging that support co-presence of other participants (Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013). This type of tool, which can be exemplified by Facebook, usually includes a personal profile that is visible in search engines and allows comments and expression of opinions (e.g. the ‘like button’) on content (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). SNS’s primary role in knowledge sharing is argued to be the construction of voluntarily founded CoP’s (Chatti, Jarke & Frosch-Wilkie, 2007; Hildrum, 2009). In addition, through forming closer and more regular communication among employees, SNSs can increase levels of relational trust, which is a requisite for effective knowledge sharing (Chatti, Jarke & Frosch-Wilkie, 2007; Hildrum (2009)

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*Blogs* pushes content to subscribers and allows readers to comment (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). This type of communication can facilitate knowledge sharing by establishing an arena that allow everyone a voice, instantly explain and publish their ideas, to enable discussions, and share personal insights (Brzozowski, Sandholm & Hogg, 2009; Chatti, Jarke & Frosch-Wilkie, 2007).

*Wikis* allows employees to add, change, or remove content in collaboration with each other (Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013), much like the online encyclopedia of Wikipedia. It is therefore argued to involve social interactions in addition to the capture and sharing of knowledge (Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013). By allowing multiple editors to contribute to an online document, and thus create an emergent structure, this type of online collaboration is argued to be one the paramount examples of exploiting combined intelligence (Chatti, Jarke & Frosch-Wilkie, 2007).

#### ***2.2.4 The role of enterprise social media for knowledge sharing***

Although the intranet still act as an important communication channel of official information controlled by management, various types of social media allow employees to more easily pursue interaction across functions, hierarchical levels and geographical regions (McAfee, 2009, 211; Newell et al., 2009, 145).

According to Martini, Corso and Pellegrini (2009), the discussion about intranet usage is not whether it can enhance day-to-day internal communication, decrease paperwork or diffuse organizational culture, rather, the question is more concerned with how it can personalizes operations and trigger and develop new systems of relationships. Creating such peripheral social relationships is closely linked to what Granovetter (1973) call weak ties within a network. This type of relationship is argued to be crucial value creators, as individuals can learn more from people with dissimilar ideas, in contrast to strong ties where people might have similar knowledge (Levin, Cross, Abrams & Lesser, 2002). However, this would imply that in order to utilize weak ties, a broad range of employees with dissimilar expertise ought to contribute.

What makes ESM unique compared to more traditional KMS's is that ESM allows for through one single medium to "view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the

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organization at any time of their choosing” (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013, 2) in addition to the following three traditional features of (i) sending messages to individuals, groups or the entire organization, (ii) finding out who talks to who, either implicitly or explicitly, and (iii) post, revise, and organize data that is linked to self or others (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013).

Accordingly, they claim that one of, if not *the* most significant organizational effect of the abovementioned attributes is augmented possibilities for social learning. This is argued to be possible through three key mechanisms: by offering transparency and retrievable history of ongoing conversations, that communication directed at a particular intended audience is transparent and made public to unintended recipients as well, and facilitation for and enabling like-minded employees to easily connect and form common ground (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013).

## **2.3 Power, politics and sensemaking**

### ***2.3.1 Power and politics***

All human behavior takes place within a specific social and institutional context. This organizational environment concurrently empowers and restricts action because it “legitimizes some forms of behaviour while simultaneously ‘prohibiting’ other forms” (Newell et al., 2009, 55). As organizations are loaded with vested interests, distinct professional groups and hierarchies, Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld (2005) affirm that it would be naïve to ignore power and politics and believe that people share goals and interests. Filstad and Blåka (2007, 77) make this notion even more clear, and state that all aspects of social practices are fuelled with some relations of force.

The present study turns to Foucault’s notion of power, who views power as relational and productive in addition to a person’s possession that can be utilized to constrict and dominate other’s actions (Fox, 2000). Describing *power* as a “force that effects outcomes”, the concept can be linked with *politics* by consider politics as “power in action” (Hardy, 1996, 3). Expressions of power can then be viewed through actions that shape capabilities, decisions and change what individuals “accept, take for granted, and reject” (Pfeffer, 1981, cited in Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, 418). Organizational politics, then, becomes a matter



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of the deliberate use of these expressions to preserve or attain control of concrete or symbolic resources (Bacharach & Lahler, 1981, 46-47).

More specifically, Hardy (1996) distinguishes between three alternative dimensions of powers that can intentionally be used to influence and contest the power entrenched in the system: resource power, process power, and meaning power. *Resource power* encompasses the power to cause wanted behaviors via the use of particular resources that the targeted group depends on. Within the second dimension, *process power*, the source of power operates through the ability to include or exclude actors from participating in decision-making processes. Thirdly, *meaning power* derives from influencing perceptions and cognitions (e.g. norms and expectations) through semantic and symbolic expressions. Here, issues can be inscribed with (new) meaning that make specific actions either legitimate or not (Hardy, 1996). While the abovementioned three dimensions can be intentionally utilized, Hardy (1996) also proposes a fourth dimension of power - *the power of the system*. This refers to the deeply ingrained and historical ways-of-doing practices within an institution that people take for granted (Hardy, 1996). Although this approach to power is less manageable by single individuals, it can notwithstanding pose substantial restraints on the ability of people to exert other forms of power (Hardy, 1996).

### **2.3.2 Sensemaking**

The interpretative flexibility afforded by IT-technology means that it could be interpreted and made sense of differently by individuals (Weick, 1995, 116). These independent socially constructed realities are influenced by the institutional context (Bijker, Hughes & Pinch, 1990; Newell et al., 2009, 59). *Sensemaking* processes are triggered when expectations differ from each other, or when engagement in activities has no clear understandable way (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). The outcome of sensemaking – or what it produces – is referred to as “accounts and the actions that are based on them” (Maitlis, 2005, 23). Accounts define or clarify reality and therefore make it meaningful, and are considered to come in various forms, for example explanations of issues as strategic or political (Maitlis, 2005). These accounts are characterized as important resources in which people can cope with tasks and negotiate their lives (Boje, 1991; Maitlis, 2005). More specifically, sensemaking occurs when

ambiguous cues in the environment are classified and transformed into words, structured in verbal and written texts, and then enacted in order to make that institutional reality more comprehensible (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). This sequence of “order, interruption, recovery” is what Weick (2006, 1731) sums up as the essence of sensemaking.

#### *Sensemaking in ‘mundane’ organizational settings*

According to Maitlis (2005), a large part of research on sensemaking in organizations has been conducted in settings of intense pressure with respect to the interruption of order. Here, issues such as the need to quickly make sense, tight-coupled social structures and high-reliability appear to be critical. Yet, such emergency scenarios can be rather different from traditional organizations where sensemaking processes often occur in less extreme situations, and where large groups of heterogeneous actors address a broad range of issues (Maitlis, 2005). This underlines the fact that sensemaking is a distributed process, leading to constructions of numerous understandings spread throughout the organization and its latent hierarchy (Filstad, Geppert & Visser, 2011).

Moreover, the shaping of what individuals take for granted, accept or reject occur through elements such as controlling cues, who talks to whom, or what actions are permitted and not (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Such attempts at influencing other peoples’ meanings and sensemaking are termed *sensegiving* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). This concept is linked to power and politics (Filstad, Geppert & Visser, 2011; Hope, 2010) and further, the tension between management’s struggle to maintain power over employees, and employees’ interpretations and legitimization or contestation of management’s sensegiving attempts (Filstad, Geppert & Visser, 2011).

#### **2.3.3 Power, sensemaking and enterprise social media**

Orlikowski (2007) argues that technology and its deployment are ‘constitutively entangled’, meaning that each build and shape each other along the process. Treating knowledge as a continuing social accomplishment, this means that information and communication technologies is regarded as social objects which can be enacted in a variety of open-ended processes (Newell et al., 2009, 57). This issue is particularly relevant in regards to ESM: The ESM technology is meant to

stimulate engagement towards concepts such as open information access, open communication and enhanced cross-departmental collaboration (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, Skågeby, 2010). This present organizations with both challenges and opportunities, as employees can muster resources and quickly experiment with ideas from the bottom-up (Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). The argument that utilization of ESM often is end-user driven (Stolley, 2009) implies that power shifts away from the management and towards employees and communities (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012) in a manner that can challenge established central control of internal communication channels (Duane & Finnegan, 2003; Newell et al., 2009, 157). By the facilitation of visible text, ESM can be regarded as an “inherently discursive space” where members can share their opinions and engage in public discursive construction (Treem & Leonardi, 2012, 175). Within this research area, organizational researchers are interested in how the ‘small’ discourse of day-to-day conversation shapes and supports the ‘bigger’ discourse of broad ideologies, and how influential actors attempt to dominate and marginalize particular types of discourses to preserve power (Alvesson & Deetz, 1999).

### 3. Research context

#### 3.1 Description of the case organization

The study was conducted in Jernbaneverket (the Norwegian National Rail Administration), which is a large Norwegian public organization that operates on behalf of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The organization is responsible for the management of developing and operating a national railway infrastructure. Jernbaneverket employs over 4000 people, who all together have broad experience and diverse expertise within areas of transport and security.

In 2012, top management decided to implement a new intranet software solution due to its diverse competence and organizational size. The goal was to simplify and improve knowledge-sharing and information flow through linking employees with related and cross-functional competence closer together. The new work-tool, which is based on a 360° and a Sharepoint-solution, now include several new features for facilitating knowledge sharing, such as blogs, discussion forums, commenting functions, electronic archives, as well as chat-functions. Arguably, by embracing such software solutions, Jernbaneverket fulfills the Enterprise 2.0 criteria. In addition, having a classical bureaucratic organizational structure makes Jernbaneverket a suitable unit of analysis for investigating our research question.

#### 3.2 Description of the case organization's enterprise social media

Below we present an illustration explaining the key features of Jernbaneverket's new intranet, called *Banenettet*. *Banenettet* can be understood as the umbrella term for the implemented intranet solution. For our purpose, the social utility of *Banenettet* can be distinguished into two sub-categories: a standard *intranet*, and *Arbeidsrom*. Below is an illustration of the main social features of *Banenettet* that are considered relevant for this study:

<b>Banenettet</b>	
<b>Standard intranet</b>	<b>Arbeidsrom</b>
<p>All employees can share and find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News about the organization</li> <li>• Leader's own blog</li> <li>• Information about various disciplines</li> <li>• Administrative and system messages</li> <li>• Comments from employees on published articles</li> <li>• Expertise tagged via personal profiles</li> </ul>	<p>All organizational units, groups and projects have the possibility to create virtual rooms where they can share and find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents</li> <li>• Discussions and short messages</li> <li>• Presentation of each room's members</li> <li>• Information about the unit/professional networks/project</li> </ul>

Arbeidsrom is the new platform where employees work with projects and tasks. The main purpose of Arbeidsrom is to have area to collaborate, share experiences, store and share documents in an efficient manner. The fundamental principle is that all employees should have access to every Arbeidsrom. In addition, every employee has access to a personal room where one can store and share documents on their personal profile.

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## 4. Methodology and research design

### 4.1 Case studies

This study aims at investigating the relationship between power and political activities on ESM, and how this affects employee's utilization of the system for knowledge sharing. According to Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead (1987), case study research is a well-suited approach when facing such phenomena in which theoretical frameworks and understanding are not well established. Yin (1994, 13) defines a case study as:

“an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' and it 'relies on multiple sources of evidence”.

Single case studies provide researchers the possibility to study a phenomenon in depth to gain rich description and understanding (Walsham, 1995). Subsequently, this type of inquiry is considered an appropriate method to investigate the implementation of information systems and its use within organizations (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead, 1987; Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998), as the understandings of individuals and the circumstances of actions are imperative.

### 4.2 Choice of method: qualitative research

An exploratory qualitative approach is chosen to our case study. Qualitative research is the preferable approach when the aim is to gain new insights on topics where current empirical research is scarce (Thagaard, 2003, 11-12). This method allows for studying processes that represent rich interpretations of individual's point of view in organizational life (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hinings, 1997). The phenomenon of sharing knowledge through social intranets is in its early, formative stages. In order to scrutinize the complex nature of sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to power and politics, we therefore aim to search for people's opinions, experiences, language, understandings, and stories that ought to be interpreted and that cannot be meaningfully presented through quantification of data. We understand knowledge in the same way as Rorty defines it: “knowledge as a matter of conversation and of social practice, rather than an attempt to mirror nature” (1979, 171). Taking this perspective of social constructivism, any knowledge emerging from this study is understood as co-created by researchers and informants. We further regard knowledge as affected by the context in which it is constructed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, 53).

### **4.3 Data collection**

The primary method of data collection in this case study was based on semi-structured interviews, as this method enables us to obtain descriptions on participant's described realities and experience of phenomena (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, 3). In addition to interviews, data collection was supplemented with secondary data in the shape of various company documentations, internal pamphlets regarding the intranet, as well as public/governmental reports. We have also familiarized ourselves with the main functions and layout of Banenettet. In addition, an hour-long meeting was held with two organizational representatives during the presentation of our master thesis study.

#### ***4.3.1 Data sample***

All interviews found place during a four-week period in May 2014 with a total of eight employees within Jernbaneverket. These were selected based on the procedure of purposive sampling by two representatives from head-office. One of the participant's work role included responsibility for personnel. However, considering Jernbaneverket's hierarchical complexity, we find this participant to fit Yukl's (2013, 162) definition of 'low-level manager'. The following criteria for selection were considered important to strengthen reliability: First, interview subjects had to be familiar with as well as having easy access to the intranet. Second, they had to be experienced with both the previous version of the intranet as well as the newly implemented intranet. Lastly, we requested that interview subjects were localized in different departments in order to decrease the probability of encounter a unique sub-culture within a particular unit.

The data sample therefore included participants located in three Norwegian cities. Of the five interviews conducted within one single city, people worked on three different locations. Names of geographical and departmental locations are withheld due to reasons of participant's anonymity. Having received the list of partakers from Jernbaneverket, we then contacted each person by telephone to solicit their participation in the study and to schedule meetings, either via computer-mediated communication (CMC) or through face-to-face interviews. Information about the study and its purpose was sent each participant.

### ***4.3.2 Conducting the interviews***

Interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview guide. This implies that the interviewer defines and introduces the topics that the subject should talk about, and limit the usage of interventions (Thiétart, Allard-Poesi, Angot, Baumard, Charreire, Donada ...& Zarlowski, 2001, 181). Questions were developed based on reviewing literature on the topics of knowledge sharing, usage of ESM and social media, as well as obtained organizational information regarding the intranet. Nevertheless, as the interview guide only serves as a template, conversations did not strictly follow the initial structure, as this depended on subject's focus. The interview guide (see Appendix 1 & 2) consisted of nine main questions, each supplemented with several following up questions in case of short replies. The five first questions were based on open-ended questions about knowledge sharing at work, while the last four questions about the intranet were of more focused character.

Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The three interviews conducted through CMC (Skype and telephone) all lasted around 45 minutes. The remaining five face-to-face interviews lasted, on average, around one hour, and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. After having conducted two interviews some questions were adjusted to improve future interviews. In particular, these revolved around social media usage, or lack thereof. Also, two initial questions that seemed redundant were eliminated. At this point we also assigned separate roles for how to practically conduct future interviews. As a result, from the third interview and onwards, one researcher was in charge of the pre-planned questions from the interview guide (main interviewer), while the other (supportive interviewer) was in charge of taking notes, follow-up questions, paying close attention to physical behavior and detailed information given by subjects, and constructing new questions that arose during conversations. We found this technique to give conversations better flow, particularly during face-to-face interviews.



## **5. Data analysis**

### **5.1 Techniques for analyzing qualitative data**

The data analysis was conducted in several stages. Before describing this process in more detail, we will in the following sections explain the chosen techniques that were applied.

#### ***5.1.1 Thematic analysis***

Thematic analysis (TA) was used as a method for identifying and analyzing patterns in the obtained qualitative data material. TA is considered appropriate for a wide range of research purposes, from those concerning individual's experiences or understandings to those concerning the representation and creation of specific phenomena in particular circumstances (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and is appropriate when analyzing small data-sets (Clark & Braun, 2006). Moreover, the flexibility of this particular method is considered appropriate for producing data-driven analyses. However, this theoretical flexibility requires that researchers clarify the process step by step: the what, the why and the how (Clarke & Braun, 2006). In accordance, the researcher's own experience and values must be taken into consideration, as these factors influence choices made throughout the research project. Choices taken must therefore be acknowledged and clarified, and it becomes essential to make this process evident.

#### ***5.1.2 Consensual qualitative research***

Since this study was conducted by two students, we chose to complement the thematic analysis by drawing upon elements from what data Hill, Knox, Thompson, Nutt Williams, Hess and Ladany (2005) define as Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). The technique is originally based on research conducted by more than two individuals (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Nutt Williams, Hess & Ladany, 2005). Still, by incorporating CQR-elements we aimed at improving the process quality and decision-making through the construction of meanings and opinions separately before meeting to discuss confusions and differences. This was done to avoid potential influence on each other's initial biases as well as gaining two individual perspectives on the same data. The technique of applying this procedure is argued to contribute to improve validating our findings (Fisher, 2010, 276).

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## **5.2 Analyzing the interviews: a description of the process**

Clarke and Braun (2013) divide the process of thematic analysis into six phases: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) coding, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up. This step-by-step guide, which should not be considered as a linear procedure (Clarke & Braun, 2013), was – in combination with the abovementioned inclusion of CQR-elements – our primary procedure for analyzing the case. Together these phases formed an iterative process. In the following, we will elaborate on the process of how we familiarized ourselves with the data and generation of codes and themes.

### ***5.2.1 Familiarization with the data***

Common to all forms of qualitative analysis is to familiarize oneself with the data. This phase begins by transcribing the interview, then re-reading the material multiple times, before searching for patterns and meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2013). We approached this by listening to and transcribing four interviews each. Each interview transcription was then anonymized and double-checked for errors before copied into two exemplars. Given the fact that we had preexisting knowledge about the discussed topics, the importance of not drawing comparisons to current models of knowledge sharing was emphasized at this stage. Instead, our focus was staying close to the data, and look for patterns of enablers, barriers and regularities of practice that our interviewees reported. Having agreed on ways of procedure, we then separately read through all interviews several times, before writing rough summaries of each interview.

### ***5.2.2 Generating codes and themes***

More than just being a method of reducing data, coding is also an analytic process (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This entails selecting and interpreting the transcribed material. We focused on possible different interpretations of what, why and how knowledge is shared in their work, how the new intranet had or had not changed their practices, why they engaged the way they did, employee sensegiving and possible political activities on the intranet, concerns and barriers for own participation, and viewpoints on top management's sensegiving and virtual engagement with employees. In line with a practice-based approach, we draw upon Filstad's notion of identifying political processes through "situated actions of resistance, agreement, persuasion and negotiation" (Filstad, 2014a, 13).

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A Microsoft Excel sheet was created to insert comments of interest stated by interviewees. Each comment was then labeled into one or more codes – or first-order concepts, depending on whether researchers gave this comment multiple interpretations. For example:

“In a way it hasn’t been put demands on people, and then I think that you shouldn’t... work on those who retire in two years... but work on others”  
(Interviewee 5)

This quote was given multiple codes in the first code-generating phase, as it could be interpreted as being related to several issues: ‘organizational culture’, ‘negotiations between age/generations’, and ‘lack of persuasion from management’. Each coded comment could then be sorted and traced after the name of the researcher, interview subject (Interviewee 1 to Interviewee 8), stated comment, and its labeled code. This phase was conducted independently. We then met to merge the coded sheets of first-order interpretations, which combined generated 167 codes. These were then reviewed, sorted and categorized in consensus into meaningful categories – or second-order concepts. This procedure reduced number of codes to 49.

Next, we independently re-read the written interview-summaries in order to consider whether we still were in touch with subject’s reports. Separately, these second-order interpretations were then organized into patterns, before we met up again to discuss and solve disagreements. Each code was written on a Post-it® note before clustered and re-clustered into conceptual maps on a white-board, which connected themes and sub-categories to each other. We initially identified five prominent clusters: managerial activities, coworker influences, institutional factors, individual factors, and technical issues related to the IT-system. As this study takes the aforementioned functional perspective, and not the technical perspective, we decided to eliminate software-related factors from further scrutiny. As we looked for political *actions*, we also decided to scrutinize how institutional factors (e.g. culture) and individual factors (e.g. type of social media user) were influential through either managerial or employee behaviors. Through consensus, the clustered data were finally organized into two broad themes: (1) Managerial activities, and (2) Coworker influences, each containing four underlying sections (see Appendix 3 for coding schema).

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### **5.3 Methodological reflections: assessing the quality of research**

#### **5.3.1 Validity**

Validity reflects the credibility of the data and their relevance (Johannessen, Christoffersen & Tufte, 2010, 69). This means whether findings are true and certain, supported by evidence, and that they reflect the studied phenomena accurately. In order to gain access to ‘qualified’ interview subjects, all candidates were selected by our contact representatives in Jernbaneverket. Although initially nominated and contacted by people positioned in Jernbaneverket’s headquarter, none of the interviewees had responsibilities toward reporting to the representatives in question – neither in this particular study, nor in their work roles. Factors of giving restrained answers due to fear of being monitored by ones leader thus seem limited. Moreover, we did not emphasize the terms power and politics when presenting our study to informants, as these terms can have negative connotations and might be regarded as sensitive and scary topics. Instead we focused on wordings like ‘barriers and enablers of knowledge sharing’, and ‘open and flat communication channels within traditional hierarchies’. It is our impression that all informants spoke freely about all the discussed topics.

Each informant was contacted via telephone one week before interview, before we sent additional information and confirmation via email. Moreover, all face-to-face interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s location, either in their respective offices, or within closed conference rooms. Interviews conducted via CMC were also held in closed-off environments. These factors may have helped establishing some trust in us as researchers. Nevertheless, to say in what extent these issues may have affected validity of the data is difficult. Three interviews were conducted using CMC. Telephone and Skype interviews are considered legitimate methods for collecting data (Bariball, Christian, While & Bergen, 1996; Carr & Worth, 2001; Law, 1997). We acknowledge that this way of communication is less rich in terms of lack of visual cues such as body language (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Consequently, informants may produce shorter responses, and our collected data might therefore be less detailed than if conducted face-to-face (Carr & Worth, 2001).

### ***5.3.2 Reliability***

While validity deals with the attempt to actually measure what we claim to be measuring, questions of reliability are concerned with whether the operations of our study can be repeated, and yield the same result (Yin, 2014, 46). In order to strengthen methodological rigor, we have followed Johannessen, Christoffersen and Tufte's (2010, 229-230) reasoning of providing readers with a clear overview of the contextual situation, and further, detailed description of the methodological process of collecting data. We have also described our thoughts and procedures around the process of generating findings and results that were extracted and generated from the data. Additionally, the fact that we were two students coding the same data through CQR can strengthen the reliability of our results.

### ***5.3.3 Generalizability***

One of the key challenges with selecting a case study approach is to determine whether or not it is possible to make any generalization. Generalizability can be understood as external validity, and is directly related to analytic generalization, meaning that results from a particular case can be generalized to a broader theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007, 42; Thagaard, 2003, 21; Yin, 2009, 43-44) Whether one chooses qualitative or quantitative approach, all research aim for transferability to other research areas and other constructs (Johannessen, Cristoffersen and Tufte, 2010, 230-231).

To achieve transferability in qualitative research researchers must provide readers a rich description of the context of the case and the process, allowing readers to make sense of those that are being studied (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998; Walsham, 1995). We acknowledge the difficulty in generalizing findings achieved through qualitative research, especially in single case studies, where the primary objective is depth of insight in one unique context (Bryman & Bell, 2007, 63-64). It is therefore not our main objective to generalize our discoveries. We believe that our findings may provide rich and valuable insights for large bureaucratic organizations that are planning to implement ESM, or that aim to increase knowledge sharing via virtual tools.

#### **5.4 Ethical considerations**

Virtually every subject matter – depending on the context and individual experiences – may raise sensitivities (Thagaard, 2003, 22). Therefore, ethical concerns must be dealt with in any research study. According to Thagaard (2003, 23-27), the core ethical principles within qualitative studies are informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of participating in the study. In dealing with these issues, the following precautionary practices were followed.

The master thesis project was submitted to the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD) and approved. Further, participation in this study was voluntary and guaranteed to be anonymous. All participators – who were asked and selected by our contact representatives inside Jernbaneverket –were emailed information about the study one week in advance. Each participator replied a written consent that they had read the information and that they had a possibility to withdraw from participation at any time without stating any reason. Each interview began by repeating the purpose of the study, before asking for approval whether the participant agreed to allow us to tape-record the interview. For the interview carried out using Skype, a separate Skype account with the name “Masteroppgave Jernbaneverket” was created. In order to protect data, recorded audio files were uploaded on a password-protected external hard drive, before deleted from the originally used devices. Each informant was given a pseudonym, and personal information that can be traced back to the individuals has been edited.

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## 6. Findings and discussion

The present study was designed to explore how power and political activities influence employee's sensemaking for how to utilize ESM for knowledge sharing. The empirical analysis of the case reveals two overarching themes: (1) Managerial activities, and (2) Coworker influences. Our findings and discussion are therefore organized into two themes respectively.

The first theme, *Managerial activities*, is structured into four sub-sections. The first section looks into how top management is staking out the new course in terms of defining vision and goals for the organization. The second section will then scrutinize the way ESM was implemented and its subsequent consequences. These sections lay an important foundation for the last two sections, which delve into top management and middle management's presence and engagement with ESM, and how their political actions may influence employee's sensemaking processes.

The second theme, *Coworker influences*, is also structured into four underlying sub-sections. The first section examines how employees perceive whether ESM can provide any value, and its importance for ESM utilization. Next, we look into employee's reasons for withholding knowledge from coworkers. The third section inspects the powerful voice of a small minority of regular contributors, and their influence on individual's sensemaking processes for how to utilize the virtual knowledge-sharing arena. Lastly, we focus on coworker's unwillingness to seek to expand one's established network.

Each underlying section comprise of a narrative story based on interviewee's statements in order to present our findings, followed by a discussion.

### 6.1 Managerial activities

#### 6.1.1 Vision and goal of the new intranet

We begin this section with a statement from an employee who briefly sums up the story behind the implementation of Banenettet:

“The history was that two years ago, the "Yes: I share" project was launched in order to manage the transition from the old file-saving structure, which was file-based in what was a very difficult structure, over to a web-based solution. Then, the decided choice was Sharepoint from Microsoft. Then this was configured

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with the help of a third party supplier in order to set up the basis configuration, before developing templates for individual workrooms. After this, we were up and running one year ago, where we configured some rooms. What might have happened was that this was just launched and told that 'this is good'..." (Interviewee 8)

The new vision set by the top management is that Banenettet is going to help establish a 'culture for sharing' (internal documents). This is meant to be achieved through simplifying the work of searching and finding, saving and archiving, communicate and share documents and knowledge. It is stated that the organization aims at improving work processes in terms of both quality and productivity (internal documents) and in a pamphlet distributed to all employees, the director of Jernbaneverket states the following:

"Collaboration and knowledge sharing across the organization is essential if we are to succeed in reaching our goals. It is important that we become a whole organization where we learn from both our mistakes and successes" (Elisabeth Enger, Director)

From this it becomes clear that top management's sensegiving concerning the new intranet is as much about establishing a new culture of sharing as it is about updating the IT-tool. When asked how interviewees made sense of a culture of sharing, we received different interpretations of what a 'culture for sharing' meant for them. Some emphasize that a culture for sharing is about "share experiences", (4), and social interaction, as another employee describes:

"That we can publish things that are interesting to others and that we can learn from each other, both what we have done well and also what went wrong" (Interviewee 3)

Other interviewees refer to that it is simply a matter of getting access to coworker's documents. Two employees describe:

"That one shouldn't send such large files to each other by email, because people are getting their email-accounts filled up rather quickly" (Interviewee 7)

"To gain access to basic *information* about own organization, management systems, organizational map, who work where..." (Interviewee 8)

Although there is some discrepancy of views with respect to what the new knowledge sharing vision mean for employees, we find a more common understanding when it comes to the personal implications of changing intranet, and how it will affect their work. Here, the majority of interviewees stressed the technical practicalities of storing documents, and its new collaboration form of wikis. Other social aspect of Banenettet, such as discussions and blogs, are not



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much emphasized. The following statement by Interviewee 3 underlines this finding:

“The only thing I remember that was promoted was that it was going to be easier to find things. And it is more simple than the old, no doubt about it”  
(Interviewee 3)

### ***Power, vision and goals***

Top management has decided to initiate a change process, and use Hardy's (1996) power dimension of resource power through vision and goals of the intranet to define a new organizational 'truth' for how practices should be carried out in Jernbaneverket. We find that employee's differences in views on what a 'culture for sharing' comprise of may reflect ambiguous sensegiving by top management for where the organization is heading. More specifically; how this can be achieved, and what is expected from employees. While some statements suggest that the new intranet is just a new way to store documents – a technical update, others emphasize that this involve a new way of collaboration with coworkers – a cultural update. The lack of common understanding of the vision indicates a discrepancy in sensemaking processes among employees. Subsequently, most people react to and adapt to the new ESM system in ways that fit established practice, where ESM primarily becomes meaningful as a new way to store documents and as an improved search-tool, much like a traditional knowledge management system.

Yet, the new intranet offers a variety of other social functions that facilitate for ways to collaborate within NoP's. These functions are perhaps equally interesting when it comes to facilitate the nurture of a culture for sharing, as top management has envisioned. We see that these features are less highlighted in leader's sensegiving efforts, and that there are ambiguous goals regarding what type of knowledge others can learn from. Our findings therefore corroborate prior research which state that achieving a collective culture for knowledge sharing is difficult without any agreement of what the main purpose of the implementation is (Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006; Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009), and that shared goals have an effect on people's attitude towards knowledge sharing and intention to share knowledge (Chow & Chan, 2008).

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### ***6.1.2 Implementation and training***

Another element that interview subjects highlighted was the implementation process of Banenettet, and in particular circumstances around the element of training and the use of Arbeidsrom. We find that in general, employees are satisfied with the information that was provided ahead of and during the launch in 2012. However, several employees consider Sharepoint – which is used for sharing documents and collaborating on wikis – as a complicated tool, and that its ‘endless’ functionalities has lead to frustration among some employees. Two employees explain their frustration:

“The thing is that you need a training course in order to use it, and also it [Sharepoint] isn’t intuitive – you know, like Apple. So it is completely hopeless, to say it like that. It is not user friendly” (Interviewee 6)

“(…) And then one [Jernbaneverket] has chosen Sharepoint, and Sharepoint is difficult. You have so many options, so I’m not sure if Jernbaneverket was mature enough to go for a Sharepoint-solution. I think we should have gone for a more simple platform” (Interviewee 5)

Furthermore, top management facilitated for learning activities for employees as well as managers. These were voluntary, and individuals had to sign up individually. Although many interviewees were positive toward the training activities, one employee raises some concerns about the nature of the training:

“And then there's one concrete issue. The training course has to get better, and then I think it would be beneficial to offer courses for the communities, and not so that we need to sign up... Perhaps both. I think it would be better if the entire department went to the course together” (Interviewee 5)

Although the new system was launched in 2012, it did not imply a swift and sudden change of practices. One of the primary goals for building the intranet is to make people’s documents accessible for others rather than be saved locally on their own computer. The new practices involve that documents under construction can be moved over to a joint workroom, where colleagues can read, comment or change content and collaborate on wikis. By May 2014, employees can still save and work on documents locally, as both systems run parallel until the closure of the old local-saving practice by the end of September 2014. By that time, people are forced to abandon the old practice. We find that the long transition period between old and new practices influence people’s sensemaking processes around the urgency of embracing the new practice of sharing. Two employees explain this uncertainty:

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“It should have been decided that R [the old practice] was to be shut down within a specific date, so that it didn’t exist any longer from ‘that’ specific date. And that has happened now, in a way, that they have decided that from a specific date, there will be no more maintenance on R. If something happens there you do not get help, if some documents ... you can use it as a kind of archive. But I think that maybe it should have been done before, not after two years. That is a long time. There has not been a clear demarcation from going over to a new system”  
(Interviewee 6)

“During the two years since the new system became implemented I have regularly heard some sighs, about... that there are... well regarding Arbeidsrom. It is cumbersome, and the user threshold is high. So that when some people find that, it sort of becomes a comparison between Utforsker [old practice], how... where is it most convenient to share documents. Is it on Utforsker or is it through Arbeidsrom?” (Interviewee 1)

### ***Power, implementation and training***

The facilitation of training practices is recognized as a political activity initiated by top management to equip employees with the right expertise so that they are capable of implementing the new knowledge sharing vision. Although most interviewees are positive towards the provided training courses, Interviewee 5 raises an interesting issue of whether or not training should have been individual. By facilitating voluntary training for individuals, and not for entire departments or professional groups, employees might be less able to discuss local issues and challenges so that different departments can get the help they are in need for. Arguably, as some employees are more familiar with Sharepoint than others, forcing people to attend training might not be regarded sensible use of resources. Nevertheless, by training individually employees are less likely to negotiate a common understanding with members of one’s CoP’s and/or NoP’s for how to best interact with each other, and how to meaningfully utilize the tool.

### ***Power and training***

Previous research has established that training is essential in order to feel comfortable and comprehend new practices (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Rogers, 1994), and is found to be a central management support component that effect participation in web 2.0 (Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009). We argue that the independent nature of training courses might influence employee’s sensemaking processes in ways that inscribed meaning power (Hardy, 1996) of the new practice in Jernbaneverket is more about efficiently coping with the technical system rather than it is about social learning. Our findings corroborate the stream of research regarding training and sensemaking: According to Mohrman, Finegold and Klein

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(2002) it is not the IT-system, but the behaviors of people that can generate shared meanings and embed new knowledge in work processes. Along this line, recent research indicates that intranets partly reinforce already established practices and structures (Hustad, 2013). Our study indicates some support for her emphasis on the importance of directing knowledge management initiatives toward CoP's, not individuals. Moreover, Filstad (2014b) finds that formal change- and knowledge sharing initiatives ought to be developed with CoP's in mind, so that the learning activities resonate within informal networks. This research further stresses that initiatives should be supported by participatory leadership (Filstad, 2014b), which was often not the case in regards to middle management in Jernbaneverket. This will be further discussed in section 6.1.4.

#### *Power and implementation*

As of May 2014, we see how top management fails to bring about the desired behavior in that a seemingly large proportion of employees continue to perform old practices with respect to document storing. Although the old practice was still needed due to technical difficulties after the launch, the long transition period between old and new organizational 'realities' make some employees delay new practices. Arguably, top management's lack of de-legitimizing old practices results in an unclear demarcation between old and new practices, where employees feel little pressure to change. Thus, we argue that top management's lack of enacting the 'stick' or 'carrot' principle that goes along with the use of resource power (Hardy, 1996) have an effect on employee's sensemaking processes in that making your documents accessible for coworkers is neither perceived as urgent nor indispensable for solving tasks. According to Kotter (2007), it is essential that managers establish a great enough sense of urgency if one aims to motivate people to help transforming the organization. Hence, by allowing both practices to run parallel, we argue that resistant employees are more inclined to stick with old practices of hoarding knowledge, which results in less knowledge sharing in ESM. Our results therefore extend Higgins and McAllaster's (2004) research on strategies and artifacts: Because IT-systems can be characterized as a cultural artifact; current cultural artifacts underpin prior strategies, and not the new strategy (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004).

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### ***6.1.3 Leading by example: top management***

We find that employees are rather satisfied with top management's participation on Banenettet and how they facilitate for a broad selection of organizational information. Members of top management are usually the ones who post an article or blog on the front page of the intranet, and the comment section below the piece allow all organizational members to partake in discussions:

“That you can have discussions with the leaders, that there are posted articles with different topics where everybody can comment. The fact that Elisabeth Enger [Director] has a weekly letter where she updates us on what has happened over the week is very positive. It is arranged so that you can be heard if you've got something that you wish to comment on” (Interviewee 2)

Further, we find that top management continuously encourages employees to participate in discussions and blogs. Employees, on the other hand, appreciate that leaders take the time to reply to questions that are posed, regardless whether comments are positive or critical of management's point of view. Two interviewees explain:

“And they have been very good at answering specific questions and so on in the blogs. This is something that I feel have changed a lot. I think that's good. And they are good at encouraging us to participate” (Interviewee 3)

“And then I see that when people are commenting, they have been good at answering. That they have put aside time the day after to reply to the incoming comments. Right now there is an article out concerning he that ... is in charge of machines or transportation, and then he published “Do we need better machines?” and that is the kind of articles that trigger a lot of people. And then we see that it would have been completely useless if he didn't set aside the time to reply to comments. But this is something I think they have been good at. So the employer, or the leaders, have done something good there” (Interviewee 5)

Allowing all employees to potentially participate in discussions may result in constructive as well as negative comments. We find that most interviewees prefer some kind of centrally imposed content control, exemplified by Interviewee 4:

“...I think that what's posted on the front page should be quality checked in some way or another. And then there are... I believe there is someone who controls what sort of topics is found interesting enough to be published. There are journalists, or something like that... they do this for a living, because it's a large organization” (Interviewee 4)

By posting articles with a broad range of topics and inviting viewpoints from across the organization, several interviewees make sense of this form of arena as something that can provide them with novel perspectives and new information from around the organization. Contrasting this perspective is a statement from

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Interviewee 6, who feels that the majority of articles and stories are too much about the result – and too little about the process in order for her/him to learn:

“(…) people like to hear about good and bad stories, but there are many *good* stories. It does not show that much... it lacks details, and they could have published reports about experiences. Instead of just ‘happy-news’ things could have been a little bit more constructive so that others can learn from it. In my opinion, it is perhaps too little of that [experiences]. I would argue so”  
(Interviewee 6)

The co-production of rhetorical content on SNS’s and blogs implies that all employees have the possibility to directly engage in conversation with leaders. Nevertheless, not all interviewees interpret the shortened communication distance within the hierarchy as empowering. Clearly, there are some employees who question whether they have gained any decision power by introducing ESM, and that this might feel like window-dressing by the management. An employee explains:

“I am not saying that I would not get anything out of it [discussions]. But one thing are discussion forums and opinions where people say this and that, and it is surely nice to have a web based arena where one can discuss, but... Well, I don’t know if anything has... something has to come out of it. When the discussion is finished, then I think ‘what now?’ It was fun while it lasted, where you had that opinion, and I had this – ‘we better do it this way, no, that is no good, we must do it the other way’. And then what?” (Interviewee 8)

### ***Power and top management***

As a means to reach the organizational goal of increased knowledge sharing, top management use their power to open the possibility for employees to share insights and opinions on organization-wide matters via Banenettet. By shortening the distance between top management and the lower levels in the hierarchy, employees make sense of this as an empowering tool where one can achieve direct dialogue with leadership, in addition to other coworkers. Top management’s presence and participation in ESM enable this dialogue to take place. This, combined with an inviting and open leadership style, make employees apparently unafraid to contradict leadership’s viewpoint.

We do, however, see a discrepancy in employee’s accounts for whether blogs and articles from top management can facilitate for knowledge sharing. Our findings indicate that interviewees have different accounts of whether this broad-spectrum information can be useful in their own work. Still, through the provision of links to project- and discussion rooms within different communities, some employees make sense of this broad arena as a potential facilitator for knowledge sharing.

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More specifically, that it can function as a gateway to experiences around project processes such as who worked on what, who has expertise about particular issues, and how processes did unfold. Subsequently, this can give opportunities to connect to new weak network ties. This, of course, depends on that organizational members actually contribute and make one's own work accessible to others, which will be elaborated later in our discussion (section 6.2.2).

On the one hand, top management usually sets the agenda with their blogs and articles, and thereby uses Hardy's notion of meaning power to control which issues are important. On the other hand, we see that blogs enable employees with increased sense of power: The co-construction of dialogue on Banenettet's SNS and blogs increase employee's ability to mobilize Hardy's (1996) dimensions of resource power (such as topic expertise) as well as meaning power in how issues are talked about. We see that some employees perceive that their voices are taken into top management decision processes, while another perceive the arena as mere window-dressing, where employee's opinions and insights are acknowledged, but ignored in future decision making. In such, employees feel no real gain of what Hardy (1996) refers to as process power, and find no benefit in participating in discussions. Given that our study only include employee's accounts, it is difficult to say to what degree leadership actually considers employee's sensegiving.

Our finding that top management's high level of participation and supportive usage of ESM spark employee participation is in line with prior research, which state that the act of leading by example is crucial for employee adoption of ESM (Brzozowski, 2009; Brzozowski, Sandholm & Hogg, 2009; Norzaidi, Chong, Murali & Salwani, 2007). Whether co-construction of dialogue in blogs and SNS's enhance tacit knowledge sharing is debatable: By first and foremost focusing on project results, as stated by some interviewees, Newell and colleagues argue that such content or product knowledge is insufficient to transfer tacit elements of knowledge (2009, 156). Yet, we find that some employees use such codified information as a door opener towards transparency of process information and social capital.

Another interesting finding is that interviewees do not seem to hesitate much if one wants to contradict management viewpoint. This may indicate that employees

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do not fear retributions from top management, and that there exist a trusting relationship. This could also be specific for the type of context in which the study was conducted, with Jernbaneverket being a public sector organization in Norway. This type of context is described as an egalitarian business culture supported by strong worker protection (Grenness, 2013). When we consider the formal authority that top management possesses regarding control of content on Banenettet, top management has selected a lenient and open policy with respect to explicit rules. This policy is in line with what current research advocate: Chen and Hung (2010) argue that management ought to resist monitoring or pre-approving employee contributions on ESM, as censoring activities will impede participation. Tennant (2010) argues that if social media policies are too strict, open dialogue and collaboration is unlikely to happen, which minimizes the potential benefits offered by social media technologies. The notion of 'too strict' might be said to be relative, but our study does to some extent contradict the abovementioned research. We see that employees approve a certain level of quality checking, and that centrally appointed censors are desired in order to protect and maintain a certain level of professionalism. This might imply an interesting notion that employees have more trust in management than in certain groups of colleagues.

#### ***6.1.4 Leading by example: middle management***

While interviewees in general were satisfied with top management's participation on Banenettet, middle management's utilization of the tool was described as less than adequate. We find that voluntary nature of signing up for training courses resulted in that many middle managers never attended. While some of these perhaps were technically competent enough to use Sharepoint without training, others were clearly not. One employee elaborates:

“I think leader's use of it [Sharepoint] has been poor. Because... often it is the case that employees are sent to courses, and then leaders are those who are suppose to 'brand' that you are going to make use of it. But then there is a lack of knowledge among them [leaders], because they don't prioritize to go to the same course. Even though I believe it is a good investment” (Interviewee 7)

As a result, many middle managers continue working with old practices, such as sending out emails with large sized attachments, which contradicts the newly set goals from top management. An employee explains:

“I don't think we are good enough to share things we've got. And of course, the leaders have a job to do, because when... we've had leaders who work, but not all have fully taken on the role and utilized Arbeidsrom. So it sort of stops there... that leaders send out things on e-mail and such” (Interviewee 5)



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The variation in middle manager attendance in the training courses imply that there is a large perceived discrepancy between different departments when it comes to utilizing the tool. Accordingly, we find that the perceived shortcoming of competence among many middle managers have resulted in poor branding of Banenettet as a ESM tool on a departmental level. The act of not using the tool consistently therefore affect employee's sensemaking processes for whether or not the ESM is perceived as an important knowledge sharing arena within their unit. Two employees explains the lack of consistent use:

“Other departments have perhaps done as they like, and might not have had the best leaders to implement such processes” (Interviewee 6)

“(…) and then I think that there are a lot of leaders who haven't participated in training courses, and use it consistently. That this in a way sets precedence for what is allowed and what is not allowed. And then I see that 'he is doing it in that way, well, then... Well, then it is allowed'...” (Interviewee 7)

The resistance among many middle managers to attend training courses, to use it consistently, and advocate the new intranet is recognized as political activities that affect employee's sensemaking for how to use ESM for knowledge sharing.

### ***Power and middle management***

We see that employees perceive a contradiction between what top management has decided upon in terms of goal setting and middle managements inconsistent engagement and participation on Banenettet. In addition, by not making training courses mandatory for middle management, many middle managers have opted not to attend. As follows, interviewees feel that some may lack the required capabilities to engage and inspire employees to utilize wikis. Moreover, the lack of utilization arguably buttresses any perceived lack of urgency among employees to change. It therefore becomes evident that a proportion of middle managers delegitimize the new practices through use of meaning power, whereby they influence cues linked to norms and expectations (Hardy, 1996).

When leaders successfully manage to influence employee's sensemaking, research states that these employees become motivated to adjust their own work roles and practices, as well as help coworkers in co-constructing practices consistent with the targeted vision (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Because middle managers find themselves in the boundaries between employees and top management, the position can include continuously reacting to the twofold

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demands of sensegiving and sensemaking (Filstad, 2014a; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Accordingly, their interpretations and actions are important in implementing departmental and or local changes that underpin the overall vision of creating a culture for sharing in Jernbaneverket. Hence, our findings support Mumford, Hunter, Eubanks, Bedell and Murphy's (2007) finding that supervisor behavior set precedence for how practices are carried out. In other words, middle managers create a climate for knowledge sharing. While organizational culture reflects what an organization values, organizational climate imply what organizational members actually experience (Isaksen & Akkermans, 2011). In their study on how leadership behaviors can influence innovative productivity, Isaksen and Akkermans (2011) find that climate plays a significant intervening role. They conclude that leaders influence innovation, partly, by shaping the climate for it to happen. This argument is further supported by Mumford and colleague's (2007) research, as well as Cabrera, Collins and Salgado's (2006) study on the importance of support from coworkers and supervisors as important predictor of participating in knowledge exchange. Thus, our study strengthens researcher's argument that middle managers possess an important role as organizational change intermediaries (Balogun, 2003; Filstad, 2014a).

## **6.2 Coworker influences**

### ***6.2.1 Coworker's social media use and benefit finding***

Through Banenettet, employees have the possibility to engage in discussions on both a large-scale organizational level and on a smaller-scale departmental level (Arbeidsrom). We find that, in general, most people limit their participation to passive observation, and the number of contributors on blogs and discussion forums is rather low. One employee explains:

“I know there are many who read the comment sections; they provide a kind of additional information that does not appear in the article. Even though they don't write anything themselves, there are many who actually take the time to read the comments below each newsletter. Because that is something that one can use in their own work, if something constructive comes out of the comments that are published” (Interviewee 6)

What some people highlighted as valuable with respect to learning was the additional information that comments from other employees could provide news articles on the front page. The fact that comments are visible to a broad audience and to employees outside ones usual network make employees see the utility of getting outsider's perspectives on issues. Two employees highlight how questions

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posed by readers can be answered, and in that sense be of utility for both readers as well as for the author:

“(…) usually, you think that you have been clear enough after finished writing an article, but then you realize that… people often read stuff coming from different backgrounds. So even if ‘it’ is almost stated in the article, it can be interpreted differently, so you get an idea for the need to repeat, clarify and emphasize things that for some people are evident, but not for others. So I think… it’s really good to be aware of that. Especially for leaders” (Interviewee 7)

“You quickly get stuck in your own department with the belief that the world is just like yours, and then forget that others got different perspectives. And those bloggers can definitely show that there are many opinions and perspectives on different issues” (Interviewee 3)

Statements from the interviewees reflected that passive observation also dominated the smaller discussion arena of Arbeidsrom, which very much reflects people’s communities of practices. Here, in addition to creating open discussions, Arbeidsrom provides employees with own personal profiles where they can write professional blogs and tag themselves with keywords of expertise. Yet, there is not much activity on the smaller arenas. Interviewee 8 describe her/his community’s level of use:

“Personal blogs are not much used, at least not in my immediate circle of associates and colleagues. There are of course some that comment on articles and stuff like that, but they are more general articles on the front page. As you go in and read, then there are a lot of people going in and writing comments, but I’m not aware of if there are any good blogs or discussion forums on a professional level. But there is a good chance that there are places that I am not visiting. As for my unit, in my little world, then this isn’t used very much” (Interviewee 8)

In general, we find that people who are less experienced with social media in personal life appear to be less likely to make sense of ESM as a tool that can facilitate for knowledge sharing and learning. When explaining how they use the social media features on Banenettet, two employees – who are little experienced with social media – give the following accounts:

“I’ve clicked on the ‘like’-button a couple of times, but that’s the only thing I’ve done and the furthest I’ve gone. That is perhaps why I’m not on Facebook, I don’t have the need to write about what I am doing” (Interviewee 4)

“(…) I don’t even have a private Facebook-account, so it isn’t natural for me to share in that way, or to use that channel” (Interviewee 1)

The more technologically experienced employees have a more positive outlook on social media features, and there is more agreement with the top management’s knowledge vision of making the IT-system more social:

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“I use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Perhaps I’m not the most prolific user, but I know how they work. When you’ve grown up with a PC... well, it has to be that way [laughter]” (Interviewee 6)

Along this line we find that experienced social media users express some frustration toward the current utilization of SNS’s comment sections and discussion threads in Arbeidsrom. More specifically, that ESM has the potential for being a beneficial knowledge sharing-tool, as explained by Interviewee 5:

“I do believe it has a huge potential that we don’t use. That we don’t manage. Because if you’re going to use these discussions... I think it would be fun to post discussion threads. And especially with respect to my own subject area, I think that if we could have started to work more with that. I think we can manage that, but again – we can’t do it on our own. I think... if there is one enthusiast amongst us, you won’t manage to get all aboard. I do believe you have to get some help from the management who knows this well, and tell... play with it. But there are some communities that have gotten better, for example [the department of] Kvalitet og Sikkerhet uses this tool a lot more, and they have fun discussions, and post tips on books... we don’t do that. We sit by ourselves and fumble too much alone” (Interviewee 5)

### **Power and coworker’s social media use and benefit finding**

We see that there is a discrepancy in viewpoints on how members see a value of participating in SNS’s and blogs as a learning arena. Some employees make sense of it a useful arena for learning about current matters elsewhere in the organization, and where one can potentially trade insights or influence leadership, as previously discussed. Others consider it a time wasting tool detached from the tasks at hand, and thereby choose to distance themselves from it. As shown, some do not find it natural to share in such manner, nor do they feel the need to share what they are doing. Subsequently, we see that some employees struggle to make sense of what type of information is expected and appropriate to share in order for others to learn. This account seems particularly salient among inexperienced social media users. Although younger employees express some frustration toward lack of ESM-usage among older coworkers, we do not have empirical evidence to state that informal groups are formed on the basis of age. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that employees who resist ESM as a discussion arena use Hardy’s (1996) notion of resource power to keep flow of expertise that other depend on in other arenas. Consequently, by keeping discussions elsewhere, meaning power is also mobilized, as norms and expectations are shaped (Hardy, 1996). The identified low discussion rates in Arbeidsrom make it difficult for people who advocate ESM discussions to exercise power and define how and where new practices in the network should be.

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Finding benefit plays a vital role in aiding people to construct change in ways that ease their adaptation (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012). Along this line, McAfee (2008, 176) argues that people having grown up in an information technology-based environment – called *generation Y* – are more familiar with and can therefore adapt more quickly to technological changes. Considering that 25% of Jernbaneverket's employees have worked in the organization for more than 30 years (internal documents), it is reasonable to argue that a high percentage of employees are not part of the so-called generation Y and its alleged accompanying mentality. Accordingly, ESM might easily be compared and confused as a work-related version of personal social media tools such as Facebook or Twitter. Because these SNS's and microblogs have often been seen as mediums for self-glorification and given a bad reputation, it is argued that interaction on ESM is ineffective use of work hours (Chen, 2011). By expressing that one does not have the need to write about what one is doing, exposure of tacit elements such as joint creation and reconstruction of content is partially lost (Newell et al., 2009, 146).

As top-down sensegiving from those in formal power positions place emphasis on changing practices from a file saving structure toward online wikis, other types of knowledge sharing arenas on Banenettet, such as blogs and discussions, are made sense of as down-prioritized and peripheral voluntary activities. Adding to this, directing training towards individuals, and not communities might make it difficult for groups and communities to negotiate and come to agreement of new practices within groups of communities. As a consequence, we find that many employees essentially continue with the old practices, where intranet is first and foremost an arena where top management provides information and news from around the organization. Informal groups, or CoP's, thusly have power to create and shape meanings about what the new knowledge vision of the organization involves (Filstad, 2014b). It is important to notice that size of network and physical closeness to colleagues might influence the need to communicate virtually. This will be discussed below in section 6.2.4.

### **6.2.2 *Withholding knowledge***

We have described how some employees choose to hold back their contributions, while others embrace the new practices of sharing. Nevertheless, even among those employees who make sense of ESM as a tool that can facilitate for

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knowledge sharing, we find several psychological barriers that may explain why coworkers withhold contribution: fear of losing expertise as well as fear of being judged negatively by the audience. We find that some employees perceive that other coworkers deliberately withhold or strategically use knowledge to their own advantage. One employee explains:

“I guess it has been a culture, historically, that the more knowledge you possess the more special you become in the organization, and then you can take advantage of that situation” (Interviewee 6)

Another employee backs up this statement:

“Another thing that one must not ignore is that knowledge is power. And if you have knowledge, then... that others don't have, then there will be power... a benefit for me in relation to the other. I can use it to either ... for something good or something less good. So that... when knowledge flows quickly, and there are short distances, then I think that... If there are hidden agendas, and if someone wants power, then you can in a way give the message or control the level of the discussion in such a way that... we maintain power, and that they might exclude some groups or people that they don't want to have power. In that way one might use the medium for keeping their agenda” (Interviewee 8)

Despite these findings, the majority of employees do not in general attribute low levels of participation on Banenettet to selfish attempts to hoard knowledge.

When asked about Jernbaneverket's culture for sharing, employees consistently characterized it as a 'people-share-when-asked' culture, as explained by two employees:

“The culture for sharing is good when it comes to... when you ask, people share. But you kind of have to ask 'have you got anything on this?' I don't think we are good enough to publish stuff that we've got” (Interviewee 5)

“... I might be dependent on that someone asks for the particular knowledge that I've got” (Interviewee 4)

These statements, which are specifically related to the new collaboration practices on wikis, show that people hold back contributions. Furthermore, we find that potential reasons for withholding contributions might be attributed to concerns of feeling exposed with new ways of working, as well as feelings of not having new and interesting knowledge to share. One employee explains:

“When you feel that others won't have any benefit from reading what you intend to publish, then it isn't...” (Interviewee 2)

For some, this is rooted in fear of lacking knowledge about the subject in question. An employee explains:

“People don't dare... or. That is perhaps to over-generalize. But there are many who think like 'oh no, what is going to be published have to be 100 percent' But I believe that is just a lack of knowledge” (Interviewee 7)

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This argument – that what is published need to be ‘100 percent’ – is closely linked to another identified barrier for ESM participation: We find that several of the employees struggle to make sense out of the appropriate language tone. In accordance, most employees spend, or would potentially spend, quite a lot of time formulating one’s own contribution in a formal language tone.

“...I think there are many who are afraid that what they write is not correct, and I think many think like that. The fact that they perhaps experience that their language and grammar skills aren’t very good - or ‘can I post this’? You are afraid of making mistakes, you know” (Interviewee 2)

“As I told, I am very careful, and I try to be extremely factual. I am one of the boring bloggers, to say it like that” (Interviewee 3)

### ***Power and withholding knowledge***

We see that within the established organizational culture in Jernbaneverket it is not natural to share and expose your own work processes. While a minority of our interviewees highlight the fear of losing resource power if one share of one’s expertise, the majority emphasized other aspects of power in regards to sharing knowledge. One of the reasons for withholding knowledge and not sharing unless asked is the factor of not being comfortable with one’s own level of expertise. On one hand, we see that it can be characterized as self-interested in that it is driven by the fear of losing face. On the other hand, fear is also identified as being other-oriented in that one fears that one might mislead or let coworkers down by posting irrelevant or uninteresting content that other coworkers do not understand. We see that the power in the system embedded in the formal bureaucratic language bear influence on sensemaking processes, which ultimately lead to accounts of ESM as just another formal communication channel. The formal nature of the bureaucratic culture subsequently hinders knowledge sharing. If there is a normative pressure that published material need to be formal and well written, some employees skips contributions due to time- and presentation issues. These matters may be linked to the individual nature of training, where the lack of opportunity to negotiate new informal rules within CoP’s and NoP’s augment the old norms.

Knowledge is not generated in a vacuum, but is ingrained in particular contexts and mediated via artifacts, such as grammar and jargon (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000). A significant challenge with respect to ESM and organizational culture is linked to expectations about how to act (Furuly, Vullum and Fremmervik, 2012, 138). A bureaucracy, in our case Jernbaneverket, is mainly constructed to

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constrain the diverseness of independent behavior (Courpasson, 2000), where bureaucratic and formal behavior is considered appropriate. According to Furuly, Vullum and Fremmervik (2012, 138) such organizational values and norms may be contrary to the informal principles of social media. Within the paradigm of Enterprise 2.0, virtual knowledge production prerequisite an organizational culture where informal language tone, sharing and self-organization is anticipated (Riedl & Betz, 2012). Our study therefore enhances Riedl and Betz' (2012) argument that employees find it hard to make sense of the equivocality between new type of informal communication tool within a traditional hierarchy.

In addition to the embedded power in the system, the fear of having one's contribution judged by peers implies a more relational dimension of power. The transparency of ESM technology makes it possible for third parties to learn that two (or more) specific actors are communication partners, who they are, and the content of their conversation (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013). In such, ESM – and in our case Banenettet – is an instrument to raise awareness and expand the attention arena of individuals within the organization through the exposure of other members' routine communication (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfeld, 2013). This makes a person's contribution more visible, and potentially more exposed to peer's judgments. Power then, becomes articulated through coworker's ability to sanction or reward the credibility of an individual's contributions.

The notion of credibility – and our succeeding identification of fear of loosing professional credibility – is highlighted as a form of resource power (Hardy, 1996). This barrier of fear emphasizes the importance of trust between colleagues, as the concept of trust encompasses the willingness for an individual to put her- or himself in a vulnerable position (Roussau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998). Then, viewing trust as a form of sensemaking, an individual's initial anticipation towards others reactions becomes an important influence in that it provides a "measure of certainty" (Adobor, 2005, 331). This initial certainty is arguably more easily established with coworkers within the same CoP, where people share a repertoire of competence, work language and stories. This is because people have more trust in individuals who they can identify with (Filstad, 2014b). The large organizational size of Jernbaneverket denotes that broad discussion arenas



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are visible for employees within many different CoP's, as well as NoP's, that do not necessarily share the same interests. However, undermining this argument that people do not participate due to an 'unknown crowd' is the fact that our empirical data also shows that people within the same CoP or NoP are somewhat anxious of sharing in-between themselves. Nonetheless, what becomes clear is that our study supports Hew and Hara's (2006) research, which states that feelings of having no new and interesting knowledge to share function as major knowledge barriers.

### ***6.2.3 The regular contributors***

The abovementioned low level of participation on discussions and blogs on Banenettet shows that - although slowly increasing - many people limit their engagement to passive observation. In accordance, our findings clearly suggest that there is a minority of employees who regularly dominate discussions on the front page, as exemplified by the following statements:

“It is my impression that there are many of the same people who comment on all the stuff that is being published. There are some regulars who have an opinion on... well, a lot” (Interviewee 2)

“Usually the leaders in the upper echelons are the ones who post the first blogs. And then there is a regular bunch of people who reply [laughter]... (Interviewee 3)

We find that most interviewees recognize these regular contributors, and they are often described in a negative tone, as someone who comments on a variety of topics without necessarily having relevant expertise. Although Interviewee 3 suggests that there might be something to learn from acknowledging regular's frustration, the majority of interviewees portray these contributors as someone who often obstructs constructive debate to take place. Interviewee 7 explains:

“(...) one sees that some... doesn't have any inhibitions. They just keep repeating themselves over and over again. It is really fascinating” (Interviewee 7)

In addition to the high frequency and repeating arguments posed by the regulars, we find that the substance of regular's comments is often characterized as negative and crass feedback. This, in turn, has consequences for other people's proclivity to contribute:

“...the fact that others can comment, and that their feedback can be crass, might make it more difficult to participate. If a person has decided to share something, and someone answers with a lot of criticism, then I think the threshold for further participation increase a lot. I am absolutely certain of that” (Interviewee 2)

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This notion is supported by another employee, who also points to how negative criticism also might discourage people from taking any part in discussions:

“Because there are many who are vulnerable, and if they experience stuff like that, they most certainly would quit participating. And then there is the wish to protect themselves, because in periods – when the situation has been tough due to reorganization for instance – employees stopped their participation in some of the conversations that I visited, and stopped reading because they got upset and dejected and sad” (Interviewee 3)

From this we see that some employees experience fear when sharing ideas, insights and opinions to a potential broad set of audience on the intranet. The impolite behaviors of a minority of coworkers make potential contributors refrain from sharing knowledge in ESM:

“Yes. Because in a way, you have to cope with silly comments, at the same time you have to think ‘What if someone say that about me? Do I want to be seen in that way?’ So for me it is a threshold to get over” (Interviewee 5)

### ***Power and the regular contributors***

With respect to coworker influences, we have so far seen how the power in the system of Jernbaneverket’s culture and lack of trust in other organizational members influence employee’s sensemaking processes in a way that hinder knowledge sharing in ESM. Along this line of distrust, one of the most interesting and surprising finding in our study concerns the issue of the discouraging effect that some coworkers seem to have on people’s participation in ESM.

Based on our findings it is reasonable to argue to that the regular contributors have two effects on how people make sense out of expectations towards the utilization of these discussions: (i) setting a benchmark for content, and (ii) discourage other employees from contributing. Firstly, the strong presence of the minority seems to suggest that they exert influence over what sort of information others might expect to find. Power, then, is articulated through Hardy’s (1996) notions of meaning power. The high visibility sets a benchmark for the type of comments that are posted. We see that the regulars are not necessarily viewed upon as credible carriers of expert knowledge. On the contrary, a large proportion of the regular posters are referred to in a slightly negative manner, as someone who uses ESM as a channel to vent frustration.

We see how some ‘regulars’ arguably have different accounts of how to utilize ESM than our interview subjects, as they break with the previously discussed

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pressure of formal bureaucratic behavior. We argue that regular contributors are powerful sensegivers in that they shape sensemaking processes around perceived utility of SNS's and blogs as learning arenas. Our findings indicate that their behavior lead to that discussions eventually lose impact and relevancy. Although our interviewees do not condone such behaviors, there seem to be a rather broad acceptance that this sort of unprofessional behavior is to be expected. One reason for the lenient reaction towards the regular contributors might be that Banenettet is not regarded as an integral arena for knowledge sharing. Moreover, as sensemaking is an ongoing process (Weick, Obstfeld & Sutcliffe, 2005), the 'regulars' continued behaviors might reinforce the previously discussed assumption that social media can be perceived as non-productive entertainment. In other words, discussion arenas in SNS's and blogs are not found meaningful for knowledge sharing.

Because of the mentioned low contribution rate among the general employee, the skew distribution of contributors is critical with respect to the fact that a small minority gets the power to control the discourse (Pettersen, 2012, 41), and the subsequent construction of meaning with respect to 'what is shared here'? Prior research state that the visible and informal characteristics of ESM and micro-blogs facilitate open communication, and that this hinder single individuals from dominating discourses (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Our study does to some degree contest this argument.

Secondly, if other organizational members are motivated to participate in discussions, irrelevant interruption by third party rhetors can hamper the quality of conversations and cause irritation among certain individuals (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Perhaps more important; people expose themselves to public feedback from some of the 'regulars'. Knowledge is an imperative element of personal self-image and self-efficacy, then, to be openly criticized for one's ideas have negative effect on participation (Wasko & Faraj, 2000). Some of the regular contributors are characterized as what is termed (internet) trolls. Oxford dictionary defines a *troll* as "a person who makes a deliberately offensive or provocative online posting", and is regarded as an individual who intentionally disrupts normal on-topic discussions (McAfee, 2009, 149).

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We find the identified negative critique as political acts, as “trying to influence others’ meaning construction is, per se, political behavior” (Hope, 2010, 196). Thus, we see how employee’s sensemaking around knowledge sharing in discussion sections are constructed as unsafe arenas. By expressing that one does not want to be ‘seen in that way’ in terms of being in the receiving end of silly comments, it becomes clear that some employees fear losing professional credibility, as highlighted by Hardy (1996) as a form of resource power. Many employees, then, choose to limit their participation to passive observation. The subsequent self-imposed censorship employees inflict on their own ESM-participation lead to overall lower amounts of knowledge to be consumed. This, in turn, makes the ones who do contribute more visible. The notion of such social influences must be taken into consideration when managing virtual communities (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Bagozzi and Lee (2002) find that, in addition to perceived utility, identification and group norms are important factors when considering online participation. In a similar vein, research on sense of community (Zhang, 2010) and sense of belonging (Lin, 2008; Teo, Chan, Wei & Zhang, 2003) are found to influence virtual community involvement. According to Chen (2011) the key within SNS applications is to manage the appropriate balance between expertise and diversity. On the basis on our findings, we argue that in general, current discussions on Banenettet’s SNS have not yet managed this balance.

#### *Trolls and dysfunctional power*

Research scrutinizing the topic of Internet trolls underlines the current scarcity of empirical research (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, in press; Shachaf & Hara, 2010), and according to Hardaker (2010) the research that exists on trolling is both multidisciplinary and dispersed. To the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of research when it comes to scrutinizing the topic of trolling behavior within an organization’s boundaries. In our attempt to link trolling behaviors to motivations of power and political activities, a feasible starting point is Wang and Noe’s (2010) argument that IT-technology can facilitate for power gain through sharing (knowledge) to a broad audience, increasing the possibility of getting personal recognition. Usually, power is scrutinized when it seek to accomplish a definable purpose (Ocasio, 2002), such as the case of getting recognition. However, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) argue that power relations might also be of dysfunctional nature. As our data sample does not include accounts of people

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characterized as trolls, it is difficult to say whether their political acts are about achieving functional results in terms of articulating different forms of Hardy's three power dimensions, or whether they are more about unwarranted symbolic demonstrations, simply because the ESM-technology offers a stage for it to occur. In such situations, Fleming and Spicer state how dysfunctional power can be enacted for its own sake, and where this "ensures that actors actually *do not* get things done" (2014, 285). Although this is an underdeveloped research area in need for further investigation (Fleming & Spicer, 2014), we argue that trolling activities may deter a proportion of employees from contributing to ESM.

#### ***6.2.4 No need to expand network***

We find that many interviewees lack a need to collaborate with others outside ones already established network. Not surprisingly, several of the interviewed subjects expressed that they have close relationships with the people they collaborate with on routine tasks, such as: "I usually know whom I collaborate with" (Interviewee 8). Interviewee 2 shares similar experiences:

"My experience is that we are very few. We are six people, and they are good at sharing in between them" (Interviewee 2)

The employee continues:

"In a way, I think we are good at sharing within [name of division], more than we are at sharing knowledge across divisions" (Interviewee 2)

Along this line, another employee – who stated that his/her contribution on ESM was limited – give the following answer to whether s/he finds it challenging to share knowledge with others due to the large size of the organization:

"I guess it's more about if you know each other well, despite [the organization] being large... then my thoughts are that that is not a barrier. That is my opinion. But if I was a newcomer and I didn't know everybody, then things might be different" (Interviewee 7)

Hence, communicating one-on-one through F2F, telephone or email is perceived sufficient to perform day-to-day tasks. Sacrificing own time to publish ideas and experiences on Banenettet therefore becomes a risk of speaking to an empty room, as one employee explains:

"(...) I have been involved in [ESM] discussions twice, where I encouraged people to discuss on my project. And one time, nobody joined. So, what can I say" (Interviewee 1)

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***Power and no need to expand network***

The majority of the people interviewed in this study did not express a high need to collaborate with people outside established networks to perform tasks.

Consequently, the perceived low benefit of sharing ideas via ESM reflected this. Such disinterest in ESM might explain why some communities have low levels of activity, and why people continue using only e-mail, telephone, one-on-one chat-functions and face to face. Our impression is that many of the employee's work roles are clearly defined, and boundary-spanning activities are not necessarily perceived as meaningful for their specific practices.

We see that when norms and expectations within CoP's de-legitimize online discussions and talk about it in ways which make it seem undesirable, colleagues enact a great deal of Hardy's (1996) power dimensions of process- and meaning power. Subsequently, knowledge sharing is forced to take place in the aforementioned established arenas. This might also be an outcome of previously discussed factors, such as lack of support and pressure from top- and middle management, as well as lack of trust and identification with the people in online discussion forums. Along this line, Orlikowski (1992) states that if the newly implemented tool cannot afford anything in addition to what is not already being offered by established practices and routines, employees are less likely to willingly embrace and make use of new technology. In a similar vein, McAfee (2009, 166) claims that e-mail, due to its widespread adoption, is part of the endowment and status quo for every worker. The endowment effect surmises that people attribute more value to possessed objects than potential substitutes, merely because of the ownership of what is currently possessed (McAfee, 2009, 168).

These arguments seem valid with respect to a large proportion of employees in Jernbaneverket. Despite all the social features offered by the new ESM system, it might just be that most elementary tools of mastering the wiki structure and making documents accessible for coworkers is sufficient in order to develop a better and more proactive culture for sharing in Jernbaneverket. Our argument echoes Gibbs, Rozaidi and Eisenberg's (2013) research, which call into question the over-optimistic assumption around ESM that more information sharing of any kind is bound to be beneficial for the organization.

## 7. Implications for practice

An increasing number of organizations depend on knowledge sharing and will make use of ESM as a KM tool in the future. For this study to have practical use, we find it important to propose some suggestions to organizations that consider adopting ESM technologies for internal knowledge sharing.

1) *Train communities.* HRM activities – such as training courses – should preferably be provided to entire units, CoP's or NoP's, and not offered randomly to individuals. By doing so, coworkers are more likely to negotiate a common understanding for how ESM can be meaningful and enhance their specific practices, as well as better integrate formal training with informal day-to-day interactions.

2) *Make middle managers lead by example.* Top management ought to make ESM training courses obligatory for all middle managers. As middle managers are important organizational climate-creators, enabling them with the right competence to promptly utilize the new tool can influence subordinate's sensemaking for whether ESM is considered important in their day-to-day practices. By making training obligatory, top management might signal to middle managers and employees that the change is considered urgent and important.

3) *Say goodbye to old cultural artifacts.* Employees may want to stick to old ways of working for as long as they can. To reduce this endowment effect, and make employees to learn and utilize the new software, management ought to limit the length of the transition period between old and new system.

4) *Prepare and communicate a strategy towards disrespectful comments.* ESM provide exposure and visibility of interactions in front of an audience. Negative feedback and critique can therefore be discouraging for participation, in particular for individuals that are unfamiliar with social media tools. Top management must therefore be aware of how bad-mannered behavior can thwart participation among employees and their benefit finding of the tool. Thus, any strategy should be communicated clearly and integrated as part of the training courses.

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## **8. Limitations and future research**

Our study has several limitations. First, it is important to acknowledge that our findings are based on a rather small number of interviews and are restricted to employees working in staffing function within a specific, public organization. Our findings might also be strengthened by adding more data sources, such as first-hand observation of ESM activity over a short period of time. Furthermore, interviewees were selected by head office, which may have limited the variation in experiences among participants. Our sample does not include accounts from any of the regular contributors or online trolls. Hence, gaining access to perspectives of some of the most engaged employees in ESM could have provided an interesting dimension to the thesis. More research is needed on the topic of intra-organizational trolling and discouraging online behavior among and between colleagues. In such respect, we echo Fleming and Spicer's (2014) call for more research on dysfunctional power, where power is exerted for its own sake.

Furthermore, our study presents the case from employee's point of view. Future research could therefore examine top management's sensemaking processes and to what degree employee's sensegiving in ESM are considered during upper echelon's decision-making processes. Along this line, the shortened hierarchical distance between employees and top management provided by ESM give rise to another area of research: Considering that employees can more easily and informally avoid middle managers as an obligatory passage point, students could look into whether middle managers feel a loss of process power, and their sensemaking in this process. Another limitation with our study is that our findings are based on a non-competitive public organization in Norway. Future research could look into other more competitive industries or business cultures. Finally, the student's limited experience with conducting in-depth interviews needs to be taken into consideration.



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## 9. Conclusion

Our aim has been to explore how power and political activities affect employee's sensemaking for how to utilize ESM for knowledge sharing. To this end, we conducted an explorative case study within a public sector organization. The thesis has discussed power and political activities through two main themes, managerial activities and coworker influence.

Our study showed how top management's political activities in terms of defining vision and goals are primarily made sense of as a new way of storing and sharing documents. Top management's lack of de-legitimizing old file sharing practices result in an unclear demarcation between old and new practices, where many employees feel little pressure to share documents online. This lack of finding meaning in ESM as integral to work becomes augmented by sensegiving activities among a proportion of middle managers, whereby many refrain from attending training-courses, nor do they consistently utilize the new tool. This lack of engagement – and subsequent pressure from management – sets a premise for employee behavior, as leaders are argued to be important climate creators for innovation. Thus, our study adds to the stream of research that underlines the strategic significance of middle management as change agents. The lack of pressure from both top management and middle management, combined with a long implementation period, result in interpretations of the new practices as uncritical for solving tasks. Moreover, facilitation of training courses is inscribed with meaning about coping with technical updates rather than it is about changing towards a culture of social learning. These identified political activities are found to hinder knowledge sharing. Nonetheless, the discussions taking place in top management's blogs were perceived as empowering to reduce power distance through dialogue with top management, as well as an organization-wide arena to negotiate meaning. For some employees, this arena is found to function as a door opener to develop and nurture weak ties in order to exchange experiences.

With respect to coworker influences, employee's political activities were to agree with or resist new practices. We have seen how lack of sensegiving from management leaves it up to employees to make sense of what type of knowledge should be shared in order for ESM to be a learning arena. Our study showed that employee's sensemaking processes influence ESM benefit finding. Whereas

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experienced social media users from private life are more inclined to accept increased level of transparency of work practices, less experienced social media users find less benefit, resulting in a negotiation of practices between younger and older generations. This impedes knowledge sharing activities related to collaboration through wikis. Employee resistance towards ESM contribution was related to the factor of not being comfortable with exposing own work processes to colleagues online, and unfamiliarity with authoring for a broad audience. This conveys elements of fear, primarily in a lack of sensemaking about what knowledge others will value. Consequently, lack of trust in colleagues is found to be an important element behind resisting online knowledge sharing. In addition, the power embedded in bureaucratic norms make employees take for granted that ESM as just another formal communication channel. Interestingly, our study indicates that employees are more concerned about coworker's reactions to own contributions on ESM than of management's reactions.

Our study also showed how a small minority of regular contributors dominates the large discussion-arenas on the intranet. These 'regulars' are influential in terms of setting a benchmark for what type of quality employees can expect to find in discussions, as well as discouraging others from contributing due to insensitive behaviors. Hence, many employees resist ESM discussions due to not finding these meaningful to solve tasks. A lack of need to perform boundary-spanning activities limit knowledge sharing actions to prior established learning arenas. This makes it difficult for employees advocating ESM to change practices in line with top management's knowledge sharing vision. We found that most employees react to and adapt to ESM in ways that fit established practice, where the system primarily becomes meaningful as a new way to store documents and as an improved search-tool. This resembles a traditional KMS, where the focus is on knowledge transfer, and where the tacit elements of knowledge sharing become difficult to achieve.

To conclude, enterprise social media is the beginning of an intriguing new era for how information and knowledge will be created, distributed and utilized in day-to-day activities inside organizations. This thesis has contributed to gaining a better understanding of how power relations influence the use of enterprise social media tools in work life. In doing so, it has opened up new directions for future research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview guide Jernbaneverket – Norwegian version

#### *Fase 1: Introduksjon og oppvarming*

- Introduksjon av oss
- Formål med studien
- Informert samtykke og konfidensialitet
- Tillatelse til å gjøre opptak
- Kan du fortelle om deg selv, rolle og ansiennitet?

#### *Fase 2: Åpne spørsmål rundt kunnskapsdeling*

- **Om du står ovenfor et problem du er usikker på hvordan du skal løse, hvor; eventuelt hva vil du oppsøke for å få hjelp?**
  - Med hvem deler du dine beste råd og ideer med på arbeidsplassen?
  - Foretrekker du å gjøre dette ansikt til ansikt? Hvorfor?
  - Hva synes du om å kommunisere på nett slik at andre kan se hva dere snakker om?
- **Jernbaneverket ønsker å skape en delingskultur i organisasjonen. Hva legger du i begrepet delingskultur?**
  - Synes du det kan være vanskelig å dele kunnskap med andre? Hvorfor?
  - Hva er det du vil finne nyttig av informasjon som skal deles med andre i organisasjonen?
- **Når du kommuniserer med ansatte (fra andre avdelinger) som har en annen stilling enn deg selv, føler du det er noen utfordringer?**
  - Forskjeller i kultur? Snakker dere samme språk?
  - Hva er typiske situasjoner der du kommuniserer med disse?
  - Kan du fortelle hvordan du velger å dele kunnskap med personer som ikke er fysisk tilstede?
- **Hvordan opplever du kulturen i din egen avdeling med tanke på å dele kunnskap?**
- **Kan du tenke tilbake til da sosiale medier ble implementert: hvordan ble dere informert om hvordan dette skulle brukes?**
  - Hvordan føler du ledelsen har lagt til rette for kunnskapsdeling ved å fornye intranettet (Banenettet)?
  - Vet du hva organisasjonen ønsker å oppnå? Kjenner du til målsetningen?
  - Føler du at det nye intranettet er en åpen kanal for ansatte seg imellom?

***Fase 3: Fokuserede spørsmål rundt bruk av intranett***

- **Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan du bruker sosiale medier på jobb?**
  - Er du en «titter» eller en aktiv «poster»?
  - Når bruker du sosiale medier fremfor andre kommunikasjonskanaler? (I hvilke type situasjoner synes du Banenettet er passende?)
  - Opplever du at måten du jobber på har endret seg etter at det nye Banenettet ble implementert? (Forklar nærmere)
  
- **Hvis du tar utgangspunkt i din egen avdeling, føler du at folk har tilpasset seg og tatt i bruk intranettet, eller foretrekker de å gjøre ting på «gammelmåten»? Hvorfor tror du det er sånn?**
  
- **Hva tenker du på når du skal legge ut informasjon på Banenettet?**
  - Når du skal poste noe, liker du å bruke et formelt eller uformelt språk?
  - Er du redd for at du ikke skal gjøre deg forstått?
  - Hva mener du er relevant å dele?
  - Hva slags regler eller retningslinjer må du forholde deg til på intranettet?
  
- **Føler du at «alle» kan bidra (lav terskel)?**
  - Er det noen som setter agendaen?
  - Føler du at det er greit å kommentere hva ledere og kollegaer deler av informasjon?
  - Synes du at det er lett å skape et tillitsforhold med andre i Jernbaneverket som du kun kommuniserer med gjennom Banenettet?

***Fase 4: Avslutning, tilbakeblikk og skape felles forståelse***

- Oppsummere funn
- Har vi forstått deg riktig?
- Føler du at det er noen utfordringer som vi ikke har diskutert?

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**Appendix 2: Interview guide Jernbaneverket – English version*****Phase 1: Introduction and warm-up***

- Presentation of ourselves
- The purpose of this study
- Informed consent and confidentiality
- Permission to record the interview
- Who are you, what is your role, and for how long you have worked in the organization?

***Phase 2: Open-ended question around the topic knowledge sharing***

- **If you are facing a problem and are pondering how you should solve it: where, eventually what do you seek to get help?**
  - With whom do you share your best advices and ideas with at work?
  - Do you prefer to do this face-to-face? Why?
  - What is your impression about communicating online, and the fact that others can see what you are talking about?
- **Jernbaneverket wants to create a culture for sharing. How do you understand the term culture for sharing?**
  - Do you find it difficult to share knowledge with others? Why?
  - What would you find as useful information that should be shared with others in the organization?
- **When you communicate with colleagues (from different departments), who have a different position than yourself, do you feel that there are any challenges?**
  - Differences in culture? Do you speak the same language?
  - What would you consider as typical situations where you communicate with them?
  - Can you tell us how you decide or prefer to share knowledge with people that are not physically present?
- **How do you experience the culture within your own department when it comes to knowledge sharing?**
- **Looking back when the intranet was implemented: How were you informed about the utilization of the tool?**
  - How do you feel that the top-management has facilitated for knowledge sharing by renewing the intranet (Banenettet)?
  - Do you know what the organization want to achieve? Are you familiar with the goal?
  - Do you feel that the new intranet is an open channel for all employees?

***Phase 3: Focused question around the use of intranet***

- **Can you tell us how you use social media at work?**
  - Do you consider yourself as a “lurker” or as an active “poster”?
  - When do you prefer to use social media rather than other communication channels? (In what kind of situations do you find Banenettet appropriate)?
  - Do you feel that the way you work has changed after the implementation of Banenettet? (Explain more in detail)
  
- **If you consider your own department, do you feel that employees have adapted and use the new intranet, or are they still doing things «the old fashion way»? Why do you think it’s like that?**
  
- **What do you think about when you post information on Banenettet?**
  - When you post something, do you prefer to use a formal or informal language?
  - Are you afraid that you will not be understood?
  - What do you mean is relevant to share?
  - What kind of rules or policies do you need to consider on your intranet?
  
- **Do you feel that «everybody» can participate? (Low threshold)**
  - Is it someone who sets the agenda?
  - Do you feel that is okay to comment what leaders and colleagues share of information?
  - Do you find it easy to create a relationship based on trust with others in Jernbaneverket if you only communicate through Banenettet?

***Phase 4: Ending the interview, recap, and create shared understanding***

- Summarize findings
- Have we understood you correctly?
- Do you feel that there are some challenges that we have not discussed?

**Appendix 3: Coding of data**

THEMES	ACTIONS	CODES - EXAMPLES
	Setting goals	<p>"That we can publish things that are interesting to others and that we can learn from each other, both what we have done well and also what went wrong"</p> <p>"The only thing I remember that was promoted was that it was going to be easier to find things. And it is more simple than the old, no doubt about it"</p> <p>"To gain access to basic information about own organization, management systems, organizational map, who work where..."</p> <p>"No... not that I can think of. That we shall create a culture for sharing. That one should not send such large files to each other by e-mail, because people are getting their mail account filled up really fast"</p>
	Implementation and training activities	<p>"I've given it some thought, I think it was a bit strange that they didn't say anything about that it should be more or less the same. And then I see that others have done things very different compared to us, however, they work differently..."</p> <p>"The thing is that you need a training course in order to use it, and also it [Sharepoint] isn't intuitive – you know, like Apple. So it is completely hopeless, to say it like that. It is not user friendly"</p>
<b>Managerial activities</b>	Top management engagement and presence	<p>"(...) And then one [Jernbaneverket] has chosen Sharepoint, and Sharepoint is difficult. You have so many options, so I'm not sure if Jernbaneverket was mature enough to go for a Sharepoint-solution. I think we should have gone for a more simple platform"</p> <p>"And then there's one concrete issue. The training course has to get better, and then I think it would be beneficial to offer courses for the communities, and not so that we need to sign up... Perhaps both. I think it would be better if the entire department went to the course together"</p> <p>"And they have been very good at answering specific questions and so on in the blogs. This is something that I feel have changed a lot. I think that's good. And they are good at encouraging us to participate"</p> <p>"That you can discuss with management, that it is themes posted where everyone can comment it"</p> <p>"And then I also see when it comes comments on topics, they have been quick to respond, and they have set aside time the next day to answer the comments"</p>
	Middle management engagement and presence	<p>"I think the leaders have been good at... they have published different topics and such..."</p> <p>"I don't think we are good enough to share things we've got. And of course, the leaders have a job to do, because when... we've had leaders who work, but not all have fully taken on the role and utilized Arbeidsrom"</p> <p>"I think leader's use of it [Sharepoint] has been poor. Because... often it is the case that employees are sent to courses, and then leaders are those who are suppose to 'brand' that you are going to make use of it"</p> <p>"Other departments have perhaps done as they like, and might not have had the best leaders to implement such processes"</p> <p>"(...) and then I think that there are a lot of leaders who haven't participated in training courses, and use it consistently. That this in a way sets precedence for what is allowed and what is not allowed"</p>
	Coworker's social media use and benefit-finding	<p>"Personal blogs are not much used, at least not in my immediate circle of associates and colleagues"</p> <p>"I've clicked on the 'like'-button a couple of times, but that's the only thing I've done and the furthest I've gone"</p> <p>"...it isn't natural for me to share in that way, or to use that channel"</p> <p>"I do believe it has a huge potential that we don't use. That we don't manage. Because if you're going to use these discussions... I think it would be fun to post discussion threads"</p> <p>"I guess it has been a culture, historically, that the more knowledge you possess the more special you become in the organization, and then you can take advantage of that situation"</p> <p>"The culture for sharing is good when it comes to... when you ask, people share. But you kind of have to ask 'have you got anything on this?' I don't think we are good enough to publish stuff that we've got"</p> <p>"Another thing that one must not ignore is that knowledge is power. And if you have knowledge, then... that others don't have, then there will be power... a benefit for me in relation to the other"</p> <p>"When you feel that others won't have any benefit from reading what you intend to publish, then it isn't..."</p> <p>"(...) one sees that some... doesn't have any inhibitions. They just keep repeating themselves over and over again. It is really fascinating"</p> <p>"It is my impression that there are many of the same people who comment on all the stuff that is being published. There are some regulars who have an opinion on... well, a lot"</p> <p>"...the fact that others can comment, and that their feedback can be crass, might make it more difficult to participate"</p> <p>"Usually the leaders in the upper echelons are the ones who post the first blogs. And then there is a regular bunch of people who reply... [laughter]."</p> <p>"In a way, I think we are good at sharing within [name of division], more than we are at sharing knowledge across divisions"</p> <p>"I think maybe because it's the way I am most comfortable communicating in, because I do not get the exposure factor. There are people different..."</p> <p>"I guess it's more about if you know each other well, despite [the organization] being large... then my thoughts are that that is not a barrier"</p> <p>"My experience is that we are very few. We are six people, and they are good at sharing in between them"</p>
<b>Coworker influences</b>	Withholding knowledge	
	Behavior of regular posters	
	No need to expand network	

