# USING SOCIAL MEDIA THE INSIDE OUT

## A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FOUR DIFFERENT LOCAL MODELS FOR ORGANIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN ORGANIZATIONS

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# BACKDROP – MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

➢Two overall motivators

1. Tendencies in the Norwegian society at large
   - ❑ Take-off curve in use of Social Network Sites, foremost Facebook in 2007/08
   - ❑ Millions of Norwegians registered on various social media platforms
   - ❑ Same tendencies in The Norwegian Public Sector
   - ❑ For example: municipalities register on Facebook, organize conferences, «social media» appear in strategy documents, etc.
   - ❑ Many bottom-up and top-down social media initiatives
   - ❑ Create questions on what social media «is»; surfaces as _ambiguous_ ; requires to be sensemade by local actors _in_ organizations

2. A research knowledge gap in organizational research
   - ❑ Study of adoption and implementation processes of technologies in organizational life is behind
   - ❑ Orlikowski and Scott (2008) performed review of leading peer-reviewed research journals in organization studies
   - ❑ Examined 2027 scientific articles from 1997 to 2006; only 100 works addressed the role of technologies in organizations
   - ❑ Treem and Leonardi (2012) make same observation on social media, a newer unexplored research realm

# RESEARCH QUESTION

➢Main research question:

❑ How is social media interpreted, used, and classified, and what kinds of new practices can we identify in the public sector?

❑ Main research question reformulated into four research questions:

1. How do actors evaluate, classify, and define social media in organizational contexts in which they interact?
2. What types of user patterns can we find?
3. To what extent is use of social media congruent with organizational practices?
4. In what ways do social media challenge organizations?

# RESEARCH APPROACH

➤Qualitative research study
- ❑ Two organizational contexts
  - ❑ K-12 education system
  - ❑ Public Administration
- ❑ 4 case studies in three organizations
- ❑ 4 actors:
  - ❑ A group of students at a high school
  - ❑ A teacher at a high school
  - ❑ Competence group in social media in a municipality
  - ❑ Employees in county authority
- ❑ About 40 informants
- ❑ Age between 16 to 60
- ❑ Main method qualitative interviews
  - ❑ Individual and group interviews
  - ❑ Two key informants interviewed several times

| No. | Actor | No. of informants | Pseudonym | Organization | Organizational context | Data collecting period | Methods |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Students | 26 | The Alfa Organization | High school | K-12 Education System | Aug 2011– March 2012 | Fieldwork Interviews Written artifacts |
| 2. | Teacher | 1 | | | | | |
| 3. | Beta Group | 4 | The Echo Organization | City Municipality | Public Administration | Nov. 2011– June 2012 | |
| 4. | Employees | 8 | The Lima Organization | County Authority | | May 2013– Feb. 2014 | Interviews Written artifacts |

# RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

➢ Organizational perspectives on adoption and implementation of technologies in organizational life

➢ Inspired by the works of W. Orlikowski

➢A research review of:

1. Research of social media in organization studies
   ▪ Social Network Sites, blogs, wiki
2. Research of social media in educational research
   ▪ Social Network Sites, blogs, wikis and YouTube

**Table 1** Summary of Perspectives on the Social Construction of Technology Implementation

| | Perception | Interpretation | Appropriation | Enactment | Alignment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phase of implementation | Adoption | Use | Use | Use | Adaptation |
| The social phenomenon constructed | Attitudes, beliefs, and values | Schemas and frames | Patterns of deviation and conformity | Work practices | Roles and relationships |
| Construction process | Social influence | Transference | Intra-group interaction | Situated improvisations | Inter-group interaction |
| Examples | Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, and Power (1987)<br>Fulk et al. (1990)<br>Fulk and Boyd (1991)<br>Rice and Aydin (1991)<br>Schmitz and Fulk (1991)<br>Fulk (1993)<br>Fulk, Schmitz, and Ryu (1995) | Barley (1988)<br>Prasad (1993)<br>Markus (1994)<br>Prasad and Prasad (1994)<br>Orlikowski and Gash (1994)<br>Walsham and Sahay (1999) | Watson, DeSanctis, and Poole (1988)<br>Poole and DeSanctis (1990)<br>Orlikowski and Robey (1991)<br>Orlikowski (1992) | Yates and Orlikowski (1992)<br>Orlikowski and Yates (1994)<br>Orlikowski, Yates, Okamura, and Fujimoto (1995)<br>Boczkowski (1999)<br>Yates, Orlikowski, and Okamura (1999)<br>Orlikowski (2000) | Barley (1986)<br>Zuboff (1988)<br>Barley (1990)<br>Zack and McKenney (1995)<br>Orlikowski (1996)<br>Robey and Sahay (1996)<br>Majchrzak, Rice, Malhotra, King, and Ba (2000) |

(Leonardi & Barley 2010)

# RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

➢ The challenge for organization studies

❑ Frame adoption and implementation of new technologies from top-down perspectives in organizations

❑ Social media requires new research lenses

❑ Organization researchers theorize the affordance introduced by Gibson (1986) concept in new ways to understand social media – but limited

❑ The thesis argues for the need of decentralized perspectives as actors can network and shape user-generated content in new ways

❑ Media and communication scholars have researched this perspective on social media on society at large



Figure 3.3 Bottom-up and top-down perspectives on social media.
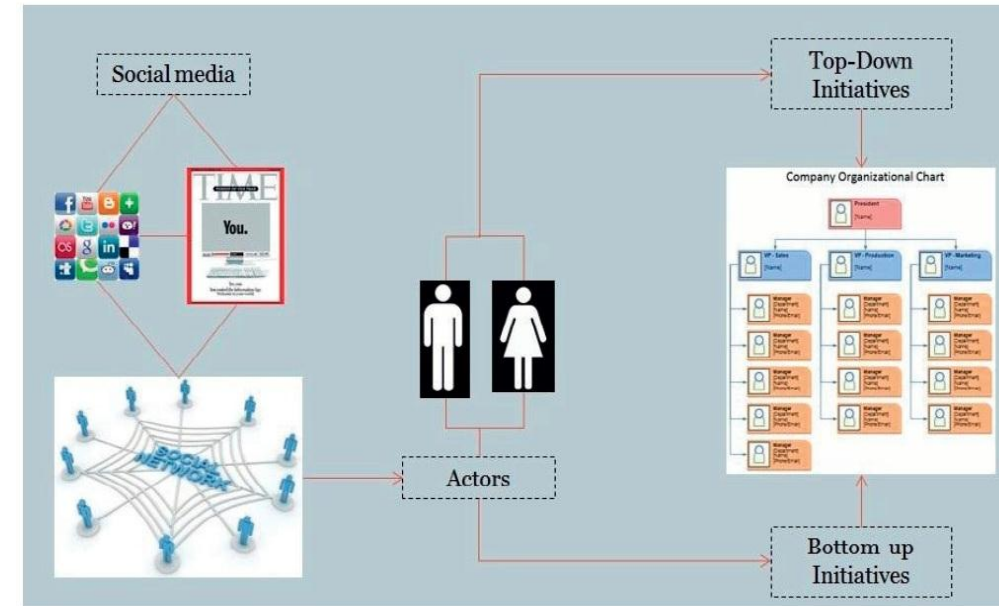
# RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

➤ **Promoting a model argument**
  ❑ Different way to address social media in organization studies
  ❑ Understand use of social media from an actor's point of view => «life-worlds»
  ❑ How actors can create local organizings around social media

➤ **Two sources of inspiration**
  ❑ Fredrik Barth's «Models of Social Organization»
  ❑ Karl Weick's "Making Sense of the Organization"

➤ Each model uses relevant concepts describing the use and condition for technology in its contexts

➤ The social side of use of technology in organizational life

➤ Address the meaning of emergent social structures coming from recursive use of use of technologies ➔ the output from such social processes where people use technology

| No. | Actor | Model | Pseudonym | Organization | Context | Perspective | Year | Concepts | Authors |
|-----|-------|-------|-----------|--------------|---------|-------------|------|----------|---------|
| 1. | Students | Shadow Student Learning Ecology | | | | | 2012 | Learning Ecology / Connectivism | Barron (2006) / Siemens (2005) |
| 2. | Teacher | Authentic Learning Situation | The Alfa Organization | High school | K-12 Education System | Bottom-up | 2011-12 | Technologies-in-practice / Reflection-in-action Reflection-on-action | Orlikowski (2000) / Schön (1983) |
| 3. | Beta Group | Relation Platforms | The Echo Organization | City Municipality | Public Administration | | 2008-12 | Genre repertoire / Reflection-in-action Reflection-on-action | Orlikowski and Yates (1994) / Schön (1983) |
| 4. | Employees | 2.0 Social Intranet Portal | The Lima Organization | County Authority | | Top-down | 2014 | Technological frames / Ethnic group of Boundaries | Orlikowski and Gash (1994) / Barth (1969) |

# MODEL 1: THE SHADOW STUDENT LEARNING ECOLOGY RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE STUDENT CASE

➤ How high school students take the initiative themselves and use social media to organize formal and informal learning

❑ Analyzed in context of educational initiative attempted to boost students' digital competence = laptop initiative

❑ School's ban on Facebook use

➤ General social media user patterns

❑ Online, yes, but passive, communicate with close ties

❑ Combine social media platforms

➤ Formal learning

❑ FB-groups main hub and take different roles

➤ Informal learning

❑ YouTube used to learn about hobbies

| Empirical findings from the student case story | |
|---|---|
| **General findings** | |
| Students take the initiative to organize formal and informal learning activities | |
| **Particular findings** | |
| **General user patterns** | **Formal learning** |
| Strong online presence | Facebook groups different roles |
| Combine social media platforms | Student bulletin board |
|   Blog, FB, Twitter, YouTube, gaming, Skype | Discussion forum of school projects |
| Strong self-censorship | Coordination of school assignments |
|   Communicate in closed online spaces | Sharing of cram sheets |
|   Strong selection of online ties | Skype |
|   Many passive consumer, very few prosumers |   Sharing of homework |
|   4/26 students made user-generated content | Google docs |
|   Online engagement from deep to shallow user |   Co-authoring of school projects |
| Gendered user patterns | Student patterns |
|   Female students mainly use and read blogs |   12/26 students to formal learning |
|   Gaming a male digital space |   Distance between student and teacher |
| Facebook a "main highway" for social media use |   Female students use in a constructive ways |
|   Decline in Facebook's popularity | **Informal learning** |
|   Facebook groups used as "private taxi site" |   Youtube videos |
|   Descaling of Facebook networks |   Learn hobbies – music, gaming and photographing |
|   300 – 400 Facebook ties on average |   Male orientated |
|   FB friends with off-line tie |   9/26 students used for informal learning |

# MODEL 2: AUTHENTIC LEARNING SITUATIONS RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE TEACHER CASE

➤ Eight months classroom study of language teacher aimed at using social media and digital learning resources to teach students a foreign language => textbook free classroom practice

➤ Uncommon classroom practice

➤ Outcomes
- ❑ Require different planning of learning
- ❑ Students differently accept such a learning design
- ❑ Requires much work on the social side of technology
- ❑ YouTube a success
- ❑ Students more textbook-orientated than we believe

**Empirical findings from the teacher case story**

**General findings**
- Possible to organize and teach with social media from a long-term approach
- Can use a variety of social media applications
- Requires considering social aspects, contexts and social situations
- No "standardized recipe" can be implemented

**Particular findings**

Requires different planning and organizing
- Regular monitoring and choice of social media
- Strategy for creating knowledge
- Embedding competence goals from curriculum
- Create meaningful learning activities

Outcome of learning design
- Difference between design and outcome
  - Limitations by language skills of students
  - Requires adaptations while teaching
  - Bounded by the progression of textbook
- Work with social ties in the classroom setting
  - Must create positive classroom atmosphere
  - Essential to eliminate student misbehavior
- Learning progression has peaks and drops
  - 3 – 4 months before learning settles
  - Different learning progression of two classes
  - Second half the most productive period
  - Teacher has to perform a lot of "pushing"
- Changes in learning strategies
  - Omits pointing out errors in student work
  - Learn to write texts from a long-term perspective

Impact on classes
- Different acceptance of learning design
  - Learning design accepted in Spanish class
  - Partial success in English class
- Blogging accepted differently
  - Blog project success in Spanish class
  - Blog project failed in English class
  - Male students "leaders" in Spanish class
  - Male students "refuse" in English class
  - Students differ in production outcome
  - Publishing curve has "take-off" and "drops"
- Youtube
  - Trigger and motivate to learn in both classes
- Technological framing
  - Students framed to Web 1.0 than Web 2.0
  - "Print-orientated"
- Student performance
  - Students do not perform more than they have to
  - Differences in being self-organized
  - Differences in collaboration
  - Variance on working with info beyond retrieval

# MODEL 3: RELATION PLATFORMS RESEARCH FINDINGS FORM THE BETA CASE

➢Tracks the work of a competence group of social media in a municipality based on a nine months fieldwork

❑ Demonstrates that the view of social media has to be fitted to dominant organizational views on how public organizations are managed

❑ Results in hybrid view on social media, combining grassroots perspectives and general views on how public administration are managed

❑ The way to analyzes above aspect is by tracking the structuration of a knowledge process

❑ A difficult case

## Empirical findings from the beta group case story

### General findings
Possible to work professionally with social media in a public organization
Importing and approbation of ideas, symbols and cultural traits from other organizations
Construct specialized and adopted organizational knowledge on social media
Formal knowledge on social media from suppliers is a scarce commodity
Hybrid understanding between contemporary Internet culture and institutional practices
Understanding of social media changes as the beta group members enter new situations
Created own definition and guidelines for social media
Continues learning process by reflecting upon action and experience
Communicate and recognized with peers in other organizations
Understanding turns from "tools focus" to the importance of "communication"
Widespread testing and reflection on social media apps

### Particular findings
Organizational social media uses

| | |
|---|---|
| Frequently readopted with new meanings | A new front desk or telephone |
| Setting up eco-systems | Interacting within SNS and collaborative software |

### Structuration as knowledge process

| 1. Discovery | 2. Testing |
|---|---|
| Social media seen as ambiguous | Testing of the Open Source SNS Elgg |
| Imported, tested, and appropriated | Contacting with peers in the organization |
| Starts with Web 2.0 and Open Source | SNS positive and a disturbance to others |
| Loose network of colleagues | |

| 3. Formalization | 4. Strategizing |
|---|---|
| Constituted formally as group | Creating strategies for social media use |
| Guidelines authored, imported, and modified | Learning organizational netetiquette |
| Recognition external than internally | Standardization of organizational social media |
| Deal with institutional logics and practices | Communicative aspects of social media |

5. Educating
Teaching strategies face-to-face
Overcome the IT silo barrier

# MODEL 4: 2.0 SOCIAL INTRANET PORTAL
# RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE SOCIAL INTRANET CASE

➤ Tracks the implementation of a new social intranet and top-management motivated initiative

❑ Establish a "sharing culture" and the idea of "sharing"

➤ Implementation of technology

➤ Different groups have different expectations

➤ Outcomes

❑ Sharing transforms to informing practice

❑ Strong self-censorship

❑ Creates private social media channels

❑ Little dialogue

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**Empirical findings from the social intranet portal case story**

**Different interpretations / technological frames**

Top-management – strategic perspective and motivator and facilitator

| | |
|---|---|
| Simplify work surface of employees | Mean to work with the CA's organization culture |
| Reduce information and e-mail overload | Part of a public procurement plan |
| Lower internal organizational barriers | Linked to ongoing top-management |
| Legitimatizing a sharing culture | Organized as part of an internal project |

Implementer – practical technology project

| | |
|---|---|
| Technical project | Social intranet still used as bulletin board |
| Organized as an internal project | Viewed as "mandate" from top-management |
| Self-learning of social intranet platform | Learn from peers in other organizations |
| Difficulties in creating an online dialogue | Set up personal social media eco-system |
| Carrying out testing of social intranet on users | |

End-users – information repository

| Sharing as informing practice | Sharing as work practice |
|---|---|
| Extended use of reminders and invitations | Sharing interpreted as a new responsibility to position |
| Republishing of information | No collaboration on documents |
| Sharing leads to a "information overload" | Social intranet used for information retrieval |
| From engaged to disengaged users | No interaction with new ties beyond departmental boundaries |
| Difficulties in creating online interactivity in rooms | Online dialogue continues on e-mail and chat |

| Strong self-censorship | Creation of "private" social media eco-systems |
|---|---|
| Share only "finished" work | Twitter, Yammer, LinkedIn used as "listening posts" |
| High ambivalence of sharing "unfinished work" | Use Dropbox and Google Docs to co-work with peers |
| Sharing associated with risk and misunderstanding | **Technical aspects** |
| Information needs to be "approved" by managers | Search engines give outdated hits |
| Social grooming discourages sharing | Difficulties in interpreting user-interface |
| High threshold for sharing | Social intranet requires much self-testing |
| Cannot share confidential information | |

# CONCLUSION AND POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

❑ What social dynamics are really at play here?

❑ Is social media an idea or a technology?

❑ Reconsider our theoretical approaches

❑ Are our methods sound?



Figure 3.3 Bottom-up and top-down perspectives on social media.