

Social Processes Influencing Knowledge Sharing and the use of Information Communication Technology

- A Qualitative Case Study of Ramboll



Master Thesis

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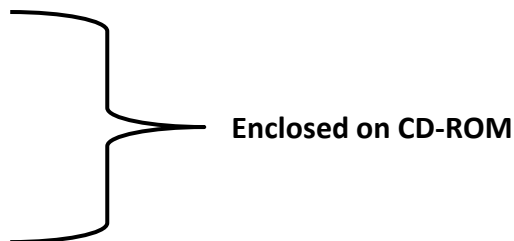
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Abstract

In today's globalised world, organisations are communicating, trading and competing at an increasing level. In order to stay competitive, intangibles such as intellectual capital and knowledge assets are recognised as vital resources in the drive to stay competitive. This is especially relevant for knowledge-intensive firms such as consultancies. The knowledge base of these companies is embodied in the minds of their employees; their expertise therefore acts as the core business asset of the organisation. As this is often spread over several locations, knowledge-intensive firms are increasingly trying to find ways for managing their knowledge pool.

The development of information technology has made it possible to communicate and distribute knowledge independent of time and geographical distance – collectively known as ICT (information, communication & technology) platforms. However, many multinational companies seem to be struggling as employees who are meant to use them are showing reluctance towards them; they prefer to stick with their own personal local networks. Organisations thought ICT's to be an easy fix; the challenge arises however, because little thought of the cultural and social aspects of them were considered.

This thesis is based on the global consultancy engineering company Ramboll, a consultancy company facing these challenges. It focuses on its business units based in Finland and Sweden. In the past year the Ramboll Group has launched an ICT platform called RamLink, which is intended to increase knowledge sharing across the whole organisation. Currently, more than a year after its launch, Ramboll is struggling with the low quality of content on RamLink and the reluctance of its employees in Finland and Sweden to take ownership of it.

Applying a qualitative research strategy, this thesis studied why employees at Ramboll's above mentioned business-units are still reluctant to use it, given the substantial efforts to improve its technical specifications. The core aim with the thesis is to understand and explain the current situation at Ramboll Finland and Sweden. However, a suggestion of what Ramboll can do to overcome these challenges will also be proposed. In order to answer these questions, the study used semi-structured interviews with employees from Ramboll Finland and Sweden.

Our analysis identified several issues that are inhibiting the use of RamLink and as a result little knowledge sharing at an organisation-wide level. The analysis used a theoretical framework of a two dimensional character. Firstly, the concept of the social environment; this will allow for the examination of how employees interact and carry out their daily work tasks, and more importantly, it will distinguish how employees in the two business units share their knowledge with others. The second part focused on how employees made sense of the RamLink platform, and in connection with this, their sensemaking of knowledge sharing.

Social interaction between employees one knows is the preferred way to seek out knowledge at Ramboll Sweden and Finland. Sharing knowledge with others is meaningful to the employees when connected with their value of being experts. In both business units there were occurrences of knowledge sharing being inhibited due to employees becoming too self-focussed in their ways of conducting projects locally. Apart from this, the analysis also identified that employees perceive

managements' involvement with RamLink as minimal – which resulted in a feeling of; *'if they don't use it why should we'*. Employee sensemaking around the platform revealed a less positive nature as their expectations of a knowledge sharing platform were not met prior to the systems launch.

In conclusion, the thesis reveals that the Swedish and Finnish employee's reluctance towards RamLink cannot be ascribed to a single factor or phenomenon. The platform's less desirable start is a result of the various social processes that unfolded in the two business units – processes that indeed influenced employee sensemaking in and around the system and a reluctance to share knowledge at an organisation-wide level. In conclusion, the dominant factor in Ramboll's unsuccessful launch of Ramlink was that they unknowingly neglected the *social* aspect of KS. RamLink must be considered as a facilitator for KS and not as a substitute for the social processes that we discovered being the vital enablers of KS.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In today's globalised world, organisations are communicating, trading and competing at an increasing level. The interconnection between nations, regions and continents has reached an unprecedented level and has brought with it opportunities for prosperity. However, the threat of losing one's foothold on the global scene is also looming and hence, the importance for organisations to stay competitive. A popular definition of today's economy emphasizes the importance of knowledge creation and utilization (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Al-Hawemdeh, 2003 and Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009) and is therefore referred to as the 'Knowledge Economy'. Throughout the world, intangibles such as intellectual capital and knowledge assets have been recognised as important resources for organisations in the struggle to stay competitive (Snyder & Wenger, 2000; Conneley & Kelloway, 2003).

The types of organisation for whom knowledge is especially important, are knowledge-intensive organisations such as consultancy firms. Firms whose employees embody the organisations core service through their internal expertise in a given area (Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009). These organisations are increasingly trying to manage their knowledge pool across their entire operation, which is quite often spread across several nations (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009 and Ajmal, Helo & Kekäle, 2010).

1.1 Managing Knowledge through IT

Fortunately, the development of information technology has brought along opportunities to communicate and distribute knowledge independent of time and geographical distance, e.g. through intranets, databases etc. The development and use of technology, in the pursuit of organisation-wide knowledge sharing (KS), is something that has been identified as an important enabler by several scholars (Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003; Connelly & Kelloway, 2003 and Ajmal, Helo & Kekäle, 2010).

As a player on the global market, the Danish based consultancy engineering company Ramboll is also focusing on knowledge as a resource and wants to distinguish itself and its services from its competitors through the ability to combine global expertise with local presence.

In the past year the Ramboll Group, the executive part of the organisation, has launched an internally developed KS platform called RamLink, which is intended to increase KS across the whole organisation. Ramboll's success is dependent on the organisation's ability to win projects through

tenders. In this process, access to information and knowledge gained from past projects is an important asset. The RamLink system contains user generated information about the organisation's previous projects, lessons learned and customer value all of which are intended to help Ramboll gain an advantage in the bidding process. Additionally, employees have their personal CV in the system, which is accessible to all their colleagues. The purpose of this is to make the expert knowledge of Ramboll employees, accessible to the whole organisation thereby facilitating a global flow of knowledge. The RamLink platform was launched across all the business units with great anticipation and presented a change for employees; they are now urged to spend the time needed to provide detailed information about their own knowledge and the lessons learned from their projects.

Currently, more than a year after the launch of their knowledge sharing platform, Ramboll is struggling with the low quality of content on the system and the reluctance to take ownership of it locally in the organisation's country business units. The corporate team behind RamLink has used the time after the launch of the system to configure the technical specifications of the platform so that it meets requirements that have been suggested by the different country business units. This has resulted in several updates of the system, each launched with the hope of increasing the quality of data. Furthermore, the Ramboll Group have attempted to improve and facilitate ownership through bilateral meetings with each business unit, where local management is made aware of areas where they do not meet expectations concerning the implementation of the KS platform. The problems concerning ownership and data quality however persist, and the Ramboll Group is still working on improving the employees' use of the system, and the quality of the content, which the users contribute.

1.2 A Common Problem

The problem of limited use of IT-based knowledge platforms is however not something which Ramboll is facing alone. Along with the trend of implementing sophisticated technologies, many multinational organisations struggle with reluctance amongst the employees who are meant to use it. In their qualitative study of knowledge management in international consultancy firms, Ambos and Schlegelmilch found that in spite of having very sophisticated IT systems available to them, 95 per cent of respondents still preferred their local network (2009). Connelly & Kelloway attribute this to an over-emphasis on purchasing, designing and installing such systems as this is an easy way to address the KS challenge (2003). What is then often left behind, is the cultural and social aspects of KS – a factor that some scholars see as having an important impact on KS (Park, 2009). When considering that the RamLink team has spent substantial efforts on meeting the technical

requirements of local business units for the system, it is possible to attribute local resistance towards RamLink to more social and cultural factors.

Given that Ramboll is an organisation operating in multiple geographical and cultural settings, culture and social processes surrounding KS becomes highly relevant. In the organisation's knowledge management strategy, the organisation touches upon this subject when referring to a shared culture:

'The foundation upon which all of our knowledge is based is Ramboll Fundamentals, which constitutes our culture, our values, our history and our combined intellect. All Ramboll employees must possess this knowledge.' (Appendix A, page 10).

Here, Ramboll is referring to an overall organisational culture that the organisation's employees need to possess. This in turn, should help ensure that KS is valued and practiced across the whole organisation. In spite of Ramboll's attempt to connect KS with an overall culture and a particular mindset, the employees in the different country business units have not fully adopted the new practice of sharing knowledge across the organisation, using the RamLink platform. This indicates that Ramboll's various units around the world have a different sense of what KS is in the organisation.

If the local organisations' ownership of the RamLink platform is not improved, there is a chance that the system will end up as a failed investment for the Ramboll organisation. At the moment, the various country business units are moving in different directions in terms of ambitions for the use of the platform, which does not foster KS across the Ramboll organisation. This indicates that the different organisational units do not have the same perception of how important KS is for the Ramboll organisation as a whole. Instead of excelling when it comes to KS, an unsuccessful RamLink platform will not only result in a financial loss (the resources spent on designing it), but it could also pull Ramboll in the opposite direction, damaging the organisation's ability to employ global knowledge locally.

1.3 Thesis Research Question

With the challenges concerning the RamLink platform and KS in the Ramboll organisation described above and as a point of departure, we pose the following research question:

'Given the substantial efforts to meet the technical specifications for Ramboll's knowledge sharing platform, why are employees still reluctant to use it?'

Through the posed research question, our aim with the present thesis may be described as being of a positive nature (Hunt, 1978), as we are primarily interested in understanding and explaining the current situation at Ramboll; *what is*. However, our research also holds a normative aspect, as we will use our findings to provide the organisation with important areas of focus; *what ought to be*.

- The positive aspect derives from our wish to explore and understand the processes which influence employees when presented with a wish from the organisation to share their knowledge through an ICT platform such as RamLink
- The normative ambitions of the study lies in our ambition to use the positive findings of the study to provide Ramboll and the RamLink team with some key processes which need to be addressed in order to facilitate local ownership of the system in the organisation's various business units.

To further help set the scene for the thesis, we will now present a literature review of empirical studies that have also dealt with our area of interest; the cross section between KS and information communication technology. Through the literature review, we will obtain a clearer picture of the various themes that influence how and if employees adopt a new technology that is meant to facilitate KS.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

In recent literature; KS has become the corner-stone of many organisations' knowledge management (KM) strategies. Organisations today seem to agree upon the importance of capturing and sharing knowledge. As a result, organisations are today mutually investing large amounts of money and time in information/communication technology systems (ICTS), in the hope of capturing and sharing their vital knowledge. Tampoe explains that the main reason for introducing these ICTS is that they can empower organisational knowledge by providing the tools needed for boosting KS skills (1996; Hendriks, 1999).

To shed some light on the problem area of the present thesis, we will use the following literature review to present previous empirical studies that have dealt with the challenges arising in the cross section between ICTS and the practices of KS. In order to provide the reader with an overview of the literature; the review will be divided into the main factors which the literature has identified as having an influence on ICTS and KS.

2.1 The Role of Management

In this particular literature review, we will present factors that previous studies ascribe significant influence when it comes to KS and the implementation of an ICT. According to Amal, Helo and Kekäle these so called factors that either facilitate or impede KS, are very much a result of how they are managed. They suggest that it is more appropriate to address these factors either as 'influencing factors' or 'affecting factors'. In other words, it is the level of management or treatment of the various factors being considered that determine their failure or success (2009)

We do in fact see management as an influencing factor, yet one that relates to all of the factors that will be presented below. The management of these may well have an influence and it is our intention to shed light on how these specific factors unfold in the Ramboll context. By doing so, we hope to be able to provide Ramboll with some key focus areas through which the organisation can facilitate KS. When presenting these influential factors, we will divide them into those directly and those indirectly influenced by management.

2.2 Factors Influenced Directly by Management

2.2.1 Technology

Technology is indeed a factor influencing the field between KS and ICT. Scholars preoccupied with KS and employees reactions to it, have stressed the need for the time required for effective employee instruction/training (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). However, as already stated in the introduction of our thesis, Ramboll has spent a significant amount of time and energy on ensuring the technological requirements are met. Now, what must be examined are the factors beyond the technology factors that can both facilitate and act as show-stoppers when an organisation wishes to increase organisation-wide KS through an ICT system.

2.2.2 Recognition

The term recognition covers both that of financial incentives and social recognition. In a study of KS in project business, Ambos and Schlegelmilch examined the perceived effectiveness of KS incentives and found that among the most influential were; reciprocity, recognition and appraisal (2009). Consequently, an organisation that actively recognises the value of its members' contributions to a KS initiative such as an ICT system, are more likely to be successful. From their data, Ambos and Schlegelmilch found that 28 out of 36 interviewees articulated a wish for feedback when contributing to the organisation's KS system, as the majority never received any word on whether or not their contributions were relevant or helpful (2009).

Recognition is also an issue touched upon by Paul Hendriks in his study on the influence of ICT concerning the motivation for KS (1999). The study states that employees generally share knowledge in the hope of receiving recognition and appreciation of their work (Hendriks, 1999). His query puts forward a presumption that if an organisation has already implemented technology that supposedly should help increase KS, yet with no significant improvement, then the first given reaction might be to begin addressing those factors influencing the motivation for the usage of an ICTS. McDermott and Carla O'Dell also suggest that organisations need to align reward and recognition initiatives as a way to promote and stress the importance of sharing knowledge (2001). Doing so can demonstrate that employees' time and energy in relation to KS do in fact count. They give an example of a recent study involving AMS¹, who believe KS to be the criterion that can help obtain the highest ratings on performance evaluation. By implementing so called annual awards such as; 'Knowledge in action' and 'Best practice awards', AMS were able to recognise employee contributions to its knowledge centres. As a result, such KS practices have become a general part of the day-to-day processes and

¹ American Management Systems (AMS) – A high technology and management consulting firm that assisted large organisations in their use of information technology.

Source: <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/american-management-systems-inc-history/>

performance appraisal systems (2001, p.81). However, Hendriks goes deeper and challenges this line of thought when he mentions that more careful consideration is needed. Rewards may very well work in the short term, but spread over a longer period of time the result is inadequate. It confuses means and goals; therefore a more fundamental question is to assess how ICTS affects the motivation of KS instead (Kempees, 1998; Hendriks, 1999). Again, as mentioned above and in connection with corporate culture, it is not about adapting these motivational factors to fit the organisation's KS approach, the key is to customise the KS approach to the given culture or motivation.

2.3 Factors Influenced Indirectly by Management

2.3.1 Culture

Although the issue of culture has gained substantial momentum in academic literature in recent years, the important role that culture plays in the knowledge arena has largely been ignored by IT implementation researchers (Cooper & Robey 1995; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000).

Indeed, there does seem to be diverging opinions on how culture can actually influence the management of knowledge. In fact, a number of researchers have found no real evidence supporting national culture having an effect on KM practices (Simonin, 1999 & Jensen, Szulanski, 2004; Liu, 2009). On the other hand, Holden is very critical of those viewpoints that ignore national culture and its influence on KM (2001; Liu, 2009). Excluding the influences of national and regional culture can have serious consequences as they undercut the potential effectiveness in global applications (Pauleen, Murphy, 2005; Liu, 2009).

This particular aspect of concern seems to occur repeatedly within recent *knowledge* literature, as the balance between IT and the culture of the organisation are often unevenly distributed. Put simply, the increasing use of IT does not result in productive KS; an even match between the organisations' culture and IT innovation needs to be present – if not, it is more than likely that failure will prevail (Robey, 1997; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000). Researchers within the field are now heavily emphasising the importance of social aspects, i.e. the people and the culture. KS is about those employees who take part and interact with the available systems, it is not merely the existence of an ICTS (Kirsner, 1999; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000). In a more recent study, McDermott and O'Dell clarify the importance of organisational culture when dealing with KM. Their central findings suggest that: "*however strong your commitment and approach to KM, your culture is stronger*" (p.77, 2001). They further argue that organisations that wish to successfully implement KM must not try to alter their culture to fit their KM approach. Rather, they must build their KM approach to fit the culture.

In sum, what they conclude is; there is no one correct way to get employees to share knowledge, instead there are countless different ways – it depends on the organisations' style and values.

Another aspect that is mentioned in KS literature is national culture. An article put forward by Kaps (2011) in the Open Journal of Knowledge Management illustrates that: it is not only the company culture that needs to be considered, just as important is how the company culture is influenced by national culture and by the individual cultures of its employees. Referring to the work of Gorelick, the study claims that it is the interdependence of people, processes and systems that are embedded within a culture (2005; Kaps, 2011). Culture influences people when cultural differences come into play; processes are influenced when having to follow strict guidelines and systems when it comes to accepting new technologies. Other areas related to culture such as; communicational style, organisational power, language and trust have also been identified as additional key challenges to KS. Trust has especially received a great deal of attention within the KM field, as it is a culture of trust that enables KS and learning to take place at all. Without trust, employees will feel reluctant to share their own learning or valuable stories with others (Kaps, 2011). McKenna, also contributes to the importance of trust, as he states that trust has an effect on greater creativity, commitment, professional satisfaction, and better performance – not only for the individual but also for the organisation as a whole (2002; Kaps, 2011).

2.3.2 Social Interaction

An interesting issue relating to KS and the implementation of ICTs is the aspect of social interaction. In the classical literature on KM, a substantial amount of importance is put on the assumption that KS is a practice involving social interaction. Well known scholars within the field, such as Davenport & Pruzak, have repeatedly underlined that for knowledge to flow, people need to interact with one another; e.g. through face-to-face communication (1998). Here, personal relationships, pre-existing acquaintances and physical proximity played an important role. In a study of employees' participation in virtual KS, Ardichvili, Page and Wentling's findings indicate that social interaction also plays a part when it comes to ICTs (2003). From their interviews with 30 employees in a large international organisation, their findings showed that employees were more likely to use their personal networks and pre-existing networks instead of turning to the available virtual KS community (Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003). The study points out that within the organisation, management needs to underline that new KS initiatives are not put in place as a substitution for existing networks, rather they need to be seen as something that can support them.

2.3.3 Employee Perceptions

Another recurring theme in the study of ICT based KS initiatives, is what can be labelled as *employee* perceptions. The term covers a number of different formulations found in the literature that all focus on how employees in an organisation experience and interpret what happens around them. An example here, is that of *perceived management* support put forward by Connelly & Kelloway in their study; 'employees' perceptions of a KS culture' (2003). As such, what management believes and claims when it comes to KS initiatives such as a new ICT system has little legitimacy compared to how the employees actually perceive and interpret management's behaviour (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Employees do so, by looking for symbols, objects and acts that can help them make sense of what is going on. For management, it should not be a case of forcing or ordering employee's to share information, as this will result in a 'cut-throat sharing culture' (Davenport, 1994 in Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Management should show its support by involving itself, not only in the purchase, but also in the continued development and implementation of ICTS. That way, employees would be more than likely to acknowledge this support and act accordingly. Conversely, if employees perceive that management's support is lacking, then the opposite effect is likely to occur, resulting in a weak KS culture. Martinsons, admits that employees' perceptions concerning management's support for KS is a necessary focal point if an organisation is to create or maintain a positive KS culture (1993 in Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). An influencing factor that the literature sees as contributing to employees' perceptions of management's support is what we have labelled above, as recognition.

Having established how factors other than the technology itself influences KS and the use of ICT, we will now present our selected case where these factors may be in play. The case description will present the Ramboll organisation and the specific case of the organisation's attempt to facilitate organisation wide KS through an ICT platform; RamLink.

Chapter 3 - Case Description

In the following section, we will present the Ramboll case and elaborate on important aspects connected with the subject of KS in this particular organisation. Before venturing into the measures that Ramboll has taken in their approach to KS, a brief explanation of the organisation is set out below.

3.1 The Ramboll Organisation

Ramboll Ltd is a Danish-owned consultancy engineering company that employs approximately 10,000 people across 23 countries. The organisation operates across seven global markets, in the Buildings, Transport, Environment, Energy, Oil & Gas, Telecoms and Management Consulting sectors and is based on a three dimensional organisational structure with Country Business Units (vertical), Global Practices/Markets (horizontal) and Functional Support Services, such as Group HR, Finance etc. (overseen by Group Management). Group Knowledge & Service Area Development, the department responsible for overseeing and facilitating KS across the organisation, is also a part of the functional support services. Ramboll's organisational structure is illustrated below².

In recent years, the Ramboll organisation has experienced a rapid growth in size and revenue. A

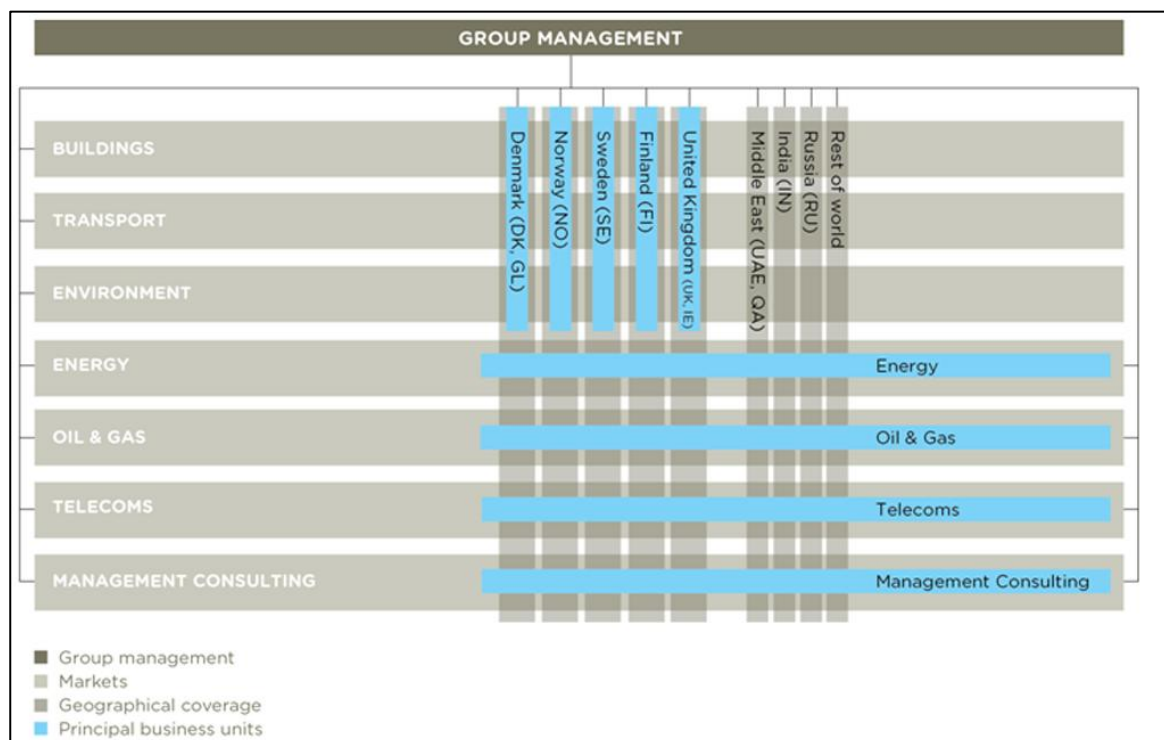


Figure 1 – Ramboll's Organisational Structure

² Source: <http://www.ramboll.com/about-us/organisation>

large part of the organisation's growth stems from the acquisition of other organisations such as the large Swedish competitor; Scandia Consult.³ As a consequence it has grown from approximately 2,000 to 10,000 employees and has moved from being a predominantly local Danish organisation to a multinational organisation.

3.2 A Project Based Organisation

As an organisation, Ramboll's core business lies in winning and executing consulting projects within its areas of expertise. Being a project based organisation, it carries with it some specific characteristics which have implications of KM and thus also KS. As such, project based organisations hold benefits arising from the innovative nature of a project tasks. Since projects often involve the development of new solutions and new processes, there are obvious opportunities for novel ideas to emerge and thus for learning to occur, thus enhancing the potential for innovation to take place within the organisation (Bresnen et al., 2003).

However, studies of KM and organisational learning in project based organisations have also emphasised the difficulties of learning from projects. Working in a context where learning is fundamentally project-based proposes multiple challenges. In most project based organisations, such as Ramboll, projects often differ substantially from each other and changes in personnel, and the required information results in the knowledge created being very context specific (Bresnen et al., 2003).

Hence, it becomes difficult to develop organisation wide processes that will facilitate the flow of knowledge between projects and units. With each project and client entailing new challenges, making the knowledge that employees obtain during such projects accessible and usable for the organisation as a whole becomes quite a challenge (Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009).

Also, in a project based organisation, most project tasks are carried out under specific time and budget constraints. Furthermore, the members of a project's team are usually needed for a new project and therefore recruited into a new project team as soon as possible, leaving little time for reflection upon the project that has just been completed. Given such constraints and pressure to get on with the next project, it is rarely possible for all team members to undertake a systematic review of a completed project and document the knowledge and experiences derived from it (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2008).

Since project-created knowledge is initially held only by project team members, it is necessary for organisations, such as Ramboll, to identify, capture, and make this knowledge available to the organisational memory of the company (Ajmal & Koskinen, 2003).

³ Source: <http://www.ramboll.dk/about%20us/historyandvalues>

To foster the dissemination of knowledge in the organisation, the Ramboll group has chosen to take a strategic approach to KS across the organisation - an approach which we will elaborate on in the following section.

3.3 Strategic Approach to Knowledge Management

In 2009, the Ramboll Group issued an internal strategy for knowledge management (Appendix A), outlining the organisation's approach to KS. In this strategy, the Ramboll Group stresses the importance of what they label as *Global Knowledge*.

The term "global knowledge" does not appear in academic literature as a defined term, but as Ramboll uses the term as a key issue in the organisation's ambitions for business success (Appendix A), it is relevant to look into their understanding of what it means. In the formulated strategy, the term *global knowledge* is introduced in the following way;

"The Ramboll business model, to be the local partner with the global knowledge, indicates the importance of our knowledge to our business and our ability to act in the market." (Appendix A, p.3)

In the strategy, it becomes clear that Ramboll's understanding of global knowledge is based on the assumption that the knowledge residing within and produced by their employees in the course of working with various engineering and consulting projects needs to be shared throughout the organisation. In their knowledge framework, employees, projects and networks are among the elements which together, possess and create the knowledge, which in turn forms the core of the organisation's competences (Appendix A, page 10-11). In the strategy, it is also pointed out that KS is not something which Ramboll is introducing as a novelty, but something which already exists locally in the organisation. What is new however is the decision behind the strategy in 2009 to employ KS strategically, hopefully making the organisation able to leverage the knowledge found across the organisation's various departments, units, services etc.

"If we manage our knowledge sharing efforts in an optimally way, we should, however, be able to increasingly utilise our global knowledge across the company in new varying combinations [...] This, we will do by focusing in information sharing about services, easing access to service managers and experts, and sharing best practice examples to follow." (Appendix A, p.6)

What especially needs to be noted in the excerpt is the word *across*, as Ramboll acknowledges, the need is for cross collaboration between units and sharing the knowledge found locally, so that it has the potential to benefit the whole organisation. From this, it is possible to conclude that Ramboll's use of the term *global knowledge* refers to the ability to make local knowledge in the different

corners of the organisation available to everyone so that it can be used by everyone in the organisation who may need it. *Global knowledge* therefore only becomes a reality for Ramboll when the geographical and culturally diverse units of the company are willing participants in KS. Ramboll's ambition to employ global knowledge locally thereby places Ramboll among the other consultant and project businesses who are increasingly trying to capitalise from their knowledge pool across their entire operation (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009 and Ajmal, Helo & Kekäle, 2010).

3.3.1 The RamLink Platform

As a direct result of Ramboll's KM strategy and to facilitate KS across Ramboll's business units around the world, the Ramboll Group decided to develop and implement an ICT platform for internal KS. The development of the RamLink platform was finalised and tested in August, 2010. Roll-out commenced in September of the same year, with Ramboll Finland being the first business unit to launch it. Roll-out of the system across the remainder of the organisation was completed during the first quarter of 2011.

The main purpose of RamLink is to support important business processes such as tendering, KS and networking. However, RamLink is also a tool where colleagues can link up and present themselves across the organisation. For managers, RamLink can also be used as a tool for forming new teams and learning about competencies available in other departments and projects. According to an internal intranet site concerning KM in Ramboll; the platform should be seen as a catalyst for personal opportunities by being the central area for showcasing expertise and competency within Ramboll.

The RamLink platform is based on *people* and *projects*. *People*, refers to each employee's personal page on RamLink, where it is possible to connect with and follow colleagues across the organisation and share ones personal knowledge and professional interests with others across the organisation. Similarly, employees can promote themselves through their CV, which is accessible to everyone throughout the Ramboll organisation. *Projects*, refers to project profiles on RamLink, where past and present projects are presented. The project profiles are meant to inspire fellow employees embarking on a similar project and aid the entire Ramboll organisation in the tendering process, by making it easy to find relevant quality project references that are needed in a bidding process. Below, images of both the CV and Project page are provided:

RAMBOLL [Logo] [Icons] **HOME** MY PAGE PEOPLE PROJECTS CUSTOMISE HELP

MSL'S PROFILE Extract CV

Mette Søs Lassenen
Short name is **MSL**

Position: Group Director, Markets and Knowledge Management
Markets, Market Strategies, Knowledge Management, RamLink, Global Accounts, Group Networks, Innovation, and lots of other things...

Contact Info: Extension Number: 6049
Direct Phone:
Mobile Phone: +45 5161 6049
E-mail Address: MSL@ramboll.com
Video meeting: 8180042
Skype:

Local Employee id: 40018

Address: Street 1: Hannemanns Allé 53
Street 2:
City: 2300 København S
Country: Denmark

Work place: RG-Ørestad
Room number: 7103

Calendar (01/07/2012) ◀ 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 ▶

Key Competencies: is responsible for Market Development and knowledge management (KM) across the Ramboll Group. She is responsible for corporate KM, including Ramboll's KM platform, RamLink. She works with strategy development (Markets and KM), and group-wide initiatives such as RamLink, Ramboll Networks, Global Accounts, etc. Prior to joining the Ramboll Group she served as senior expert in the areas of public administration reform and good governance with particular focus on anti-corruption and public procurement. She has served as team leader on numerous assignments for a variety of clients, including the EU, the World Bank, the OECD, Danida, Sida and DFID.

Areas of Responsibility: Markets and Knowledge Management

Business unit: RGR

Division: [RamGrp - 4900 \(Jens-Peter Saul\)](#)

Area: [Rambøll Gruppen - 4801 \(Jens-Peter Saul\)](#)

Department: [Executive Board CMO - 4407 \(Søren Holm Johansen\)](#)

Markets: [Functional Support Services](#) Knowledge management

Employment Date: 18/08/2008

Number of years in ramboll:

SEARCH Last search result

I am looking for?

Latest 25 days ago

Preparing user guide for RamLink statistics

I am currently working with?

METTE SØS LASSESEN

MSL'S PROFILE

MSL'S PROJECTS

MSL'S UPLOADS

MSL'S PEOPLE

MSL'S LOG

Employee profile on RamLink

RAMBOLL [Logo] [Icons] **HOME** MY PAGE PEOPLE PROJECTS CUSTOMISE HELP

PROJECT PROFILE

Waste-to-energy facility in the Isle of Man

Customer: Isle of Man Govt., DLGE
Project Manager: [Thomas Rand \(TR\)](#)
Period: 1997 - 2029
Project budget: 318,929
Location: Douglas, Isle of Man
Project web link:

PROJECT SUMMARY

Waste-to-energy facility in the Isle of Man

Follow

Ramboll, as lead consultant in the Ramboll/McCarthy JV, was the Client's Representative during the establishment of a new waste-to-energy facility in the Isle of Man. The facility produces 40,000 MWh electricity for the island's inhabitants and has been prepared for heat production. It has been...

SEARCH Last search result

isle of man

Latest 54 days ago

Preparing user guide for RamLink statistics

I am currently working with?

PROJECT UPLOADS

In Project Uploads, you can see an overview of items you wish to share with your colleagues who follow the project.

PROJECT TEAM

In the Project Team, you can see an overview of who are working on the project.

PROJECT LOG

2011/09/29 305 days ago
[Charlotte Boesen \(CB\)](#)
Project content is now ap ...

2011/09/29 305 days ago
[Charlotte Boesen \(CB\)](#)
Project language is now a ...

2011/09/29 305 days ago
[Charlotte Boesen \(CB\)](#)
Project has been sent for ...

Project Profile on RamLink

3.3.2 One Company

Another aspect worth mentioning in connection with Ramboll's decision to implement an ICT platform such as RamLink is the ambition that it will help the organisation to achieve its goal of becoming *One Company* – an important factor in the organisations competitive platform (Appendix B). The idea behind the 'One Company' concept is to capture the value of being a large organisation by proactively sharing and utilising the collective expertise and best practices across the organisation, as well as sharing work and resources whenever it is beneficial. Another important aspect of the 'One Company' is the Ramboll Group's wish for employees to share the same values and company culture under a common mindset (Appendix B, p.9).

3.3.3 Governance Organisation

At Group level, a so-called RamLink team oversees the progress of the system and decides on the technical specifications of the system. The structure of the RamLink organisation is outlined below.

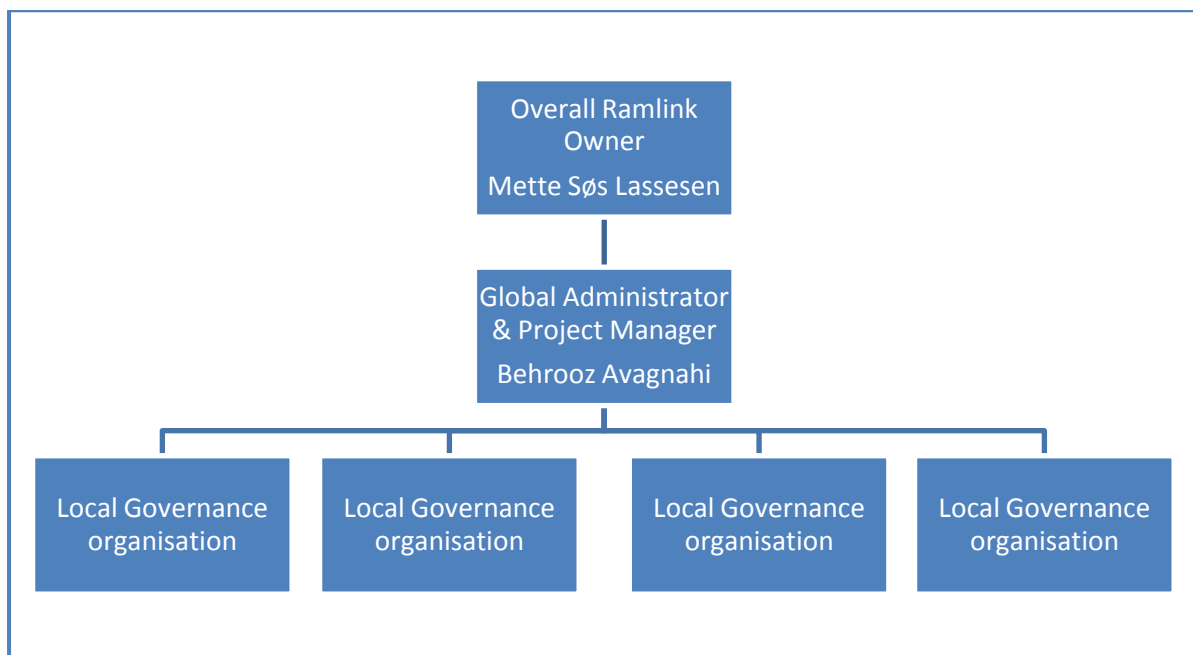


Figure 2: Overall Governance Organisation

In Ramboll, each Business Unit is run locally and responsible for making sure that the local organisation is developing in the strategic direction put forward by Ramboll Group HQ, Copenhagen. This is also the case regarding the RamLink platform. To facilitate implementation success, local governance organisations have been appointed in each business unit, consisting of a local system owner, daily operators and super users. The local organisations have the responsibility for ensuring the RamLink platform is firmly embedded to support existing business processes. It is however noteworthy, that the members of the local governance organisations do not have RamLink as their main focus in their jobs. Rather, it is an additional task given to them besides their main roles as

engineers, project managers etc. Below, we will outline the different roles in the local organisations and present their main responsibilities.

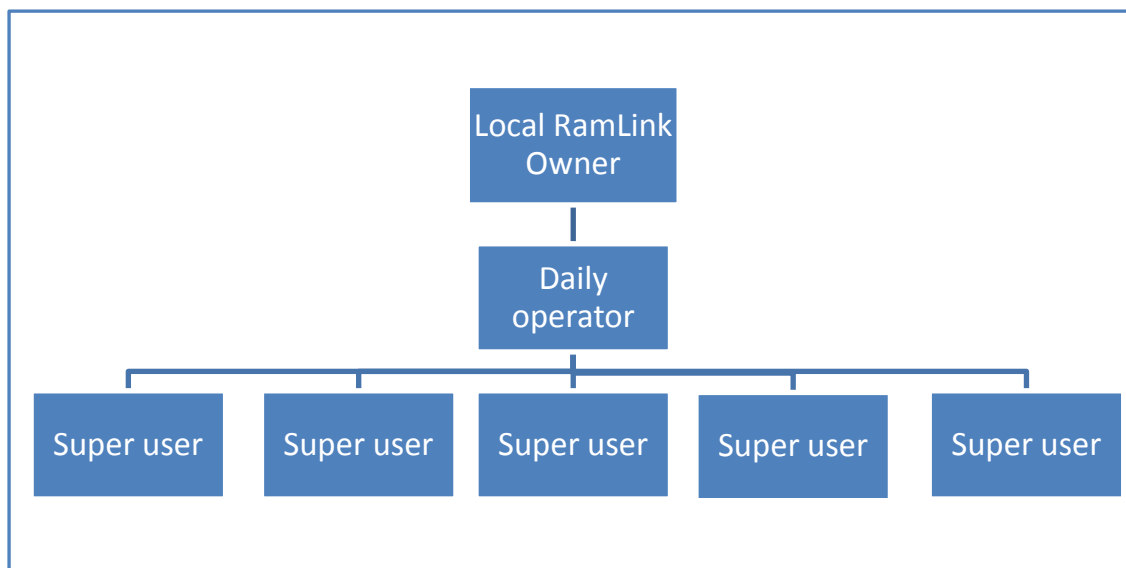


Figure 3 - Local RamLink Governance org.

Local owners

- ensure RamLink achieves the intended effect regarding business goals defined for the system
- have the overall responsibility for content and quality of data in RamLink within their own BU
- ensure an effective flow of information on RamLink to the daily operator, super users, project creators and people data maintainers, by attending training days, and being updated on the latest changes in RamLink
- ensure daily operators, super users and other people who are assigned to do tasks related to RamLink receive allocated time for their RamLink work activities

Daily operators

- keep the RamLink owner (BU) informed about RamLink operations and possible challenges
- are responsible for collecting feedback concerning bugs, functionality improvements and wishes from users, and registering them in an internal database.
- must contribute to the ongoing improvement of RamLink's functionality – and has the responsibility for an optimal RamLink operation in their own business unit

- must be able to provide first line support (try to solve the problem instead of just forwarding it to the RamLink team).

Super Users

- must keep the Daily Operator informed on possible challenges when using RamLink.
- are responsible for supporting the users in their own organisational unit or department.
- The number of super users in a local business unit depends on the size of that particular unit.

3.3.4 Current Challenges

A Vicious Circle

As stated in chapter 1, Ramboll is currently struggling with poor quality of data in spite of efforts to improve the technical specification. According to the RamLink project director, the issue of poor data quality results in what can best be described as a vicious circle. When users seek information in the RamLink platform, they are met with a high amount of projects and employee profiles that are of little use because of the poor quality. This results in frustration towards the system by users and thereby causing them to abandon it as a source of knowledge. Consequently, they may also stop contributing to the system themselves, thereby adding to the problem of poor data quality (Preliminary interview with RamLink Project Director, Behrooz Arvanaghi, 27. March, 2012)

Who Are We Looking for?

In our preliminary conversation with the RamLink project director, it also became apparent that Ramboll sees a need to obtain acceptance from the wide majority of the organisation's employees when it comes to the RamLink platform. As the system is highly dependent on contributions from the employed consultants, who are the majority of employees, the team behind RamLink finds it very important to reach a common understanding across the organisation where KS and RamLink is perceived as something that benefits the organisation. Up until now, there has been a focus on securing commitment and understanding in the local governance organisations described above. However, in our preliminary conversations, Behrooz Arvanaghi also underlined the need to reach regular employees, who are in fact the most important users. He referred to *trendsetters*, who act as sources of inspiration for fellow employees, but who are not necessarily identifiable through an influential position or title in the organisation. This makes them hard to identify, and thereby recruit as advocates for the RamLink platform (Preliminary interview with RamLink Project Director, Behrooz Arvanaghi, 27. March, 2012).

Eighty In, Twenty Out

A relevant challenge that is connected with the notion of gaining support for RamLink across the majority of Ramboll's employees, is a point made by Senior Project Manager for RamLink; Tine Schjelde Møberg. In a preliminary interview, Tine describes the current scenario for RamLink, where approximately 80 per cent of users of the system are contributing to the system with data, whereas around only 20 per cent of users are actually extracting data from the system for use in tendering processes etc. According to Tine, this makes it hard for many of the people using the system to see what their efforts regarding RamLink actually result in (Preliminary interview with Senior Project Manager for RamLink, Tine Schjelde Møberg, 4. April, 2012).

Having presented the Ramboll case and elaborated upon the important aspects connected with KS. We will now present the methods that will be used to conduct our research and answer our posed research question.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

This section of our thesis accounts for the choices of approach, research design and those methods this study will adopt and apply. The objective of this methodological section is to identify the *recipe* or set of *guidelines* to be used in the unfolding and presentation of this thesis. Yet, the main emphasis throughout this section will be to discuss the implications behind our methodological choices and considerations. In short, this methodological section will clarify:

- *what* we are attempting,
- *why* we are doing it and
- *how* we are going to do it.

4.1 Research Approach

Since the core aim with this study is to discover and answer why employees at Ramboll are reluctant to use the RamLink ICT platform, a qualitative research strategy will be applied. This includes an inductive approach and a social constructivist position. The study will employ semi-structured interviews with individual employees within Ramboll's business units in Sweden and Finland. These particular country business units have been selected during our preliminary interviews with the Project Director and Senior Project Manager of RamLink, where it was established that these are experiencing most challenges when it comes to RamLink (Preliminary interview with Behrooz Arvanaghi, 27 March, 2012 and preliminary interview with Tine Schjelde Møberg, 4 April, 2012)

The research design applied for this study is that of the *case study design*. It is our collaboration with Ramboll that has enabled us to explore specific parts of the KS activities within the organisation. Not only does our choice of employing the case study design enable us to explore Ramboll organisation in-depth, i.e. as a context specific case, our results might shed light on similar issues found in other consultancy firms. This is also known as the claim of generalisation or as Flyvbjerg would term it: '*through the power of the good example*' (2006). Since the issue of generalisation is a much debated matter within qualitative research literature, we find it necessary to elaborate further upon it when we reach the section concerning critique of qualitative methods.

4.2 A Qualitative Approach

As has been clarified above in our research approach, the present thesis is based on a qualitative research strategy. We argue that the qualitative research approach sufficiently supports the

direction this study will take. As it is our research question that will act as the first of many building blocks throughout this study; it not only has to withstand the enormous weight of many other building blocks, but also act as the connecting link throughout this study. Implementing the qualitative approach is therefore very much a result of our research question with which we wish to explore *why* employees at Ramboll are reluctant to use the recently modified ICTs platform. Exploring the *why* naturally invites the use of rich-data, i.e. words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2008). Though, we also find that numbers, to some extent, matter in a study such as this one, as the number of interviews and relevant amount of sources are issues that qualitative researchers need to consider.

It must also be noted that it is not only our proposed research question that invites the sole use of the qualitative approach. We also need to consider that our literature review and the complex nature of the term *Knowledge Sharing* have also played a significant role in our choice of implementing the qualitative approach rather than the quantitative. When addressing how our literature review has influenced our choice of approach, we found it relevant to first of all investigate which methods had been employed in various empirical studies that we found had relevance for this study. As has already been established, the majority of the various studies address those challenges arising in the cross section between ICTs and the practice of KS. Yet, as expected, it soon became clear that ICTs are heavily influenced by context specific elements such as culture and those people using them. As a result, qualitative research methods, e.g. interviewing is by far the preferred choice for data generation. Consequently, examining complex employee perceptions and organisational culture with the use of quantitative methods, e.g. a questionnaire would have proven to be difficult and far less appropriate, due to the richness and subjectivity of the issues in focus. Therefore, if a quantitative approach had been applied in this study, it would have been difficult for us to capture just how abstract and complex the term KS is and for that matter, why Ramboll's employees may have a hard time relating to it. We further argue *for* the qualitative approach, as we also need to consider that even though Ramboll's employees often practice KS, they may not be aware of it. Although being a term that often appears in the strategic considerations and aspirations of an organisation, the term KS is not something that employees would use or reflect upon in their daily work lives. Therefore, we find a qualitative approach to the present thesis fitting, as rich and detailed data concerning local work practices in Ramboll will give us a deeper understanding of how the rather abstract term KS unfolds. In addition to this, we also find it relevant to mention *how* and *why* the qualitative research strategy has certain advantages for this particular study and are listed below, in no particular order:

- as it is the social world we are interested in, i.e. individual thoughts and perceptions of the interviewees at Ramboll – it is the qualitative research method that allows us to perceive the social world through their eyes
- we are able to gain detailed explanations of how and why specific contexts are constructed
- the qualitative research method allows us to focus on multiple subjective realities, rather than objective truths (Lee, 1999)
- new themes are able to arise during our qualitative interviews, therefore the essence of flexibility becomes all the more apparent (Bryman, 2008)

The relevance of the above mentioned advantages allows us to focus on rich individual interpretations and meanings and not objective truths. Nevertheless, a number of researchers within the field of social science find quantitative research methods more convincing, since replication and generalisation is more easily achievable (Bryman, 2008). It is possible that this is a tendency that simply discusses qualitative research in the ways that it differs from quantitative research, i.e. qualitative research ends up being criticised in the light of what quantitative research is not (Bryman, 2008). We argue that our qualitative research study will focus on a specific context, where our findings could very well prove to be an ‘exemplifying case’ (Flybjerg, 2006) as our literature review has made us aware that numerous organisations world-wide are also facing such challenges with their own KS activities/platforms. Consequently, our findings could easily be related to scenarios in other organisations, which as a result could to some extent make generalisation feasible.

4.3 Case Study Design

Our choice of research design is that of a case study, as we wish to conduct a detailed examination of one singular case. Our aim therefore is to intensively examine the multifaceted nature of our case, in a thorough, holistic and in-depth manner (Gilbert, 2008). As it is the employees at Ramboll we will be interviewing, they naturally become our main focus as they are real life examples, i.e. it is their own understandings and experiences of KS and the Ramlink platform we wish to capture. This is also an issue Yin suggests by examining the case through the *why* and *how* perspectives (1994). Additionally, the case study will also focus on a subject that is either extremely atypical or greatly representative (Burns, 1997), with our study leaning more towards the latter; since numerous multinational organisations also seem to be facing reluctance amongst their employees concerning the limited use of IT-based knowledge platforms (see Chapter 1 and 2). For this particular reason, our study could very easily act as an ‘exemplifying case’ for similar cases within the same area of

research. As previously mentioned in our research approach through *'the power of the good example'* (Flybjerg, 2006).

4.3.1 Case Selection

There are several explanations behind our selection of Ramboll as a case example. The most obvious relates to the present challenges that Ramboll is facing concerning the RamLink platform and the given challenges arising in the cross section between RamLink and the actual practice of sharing knowledge. It is this particular cross section between the two that paves the way for our choice of the case study design. Additionally, since the RamLink platform was launched in September 2010; the time frame from the launch up until now has been relatively short. As a consequence, we further find Ramboll to be a relevant case as interviewee opinions and experiences will still be very much fresh in mind. Lastly, even though it is not our aim; we also see the Ramboll case as a being able to exemplify similar circumstances present in other consultancy firms that are also pursuing organisation-wide KS through the use of their own ICT.

4.4 Methodological Implications

4.4.1 Inductive/Deductive Approach

As we are not concerned with testing a hypothesis or existing theory, we find an inductive approach to theory suiting for our particular study. Our intention is to make the most of the rich data we have access to, and seek a deeper understanding of the specific situation Ramboll finds itself in. However, having this in mind does not automatically rule out the deductive approach, as the inductive/deductive stances are not as unambiguous as they sometimes are presented to be (Bryman, 2008). This is also put forward by Bryman himself in his own words; *"just as deduction entails an element of induction, the inductive process is likely to entail a modicum of deduction"* (2008) - which is also very much the case for this study. In the process of conducting both preliminary and our main interviews, we will gain a new understanding and perhaps new ideas as how to explain the phenomena theoretically. As a result, this study will have elements of a mutually inductive and deductive nature, which corresponds well with Bryman's viewpoint that the deductive and inductive stances are more in line with tendencies than 'hard-and-fast distinctions' (2008, p.13).

4.4.2 Epistemological and Ontological Reflections

As our main objective is to discover why employees at Ramboll are reluctant to use the recently modified KS platform – individual employee subjective meanings naturally become a prime data source; as a result our epistemological stance therefore takes on that of *interpretivism*. In other words, it is how they, as individuals, understand and interpret KS and the RamLink platform that has

great relevance for our research. Our data cannot be extracted from objective facts, but as subjective interpretations that can only be found in the minds of our interviewees (Bryman, 2008). It is therefore the essence of subjectivity that will play the key role in accessing the applicable data for this study (Guba, 1990).

Additionally, as this study focuses on the employees' own individual interpretations our intention is not to locate one objective truth. Rather, we are examining the social world, social actors and how they are constructed, i.e. it is the perceptions and actions of each employee that we wish to capture (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, will our ontological stance take on that of *constructionism*, which has also been referred to as taking on the position of either *constructivism* (Bryman, 2008) or *relativism* (Guba, 1990). Constructionism illustrates human knowledge as the outcome of human activity; it can never be considered as ultimately true, rather it is problematic in its nature and is in constant change (Guba, 1990). From this, our study will also centre upon such multiple understandings, rather than searching for one objective truth.

4.4.3 Addressing the Critique of Qualitative Research

The above mentioned advantages are not likely to be found in a study holding a more quantitative approach. However, a study having a qualitative stance, which is apparent here, increases the likelihood of a critique originating from quantitative researchers. Therefore, in the following we shall briefly account for the four main areas of critique that Bryman (2008) has collected.

Qualitative research is accused of being too subjective and impressionistic (Bryman, 2008). It depends heavily on the researcher's frequent unsystematic viewpoints of what is important and significant. A tendency to create personal bonds is common, which as a result may lead to biased results. Our intention will not be to engage in any additional relations that do not have direct relevance for the actual interview. The only form of interaction during the interviews will be between the individual employee and us as the interviewers.

The second critique addresses the replication of a qualitative study. As it is the researcher that chooses what to include and where the centre of focus should be, it becomes almost impossible to either conduct a true replication or restudy (Bryman, 2008). To some extent, we do find parts of this critique appropriate, however it is not our intention to conduct this study with replication as our main focus. Even so, we argue that our study will, to a certain extent, be replicable, as existing theory and a provided interview guide can act as directing tools for others wanting to embark on a similar study.

A further issue that is often debated is that of generalisation. It is often argued that qualitative investigations and their findings tend to be too restricted in their nature (Bryman, 2008). To put this specific critique into perspective, our choice of the case study design for this study would therefore be inappropriate, since it is argued that a single case study cannot be representative of all other cases. However, in our defence we argue that we are not aiming to generalise on the basis of our own findings, instead we lean more to the view put forward by Williams (2000), in which our study could produce *moderatum* generalisations – being the aspects in which the focus of enquiry, i.e. consultancy firms or similar organisations like Ramboll; ‘*can be seen to be instances of a broader set of a recognisable features*’ (Williams, 2000; Bryman, p. 215).

The closing critique addresses the transparency of the qualitative research study that is not being transparent enough (Bryman, 2008). Its main concern queries how the qualitative researcher manages to arrive at his/her conclusion and how the selection of participants, e.g. for the semi-structured interviews are decided upon. Overcoming this critique to the full is something we are unable to do. Yet, in a following section, we will elaborate upon why certain groups of employees in Ramboll Sweden and Finland have been chosen as the most relevant for our particular study.

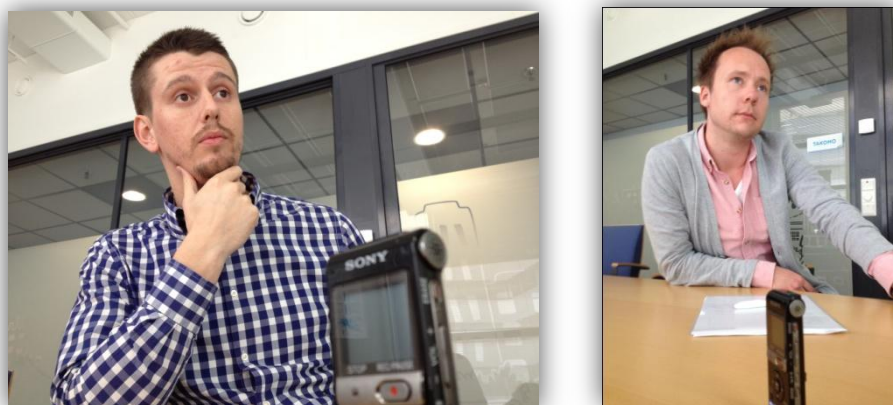
4.5 Generation of Data

As the main source of data in this thesis will be based upon qualitative interviews with a range of Ramboll's employees, we find it important to use the term *generation of data*. As such, our data is not lying around, ready for us to collect. Instead, our data is a product of our conversations with the employees at Ramboll, and therefore generated through our interaction with them.

4.5.1 The Semi-structured Interview

As it has been established our study is based on a qualitative research approach, therefore our intention is to generate in-depth knowledge mutually having “*rich and detailed answers*” (Bryman, 2008 p.437). We are interested in gaining the interviewee’s point of view concerning the Ramlink platform and the challenges it is facing at present. Therefore, by implementing the semi-structured approach our interviews have room to be flexible, i.e. they can easily respond to the direction the interviewee wishes to take the interview (Bryman, 2008). In addition, the semi-structured interview is also a well established method for gaining access to employee’s having a certain amount of authority - also known as *business elites* (Fotana & Frey, 1994). This is also an aspect that has relevance for our study, since our aim is to interview Ramboll’s project managers that have the responsibility for managing projects.

A final aspect that supports our decision to employ the semi-structured approach is; it allows for new themes to arise during the interviews - themes which we as researchers were not prepared for or had not foreseen prior to or during our preparations of the interview (Bryman, 2008). Still, our interviews will follow a certain structure through the aid of our interview guide (Appendix C); ensuring our desired themes are covered. However, there will still be plenty of room for flexibility and leeway due to the open-ended nature of our questions.



Conducting our Semi-structured Interviews

4.5.2 The Interview Guide

The open-ended nature of our questions will allow our interviewees to express their own interpretation of their social world. Again, this will hopefully allow us to capture and utilise view points of a rich and in-depth nature (Bryman, 2008), which will assist us in answering our research question. Moreover, we will use *comprehensive* and *relevant* language in our interviews, as we find it relevant to comply with Ramboll's organisational language: English (Bryman, 2008).

Lastly, whether it is quantitative or qualitative interviews a study decides to employ, it is always important not to ask leading questions (Bryman, 2008). When leading questions are used, the generated data in the study will be a representation of the interviewer and not the interviewee - this can have a negative effect on the final results of the interview. In fact, Kvale states that the data will be corrupt and insufficient for research. Therefore, our intention is to ask questions of a more probing, introducing and following-up nature (1996).

Our interview guide will be based on several sources within our problem area; originating from the initial stages of our research. Doing so enables us to generate relevant data for answering our proposed research question. The following areas below will therefore form the base for our semi-structured interview guide:

- initial research of similar empirical studies addressing organisational knowledge sharing and the use of ICT
- preliminary conversations with RamLink Project Director Behrooz Arvanaghi and Senior Project Manager for the platform Tine Møberg
- prior knowledge of theoretical concepts such as identification, meaning and sensemaking

Our decision to employ the semi-structured interview also allows for any additional themes that may arise during the interview process; themes that we had not accounted for in our initial research. In addition, as our interview guide will also be subject to existing theory, our intention is not to solely rely on our chosen theoretical concepts whilst the interview is taking place. Rather, our objective leans more to an exploration of why employees are showing little interest in the RamLink platform, i.e. it is the employees' individual views and expressions that we wish to capture. However, our theoretical concepts can still be incorporated into our interview guide, as they can help relate to our particular field of interest in an indirect fashion.

4.5.3 Selecting Our Respondents

For the selection of respondents, it is relevant to consider the specific context that Ramboll finds itself in. As the purpose of the RamLink system is to facilitate organisation-wide KS, it is important the selected interviewees represent those employees that Ramboll needs to share knowledge. Therefore, we have chosen to interview two project managers and two 'regular' consulting engineers in the Swedish and Finnish business units. These types of employees are highly relevant for Ramboll and the success of the RamLink system, as it is them who execute the projects that make-up the core of Ramboll's business – projects in which the local knowledge that Ramboll wishes to spread across the organisation is generated. Additionally, a requirement for the interviewees was that they had a minimum of two years experience within the Ramboll organisation in order for them to have enough routine and thereby be valid and representative interviewees for our research. In the course of our interviews, one of our participants from the Swedish business unit sadly had to cancel the interview due to a high workload. Sadly, we were not able to secure an additional interviewee within the project period – resulting in only three interviews with employees from Ramboll Sweden. As our interviewees were promised anonymity, each has been assigned a letter referring to either Sweden (S) or Finland (F) and a random number. Further, we have provided only the market in which their department belongs, yet not the actual name of the specific department. An overview of the interviewed employees is listed below:

Table 1 - List of Interviewees

Business Unit	Alias	Position	Market	Years Employed
Sweden	S1	Project Manager	Transport	2,5
Sweden	S2	Engineer	Buildings	4
Sweden	S3	Head of Department / Project Manager	Transport	8
Finland	F1	Engineer	Environment	4
Finland	F2	Engineer	Environment	2,5
Finland	F3	Project Manager	Environment	6
Finland	F4	Project Manager	Transport	10

Our choice of interview participants does not include managers from the various levels within the Ramboll organisation. This must not be interpreted as though we do not ascribe any significance to the importance of leadership within the cross section between KS and the use of ICT. In this particular context, we find 'regular' employees' experiences and perceptions of leadership more important than those of the higher level managers themselves. It is not the intentions and explanations residing within the minds of top management that define the choices and actions among the local employees. Far more importantly it is the way regular employees perceive and make sense of management's actions. It is for this reason we argue that our choice of project managers and engineers is the most relevant choice of participants.

4.5.4 Conducting our Interviews



Inside the Helsinki office

The time and place for the respective interviews were coordinated via email and in accordance to the interviewees' convenience. As we found it important to conduct the interviews face-to-face and familiarize ourselves with the local environment, we arranged trips to Ramboll Finland's office in Helsinki and Ramboll Sweden's office in Gothenburg. Our aim was to conduct all our interviews when at the respective offices, yet due to the participants' tight working schedule; such coordination was not possible. Therefore, we conducted the ones possible during our stay and the remaining interviews were then conducted via Ramboll's internal video conference system. This enabled us to maintain our aim of

face-to-face interviews. The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission and lasted approximately between 1-2 hours. The interviews were conducted in English as all were comfortable with this. Each interview has been transcribed word for word, with 'I' representing the interviewer and **S1**, **S2**, etc. representing the given interviewee. When the interviewee refers to a situation with direct speech, it will be marked by '...!.



Inside the Gothenburg office

Chapter 5 - Theoretical Framework

5.1 Approaching Our Choice of Theory

In this chapter, the theoretical framework employed in the analysis will be explained in detail, and will include two central dimensions containing various theoretical concepts. Having established the need for a social orientation in our literature review (chapter 2) and with our social constructivist position as an underlying approach; the purpose now is to present and elaborate on our view of KS as a predominantly social activity that influences the use of an ICT platform. In order to explore how KS unfolds as a social practice, in this case within Ramboll Sweden and Finland, two main theoretical dimensions concerned with the social aspects within an organisation are put forward: 1) the social environment and 2) making sense of an ICT system will be outlined in more detail. The first dimension as indicated, will present KS as taking place in a social environment, where different interconnected determinants affect the way KS takes place. The second dimension draws on sensemaking theory and will enable us to look deeper into how employees make sense of things; in Ramboll's case, the RamLink platform. Although focusing on the individual, sensemaking can be regarded as a social process, thereby connecting our two dimensions. In the following section, we will start out with a distinction between KS and KM, as it is the act of *sharing* that is central to our area of interest.

5.1.1 Knowledge Sharing; a More Appropriate Term

In many academic articles, researchers appear to see KS and KM as the same and treat them as such, or without giving much reflection to the actual meaning or importance of the particular term *knowledge sharing*. We however see KS as a separate term, not equivalent to KM, and as being very important in an organisations pursuit of leveraging their combined knowledge pool. Some scholars also make this important distinction between sharing and management:

"KS is the deliberate act in which knowledge is made reusable through its transfer from one party to another. It is considered one of the main pillars of KM. For a KM initiative to succeed, a knowledge-sharing culture needs to be created and nurtured within the organisation" (Lee, 2002, page 1).

For any KM initiative to take off in an organisation, it requires the active participation by the organisational members to *share* their knowledge (Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003). Knowledge is in general, also when residing within the mind of a single employee, of value to the organisation of

employment. Only when *shared* with colleagues and thereby the organisation, can this knowledge turn into an organisation-wide benefit (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). Therefore, we argue that KS is a more appropriate term for our research, as we are interested in why employees at Ramboll are reluctant in sharing their knowledge by contributing to the organisations' ICT platform. Our aim now therefore, is to present our theoretical framework by elaborating on the social processes that affect KS in organisations.

However, before venturing into our theoretical framework, let us present the paradoxical observations within the general field of KM as put forward by Alvesson and Kärremann (2001), for it is these that have influenced our view of KS as being a social practice.

5.1.2 The Problem of Knowledge and Management

In their research article, Alvesson and Kärremann take a refreshingly critical approach to the general acceptance that KM has received in both academia and practice (2001). Firstly, they argue that the concept of knowledge, as referred to in the wide range of KM literature, '*is far too loose, ambiguous, and rich, and pointing in far too many directions simultaneously to be neatly organised, co-ordinated and controlled.*' (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001, page 1012). The problem stems from the fact that knowledge can take a wide variety of forms; encyclopaedic, procedural, explanatory, social, and so on. In the literature, knowledge is often seen as *tacit*, or embodied within people, making it hard to make it explicit and thereby sharable in an ICT system. In other cases, knowledge can take on a more objective form, for instance as procedures and guidelines, making it more easy to handle (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001 and Kalling & Styhre, 2003).

The main concern put forward by Alvesson and Kärremann however, emerges when we add the word *management* into the picture. In KM literature, management is predominantly taken for granted and not dealt with in an exhaustive manner. Alvesson and Kärremann do not discard the possibility of management playing a part, yet advises caution when relying too much on a management approach that speaks of control, streamlining and over-emphasises on technology and structure (2001). By adhering to classical management approaches, the KM discipline may well end up limiting the production and sharing of knowledge in organisations (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001). Within the social constructivist camp, researchers are instead advocating for an emphasis on knowledge, and the possible management of it as a highly social construct which revolves in and around social interaction, dialogue, negotiation, sensemaking and communities (Brown & Duguid, 1998; Brown & Duguid 2001 and Ardichvili, Page & Wentling, 2003). In fact, to a certain degree, they see KM as overlapping and perhaps merely re-labelling existing fields, such as organisational culture, motivation etc.

5.1.3 What Lies Beneath

Instead of being overly occupied with either of the two labelling words in *KM*, we argue that researchers must look at the above mentioned existing fields that influence *KM*; with the main one being organisational culture (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001). Although several authors emphasise culture, often through the concept of community, as a key component in *KM*, they seldom develop or explore it (Ruggles, 1998; Sarvary, 1999 in Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001). However, using our theoretical dimensions to highlight the social aspects of organisational culture will allow us to explore those areas which we believe need to be addressed in greater detail.

With the previously mentioned over-emphasis on the power of technology (2.2.1) and the critique of *KM* put forward by Alvesson and Kärreman (2001), we find it necessary to look at the cultural environment, or social world that unfolds within the organisation, hereby enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of why Ramboll is having problems in their efforts to employ *KS* in their organisation through an ICT platform. Although, it is also important to mention, we are not ignoring management as an influential entity, as its actions or non-actions can have an indirect or direct influence on how employees in organisations make sense of their daily work lives (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001 and Connelly & Kelloway, 2003).

5.2 Our Framework

KS is a concept that cannot easily be applied or forced onto an organisation in the hope that it will successfully take form in the present or long term. According to Gupta and Govindarajan all knowledge starts out as information, resulting in companies often regarding knowledge as being the same as information, with the result of turning towards technology as an easy fix (2000, and Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Yet, the sharing of knowledge is not merely about distributing information through databases or intranets, allowing 'search and retrieval' to flourish (Brown and Duguid, 1998). The central criterion that distinguishes knowledge from information is the aspect of social interaction or the social system within an organisation; something Gupta and Govindarajan refer to as 'social ecology' (2000). Stored information *can* be searched and retrieved from ICT systems and it may efficiently connect people in various geographical locations. However, an ICT platform used only for this particular purpose will be short lived; its sustainable advantage depends on the relationship between the technological apparatus and the social environment (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000).

It is precisely this aspect of incorporating an ICT system within an organisations' social ecology that has relevance for our thesis. Even though we have re-termed the 'ecology' part to 'environment' – we will follow the same line of thought that Gupta and Govindarajan put forward. They state that there are several determinants that contribute to an organisations social ecology; culture, structure, information systems, reward systems, processes, people and leadership (2000). As a result, we have also chosen several interconnected determinants that we believe contribute to the social environment of an organisation, they are as follows; *communities, employees' perception of management, local values, power & politics and reward & recognition*. As stated above, we will also be looking at how employees make sense of their environment by drawing on sensemaking theory. A simple overview of our theoretical framework can be visualised in the following way:

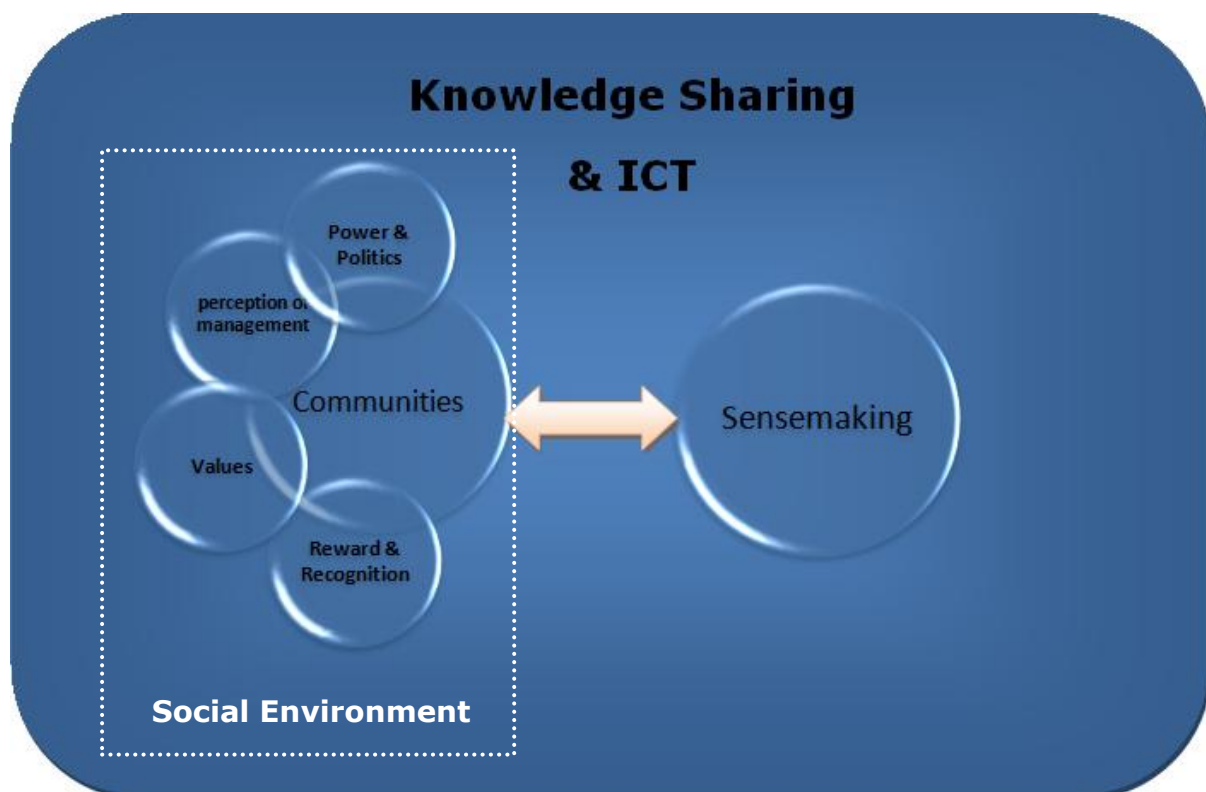


Figure 4: Theoretical Framework –

Social Processes Influencing KS and the use of ICT

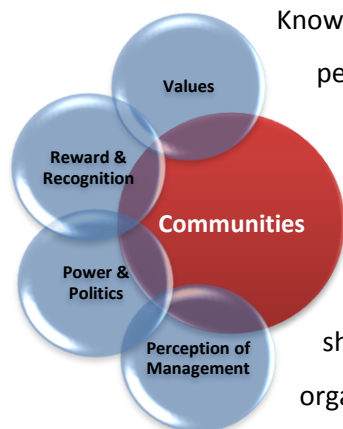
5.3 The Social Environment

As we have made clear so far, the purpose of our theoretical framework is to provide us with a deeper understanding of how social processes affect knowledge sharing and ICT. What has also been noted is the relevance of culture (Alvesson and Kärremann, 2001). By this, we are not referring to a macro perspective on culture but rather to an interest in how culture is negotiated in an organisational context. In order to work with the term culture, which can cover a vast range of

concepts, we find it necessary, as suggested by Geertz, to cut the concept of culture down in size (1973). We will therefore be using a theory involving Communities of Practice (CoP), along with secondary concepts, to investigate local culture, or the social environment in Ramboll Sweden and Finland. CoP theory should however not be seen as being equal to culture, but as an analytical tool that incorporates processes of culture as an influencing factor. What CoP brings in addition, is a focus on the concept of practice and our mutual engagement in practices which plays a significant role in organisational life.

We see organisations as a constellation of communities (Brown & Duguid, 1998) and not a unified homogeneous entity. However, it is not our intention to identify the vast amount of communities that can be found across the Ramboll organisation, but to use the influential processes unfolding within communities to uncover social processes that influence KS and the use of a common ICT platform.

5.3.1 Social Practices of Communities



Knowledge is created or produced collectively, normally occurring when people work together in 'tight knit' groups. Within these gatherings, work related activities or organisational knowledge is unavoidably characterised as being very social. Several authors within the field refer to this social activity as CoP (Brown & Duguid 1998, McDermott 1999, Wenger 1998). The concept of CoP plays a critical role when sharing knowledge, i.e. they can promote the creation of and sharing of organisational knowledge (Lesser & Prusak, 1999; in Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000). Yet, as we will be discussing in a later section, CoP also carries

with it a series of challenges for KS as a practice (5.3.1.5).

CoP can be described as a collection of individuals that are bound by informal relationships (Snyder, 1997), that build over a period of time. It is with these informal relations that comparable work practices can be shared in a common context (Lesser & Prusak, 1999; in Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000). Although informal in nature, it is important to make clear that a formal department or project group can develop into a community. The common context in a CoP can be further specified as the similar experiences or challenges that individuals collectively share with one another.

According to Lesser and Prusak, the *community* and *practice* part of the concept are interrelated and therefore call for close consideration (1999). In other words, they are intertwined – due to the fact that communities are organised around practice (Brown & Duigid, 2001). Initially, the *community* part of CoP underlines the personal basis upon which relationships are created through mutual

engagement and shared repertoires (Wenger, 1998). It must be made clear however, that communities are not confined to a particular location or business unit, rather their essence lies within the social context of similar work tasks and shared interests (in Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000).

The latter part of CoP; *practice*, refers to an active process. It is the practice part of communities that refers to how individuals *in fact* perform their daily work tasks, and not how they *ought* to be performing in accordance to the formal guidelines or rules of an organisation. Practice suggests a dynamic process where individuals learn through doing, i.e. it is the interaction with others performing similar tasks that establishes the fundamental aspect of practice (Lesser & Prusak, 1999; in Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000).

CoP can be found within all organisations and more often than not exist without any formal charters or organisational mandates, normally seen in organisational teams or groups. What distinguishes CoP from formalised teams or groups lies primarily in the fact that communities often have a more fluid and self-organising nature (Lesser & Prusak, 1999; in Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000). As proposed by Brown and Duguid:

"They are more fluid and interpenetrative than bounded... And significantly, communities are emergent. That is to say that their share and membership emerges in the process of activity, as opposed to being created to carry out a task [...]" (1991, in Lesser & Prusak, p. 199).

Having established that CoP are highly social in character, we now find it essential to dig deeper into the practice part of communities. Practice can be understood as the 'doings' or 'engagement' people undertake within a community (Wenger, 1998), which is very much what we are interested in; being the properties and processes connected with CoP that have an influence on KS. CoP are not to be equated with KS, but the processes unfolding within and around them may certainly have an effect.

An important aspect of *practice* is that our engagements in a certain practice also need to have a fulfilling feeling for those involved. This is something Wenger also elaborates on through the term of meaning – he states that; *'practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life'* (1998, p. 52). Wenger outlines three basic concepts that are all related to meaning they are as follows: *negotiation of meaning, participation and reification* (1998). Our intention is to outline these concepts and relate how they influence KS.

5.3.1.1 Negotiation of Meaning

Our engagement in practices may very well hold certain patterns, yet through the production of newly created patterns we gain an experience of meaning. It is through these experiences of

meaningful patterns that we, as social beings, can picture the world. Wenger refers this process of meaning to a 'negotiation of meaning' (1998). The process of negotiating a meaning, can seem rather abstract, therefore we find it necessary to illuminate upon it further. At Ramboll, employees will often meet and interact, either on the corridor or in the canteen. It is nothing new for them and it is something that will occur time and time again. Even the specific subject of the conversation maybe something that has been addressed many times in the past. Even though these repeated interactions may have been covered at numerous points in the past, they will still produce a new situation, an impression or a new experience. If we relate these interactions to KS; knowledge and the sharing of it will also move backwards and forwards, creating new situations, impressions and new experiences; it too can be interpreted as a constant process of negotiated meaning. It is this; what gives us meaning in our engagements with others that we are concerned with.

However, Wenger also states that it is not only routine activities that create a negotiation of meaning; it is particularly those activities that present us with challenges or those that we care about that are of importance (1998). In other words, the involvement in KS involves mutual interpretation and action, challenges and issues employees care about. Which as a result act as constant processes of renewed negotiation, since the process of negotiating a meaning constantly changes due to the specific situations that create meaning and affecting those involved in the process. Essential to the process of negotiation of meaning, are two incorporated components which are *participation* and *reification*.

Firstly, we find it relevant to define what *participation* is using Webster's definition: '*To have or take part or share with others (in some activity or enterprise, etc.)*' (Wenger, 1998: p 55). Put differently, it is an active process of taking part in an activity or enterprise, and relating or reflecting that activity with others. Mutually having a personal and social nature it combines the following personal actions; doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. Lastly, it involves our whole person through our bodies, minds, emotions and social relations with others (Wenger, 1998). Participation must be regarded as a profoundly social process that involves mutual recognition. Wenger puts forward an illustration of participation through the use of a computer, which cannot participate in a CoP. Even though a computer may be part of a practice, in the sense of getting things done, it does little more than precisely that. Yet, if we take today's social media world, i.e. through Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, the computer as a way of participating may have become more relevant. Perhaps, the success of online services such as Facebook lies in the very name of this type of media – it holds a *social* component and allows for some degree of mutual recognition. In addition to the aspect of mutual recognition, Wenger sees it as source of identity; since it is our engagement in a social

process, e.g. the sharing of knowledge through a conversation that can be recognised by us as individuals and by others who are a part of that given conversation. In other words, it is the ability to negotiate meaning from a given context (1998). Wenger, further states that we become a part of each other through such social processes - our identities exist through participation. We will be addressing identity in more detail in the section where we look at identity through modes of belonging.

Wenger states that *reification* is less common than participation. However, in conjunction with participation it becomes valuable in describing our engagement with the world as 'a productive of meaning' (1998: p.58). Once again, and taken from Webster's definition of the term, reification is: '*To treat (an abstraction) as substantially existing, or as a concrete material object.*' It is our individual meanings that we project into our given world, with these individual meanings we try to perceive them as being a part of the world, having a reality which we can relate to (Wenger, 1998). Again, we find it relevant to connect reification with the case at hand. If we were to use the minutes of a given meeting at either Ramboll Finland or Sweden, we could say that these writings are evidence of what has been said or understood during a meeting. When the meeting is complete and there is a need to relate back to what had been agreed upon, employees involved can go back and create an understanding with the aid of the written minutes. This generates meaning for those people reading the minutes as they are capable of relating what is written to the actual given meeting. It is with the tools or stories that our understanding of something shapes our experiences as seen with the given example. Though, it is not only 'tangible objects', it is these concrete objects which are mirrored through practices of human meaning. In other words, Wenger states that they may just as well be concepts or ideas that reflect these practices – in his words the products of reification are; '*the tokens of vast expanses of human meanings*' (Wenger, 1998: p.61).

If we are to recap so far; we have established that participation concerns a persons' recognition and that of others through social interaction or as Wenger states through mutual engagement (1998). Reification on the other hand involves the projection of oneself into the world through material objects or through ideas and concepts which reflect the practices of human meaning (Wenger, 1998). But, according to Wenger the two come as a pair - they create an interplay and cannot be considered in isolation, something he has termed; '*the duality of participation and reification*' (1998; p.63 – figure 5).

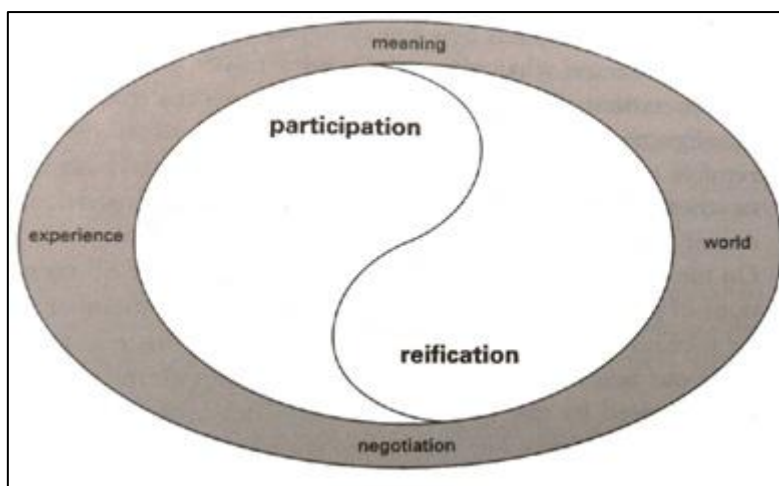


Figure 5 - Negotiation of meaning through participation and reification

To put the 'duality of participation and reification' into perspective we find it relevant to illustrate upon it further. Within an organisation the reification of emails and documents are constantly being sent and passed around. In other words, we are dealing with 'tangible objects' that concern individual thoughts, ideas and values. Yet, they are little more than 'informing objects' without the participation of the receiver of these emails and documents, i.e. without their participation in the form of responding in some way to these thoughts, ideas and values; the receiver is not negotiating meaning with the sender. As a result, the mutual interplay of reification and participation is very much lost. The negotiation of meaning weaves the two so closely together that meaning becomes a self-contained existence (Wenger, 1998).

5.3.1.2 Identity and Modes of Belonging

Another important aspect of CoP that we see as an influencing factor on how employees practice and relate to KS, is the concept of identity. Wenger sees identity as something that is constructed through ongoing negotiation of the relations between the individual and a given community (1998). The concept of identity acts as a link between the individual and the social world, or in connection with our present case, the Ramboll employees and their work. The concept of identity is very much linked to sensemaking theory, which will be presented later in our theory section (Chapter 5). From people's identity, a certain view of the world emerges and this affects how they perceive their surroundings. To understand the identity concept, we need to look at what Wenger calls 'modes of belonging' (Wenger 1998). As the words indicate, these are ways of belonging to a community and influence the characteristics of both our identity and our subsequent identification with, for instance, our organisation of employment. Below, we will present the three modes of belonging put forward by Wenger (1998) and describe how each of them can influence KS.

When an individual engages in a practice within a community, for instance by working on an engineering project within structural engineering, certain experiences emerge from the participation. According to Wenger, these experiences are negotiated through the reification which emerges from what the specific community pays attention to, or attributes as being important (1998). What a given community, group or organisation pays attention to has an influence on an individual's identity, for instance by being affirming or conflicting with the current identity. Wenger identifies three modes of belonging that influence our identity; *engagement, imagination and alignment* (1998). The modes of belonging can be described as the themes from where the sense of belonging to a community comes from.

Engagement relates very much to the element of practice put forward in the previous section, and constitutes participation in meaningful activities and interactions (Wenger, 1998). Engagement as a mode of belonging is central to our forming of identity and gives us the ability to contribute to the community. It is however important to mention that engagement as a mode of belonging also carries with it a risk of narrow-mindedness, since *'through engagement, competence can become so transparent, locally ingrained and social efficacious that it becomes insular: nothing else, no other viewpoint, can even register [...]'* (Wenger, 1998, p. 175). This can be related to the challenges connected with CoP which will be elaborated upon at a later point (5.3.1.5). Belonging through engagement requires access to participation through, for instance, interaction with other community members. Engagement as a mode of belonging is occupied not only with interaction, but also the distinct feeling of being involved and invested in a given context. Also important for engagement, is access to reification such as tools and documents (Wenger, 1998). For KS, engagement as a mode of belonging relates very well to the earlier stated point, that within a community, knowledge is shared easily among its members as they all share the same basic view of the world.

Imagination refers to our ability to see the broader perspective of what we are doing in practice. Imagination involves a level of open mindedness that requires a willingness to explore, take risks, and make connections in order to move towards a new image of the world and oneself (Wenger, 1998). The strengths of imagination are the ability to introduce new meanings, perspectives and possibilities. For imagination to connect with our identity, we need to possess the willingness, freedom, energy and time to engage in the things that broaden our horizon. A lack of time resulting from an old fashioned view on work can limit imagination. This view holds the assumption that: employees are only working, and thereby contributing to the organisation, when they are sitting at their work station (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) – in the case of Ramboll this would equal working on

completing ones projects. In imagination, different forms of reification are also important as they help individuals to see patterns which do not emerge through local engagement (Wenger 1998). Wenger refers to such types of reification as being at the boundary of the community (1998). It is necessary here to stress that Wegner does not equate the presence of imagination with employees aligning themselves with expectations that are put forward in a given context (Wenger, 1998). This naturally brings us to the last of the three modes of belonging; alignment.

Alignment shares similarities with imagination as this mode of belonging also entails the ability of viewing the world in a boarder sense than merely through engagement in a local practice or the mutual engagement in a community. As a mode of belonging, alignment describes a process of coordinating perspectives and actions and through this finding common ground from which we can act. Facilitators of such common ground can be identified as *boundary objects* (Wenger, 1998). However, alignment can create blind adherence that takes away members' ability to engage and negotiate on their own. If people cannot find meaning in alignment, the result can be mere compliance, where focus is placed too much on meaningless literal translations of what it means to belong and participate (Wenger, 1998). Alignment requires the '[...] *ability to communicate purpose, needs, methods and criteria*' (Wenger, 1998, p. 186).

The reification requirements of alignment are also of a somewhat peripheral nature; being artefacts, objects or discourses that are shareable between different communities of practice. Insufficient reification can result in difficulties in reaching coordination as people's understanding of it is simply too vague and illusory (Wenger, 1998).

When investigating the identities that influence communities and their KS practices, it is important to keep in mind that the three modes of belonging described above do not exclude each other. One may be more dominant than the others and this can result in actions and meanings by the individuals in question to have distinct qualities and requirements (Wenger, 1998). But, as Wenger states; '*Because engagement, imagination and alignment have different but complementary strengths and weaknesses, they work best in combination*' (Wenger, 1998, p. 187). Therefore, an exploration of how the modes of belonging affect the extent to which the employees identify with the practice of sharing knowledge will provide us with a useful level of analysis.

Now that we have presented the fundamental concepts in CoP, those we believe have a substantial effect on how knowledge is shared in an organisations' social environment. We will now move onto present a popular tendency in the literature that often associates CoP with vast opportunities.

5.3.1.3 Communities of Practice: Valuable Assets

A large majority of companies have started to acknowledge that these communities can be very much exploited to the benefit of the company as a whole (Lesser, Fontaine & Slusher, 2000). One of the key reasons why companies are now seeing CoP as an efficient tool for the sharing of knowledge lies within their competitive advantage. Or, to be more precise, it is the people within them that hold a vast amount of intangible or tacit knowledge; i.e. knowledge residing in the minds of people (Dougerty, 1995; in Ardichvilli, Page & Wentling, 2003). From this, Horvath observed that the knowledge found in people's minds only becomes visible through the active conversation among people (1999; in Ardichvilli, Page & Wentling, 2003). Several scholars work from the assumption that knowledge is produced and disseminated through the social activity of conversation and networking that CoP can enable (Araujo, 1998; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Weick & Westley, 1996; in Ardichvilli, Page & Wentling, 2003). In fact, the value of knowledge grows when it is shared, e.g. when knowledge is shared with other units or communities, not only do they gain; they also share it with other communities in the organisation, often with additional questions, amplifications, and modifications, all adding further value to its original origin (Quinn, 1996; in Cabrera, Á. & Cabrera, E.F. (2002). From this, the emphasis should therefore lie on *assisting* members in expressing their own individual thoughts and stories with others, having great value for the organisation and those communities within.

However, this acknowledgment concerning the beneficial influences that CoP holds can also result in CoP losing its value, due to the imposition of management principles upon it. Several scholars have criticised a trend in the literature where both academics and organisations now seem to acknowledge that CoP can be exploited through management, paving the way for organisational efficiency (Cox, 2005 and Hughes, 2007, in Murillo, 2010). These issues are something we find vital to elaborate further upon, not merely as an identification of a shift in academia surrounding CoP theory – but more importantly to distinguish how we will and will not be applying CoP theory.

5.3.1.4 CoP theory: Analytical or Instrumental?

When Wenger published his title: *Community of practice – Learning, meaning, and identity* in 1998. It started out as (and still is) an analytical concept stemming from learning theories, which as a result christened a phenomenon that in fact already existed in numerous organisations and institutions. CoP was initially intended to elaborate on the nature of practice, rather than being used prescriptively (primarily those prescriptions concerning the educational, institutional, or managerial). Yet, Vann and Bowker state: that if the concept simply becomes a *design intention* or a *prescribed process*, the idea or insights that were there to make it useful will be lost (2001, in Wenger, 2010). Additionally, Hughes states that instead of CoP becoming a sharper and more

coherent concept the essence of it becomes more diluted and heterogeneous since a range of disconnected groups will simply use it to fit their own interests (2007, in Wenger, 2010).

CoP is not something that is authoritarian, which implies; it cannot simply be managed or applied. The concept is far much more fluid than that (Wenger, 1998). Yet, as established above, the concept has been used in ways that seem far-fetched from its original origins and to a certain extent can now be understood as 'out of control' (Wenger, 2010). This particular issue relates to the fact that a lot of people are using CoP inappropriately, and as a consequence less care is taken with the broader framework or for those principles that lie underneath the actual concept (Wenger, 2010). What can now be seen is a majority of organisations having an interest in CoP becoming extra effective at what they can already deliver, yet with no interest in an intensified transformation of the concept. As a result, the informal nature of CoP and the complexity for the desire of the organisations to measure its value often results in them falling through cracks and losing their overall superiority (Wenger, 2010).

Now that we are aware of this critique, we too acknowledge that it is not the management of CoP that is the way forward or how they can be measured. Rather, CoP should not be seen as an instrumental concept; but as it originally started out, i.e. as an analytical concept. This is an issue where organisations need to tread carefully as they too (amongst those who already have) could very much end up getting caught in what we term; 'knowledge-community traps'. Using this as a starting point for our next section, we now find it relevant to elaborate further upon the challenges organisations face in connection with the sharing of knowledge through CoP.

5.3.1.5 Challenges of Communities of Practice

There is no doubt that CoP holds many positive aspirations; however there is also a risk of these positive relations overpowering the concept. The concept must not be interpreted as the 'golden-solution' for collective knowledge to be shared. In fact, CoP and the processes connected to them hold several challenges, or even downsides, that are vital to point out.

One challenge is connected with communities becoming too fixed. Even though a fixed community may very well be good at working together and learning, they can also have negative consequences for their own surroundings. This is a result of communities having their own 'signature skills' that are very much ingrained and formed to a particular community and for that matter very difficult to change (Leonard, 1995; in Huysman & Wit, 2002). A community can become so narrow-minded and self-focussed on its own learning that the tendency may be to bypass its valuable surroundings. As a result, the community tends to carry on in this way; doing and thinking as they have always done, without giving a thought to the fact that they are at the same time increasingly excluding members

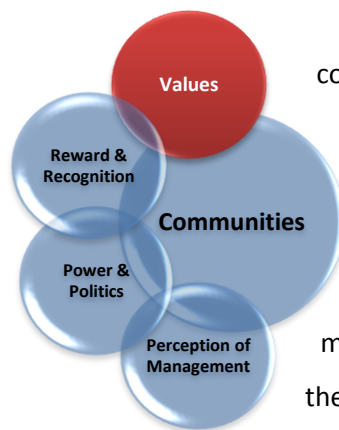
outside of the community. It is not as if outside members are excluded purposely, yet due to their conservative behaviour this will often be the outcome (Huysman & Wit, 2002). Brown and Duguid also state that: '*CoP, while powerful sources of knowledge, can easily be blinkered by the limitations of their own world view*' (1998, p.97). In this way, the positive attribute of CoP that makes knowledge flow easily within communities can also act as a weakness.

In this connection, we find it important to highlight the importance of making communities that share some basic traits aware of each others' similarities. In their study from 2001, Brown & Duguid state that communities, although separated by vast distances and time, can become connected to each other and share knowledge more easily when they have practices such as academic disciplines in common (Brown & Duguid, 2001). They call such entities *Networks of Practice* and distinguish them from CoP in the traditional sense as people in such networks are much more loosely connected. In fact, most members of such networks will never know or come across one another (Brown & Duguid). What makes knowledge flow more easily is the common foundation arising from practices that resemble one another. The notion of networks that can comprise of and create connections between CoP is especially relevant for Ramboll. As an organisation with numerous subsidiaries around the world, there is a good chance that employees situated in different countries may have colleagues across the organisation in other countries and with whom practice can be seen as a common denominator. Yet, for the connection to be made, people of course need to discover such commonalities.

Lastly, knowledge is a social thing, it does not move the same way within a community as it does between communities. Knowledge within a community is always connected to practice and easily circulates within it, hence the term: *communities of practice*. However, the challenge occurs when knowledge needs to be moved from one community to another. Each community has its own characteristics, different standards and ideas of what is important. As a result, divisions between the various communities very much encourage local innovation, but they can very easily isolate them from the rest of the organisation.

Having presented the properties of CoP that we see as influencing KS and the use of ICT, we will now move on to the additional concepts in the social environment dimension; being *Local Values, Reward and Recognition, Power and Politics* and *Employees' perception of Management*. We see each of these as complementing and interconnected with CoP theory, influencing the behaviour of communities and thereby KS.

5.3.2 Local Values



An influential factor that we also find necessary to elaborate upon in connection with the social environment dimension is the aspect of values.

A wide range of cultural theories underline the fact that values held in an organisation heavily guide and influence how people behave and react (De Long & Fahey, 2000). Most organisations have official values that they perceive guide their employees. This may be in the form of a mission statement or an actual list of values displayed visually – this is also the case in Ramboll. But values also exist at a deeper organisational level, embedded in the way people act and what they expect of each other (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). These deeper values are often not articulated and are invisible to organisational members. Yet still they affect employee behaviour. Since these underlying values do not always correspond to those put forward by management, people can often act in ways that do not fall in line with the wishes of the organisation. As established previously, we see an organisation as consisting of many different communities with many different values that they 'live by'. Some values may however also span across several sub-units within the organisation (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Values can be hard for employees to articulate, and are often uncovered in the way we act and speak and *'When boiled down to their essence they are often simple precepts like 'Do good technical work' [...]'* (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001, page 78).

Several studies concerning knowledge management and KS identify a connection between the core values held by employees and their KS behaviour (Pan & Scarbrough, 1997, McDermott, 1999; in De Long & Fahey, 2000 and McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Some scholars and practitioners see an opportunity in trying to change and control employees values in order to reach consensus in organisational matters (De Long & Fahey, 2000 and Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001). This however is not why we are drawing on values in our theoretical framework. Rather, we agree with studies that consider values as something that is hard to change and should be used as a point of departure, not manipulation (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Given their influence on what people consider as important, we believe that an investigation into the values of Ramboll Sweden and Finland, will contribute to our understanding of the social environment and provide us with important insights into why employees act the way they do when it comes to KS activities and using the RamLink platform. If the values held locally in Sweden and Finland are in conflict with Ramboll Group's wish for them to contribute to the RamLink platform, the employees may be reluctant towards it.

5.3.3 Reward and Recognition



This section of our theory concerns the rewards and recognition or in more general terms; the motivational factors that can either enhance or to some extent limit KS – mutually in the social environment of an organisation or in connection with its ICT platform; e.g. RamLink. The motivational factors that we will now present provide the foundations for linking an ICT platform such as Ramlink to the motivation for KS within an organisations social environment.

If we revisit our literature review (2.2.2) concerning the presumption that an organisation has implemented an ICT platform that supposedly should help increase KS, though without any significant improvements. Then the first place to start, according to Hendriks, might be to identify and address those factors influencing the actual motivation for the usage of an ICT platform (1999). Research relating to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does suggest that the two can have a substantial effect on KS. Yet, according to Ostrelöh and Frey, it is the intrinsic motives that are by far the more powerful enablers for sharing knowledge (2000; in Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003). But, before we elaborate further on this finding, it will be necessary to touch upon, what the two motives entail.

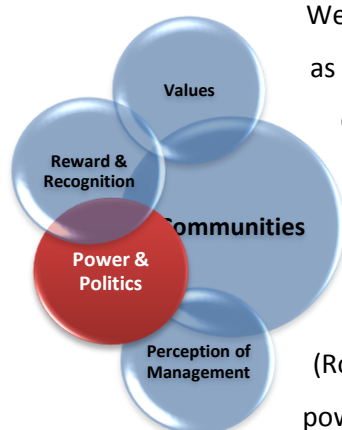
Firstly, we argue that intrinsic and extrinsic motives fall into the same boat as Herzberg's; 'two-factor' theory. Herzberg's two-factor theory is based on the distinction between *motivators* (intrinsic) and *hygiene* (extrinsic) factors. Starting with the latter, Herzberg relates hygiene factors to elements such as: salary, status, company policy and interpersonal relations. On the other hand, the motivators are assessed with the following six factors: achievement, responsibility, recognition, operational autonomy, promotional opportunities and the challenge of work (1987; in Hendriks (1999). The characteristics of the two become relevant parts of our thesis as they can very much influence motivation for KS and as a consequence employees' perception of RamLink.

However, Stott and Walker state that the hygiene factors act, metaphorically speaking, as cars circulating in a roundabout – understood primarily in a negative sense. In essence they do not motivate organisational behaviour when present, but if absent they can very easily lead to dissatisfaction and result in a decrease in motivational behaviour (1995; in Hendriks (1999). This is further elaborated upon by Scott and Walker (1995) and Tampoe (1996) whom implicate that knowledge is not shared between employees as a result of money (monetary assets) or to improve personal relationship with their colleagues. Rather, their motivation originates from their own individual desire for self-actualisation (in Hendriks 1999).

Identifying why employees wish to share their knowledge, more often than not points to the motivational factors, rather than the hygiene factors. Monetary rewards may very well lead to an increase in the use of KS platforms, but these will be short lived as they are unlikely to result in an enhancement of motivation for KS as a social practice to grow. Moreover, the hygiene factors also carry several costs for the organisation: The monitoring of participation for administering the monetary rewards, the actual cost of the rewards and the disadvantage of increased quantity rather than quality (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). It is the latter cost that we find needs to be approached with extra caution, since employees may have a tendency to increase the quantity of input into an ICT platform, whilst at the same time sacrifice the quality of these inputs. From this, whilst hygiene factors may increase cooperation and the quantity of knowledge contributed, they also carry the risk of jeopardising the quality of that knowledge and its value for others in the social environment (Hendriks, 1999).

To conclude this section concerning reward and recognition, there seems to be a positive connection between the factors that celebrate collective achievement and social recognition as they can encourage quality rather than quantity. These can be found in motivators, as they trigger the importance of sharing amongst employees. This has also been confirmed through empirical research primarily conducted by Tampoe, who established that knowledge workers are very much triggered by motivational factors such as; '*personal growth, operational autonomy and task achievement*' (1996); in Hendriks, 1999, p.96), and not by the hygiene factors that are very much related to monetary rewards.

5.3.4 Power and Politics



We also find it necessary to bring forward the concept of *power* and *politics* as an influential factor when dealing with KS. With reference to our use of CoP theory, the aspect of power is something that both Wenger and others have been criticized for neglecting (Roberts, 2006).

CoP does not operate in a vacuum and both within and between communities; different sources of power can have an effect on KS (Roberts, 2006). Wenger does however touch briefly upon the influence of power, as he states in organisations, classic hierarchical power relations give way to certain meanings taking precedence in what he calls the economies of meaning (Wenger, 1998). In hierarchical organisational structures, the negotiation of meaning may be limited or often evolve around key figures of authority – people placed higher in the hierarchy (Roberts, 2009). When individuals form social systems around a practice, they tend to confer themselves the

right to claim what is acceptable knowledge and what is not (Wenger, 2010). An example connected to our present case could be a group of geographers, who, by virtue of their professional practice, see themselves as the only ones who have the legitimacy or power to produce environmental impact assessments. Such dynamics can create distance between different communities and be even counterproductive, resulting in the difficulty of the sharing of knowledge. Wenger also makes a relevant point when he identifies that practices and the differences between them also relates very well to management as an organisational practice (Wenger, 2010). When the practices of communities collide; political struggles can emerge in the form of discontinuity.

Related to this is what Wenger describes as: *The politics of participation and reification*. When CoP becomes involved in these dual modes and sources, participation and reification offer *dual avenues* for influencing what becomes of a given practice (1998, p. 91). In their dual nature, they can offer two kinds of tools available for attempts to shape the future - maintain the status quo or on the contrary redirect the given practice at hand. Wenger elaborates further as follows:

1. through participation one can seek, cultivate, or avoid specific associations with certain people
 2. through reification one can promote or produce specific artefacts in order to focus future negotiation of meaning in certain ways
- (1998, p. 91)

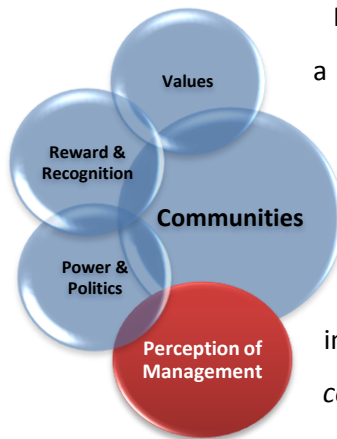
As a result, the two act as distinct channels of power available to participants within a CoP and to those outside, further compromising two distinct forms of politics:

1. firstly, the politics of *participation* contain; personal authority, influence, nepotism, rampant discrimination, charisma, trust, ambition and friendship
2. *reification* on the other hand includes different politics; legislation, institutionally defined authority, policies, argumentative demonstrations, expositions, contracts, statistics, plan and designs

To put this into perspective, Wenger elaborates on the difference in making sure cohesion is present in a collective team (through friendship) in comparison to underlining a set of goals or a scheduled work plan (through legislation). Not only can the two complement each other, these two forms of politics can also be played off each other. This entails that the politics of participation and reification can each be employed to avoid the other, or compensate for abuses in one or the other (Wenger, 1998).

When considering the relationship between units found in different countries, power and politics also play a role. When outside forces bring forward a suggestion or tool, subsidiaries can exhibit what has been labelled as the *not-invented-here* syndrome, where the local entity displays bias against initiatives originating from outside sources (Huber, 2001).

5.3.5 Employees' Perception of Management

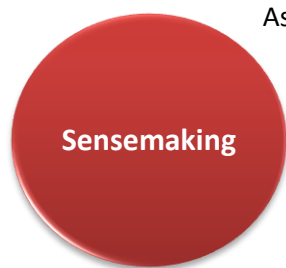


In a research article from 2003, Connelly and Kelloway found evidence for a connection between employees' perceptions of management and their engagement in KS. In connection with the implementation of ICT to support KS, they state that management's decision to invest and develop an ICT can signal commitment towards it. However, equally important is management's behaviour after an ICT has been implemented – *'If employees perceive that management is not very committed to implementing this new technology, then the initiative to promote a strong KS culture is unlikely to be successful'* (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003, page 295). In a similar way, McDermott and O'Dell found that in organisations that have had success in their quest for capitalising on knowledge, support from immediate managers can act as an enabler of KS. DeTienne et. al. also stresses the importance leadership and management has as a supporting and guiding entity – highlighting both middle management as mediators but also top management figures, such as the CEO (2004). In relation to CoP theory, it has also been stated that management *'must remove the control hat and put on a hat of facilitator and environment creator.'* (Plaskoff, 2005, page 180-181).

As mentioned both in our literature review (2.1) and a previous section in our theoretical framework (5.1.2), we see management as having less of a coercive and controlling role when it comes to knowledge sharing. When we initially presented the problems with knowledge and management, we highlighted an approach to knowledge sharing where management acts as a supporting entity rather than one of control (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001). With these considerations in mind, we see management's behaviour and employee perceptions of it as having a possible influence on the social environment in Ramboll. Hence, we will also use our analysis to look at how employees perceive their management's behaviour in connection with both an ICT platform and other KS activities.

With the various concepts of the social environment dimension in place, we will now move on to the second dimension in our framework; making sense of Knowledge Sharing and an ICT platform.

5.4 Making Sense of an ICT platform



As mentioned in the introduction to our theoretical framework (5.1), the theoretical dimension concerning how employees make sense of their surroundings will primarily be drawing on Karl E. Weick's theory concerning sensemaking. Sensemaking is highly connected with the aspects of CoP theory concerning meaning and identity. However, by adding sensemaking to our theoretical framework it will enable us to gain an even deeper understanding of the individual processes through which individuals make sense of, and determine what, a given phenomenon means to them. We will start off this theoretical dimension with an introduction to sensemaking theory, after which we will present the seven properties that influence the sensemaking process.

Sensemaking has an individual focus, which naturally brings forward the question; does this way of looking at our case not conflict with the social aspect of KS put forward previously in our theory section? As will be elaborated upon when addressing the seven properties of sensemaking put forward by Weick, sensemaking has a social component to it and is a result of interactions with others (1995). Thus, an exploration of how individual employees in Ramboll Sweden and Ramboll Finland make sense of the RamLink platform is highly connected to the social environment in which they find themselves; as individual's they are very much a part of the social environment through their contribution and interaction.

The concept of organisational sensemaking is rather simple, as Weick states himself; '[...] *sensemaking is well named because, literally, it means the making of sense*' (Weick, 1998, p. 4). Hence, sensemaking can be used to understand, how people make sense of the novel or unknown, why, and with what effects – the effects in our present case being Ramboll employees that are reluctant to use the RamLink platform. In other words, the decision was made by the Ramboll group to implement a KM platform and now the employees in the organisation need to make sense of this platform.

A relevant description of sensemaking, related to our area of interest, is put forward by Brown, who states that '*sensemaking refers to those processes of interpretation and meaning production whereby individuals and groups reflect on and interpret phenomena and produce intersubjective accounts*' (Brown, 2000, p.45-46). This definition of sensemaking is relevant for us to bear in mind, as our analysis of how employees make sense of RamLink is likely to reveal understandings that are common to wider collectives, or communities of practice in the Ramboll organisation.

Weick's sensemaking concept falls under the social constructivist paradigm, along with the ideas of Alvesson & Kärreman and CoP theory put forward earlier. The familiarity with social constructivism can, for example, be drawn from the description of sensemaking as a social and ongoing process. These characteristics make out two of the seven central properties of the concept which we will present shortly. The properties are all related to each other and to some extent also overlap one another (Weick, 1995). They all however present a distinct aspect of sensemaking in organisations and can be listed as follows:

1. grounded in identity construction
2. retrospective
3. enactive of sensible environments
4. social
5. ongoing
6. focused on and by extracted cues
7. driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

(Weick, 1995, p. 17)

Before presenting the seven properties, we note that Weick states it as unrealistic to expect any one research case to be illustrative of all the seven themes in connection with sensemaking (Weick, 1995). The following sections will outline each of the seven properties and explain their relevance for our interest in uncovering why Ramboll's employees hesitate to use the RamLink platform.

5.4.1 Grounded in Identity Construction

According to Weick, people's identities are reinterpreted or reconstructed through an ongoing process, which is social and interactive by nature. For that reason, one's perception of one's own identity is continuously renegotiated, because it is adapted to the impressions of events and experiences in one's life, along with impressions from other people. Depending on who we are, our definition and sense of what we encounter will also change.

As an important part of identity construction, Weick also explains how people negotiate their identity around three self-derived needs; the need for self-enhancement, which results in a constant search to maintain a positive cognitive and affective state about oneself, the desire to perceive oneself as competent and effective, and lastly, a desire to experience consistency and continuity (Weick, 1995). In relation to organisational life, these needs often result in employees, when in doubt about a certain situation, choosing an alternative that reflects positively on themselves and the organisation (Weick, 1995). Individuals therefore, are motivated to uphold a positive

organisational image and repair a negative one through either association or disassociation with certain actions connected to the issue at hand (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991 in Weick, 1995). This interconnectivity between the individual and organisational image presents us with the possibility to not only examine the identity of single employees within Ramboll Sweden and Finland, but also uncover wider held beliefs and values held communally. As Weick states;

'When we look at individual behaviour in organisations, we are actually seeing two entities: the individual as himself and the individual as representative of his collectivity[...]Thus, the individual not only acts on behalf of the organisation in the usual agency sense, but he also acts, more subtly, "as the organisation" when he embodies the values, beliefs, and goals of the collectivity.'
(Weick, 1995, p. 23)

5.4.2 Retrospect

The retrospective property of sensemaking is concerned with the fact that when we as individuals make sense of things, it is done by looking back at what has happened (Weick, 1995). The concept of retrospective sensemaking originates from Schutz' analysis of a *'meaningful lived experience'* (1967 in Weick, 1995). The emphasis on *lived* puts emphasis on the past tense, and captures the reality that people can only know what they are doing from previous experiences. Since sensemaking focuses backwards from the present, our feelings in the present will affect the backward glance at what has already happened (Weick, 1995) and thereby, result in many possible outcomes of the sensemaking process, as Weick also points out:

"The important point is that retrospective sensemaking is an activity in which many possible meanings may need to be synthesized, because many different projects are under way at the time reflection takes place. The problem is that there are too many meanings, not too few. The problem faced by the sensemaker is one of equivocality, not one of uncertainty. The problem is confusion, not ignorance." (Weick, 1995, p. 27)

In regard to sensemaking in organisations, Weick points to a common misunderstanding; that in times of confusion and need for sensemaking, people simply need more information (Weick, 1995). But this will not aid sensemaking as more information will simply add to the uncertainty. Instead, people need values, priorities and clarity about preferences to help them find focus and obtain a clear sense of what they are facing (Weick, 1995).

This particular aspect of sensemaking can also prove useful in our analysis of the current situation at Ramboll, as signals or views of what to prioritise may have an influence on the importance that employees ascribe to using the RamLink platform.

5.4.3 Enactive of Sensible Environments

Enactment, or enactive of sensible environments is concerned with the fact that individuals are themselves a part of, and also create the environment that they find themselves in (Weick, 1995). It is through actions, or equally important the choice not to act, that organisational members create their own environment and environments for others, i.e. their colleagues. The actions then contribute to the creation of a certain environment that presents either constraints or opportunities of what they are facing (Weick, 1995).

The idea of enactment pays attention to interdependent activities, processes and continuous change, the latter related to the ongoing aspect of sensemaking which will be presented later. The world in which we find ourselves in is not fixed and pre-given; rather it is continuously shaped by the actions in which we as individuals engage in (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; in Weick, 1995). Being aware of our own role in our environments is vital, as this can counteract the tendency that *'over time, routines develop and things become taken for granted and fixed by organisational culture [...]'* (Weick, 1995, p.35). In Ramboll, both employees and managers create the environments in which KS may or may not take place.

5.4.4 Social

Although sensemaking as a concept addresses cognitive processes that unfold within an individual, we find it important to emphasise the social character of these processes.

Weick draws forward Resnick, Levine, & Teasley (1991) who have elaborated upon how it is important to remember that sensemaking is based on human thinking and functioning in a social world (in Weick, 1995; p.38). A relevant expression that we find important to draw forward is what Walsh and Ungson have dubbed *intersubjective* meanings (in Weick, 1995; p.38). Such meanings are created in organisations when the people inside develop a common language through everyday social interaction. In fact, Weick puts forward the idea the sensemaking is a process that we never go through alone but something that emerges through our interactions with others. Even when we are physically alone, our thoughts and sensemaking will be influenced by a presumed or imagined audience (Weick, 1995) To amplify, an employee at Ramboll may well be affected by the acts and words of both colleagues and managers, even though they are not present at the moment when the employee needs to make sense of a given phenomenon or object.

Although intersubjective meanings in organisations relates to action and coordination in an organisation, it is important to bring forwards Weick's notion that action and coordination can just as well arise through compromise, sensibility or sheer necessity (1995). But revisiting the idea of shared practice and common understandings as an important process in KS, intersubjective meanings can be said to relate mostly to KS.

5.4.5 Ongoing

According to Weick, people are always in the middle of their projects and often see aspects of the world that relate to the current projects being undertaken (1995). This illustrates the ongoing nature of sensemaking. However, while we are focusing on our own projects, we are still aware of what happens around us and this is especially true when our projects or daily work is interrupted (Weick, 1995). In such interruptions, emotions can come into play, particularly when an interruption is in conflict with our expectations.

In an organisational context, Eccles and Nohria point to the use of different *events*, such as exercises and meetings, as being important focal points in the ongoing sensemaking process, as these offer '*moments to take stock of ongoing actions, to spin new stories, to set in motion future actions, to formally announce beginnings, milestones and ends, to trigger a change of course or just to touch base and reaffirm individual and organisational identities*' (Eccles and Nohria, 1992 in Weick, 1995, p.45).

5.4.6 Focused on and by Extracted Cues

The sixth property of sensemaking that Weick puts forward, concerns the fact that we direct our attention towards signals or cues in our environment (1995). Weick labels these signals as *extracted cues*: simple and familiar structures from which people develop a sense of what is occurring (1995). Because sensemaking is often a swift process, we as researchers often see the product or result of sensemaking rather than the process itself. Therefore, Weick advocates directing our attention towards the tangible cues that individuals deal with. By doing so, we can gain insight into the sensemaking process (1995).

When we are interrupted or surprised in our projects, we tend to direct attention towards available cues in an attempt to understand what is going on. With reference to Ramboll and the RamLink platform, employees will be looking for explanations as to why they need to use the platform and equally importantly whether or not it is actually necessary. It is important to understand that cues not only direct, but also have the ability to limit sensemaking (Weick, 1995). When a cue is put forward, it can for instance be in the form of speech, action or written text, this particular cue may

guide the *sensemakers'* thoughts in a specific direction. However, at the same time, it also has the potential of downplaying or ruling out other ways of thinking as being legitimate (Weick, 1995).

The cues that end up being extracted as cues for sensemaking, also labelled as noticing by Weick, is highly dependent on the context of the matter (1995). Weick refers to Fiske and Taylor, whose work indicates that amongst the things we notice are: things that are novel, people or behaviour that seem unusual or unexpected, extreme and perhaps negative behaviour and stimuli relevant to our current goals. Moreover, cues that draw in people's attention are often of a frequent and chronological nature (Weick, 1995). A very important point in relation to extracted cues is the need to create faith around them and hereby enable people to take action when they are confused by the world around them (Weick, 1995).

5.4.7 Driven by Plausibility Rather Than Accuracy

The final property that Weick presents as a property of the sensemaking concept is that it is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Weick claims that our understanding of sensemaking must rest on the assumption that there is only one single correct way to register and make sense around a given event or object (1995). Furthermore, Weick notes that the speedy process in which sense is made may often reduce the necessity and possibility for accuracy, as a more swift response may shape events before they become locked and focused as single meanings (Weick, 1995). In connection with organisational sensemaking, he notes that accuracy is a *nice* but not a necessary goal. Instead, sensemaking is directed towards '*pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention, and instrumentality*' (Weick, 1995, p.57). People are looking for a point of reference which is then linked to a more general idea of the surrounding world. By doing so, people can assign an explanation to what is confusing them and thereby take action and carry on with their doings – as opposed to being stuck and confused (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking rests on the assumption that people, when making sense in times of interruption and confusion, search primarily for accounts which may help them move on and which they can believe in (Weick, 1995). Here, it is relevant to also draw on Weick's insistence on emphasising *small wins* when embarking on new projects such as Ramboll's wish for organisation-wide KS;

"A small win is a concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance. By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. A series of wins at small but significant tasks, however, reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals. Small wins are controllable opportunities that produce visible results" (Weick, 2001, p.431).

All together, the seven properties of sensemaking contribute an additional level of analysis when looking at the social processes influencing KS.

Chapter 6 - Analysis of Ramboll Sweden

Equipped with our theoretical framework, we will now look at our selected cases - Ramboll's Swedish and Finnish business units - and explore how the social processes unfolding in each affects KS and the use of the RamLink platform. Each business unit will be analysed separately and each of these will be structured in a way that corresponds with the presentation of the various theoretical concepts in the previous chapter.

Starting out with the interconnected concepts that make up the social environment dimension, we will determine how KS unfolds locally and continually relate and discuss what our findings will mean for the use of the RamLink platform. Following the analysis of the social environment, we will move on to an analysis of how the interviewees in each of the respective business units make sense of the ICT platform – showing that this process is influenced by the social environment. To create an overview, we will summarize our findings after the analysis of both the social environment and the making sense of an ICT. We will begin with Ramboll Sweden.

6.1 The Social Environment – Ramboll Sweden

In this particular part of our analysis the objective is to investigate, analyse and discuss the social environments within Ramboll Sweden. More importantly; our objective is to identify how the Swedish social environment influences KS. Since our point of departure at this present stage is the social environment; we find it natural to begin with the processes connected with CoP – being a central part of our social environment dimension.



The visited office in Gothenburg, Sweden

6.1.1 Social Processes of Knowledge Sharing

If we revisit our theory section concerning the processes of CoP, it was put forward that CoP are best described as a collection of individuals who are bound by informal relationships, where similar or challenging work practises can be shared in a common context. It is how individuals within them connect with, recognise and create meaning with each other and their daily work practices that we are interested in.

When addressing the social environment within Ramboll Sweden, the aspect of local practice plays a significant role. In fact, local practice seems to act as the core foundation for the sharing of knowledge to take place at all, regardless of which field of expertise employees belong to. This perception is further strengthened as all three interviewees revealed the importance of having familiar faces close by. What is meant here is employees seem to find it easier and faster to get a hold of knowledge, which is found locally through interaction with those people they already know. It is important to state here however, that when we say 'locally', we are not only referring to social interaction within the same building - it can also mean social interaction on a national scale. The essence of *local* therefore lies in the term *familiarity*, i.e. knowing the person where knowledge resides and as a result can easily be shared. This particular aspect is especially true when employees encounter a challenge or problem, which they themselves cannot resolve:

"[...]I mean it's much easier if you have met this guy or girl to take up the phone or email, because you know who will respond you later on. [...] when you are not sure if it is a young, old or experienced guy or is he formal or informal. I mean I think that is the biggest obstacle for them to come over." (S3, p. 9)

Turning to colleagues who you know and are familiar with makes the process of finding a solution to a specific problem much smoother. Employees interact with their own local networks that they themselves build up over time. These interactions take on a social nature as knowledge is being shared in a common context. However, these particular interactions (where knowledge is being shared) are once again restricted to their own local networks, i.e. those people they know and have worked with before.

The relevance of this particular finding contributes to one of several reasons explaining why employees may have little engagement in the RamLink platform. It uncovers how employee social-interactions take place predominantly at a local level with those people with whom a common practice has been established. Put another way, using the RamLink platform does not play a natural part of their daily practice, since employees feel more comfortable sticking to what they know and with those people they are familiar with. RamLink to a certain extent gets pushed to one side. The following extract elaborates further:

"[...] I think it is personal contacts that stand over everything else. If RamLink was somehow a part of how I keep in touch with the people I know, I think it would be very good." (S2, p.12)

The above excerpt confirms the point of knowing those people who can assist another individual with a challenge or the like. It is first of all about creating a connection, once the connection has been made, the sharing of knowledge and social interaction seems to increase. Without this connection however, uncertainty prevails and as a result limits the KS process. It is this aspect interviewee S1

talks about – which also incorporates our additional interviewees' opinions on the matter. He exemplifies this through the sender and receiver of a dialogue or interaction where the two have never met before. If the sender has no connection with the receiver, an uncertainty of *'shall I bother him/her with this question?'* occurs. On the other hand, the receiver may find this incoming query or question to be of less importance as he or she has no relation with the sender. As a result, little trust is present between the two (S1, p11). From this, we can hypothesise the following: If employees find that familiarity and knowing a person is a key factor for sharing knowledge, the result could be a limited use of RamLink with colleagues outside of Sweden. This as a consequence, could also limit the sharing of knowledge on a more international scale – the very thing that Ramboll wants to accomplish.

Locating knowledge in the same building or just around the corner certainly makes things a lot easier (S1, p.1). Though as stated above, knowledge is to a large degree also shared on a more national context within Sweden:

"We are geographically here in Stockholm, but we also have the technical discipline all over Sweden. So I can contact this organisation inside Ramboll and ask if anyone knows the answer to the question." (S3, p.4)

From this, we argue that knowledge is being shared predominantly in a local context, either within the same building or within Ramboll Sweden. It is a case of familiarity with the person you are dealing with, which the Swedes find to be a vital factor when a challenge or problem occurs.

From these findings, we will now look at what can be described as occasions for KS in the Swedish business unit. An interesting finding in our data reveals that yearly gatherings within specific fields of expertise are held in Sweden – something Ramboll Sweden organises and budgets for at an organisational level (S1, p.11). At such gatherings, it is possible to identify colleagues that one may not have realised at all existed, thereby opening a door for mutual understanding. Our interviewees seem to agree on the fact that these gatherings are positive initiatives:

"[...] this getting together we have this once a year and I think it has two reasons, first the social one, you meet and see that you have colleagues and see that you almost have the same problems whether you're in Stockholm or if you are in Gothenburg and then people can help each other." (S3, p.4)

Here, the employees see a positive advantage from these gatherings (see also S1, p.11). They mention how important it is to make the effort to interact with others, not only to discover those aspects they have in common, but also the challenges they face collectively.

However, even though these yearly gatherings do play a crucial role for the social practice of sharing knowledge, there are also issues relating to these having a less positive note. Our interviewees believe the gatherings are too rushed and too controlled, due to the number of agenda items Ramboll wishes to cover during the gatherings. Employees' interpretations of these meetings are therefore of a top-down and forcible-like nature, i.e. a managed or controlled method of KS. Additionally, we also encountered an understanding that management in Sweden has not stressed the importance of these meetings. As a result, if the significance of these meetings has not been made clear; employees will perceive them as being less important:

"I think also that what they have to do, is instead of working with 8 or 10 different items, they have to go down to one or two and really put some effort into these questions that are important for the employees all over Sweden [...] When you deal with so many different tasks no one is really interested". (Interviewee S3, p.5)

The core issue of concern here is not having the time to socialise due to the vast amount of themes that management expects employees to discuss (see also S2, p.2). Recalling our theory concerning the management of knowledge, it was established that knowledge is: *far too loose, ambiguous, and rich, and pointing in far too many directions simultaneously to be neatly organised, co-ordinated and controlled* (Alvesson & Kärremann, 2001, page 1012).

So far we have addressed how employees find that knowing a person makes the process of sharing knowledge smoother. Employees share their knowledge in their daily practice, though it is restricted to their national business unit.

However, what Ramboll is looking to facilitate through RamLink, is KS at a more international level. In the following section we will attempt to uncover why employees at Ramboll Sweden are reluctant to incorporate KS at a more international level into their daily practices. In order to do this, we need to look at how the social environment in Ramboll Sweden negotiates meaning around KS and international collaboration. This brings forward Wengers' concepts of negotiation of meaning; participation and reification that can be used to further elaborate upon the present social environment.

6.1.1.1 Negotiation of Meaning

Employees at Ramboll Sweden can negotiate meaning from their local interactions – as their negotiation of meaning takes place when KS occurs on the corridor, during coffee breaks or to a limited extent at those previously mentioned yearly meetings. They involve processes that create a negotiating of meaning – local practices are experiences of meaningful patterns where employees can picture their own world (Wenger, 1998). But where the local practices create meaning for the

Swedish employees, RamLink seems less meaningful. Fundamental to the reluctance towards RamLink is that little negotiation of meaning of it is present. The following extract illustrates further:

"[...] All this technology is brilliant, but they are only tools, and if you don't have the relationships, you don't have any use for a tool like these. Because the digital link is not a social link, you first need to have the social link to have some use of the technical links." (S1, p.11)

This particular quote indicates that RamLink is not a part of the employee KS practice and as a result, not a part of the social environment. The perception of RamLink seems to reveal a platform that has merely been placed on top of the local practice, rather than being integrated into it. Supporting social processes is vital for KS, employees cannot see RamLink as a social link where knowledge can be shared; it is a digital link, a phone directory or CV generator (S1, p.15).

Participation

When referring back to our theory section, participation should be seen as a process of taking part and reflecting on an activity with others (5.3.1.1). Through our data, we have been able to identify numerous situations where KS can occur, one of which is the so called *closure meetings*; where employees can discuss delivered projects and learn from each other. The meetings are encouraged by management, though employees need to arrange them themselves. Participation in such meetings has the possibility of creating new knowledge concerning what went well and what needs improvement, through the actions of: *talking, thinking, feeling and belonging* (Wenger, 1998). The aim is to open the door for KS to prevail, i.e. employees can gain from interacting with their colleagues and furthermore, colleagues outside the given project may also benefit if such meetings are reified on an organisational level. We find it of importance to explore why there has been little participation in these particular meetings:

"The ambition is always to have a meeting where we meet and talk about the good and bad things we have learned in the project. But the time does not really exist always... As well as the money." (S2, p.7)

"We don't have them no, I think we have had them two or three times just, so it is not a habit no." (S3, p.8)

These quotes show that participation in such meetings is very much limited as employees seem to point the finger of blame at limited time and resources. If closure meetings are limited due to a lack of time and resources, no real exchange of knowledge will take place at perhaps one of the most vital stages of a project. Instead, KS will take on a more ongoing nature, i.e. when a challenge occurs an attempt to overcome it there and then will prevail. Such closure meetings however, can create an environment where discussions on how the project took place can be dealt with in more depth and in a collective manner, if time and resources allow employees to discuss and reflect on the projects'

process. This is an issue S3 further elaborates upon when asked what he thought participation in such closure meetings can do:

“I think it is very good, because it. Otherwise it is a risk that everyone has this thought that they don’t really speak out and it will be like an obstacle for the next project. It’s better to speak out now and say ok I think so, but let’s go to the next step now” (S3, p.8)

The employee is able to see how such closure meetings may broaden employees’ horizons by speaking out about one’s thoughts and expressions of a projects’ processes. As an example, we can draw upon an instance where a closure meeting was in fact held:

“[...] with a team of three colleagues doing the work [...] I out of my own initiative organised a little review after we had delivered; talking about what went wrong and how we could do that better next project.” (S1, p.13)

With this example we can see that an active process has been created within a self-organising community, where employees are taking part in activity, and relating that activity with others. They are *talking* to each other about what went wrong throughout the project, in the hope that such matters will not repeat themselves in the next. From this, we regard this ‘little review’ as a profoundly social process, where the sharing of knowledge can be interpreted as mutual recognition in a given project.

However, remembering that participation cannot be considered in isolation, we will now bring forward its counterpart; *reification*.

Reification

Having established that there is little participation in closure meetings, we will now try to illustrate how reification becomes a valuable asset in connection with one’s participation (Wenger, 1998).

Yet, when closure meetings do take place, employees are expected to participate in them by discussing, talking and sharing what went well and wrong in a project. This can be interpreted as a collection of individual meanings that are being projected into a given situation. These meanings that each member holds are therefore being perceived as a part of the given meeting as they can hold a reality that the members can relate to. These interactions in such closure meetings are therefore vital for the KS process; employees are able to reflect and discuss the development of a project with the additional members of the project community. However, there is a limited interplay of the two, i.e. little participation and as a result limited reification. As established above, restricted time and resources often result in these meetings seldom being held. Instead, when a challenge or problem arises it is addressed on a more ad-hoc basis (S2, p.7).

As a result, the limited participation in these closure meetings also inhibits the reification within them. If the findings of these closure meetings are shared with others on a wider scale, i.e. in the social environment, the outcome would not only benefit the members of a specific closure meeting, but act as a potential source of reification for the social environment as a whole. If we revisit the 'little review' meeting that was described by interviewee S1 above, he further elaborates upon the capturing of what had been discussed in the meeting:

"Yeah, I wonder whether we wrote minutes – no this was only invested in us four (laughing). Yeah, that is a great lack and I guess in our routines this is mentioned that when I am supposed to do that [...] Yeah another way would be to make a small document." (S1, p.13)

S1 explains that if some kind of reification was made available in the form of documentation, e.g. minutes of the meeting; members could easily relate back to these writings and re-use previous meanings to create new ones when an additional problem occurs. The outcome of one closure meeting could have the ability to also become 'a productive of meaning' for others facing similar issues in their projects, locally and on an organisational-wide level. Recalling Wenger here, it is with tools or stories that our understandings of a given practice shape our experiences (1998). Currently, there is little reification of captured or documented knowledge from these meetings, since KS is restricted to those employees who are familiar with each other in a local context and not on an organisational-wide level.

6.1.1.2 Belonging to Ramboll in Sweden

As we have established so far, KS is practiced on a local level in Ramboll Sweden. The International KS that RamLink is meant to facilitate has however not been realised. To gain a deeper understanding of why the social environment limits international KS through RamLink, we will now look at how the three modes of belonging (5.3.1.2) influence employee behaviour. As mentioned in our theoretical section, the three modes of belonging are influential in defining what a member of a community sees as important and thereby invest his/her time in.

From our generated data, it is clear that the interviewed employees from Ramboll Sweden are highly influenced by *engagement* as a mode of belonging. Their daily work within their profession (see also S2, p.2) and engagement with colleagues is something that they place centrally in their daily work;

"A central theme is again this, being an expert. I know that it is the core thing that gets me going. When I can be in a situation where I'm part of a working team, a project, where people are dealing with all kinds of problems [...]. And then "HERE COMES HE" with the answers" (S1, p. 6).

As seen in the excerpt (see also S3, p. 13), there seems to be a connection between the value of being an expert and working together with colleagues. Their daily engagement with their colleagues adds meaning to their work. Although it may seem a somewhat obvious point to make, the fact that the employees place great emphasis on their work as experts and working along with others is of great significance to our investigation of KS. If we again refer to the yearly gatherings of Swedish employees within the same profession, employee participation in such events is a significant enabler of KS. What is important to note, is the fact that the employees are able to relate a KS activity such as these gatherings to the problems that they encounter in their daily work practice:

"You meet and you see that you have almost the same problems whether you're in Stockholm or if you are in Gothenburg. And then people can help each other" (S3, p. 4).

This is a clear example of a process related to CoP, showing how participants recognise each other and become invested in a practice through a shared interest; the act of sharing knowledge flows easily in such instances as they are well connected to their engagement in their daily work. KS also has the possibility to connect with employee engagement through the earlier mentioned closure meetings that employees do indeed see as having potential. Employees reflect on projects and learn from their work, but the limited participation and reification of such meetings, due to a lack of time and resources, can prevent such meetings becoming truly meaningful and central in employee practice.

However, it is clear that engagement as a mode of belonging has a significant influence on how employees in Ramboll Sweden share knowledge with one another. KS is meaningful for employees when connected with their local practice as experts. However, organisation-wide KS, with RamLink as the intended facilitator, does not seem to be quite as meaningful to Swedish employees - something that can be related to the second mode of belonging; imagination.

Recalling the characteristics of imagination; it entails the ability to see one's own practices in a broader perspective so that new meanings, perspectives and possibilities may be introduced. With Ramboll's wish for international KS among the organisations business units, it is relevant to investigate the extent to which the employees can relate the locality of their daily practice with that of other business units in other countries. For one employee, sharing practices with business units in other countries is irrelevant (S2, p.7) However, in the process of the interview, S2 draws forward a contradictory example where a colleague in Norway had contacted him:

"It's nice to be able to help someone in another place in the organisation and to... You get to know that you can help others and that others think that you are good at what you do..." (S2, p.13)

Here, the employee sees a positive outcome from the collaboration with a colleague from another business unit outside Sweden. It is connected to imagination as a mode of belonging and the experience emerges when something crosses the boundary into his own practice and relates to his own work as an expert - giving him a feeling of competence. The presence of imagination can also be found in the account of S1, as he finds it very exciting to know that he is a part of a large organisation. However, he would like to have had more involvement in it, as he currently has very little practical links with other countries (S1, p.4). The fact that S2 is able to see a connection between him and Ramboll's other business units when it was related to his identity as an expert, shows the importance of participation as a facilitator of imagination. S1's wish for more collaboration shows a potential for imagination as a part of the way he belongs, yet as the employee expresses, participation in international collaboration is limited. Project manager S3 also sees the importance of cross collaboration between different country business units (S3, p. 6), yet he also states that people need to actually see that it works:

"I think it is a question of attitude and seeing that it really works. I mean, we are really conservative the people who work here and 'Oh, that wouldn't work, no no...' But to have some successful work together, that would be no problem I guess. [...] Now, you and I, we can sit here [...] and we can see each other... and we can share documents on the screen. It makes it easier." (S3, p.7)

The excerpt reinforces the importance of actual participation in practices that can expand the way employees see themselves in connection with Ramboll's business units outside Sweden. People need to actually see that such collaboration is possible, also emphasising the importance of reification as the spark for new ideas. Project manager S3 does however see successful collaboration as possible, for instance through a newly implemented technology called LYNC, where people can hold video conferences via the computer, sharing desktops and documents as they are talking (S3, p. 9). The LYNC system represents a boundary object – an important enabler of imagination as a mode of belonging. What is especially interesting here is the fact that the interviewee draws forward the LYNC system but never mentions RamLink naturally in connection with his daily work – a tendency that all our conducted interviews show. This could indicate that LYNC represents a competing, and in the eyes of the employees, more fitting boundary object that can connect Ramboll's employees across borders.

It appears imagination does in fact influence employee perception of their work and is seen most clearly when making a connection with the employee's practice as an expert. This is not only in relation to KS between Sweden and other country business units, but also when it comes to KS practices in the local social environment. Here, it is also relevant to mention Wenger's notion that we are shaped as members of a community through the things which the community pays attention

to. Referring once again to the tendency to neglect closure meetings in projects - the little attention paid to such meetings can result in employees having difficulties ascribing significant meaning to such KS occasions. But if employees see an advantage in collaborating and sharing knowledge, then why are they not investing themselves in using and sharing through the RamLink platform? As stated earlier (5.3.1.2), the ability to imagine broader meanings does not necessarily result in employees aligning their actions with the broader context of the organisation. Consequently, we will now examine the particular issue of alignment amongst employees in connection with RamLink as a KS platform.

By alignment, we are referring to the extent to which employees coordinate their efforts with the Ramboll Group's wish for employees to share their expertise through the RamLink platform. It is however important to note that alignment exists in a wide variety of aspects in Ramboll Sweden. For example, employees do, to a great extent, align themselves with the general goal of executing quality projects and thereby providing clients with a satisfying solution. Therefore, alignment can also be seen as an influential mode of belonging. However, in direct connection with our interest in employee reluctance towards using the RamLink platform, there seems to be little alignment with this particular organisational goal.

When the interviews turned towards RamLink as a subject, all three seem to refer to the platform as a simple contact directory or phonebook and not something that can benefit them in their work as experts. They use it mainly to retrieve the contact details of people they have already established a social connection with. Aligning themselves with the purpose of the system by updating their CV's and project profiles is seen as time consuming and tedious work – showing their reluctance towards it. To gain a deeper understanding of the lack of alignment, we will be drawing on some of the key factors that, in accordance to Wenger, promote alignment as a mode of belonging.

As mentioned earlier (5.3.1.2), alignment needs boundary objects that put the actions of community members into a broader perspective. Boundary objects can define broad visions and aspirations for the employees to align themselves with. In connection with KS and RamLink, the 'One Company' strategy (Appendix B, p.9) aiming to bring the different entities across the organisation closer together under a shared mindset and increased collaboration, can be seen as a boundary object. In the Swedish interviews, two of the three interviewees mention 'One Company' spontaneously;

"I mean this ONE COMPANY slogan does work, although it is a bit simple but it is mentioned as a kind of. Well when this knowledge sharing doesn't happen everybody is horrified that; "we are supposed to be the ONE COMPANY!" So it is then used as the label under which a set of arguments for collaboration are gathered." (S1, p.14).

The interviewees from Sweden refer to the concept of 'One Company' as something that works and something that they aspire to (See also S3, p.5). However, in both cases it is used in connection with descriptions of how local or national collaboration and KS can be improved (S1, p.14 & S3, p.5). Here, the employees seem to align themselves with the idea of being One Company, yet equally important is the fact that they do so because they see a relation to their local work and engagement. The employees do not however make a connection between RamLink and 'One Company' – separating the platform from the aligning potential of One Company.

From the conducted interviews, it also became clear that employees feel unequipped to really utilise the system. This results in an unclear picture of how RamLink may contribute to their daily practice.

" I am not sure what they told you in Gothenburg, but here in Stockholm, we haven't worked very much with it, we haven't been educated in it [...] here in Sweden no one worked with it, I mean not from my.. erm.. in the communication area or whatever. They just put this Ramlink out and then it was up to us to use it and we didn't know how to use it." (Interviewee S3, p.9).

As alignment involves the ability to communicate purpose, the employees feeling of a lack of introduction (see also S2, p.11) and confusion concerning the RamLink platform may be an obstacle for finding a common ground between management strategies and the employees. Instead, the common ground that the employees find is the confusion around RamLink. If the social environment finds consensus in not participating in RamLink, others are likely to follow.

Having examined how the different modes of belonging influence the way employees share knowledge and having established that RamLink has a hard time connecting with this; we will now look at the challenges that can arise from being over concentrated with a given practice.

6.1.1.3 The Challenges of Social Practices

In this section of our analysis we will be investigating further into the practice part of communities and those challenges that can arise from them. To recap so far; we have found that KS takes place at a local level, where participation and reification and our findings of belonging to a community may explain why some employees at Ramboll Sweden are perhaps reluctant to share knowledge at an organisational-wide level. However, an aspect we have not dealt with, which we find has significant value for our investigation, is the aspect of local practices becoming narrow-minded and self-focussed.

Recalling our theory concerning the challenges CoP may hold (5.3.1.5), we find the connection between employee engagement (6.1.1.2) with other colleagues they know and the importance of being an expert, to be fitting examples of the challenges CoP can hold.

Engagement with other colleagues one knows is not to be interpreted as a negative thing. After all, it is still very much a powerful source of social interaction where the sharing of knowledge can and does flow. On the contrary, if this particular practice is purely restricted to those communities and individuals one is familiar with, i.e. locally, then there can be a risk of these local practices becoming too fixed, since that of other members holding valuable knowledge can be bypassed:

"[...]we have a biologist who's an expert on water issues [...] They've had a parallel track with some projects, not having been in contact with a biologist colleague although she is an expert within this area, this department upstairs ignored that. And this was discussed and everyone is horrified; "how stupid" and "we're one company" and "why can we not collaborate better?"
(S1, p.5)

The essence of this quote reveals that the environmental department has neglected or simply bypassed valuable knowledge which in fact was available upstairs. Recalling Huysman and Wit here, they mention that members are not necessarily excluded on purpose – however due to a community's conservative behaviour this can often be the outcome (2002). The environmental department's engagement in the given project has been so self-focussed on its own learning that its valuable surroundings have been forgotten or simply bypassed. Yet, as the interview proceeds with S1 an interesting aspect is further revealed:

"[...] people upstairs didn't make contact with her and try to solve it themselves, although they lacked that expertise [...] but choosing not to ask for help." (S1, p.14-15)

Even though employees lacked expert knowledge to solve a problem, they still decided not to contact another employee who could very easily have assisted them. Consequently, this contradicts with the point previously made, of these employees simply bypassing or forgetting expert knowledge that was available to them upstairs. Instead, employees seem to be deliberately avoiding an employee in the hope that they themselves can solve a given problem.

We argue that this goes to show just how occupied employees can be with being experts; they would prefer to solve their own problems with those people they share similar fields of expertise with, i.e. within their own community. We asked our interviewee why he thought employees seemed reluctant to ask for help when a challenge arose:

"Well because you become less autonomous, you become more dependent on other people."
(S1, p.15)

Loosing ones sovereignty and becoming dependent on others seems to result in employees thinking they will be less of an expert. Again if we refer back to our theoretical section concerning the challenges of CoP - Leonard mentions that a community creates their own 'signature skills' that are

very much engrained and formed by that given community and as a result are difficult to change (1995).

An issue of a community holding specific 'signature skills' that are difficult to change also becomes relevant when one of the interviewees explained that he was working in developing methods concerning an environmental building classification system – methods he wanted to share with his colleagues. Yet, he soon ran into problems, as the project management department in Sweden expressed that he had no business in developing methods (S2, p.6). The development was then put to a standstill, preventing potential knowledge in being shared, although it could have very easily benefitted others. If we relate back to what Brown and Duguid state; a challenge can very easily occur when knowledge is to be passed on or moved, e.g. from one community to another (2001). The example above reveals how the project management team have their own characteristics, standards and ideas of what they think is important. From this, we can conclude that the processes connected with CoP can encourage local innovation through local KS, yet they can just as easily isolate communities from each other due to them having an engrained and segregated character. As we find this particular episode above can also be interpreted as a difference in power relations, we will be revisiting it in the section concerning power and politics (6.1.4).

On a more positive note, we have also found examples in our data that reveal how the commonality of practices can enable the sharing of knowledge and collaboration; either by collaborating with competitors outside the organisation or on a more organisation-wide level within Ramboll's domain. Starting with the first of the two examples; the collaboration with competitors is found when S1 is faced with a problem he cannot answer himself:

"Yeah, that would be to make contact with colleagues working at the urban planning departments at municipalities or competing consultants." (S1, p.10)

We find it rather interesting that our interviewee stated that he refers to competing consultants for an answer to a given problem. Conversely, we cannot know for certain whether he is contacting other Swedish or foreign owned consultancy companies. Though, we can assume from what he is telling us, that the people he is contacting share the same practices and academic disciplines as he does. Recalling Brown and Duguid, we see a connection with their term: *Networks of Practice* - being much looser connected than CoP (2001). In essence, these interactions reveal how knowledge can very easily flow through the common foundation of similar practices (2001).

Another illustration of the common foundation of similar practices can be found in the following, where an interviewee elaborates on his collaboration with Ramboll India:

"Interviewer: So you have a lot of colleagues around the world who are experts in the same field?"

S3: Then of course we have the different, here in Stockholm or Sweden the cold winters that they don't have in India or Bombay, so they have to learn about that, but of course the side line is the same in a way." (S3, p.12)

What we see here are indications of networks of practice spread by vast distances and time. They illustrate how employees still can share knowledge and learn from each other when having academic disciplines in common, though not having to be down the corridor. This goes to show that this particular employee can see the benefits of learning from his colleagues in India (S3, p12). He does not necessarily have to know these people in depth, but since he shares similar practices with them, they are able to interact and share knowledge. If this experience were to be projected within the social environment as an exemplifying story, the result could also create meaning for additional employees.

Having analysed the various processes of CoP that influence KS and the RamLink platform, we will now move on to the additional concepts that we have put forward that we believe have an effect on the Social environment; the first one being local values.

6.1.2 Local Values

As put forward in our theoretical framework, we perceive employees' values as being influential when they choose how to behave in an organisation (5.3.2). Although these values may very well differ between different sub-units in an organisation, our data has revealed some basic assumptions that seem to be important to employees across Ramboll Sweden.

As has been touched upon several times in our analysis so far, the role of being an expert is very central to the interviewed employees at Ramboll Sweden. Although this may seem like a natural interest and almost a prerequisite, the high importance of being competent and focussed on your project plays an important part when it comes to the employees KS behaviour in Ramboll Sweden:

"Well, to be an expert in your field. To have expertise knowledge is certainly... It has a high status within the company. More than most of the others perhaps" (S1, p.5).

As can be seen in the excerpt (see also S1, p.6 and S2, p.2), employees place very high importance on being an expert within their field of work, and as was discussed earlier, when addressing how employees share knowledge locally in Ramboll Sweden, they see KS as meaningful when it is related to their role as experts. The value of being expert can also be connected with the importance of working with projects and delivering a quality product to clients. On several occasions, the interviewees indicate that people in Ramboll are very focussed on making good projects:

"Most engineers are techno... technology obsessed and just want to fix things and would like to talk with the client about the potential of the project to continue... And it's very easily, and I've had quite a few projects like this, and I start to swallow the whole project and make it completely mine [...]." (S1, p.3)

Employees' engagement in their projects may also seem like a simple finding (see also S3, p.3), but this specific issue does indeed influence their behaviour when it comes to sharing their knowledge. Therefore, the basic values of being an expert and focussing on your projects play an important role in the social environment and will be drawn forward in other parts of our analysis when relevant. In the following section, we will be looking at what motivates the employees when it comes to KS. It is worth noticing that the values just described are connected with the intrinsic motivators that will be elaborated upon below.

6.1.3 Reward and Recognition

This brings us to the motivational factors that can either enhance or to some extent limit KS and its connection to the RamLink platform. It is in this part of our analysis we will bring forward what our interviewees believe are rewarding factors when sharing knowledge.

Starting with the hygiene factors, during our interviews in Helsinki, we discovered that Ramboll Finland had launched a competition where employees and departments could win a prize if they made sure to fill in their CV's and upload germane projects. Therefore, we found it relevant to ask the employees at Ramboll Sweden whether similar initiatives had also taken place in Sweden and what they thought of such a competition:

"That could be a good way, because then you put focus on this RamLink and then maybe you I mean in every department you could have your own competition and even if you don't get to the final, I mean everyone will have their own competition. Yeah, why not." (S3, p.13) (see also S2, p.13)

Interestingly enough, two out of our three interviewees at Ramboll Sweden found such ideas to be beneficial. We however argue that such competitions are two folded. We agree that taking the initiative to hold such competitions will create awareness of RamLink. Employees would therefore perceive that Ramboll believes the involvement in the platform is something of great importance. We also agree, that employee sensemaking of the platform may also change as awareness is created through the active participation in these competitions.

However, we can argue that such competitions can only create awareness for a certain amount of time. What happens when the prize has been won and the competitions are over – will employees simply go back to their daily routines? This is an issue we are not in a position to answer; though with the aid of Herzbergs' theory concerning hygiene factors, we can postulate that benefits of such

motivators are questionable when it comes to KS through an ICT. Whether or not a RamLink competition can be successful will be dealt with in greater detail when we look at how the employees in Finland perceive the held competition. However, remembering Herzberg, extrinsic motivators may increase quantity but at the cost of quality. The use of hygiene factors with such competitions may create awareness concerning the importance of KS with the use of RamLink at that given time. However, they also carry the risk of employees losing interest once the competition is over.

On the other hand, intrinsic motivators can play a significant role in KS. As was put forward in the section above (6.1.2), S1 values the ability to collaborate with others and this is something that he finds motivating as this gives him a feeling of being skilful (S1, p.6). In general, the Swedish employees identify with intrinsic motivators such as social recognition and achievement:

"I have been contacted from Ramboll Norway (through RamLink, Ed.) [...] It is nice to be able to help someone in another place in the organisation and to... You get to know that you can help others and that others think you are good at what you do." (S2, p.12 & 13)

It is with the quotes above that show employee experiences have a positive effect on the sharing of knowledge and its connection to RamLink. These particular issues can be closely linked to Herzberg motivators. These perceptions that Swedish employees find as motivators therefore have great relevance for the sharing of knowledge and the positive interconnection it can have with the RamLink platform. If RamLink was connected with the motivators that the employees find important, the platform might have an easier time fitting in the social environment in Ramboll Sweden.

6.1.4 Power and Politics in Ramboll Sweden

We will now look at the processes of power and politics in Ramboll Sweden that influence both the practice of sharing knowledge and the RamLink platform.

As put forward in our theoretical section, people who engage in a given practice can become so focused on their doings that they actually see themselves as the only one having the right to this practice (5.3.4). This is also an issue that we find emerging in Ramboll Sweden:

"I also have had some plans for the environmental buildings classification systems. We should build some methods here in Sweden I think [...], but we ran into some problems because the division that works with... what do they call themselves 'projektledning' (Project Management, Ed.). They think that it is their area and we should not be doing anything about it [...]. They want that area and they don't want us in buildings and design to step into the area [...]." (S2, p.6)

The excerpt exemplifies how a department within the organisation has reserved the right to a specific practice and thus denies the legitimacy of those outside the community that try to influence it. Here, it is possible to draw upon Wenger's *politics of reification and participation*, as the project management department rejects S2's work, resulting in his ideas not being reified but also in him not being able to participate in the practice of developing methods. Such instances of political struggles within an organisation can create distance between different communities, but more importantly in our case, it can result in this particular employee feeling less inclined to share his knowledge. A similar example can be drawn from the account of S1, brought forward earlier in our analysis (6.1.1.3). Here, a department refrained from seeking out a knowledgeable biologist even though they were in need of her expertise. Once again, there is an indication of a political decision to avoid association with particular people that are not a part of one's practice.

An example of how distance between communities can be reduced in Ramboll Sweden can also be drawn from the account of S3:

"from the first of January we came into a new organisation in Sweden, where we opened up from five regions to three divisions...[...] And this opened up more... I mean, the walls fall down. We could talk easier... I could talk easier with my colleagues in different cities. When you are called something different, you have a wall there to go through..." (S3, p.6)

As the excerpt shows, Ramboll have made the decision to reduce the complexity of the organisation in Sweden, lessening power struggles and making it possible for people to associate themselves with others, thereby enabling collaboration and KS.

In relation to power and politics and its influence on the relationship between the different country business units, our data also reveals some interesting findings. In the conducted interviews with Swedish employees, there are indications of a feeling of *us and them* when it comes to the Danish mother company:

"I think we are, how should I say it... I think we are more famous and good at what we do in Denmark and internationally in projects than we are in Sweden. We are kind of a bit behind our colleagues in the business I think." (S2, p.2)

"There are some instances now and then where a culture difference between Denmark and Sweden is noticed. In our department we also have a graphic design group and they deal with a lot of national design projects. Graphical projects and this is governed by the Danish headquarters [...]. Erm, but this is heard from my colleagues that work with projects like these presentations. It's like 'No, no, Copenhagen is against that... They're very tough on all things.'" (S1, p.4).

Although not directly connected to the *not-invented-here* syndrome that was put forward in our theory (5.3.4), the excerpts display perceptions of Ramboll Sweden being very different from the

Danish unit. In the first quote, the interviewee displays a feeling of being less significant than those that work with large international projects. In relation to KS, this could entail the employees downplaying the significance and relevance of their own knowledge when it comes to sharing it across country business units. The latter of the two relates to the politics of reification, where certain meanings are perceived as more legitimate through the use of institutionally defined authority. Recalling how the negotiation of meaning in organisations often tend to evolve around figures of authority, the attitude of the head of office in Gothenburg also represents a source of distance between Sweden and Denmark:

" When I had an introduction course, the head of our office here in Gothenburg told a little about the history of Ramboll and presented very clearly that 'they, the Danes, took over US' and that continues during his talk [...]" (S1, p.4).

The perceived distance through both significance and power relations can attribute to a feeling of RamLink being something that is *purely owned by Copenhagen* (S1, p.19), which in turn paves the way for the *not-invented-here* syndrome.

6.1.5 Employees' Perception of Management

The final section in our analysis of the social environment brings forward the connection of how employees at Ramboll Sweden perceive their managements' engagement in the RamLink platform to support KS.

Up until the launch of RamLink and on the actual day when the platform was revealed, employees' expectations of it seemed somewhat positive. The anticipation of it being an effective tool to aid KS seemed to be intensive at the initial stages of the launch. One of our interviewees explains how he found a newsletter from the communication department mentioning the importance of joining in and taking part in the RamLink platform. It gave details on how RamLink could be used, how it should work and that every second week there would be an educational session where employees would become acquainted with the platform and learn how to use it to their own advantage (S3 p. 9). As a result, this particular employee found the information to be very encouraging. However, it did not take long before he felt support had been lost as nothing else actually happened. He then turned to the communication department and asked what was happening. He accounts for their answer:

"Ahh well we don't have the time and we don't know what to do." (S3 p. 9)

Being a project manager and head of his department, S3 found this attitude to be rather frustrating as he has to perform a balancing act between top management desires and his employees' perceptions of these desires. As he explained himself:

“So it’s hard for me as a manager to keep up the good mood for my employers.” (S3 p.9)

Since S3 feels he has the responsibility to encourage employees to use RamLink, the episode with the communication department could very easily have an effect on employees’ perceptions that management, via the communication department, are not very committed in promoting RamLink. Recalling DeTienne, McDermott and O’Dell, they stress that management needs to support and guide potential users in the quest for KS (2004). Yet, as our interviewee mentions, it becomes difficult for him to encourage others to use RamLink – especially when the communication of it is restricted due to the department responsible not having the time, nor knowing what to do. It seems that the communication department in Sweden, who can act as an important link in the overall understanding of RamLink, lack instructions and the involvement in the practicalities of the RamLink platform. We found two issues that can perhaps further explain the matter. Firstly, when we asked S3 whether he talks about RamLink with his colleagues, he replied:

“We talk a little bit about it and then we laugh (laughing), like this yeah yeah – do you use? No I don’t.” (S3 p. 11)

This demonstrates that employees seem to perceive RamLink and associate themselves with it in a less serious manner. It seems that employees to some extent perceive it as a farce; when RamLink is mentioned in conversation amongst employees’ they simply laugh. This then leads us to the second issue that can perhaps explain in further detail why employees seem reluctant to use the RamLink platform:

“I mean, not even the managers use RamLink in Sweden. They are not showing a good example. If I go in and find my boss or some of the managers higher up here in Sweden, they don't have the information in their CV's when you look at them. If they don't do it, why should we do it? I think they should. If they're telling everyone else to it, then they should do it themselves to start with.” (S2 p.13)

The general perception of managements' involvement in the RamLink platform shows a less positive nature (see also S1, p.18 and S3, p.11). Their limited involvement seems to be having a negative effect on employee involvement in RamLink. In fact, managers’ profiles and activity in RamLink is so poor that employees bring forward quite an alarming perception: *If managers do not use it – why should we?* In conclusion here, we argue that managers may need to put on their *facilitator hats* in order to help along a more positive perception of the RamLink platform.

6.1.6 Recapping on the Social Environment in Sweden

The following chapter of this analysis will focus on how employees at Ramboll Sweden make sense of the RamLink platform. Before we do this however, we feel it appropriate to summarise our findings concerning the current social environment.

In the social environment in Ramboll Sweden we found the aspect of local practice plays a significant role. In fact, we found that it acted as the core foundation for the sharing of knowledge to take place. Having a common ground to act from, a shared practice becomes important for KS in Ramboll Sweden. We also found that KS had a hard time expanding to an organisation-wide level, for instance through the RamLink platform. Without a social connection, employees find it 'a hassle' to contact colleagues overseas.

Acting as a facilitator for local KS are the yearly gatherings. They enable colleagues to meet each other over the same interests and discuss challenges they face collectively. However, employees perceive these yearly gatherings to be too rushed and controlled, consequently inhibiting the creation of the very social connections that can facilitate KS. Additionally, we also encountered an understanding that management in Sweden has not stressed the significance of these meetings, with the result that employees perceive them, and the social processes within, as less important.

Employees at Ramboll Sweden negotiate meaning from their local practices, yet little meaning was present concerning the RamLink platform. They found the platform to be another tool amongst the many other systems within their social environment. It has not been integrated into their local practice; rather it is perceived as a phone directory or CV generator. The participation and reflection with other colleagues in closure meetings were identified as activities where KS can occur. However, due to limited time and resources few of our interviewees had participated in them, which results in little reification at a more organisational level.

Being an expert at Ramboll Sweden is a core value as it plays a large part in the daily engagement of employees with others in the social environment; it adds meaning to their work. The importance of interactions with others is seen in the examples of interaction with Norway and that of the LYNC system, employees are able to imagine how KS can not only benefit them, but also others within the organisation. However, confusion around how to use RamLink and the little connection of it with the One Company as an aligning object, is working against RamLink.

The aspect of local practices being too fixed and self-focused was seen with the environmental department neglecting valuable knowledge found upstairs. A reason for this behaviour was partly due to not wanting to run the risk of becoming less autonomous or losing one's sovereignty. Adding to the challenges here, we also found that certain practices became so self-focussed, that potential ideas for a building classification system were put to a stop. On a more positive note, collaboration with colleagues placed in alternative geographical places shows how knowledge can be shared when

a result of having similar fields are apparent. If projected as an exemplifying story, the result could also create meaning for others in the Swedish social environment.

Concerning reward and recognition, in Finland we found the hygiene factors such as the Ramboll competition to be perceived as good initiatives, the actual effects of such a competition will be dealt with in the analysis of Ramboll Finland. In Ramboll Sweden taking part in challenging work with skilful colleagues within an employees' social environment were identified as favourable motivators – as knowledge can be easily shared and employees have a feeling of being skilful.

The issue of becoming so engrained in one's practice we found present in the processes of power and politics, which also influences KS and RamLink as they can easily be obstructed by politics. The politics of participation and reification show how reserving the right to a specific practice can rule out certain employees and their desire to share knowledge with others. This was also further elaborated upon through the; *us and them* syndrome as employees felt at times less significant.

Employees seem to have been positive towards the RamLink platform before its launch, yet due to the perceived lack of communication and commitment from management, we also found that this may have had an effect on employees perception of KS and RamLink – as they express the feeling of; *“if they don't use it why should we?”*

6.2 Does RamLink Make Sense in Sweden?

As an introduction to the analysis of the Swedish employees' sensemaking around the RamLink platform, it is necessary to bring forward Weick's notion that in a given case it is very difficult to find a complete representation of all of the seven properties (Weick, 1995). The following sections are therefore very different in how they cover the numerous aspects that we find to be connected with each of the seven properties of sensemaking.

6.2.1 The Influence of Identity

As we established earlier, (6.1.2) the value of being an expert comes across as very significant in our collected data. As sensemaking is grounded in identity construction, it is therefore relevant to explore how and if our interviewees relate the RamLink platform to their work as experts. What emerges from our generated data is a general description of RamLink as a *phonebook* – a way of getting hold of people whom you already know (S1, p.15 and S2, p.4), i.e. not a platform that can help employees become better experts, but simply provide contact information. The interview with S3 indicates that he is having a hard time making sense of the platform:

"Interviewer: Now I have some questions about the Ramlink platform

S3: Yeah, that will it go fast (laughing, Ed.)

Interviewer: Now if you think of the Ramlink system, what can it potentially do for your daily work?

S3: To be honest I am not sure, now I don't know what they have told you in Gothenburg, but here in Stockholm we haven't worked very much with it, we haven't been educated in it. So I am not sure I can answer that question really." (S3, p.9)

The interviewee finds it hard to describe how and if the RamLink platform can contribute to his daily work. If his identity is highly influenced by his role as an expert, there is a chance that RamLink does not fit with this particular identity trait. There are however instances where RamLink makes sense in the minds of employees:

"And RamLink is an excellent platform for getting CV from people with the same design as well. That's the biggest benefit I see from RamLink [...] I think the people who work in my unit that do not do tendering... they don't really use RamLink. They update their CVs because I tell them to but they don't search for information or anything." (S2, p.10)

S2 has a positive view of how RamLink can benefit him in his work with tenders, thereby connecting with his daily practice. However, people who are not working with tenders do not use the platform. A similar pattern arises with S1, as he also sees potential in the platform's ability to support the tendering process. Yet, as in the excerpt above, S1 also has the impression that most of his colleagues hardly use the RamLink platform - people see very little results emerging from the work it

takes to fill in information (p.17). Recalling that the behaviour and accounts of individuals can be used to identify wider held beliefs (5.1.4), the fact that all of our interviewees believe that the majority of their colleagues see little benefit in the RamLink platform, indicates that it does not connect with their organisational identity as experts. If being an expert is mainly related to working on projects and ensuring a quality product for clients, employees see no connection between RamLink and these practices. RamLink and the demands it puts on employees may conflict with the organisational identities in Sweden.

6.2.2 Retrospective Sensemaking

The retrospective property of sensemaking is also something that we feel can contribute to our analysis of how employees in Ramboll Sweden make sense of KS and the RamLink platform. As such, our generated data can be seen as their retrospective accounts of how they have experienced RamLink up until the time of our interviews. As described earlier (5.4.5), sensemaking is a process that can have many different outcomes depending on what is attentive in our minds at the time we look back at what has happened. Likewise, the many projects that we are currently engaged in also influence the sensemaking process. The notion of retrospective sensemaking is relevant when looking at both the employees and Ramboll as an organisation. In project based organisations, employees are always in the midst of a project, or perhaps several. However, KS is a social practice that requires people to take the time to reflect upon and discuss their experiences – time that does not seem to be available in the social environment in Ramboll Sweden:

"Of course, there is always the time... There's never enough because you have the next project or you have more than one project, so you need to hurry. That's the hardest thing I guess." (S3, p.3)

When RamLink enters as a novel entity in their working environment, employees try to make sense of it by relating it to their past experience in the organisation and as we have already seen, there is a tradition to push aside things that do not fall within the employees work as expert consultants. The tradition of skipping occasions for reflecting on your work presents a hard starting point for the RamLink platform, as the system also needs employees to take time to reflect upon their own skills and current projects.

As is also pointed out in the sensemaking theory, the problem at times of confusion is that people find themselves in a situation of equivocality. From our analysis of the social environment, we can once again draw on the fact that local managers have tried to let Swedish employees know that they need to use RamLink, thereby providing clarity and priority. However, with reference to the previous analysis of employees' perception of management (6.1.5), Swedish employees seem to cast doubt

on management's own belief in the RamLink platform, and this can easily influence how employees make sense of management encouragement.

6.2.3 Enacted Sensible Environments

The considerations put forward concerning manager's actions, or non-action can also be related to the aspect of enactive sensible environments in the sensemaking process. However, before venturing into this issue, we find it relevant to look at how employees themselves create the environment that RamLink currently exists in. Recalling that our actions create environments that present either opportunities or constraints for our situation, employees' limited contributions to the platform create a difficult environment for RamLink:

"I can also see a potential in this CV database, if everyone put in that their information, that is not what has happened here in Sweden, so therefore I am not sure that I can trust Ramlink and I guess... this is my opinion... I think, anyway, here in Stockholm most people have this same affair of trusting this system." (S3, p.9)

As can be seen in the excerpt, S3 feels that he cannot trust the content in RamLink because a lot of the employees do not use it. This is an example of how employees themselves, by taking no action, create an environment where RamLink is untrustworthy. But where does this *non action* come from? If we look closer into the enactive environments, it becomes clear that the local management of his business unit has involved itself very little when it comes to creating an understanding of the RamLink platform:

"No it's discussed at our Department meetings and marketed that it's important, but they don't seem to be involved in it. This is very clearly a Ramboll global thing which probably lies in its nature as a general database but might also be an obstacle as it's a foreign thing, it's something that Denmark has developed [...] also my boss has no involvement in RamLink and it isn't an issue within the Sweden headquarters either, this is not mentioned, this is a project purely owned by Copenhagen." (S1, p.18-19)

Through the act of not paying much attention to the RamLink platform (see also S2, p.13), local management in Sweden is enacting an environment where RamLink has little significance. This particular environment then influences and becomes a constraint when various managers try to emphasise the importance of the platform. This particular environment creates distance between RamLink and the social environment in Sweden, making it difficult for employees to see the relevance of it. In addition, the practices that let regular project work take precedence over KS around a finished project also create enactive environments that inhibit wide sharing of knowledge as a natural part of the employees' daily work. However, enactive environments are continually shaped by our actions, and S1 sees a potential in the platform and tries to influence his local environment. As he has been involved in the RamLink project in Sweden, he often mentions the

good things about it and describes how some of his colleagues have reacted positively (S1, p.17). Hereby, he is creating an environment that holds opportunities not only for himself but also his colleagues as his social interaction with them opens up for the current sensemaking around RamLink to be reworked and perhaps changed for the better.

6.2.4 Social Sensemaking

The social aspect of sensemaking refers very much to the intersubjective sense around RamLink as a tool that has little use in the Swedish business unit. Recalling Wenger, it is the social aspect of interaction with others that sustain intersubjective shared meanings (1995). In our collected data, it seems that the social interactions with RamLink in focus are of a negative nature:

"But the people I talk to from other departments here in Sweden, they think it's shit actually. [...] I talked to my colleagues in Stockholm and they say no one uses it. Absolutely no one" (Interviewee S2, p.11) (For a similar example; S3, p.11)

Given that employees look to others for confirmation of their sense of things and that the social interactions they have had around RamLink resembles the one in the excerpt above – the employees reaffirm each other in their choice not to use it. When the social aspect of sensemaking is also present when individuals are by themselves, the knowledge of others choosing not to use the RamLink platform may well influence the individual when he or she is sitting in front of the computer screen, trying to make sense of it. This view of RamLink has perhaps spread more easily when the managers trying to encourage the use of RamLink are not perceived as committed to it by the employees (see 6.1.5). As S1 describes, RamLink is on the agenda at department meetings where the managers' try to *market* it, but at the same time, they do not seem to be involved in it (S1, p.18). What is also interesting to note, is the fact that S1 refers to the act of *marketing* RamLink – not a situation where meaning can be negotiated through conversation, reflection and mutual understanding. Interviewee S3 reveals that in Stockholm, there have been few occasions of a social character where a different sense concerning RamLink can be made. In his opinion, he and his colleagues have not been educated in using the system:

"I found the first newsletter we got from our communication department here that Ramlink: 'Come along with Ramlink and this is what they can do and this is how it should work and every 2nd week you will have some education for this'. And this sounds very good and I have 'oh yeah this could be support for me' and then nothing happens." (S3, p.9)

Here, it is clear that employees had expectations of receiving some education or training in using the system. Conducting face-to-face sessions where people are able to interact, ask questions and possibly resolve their confusion can be a way of guiding the social aspect of collective sensemaking that facilitates intersubjective meanings. However, if employees in Ramboll Sweden do not have the

opportunity to participate in such events where knowledgeable people could help them make sense of RamLink, then frustration and an unclear sense of what RamLink offers is likely to prevail. The issue of having expectations is related to another property of sensemaking; ongoing.

6.2.5 Ongoing Sensemaking

Weick states that sensemaking always takes place from an ongoing involvement in different projects (5.4.5) and this is also the case in Ramboll, as the employees are always in the midst of a given project. When an interruption then occurs, sensemaking becomes more apparent. The RamLink platform can be seen as an interruption, or a novelty that the employees need to make sense of. If we look back on the account of S3 and his expectations about being educated in the system, we can see he had already made sense of RamLink before it was launched. On the announcement of the plans to implement RamLink, employees in Ramboll Sweden develop a perception of what is in store. In fact, S3 displays a positive attitude towards the system and anticipated that it would be able to assist him in his daily work (S3, p.9). As an ongoing process, sensemaking around the system was already taking place before they, the employees, had actually met the system face-to-face. Then, when they had their first encounter, their expectations seem to have been shattered:

"[...] we got some information that all our information in our CVs would be typed in by some students into RamLink. But it turned out that that was not the case and everyone got really mad and angry about it. It takes a couple of hours to get everything done and they thought the work should be done for them, but that was not the case, so everyone got really mad. And a lot of people in Sweden did not start to use it after that." (Interviewee S2, p.11)

In the excerpt, it is clear that employee expectations were shattered (See also S3, p.10-11) and this created a feeling of frustration. With their experiences being in conflict with what they had expected, they now seek to make sense of things, and this is where Eccles and Nohria point to the importance of events such as meetings and exercises that act as important focal points (See 5.4.5). Organisational members relevant for the creation of such events are the members of the local governance organisation (see 3.3.3) – yet, there seems to be little evidence of such events. Furthermore, S3 displays confusion around who is actually responsible for RamLink in Sweden, particularly in the Stockholm office:

"Interviewer: Who's responsible for it (RamLink, Ed.)?"

S3: Well, that's a good question. I think of course, we are all responsible for it. With me as a manager, but also the employees as well." (S3, p.11)

The previous example where an employee described how RamLink is on the agenda in department meetings can however be seen as such an event, but these are influenced by the perceived uncertainty concerning management's commitment. Management may also have a hard time

resolving this uncertainty if it is simply *marketing* RamLink and does not generate discussions and reflection around the platform.

6.2.6 Cues for Sensemaking in Sweden

Drawing on the notion that people direct their attention towards cues when they are of an unexpected nature (5.4.6), the announcement of RamLink itself can be interpreted as a cue for employees' sensemaking. However, after the launch of the system, employee expectations did not match their experiences, and they once again turned their attention towards available cues in order to make sense of the situation. Ramboll, both in Sweden and the Ramboll Group seem to provide employees with few cues that can resolve the confusion surrounding RamLink. As touched upon above, management's non-action can also be seen as a cue – one that reinforces employees' perception of RamLink as something that has little significance. Furthermore, the employees own behaviour of not using RamLink also acts as cues for others. Additionally, communication concerning RamLink seems to be primarily of a mediated nature:

"And on the Intranet, there is some new. I think it came last week with a new google search engine. So we get it from the intranet." (S2, p.11)

"One more (electronic newsletter, Ed.), it came out two months later on and then it's like 'you have to learn and you're out by yourself [...]' (S3, p.10)

Here, it seems there are few occasions where people can come together and discuss and perhaps resolve the frustrations they have toward the RamLink platform. Furthermore, we can also draw upon the words of Weick when he states that what people need in times of confusion is not simply more information, but priorities and values that can help them make sense of things and take action. In terms of communication, S3 feels that people are left to themselves when trying to figure RamLink out:

"My manager of the region, he tried to tell us how we should use this, but he had no more information than I had. So I mean, this also goes back to this lack of information even for them. So it's hard for them to tell it's how I should use it, like it's hard for me to tell my employees how to use it." (S3, p.11)

Here, it seems there are few cues available to employees at multiple levels in the organisation. Both S3, as a project manager and his own superior have a hard time figuring out how RamLink can be used. This in turn makes it difficult for them to motivate their colleagues. Here, it is relevant to bring forward the fact that none of the Swedish interviewees mentioned that a local governance organisation has been put in place – one that can be utilised to create occasions where a negotiation of meaning around RamLink can take place.

When we addressed the enactive environments that currently exist in Ramboll Sweden, we saw that RamLink has been partly dissociated from the social environment in Sweden, partly through management's behaviour. S1, who is involved in RamLink, does however collaborate with the Ramboll Group in the work to improve the platform. However, his own sensemaking around his efforts to support RamLink is affected negatively:

"[...] this is something which I experienced during the workshops which I had where representatives of various countries were invited to participate in a workshop in Copenhagen where we had video connections, Denmark discussed things we sat and watched - we were completely ignored, there was a moment where we were asked to give a reaction, there was no reactions and this was it." (Interviewee S1, p.18-19)

Here, S1 experiences the behaviour of the participants in Copenhagen negatively, i.e. this acts as a cue for him. The employee attempts to participate and projects his own perceptions onto the colleagues at the meeting. However, as he is ignored, his participation is not reified – leaving his experience of it with little meaning. This negative experience can then contribute to the feeling of distance between the RamLink platform and the local Swedish business unit.

6.2.7 Plausibility

The element of plausibility is also an aspect that can help us understand employee perceptions of RamLink. If we draw forward the central theme in this property, it states that people at times of confusion are not looking for the complete and accurate accounts for what they are facing. Instead, they need only enough to end the standstill and move on (Weick, 1995).

The fact that the employees in Ramboll Sweden have a hard time seeing RamLink as a meaningful element in their daily work, apart from those working with tenders, means that RamLink actually represents an obstacle in their work practice. In other words, it can bring them to a standstill in their daily work. Accepting the plausible explanation that RamLink does not work and is irrelevant for their work as experts helps them take action and move on with their daily practice. In connection with the KS occasions such as the closure meetings, the lack of time and resources to create such events also paves way for the plausible explanation that these meetings and the KS connected with them is of little significance.

The Swedish employees' sense of RamLink is however not locked and unchangeable – sensemaking is an ongoing process. Therefore, it is also important to put forward the concept of *small wins*; a concrete, implemented outcome of moderate importance (Weick, 1995). As touched upon earlier, employee S2 has had a positive experience with RamLink as it facilitated a contact between him and a colleague in Norway. *Small wins* are also something that employees call for when asked about what can motivate them to use the platform:

"Good examples of RamLink being used successfully. Someone who has used it in a good way and got like into an interesting project or something because someone found them in RamLink." (S2, p.12)

" Successes. That people talk 'Oh, my guy was able to find just the person working with pipes and sludge and slurry situation in frozen seabeds. No idea that somebody knew about that, but we had somebody doing just that.'" (S1, p.19)

Given that the current environment in Sweden leaves little room for another sensemaking around RamLink to take place, such small wins may have an effect that can help employees make sense of the organisations' KS platform in a more positive way.

6.2.8 Recapping on Sensemaking in Sweden

For the purpose of getting an overview of our findings concerning the Swedish employees' sensemaking, we will now draw together the central findings.

Central to employee sensemaking when it comes to both KS and the RamLink platform, is employee identity. From our investigation of the social environment, we have identified the role of being an expert as a central part of employee organisational identity. Employees try to make sense of RamLink via the role of an expert, but have a hard time connecting this particular role with RamLink. RamLink does however seem to make more sense for employees working with tendering. The social environment's practice of skipping and ignoring the importance of closure meetings influences employee sensemaking in a direction that works against RamLink, as the platform requires a similar process for the reflection of one's work.

Another reason for the rather negative or indifferent attitude of employees towards RamLink stems from their expectations not being met when the system was launched. This resulted in a heightening of their sensemaking, making them turn towards available cues for guidance. Such cues do however seem scarce and employees are left to make sense on their own. When management attempts to persuade employees to use the platform, employees are sceptical towards management's own commitment in this regard. Management's low activity concerning the platform is creating an environment that constrains their communication. Employees themselves are also enacting a negative environment where their lack of participation in the platform becomes the constraint for both themselves and others.

Intersubjective meanings concerning RamLink are reached through interaction and conversations with others. Social gatherings or events where people with knowledge about the platform can aid employee sensemaking, the intersubjective meanings are based primarily on conversations with colleagues that are just as confused. Interviewee S1 does however see potential in RamLink and tries to influence the enacted environment positively by interacting with colleagues. Additionally, he has

participated in the collaboration with the Ramboll Group on the work to improve the platform. Such collaboration can help reduce the feeling of *us and them* that seems to be present between Sweden and the Danish Mother Company. Yet, S1 feels that his thoughts were ignored; limiting reification and thereby a meaningful experience from the collaboration. As a consequence, S1 may end up seeing his involvement in RamLink as irrelevant.

Through the social environment, we found that social events are of high importance for KS, and this is also the case when it comes to RamLink, as they are occasions for sensemaking to change course collectively, perhaps for the better. Such events do not however, seem common in Ramboll Sweden and our data shows very little evidence of involvement from the local governance organisation – knowledgeable colleagues who can help resolve people's frustration towards the platform. Instead, employees are left with the plausible explanation that RamLink is irrelevant for them and as a consequence push it aside in order to get on with what they see as important in their daily practice.

Chapter 7 – Analysis of Ramboll Finland

7.1 The Social Environment – Ramboll Finland



The visited office in Espoo, Helsinki, Finland

Using the same structure as that in the analysis of Ramboll Sweden, we will analyse the data collected from our interviews at Ramboll Finland, in order to uncover the properties of the social environment in this particular business unit. Where relevant, we will highlight similarities and differences with the previous analysis of the Swedish business unit.

7.1.1 Social Processes of Knowledge Sharing

Our starting point was to determine the nature of how the social practice of KS takes place in this particular business unit. Throughout the conducted interviews at Ramboll Finland, a clear point of similarity with Sweden is the use of locally established relationships and communities as the preferred way of seeking out knowledge:

"If I already know some colleague that is expert in that field I might just go straight to him. Even if he is from other office, e.g. when I worked with damn safety issues there is one colleague in Helsinki, who is expert in these things, I already know him so there is no problem in this, so I would go straight to him." (F2, p.8)

"We know the people who know the people. I mean there is of course some kind hierarchy both organisational but also kind of knowledge-wise and experience wise, so you know that this person has been working here for a long time with such projects and that he probably knows this [...]." (F1, p.5)

As can be seen in the above excerpts, social aspects play an important part in the way Finnish employees go about acquiring knowledge and as can be seen in the latter of the two quotes, KS seems to operate in a complex social system, affected also by authority and tenure. The importance of establishing personal relationships is something that all our Finnish interviewees indicate and F3 goes even further, as he has sought to actively promote himself:

"If you are active and communicating with a lot of people, people get to know you and you might not be the best expert on a certain topic but, because people know you they will revert to you [...] after establishing your sort of say your place in the organisation people start know 'ok he does this and he does that and this and works on that kind of project' [...]" (F3, p.4)

Interestingly, the interviewee expresses that the social connection is actually more important than possessing the *best* knowledge – once again emphasising that KS is highly dependent on social processes and shared practices. The excerpt also shows that the establishment of the social connections that foster the sharing of knowledge is something that takes time (see also F1, p.2). Once a mutual understanding has been established, collaboration and thus KS takes place more easily. As you establish a practice where you know what to expect from one another and you also know the way in which you are to approach other people. F1 describes that once you get to know a person, it changes the way you communicate, as you know how to approach each other in a way that the other person appreciates (F1, p.7). In other words, you develop a practice of how to contact each other. As with the Swedish business unit, KS in Ramboll Finland is highly dependent on social processes and the forging of common understanding to act from.

If we now look at the occasions for KS on a wider organisational level, the yearly gatherings of employees working within the same technical areas also seem to play an important part in Ramboll Finland. As an example, F1 describes how these gatherings are essential for collaboration between different offices, or CoP in Finland:

"But definitely, it is good I think that you meet the people [...] Anyway our own field of work. We have these meetings, I think once a year. Kind of network meetings where we have kind of workshops and check what are the current issues in the area and of course then just regular networking." (F1, p.7)

Through the yearly gatherings with colleagues in Finland, KS as a social practice extends more easily to a national arena (see also S2, p.8), as employees have the possibility of reaching a common ground to act from at such gatherings (see also F4, p.13). The importance of having an established social connection can also be seen in the way in which employees use the RamLink platform:

"Usually, it is face-to-face; normal communication like I ask my colleague 'do you know anyone who does this' although I might do cross search on e.g. RamLink and then I ask 'do you know him or is he good or would you think I could use him for the project that is within Finland' [...]" (F3, p.4)

A prerequisite for using RamLink in this situation is the presence of an already established connection (see also S2, p.11). In the excerpt, we see a complex process, where the interviewee uses the system, but refers to his established community to determine the usability of what he has found.

In our analysis of the Swedish business unit, it was established that KS was predominantly confined within Sweden's national borders as the employees had little participation in international collaboration or other instances that could ease organisation-wide connections. In Finland, there are instances where knowledge is being shared on an international level, across different country

business units, but with established social connections as the facilitator. Yet, the predominant tendency is a KS behaviour resembling that of Sweden, restricting KS to the local arena in their own country. We will now explain how the social environment in Ramboll Finland ascribes meaning to KS. In order to do so, we will look at the negotiation of meaning around KS activities through participation and reification and discuss how this influences the use of the RamLink platform in Ramboll Finland.

7.1.1.1 Negotiation of Meaning

If we keep the yearly meetings in mind, these occasions for KS clearly seem to be meaningful to the employees at Ramboll Finland. By meeting with other employees within the same area, they are able to reflect on their own daily work practice with that of other colleagues. That KS is a social practice requiring a mutual understanding is also clear: Interviewee F4 describes how he has learned a lot by talking and listening to stories from his older colleagues but he finds it difficult to write them down so that others can benefit from them (F4, p.12). Instead, he underlines that it is important to have personal contact and dialogues, something that he expected RamLink to facilitate. Yet to his disappointment, it did not meet his expectations (F4, p.14). KS seems meaningful for Finnish employees when the activity holds a social component and connects with their daily work practice. RamLink however, seems to struggle in becoming meaningful, particularly for interviewee F4:

"I don't know for my daily work actually can I say it is quite useless for me [...] I have tried to always find something positive, but in this case it is very difficult for me to really find out good things from this Ramlink, but I am not using it daily. But and its, I cannot see as a tool in my daily work or for my project work." (F4, p.17)

The excerpt shows that employee F4 does not find RamLink useful in his daily work on projects, even though he feels that he has searched for something positive to say about it, i.e. he does not get a meaningful experience from it. We will now look at the interconnected aspects of participation and reification to understand why local KS seems meaningful yet using the RamLink platform is limited.

Participation

Local occasions for KS seem to be meaningful for the interviewed employees in the Finnish business unit. As in Sweden, the employees refer to closure meetings as a beneficial way of sharing ones experiences:

"[...] especially in the bigger projects we might have meeting after project and go through what went well and what didn't go so well in the project and so forth [...] it helps to avoid the same mistakes of course if there has been some problems, well you should learn most about the problems and mistakes. But also if things have gone well, you can think what went well and why and how can we use it also in other projects so." (F2, p.9)

Employee participation in closure meetings provides them with a meaningful way of learning from both mistakes and successes emerging from finalised projects (see also F4, p.10). Through the concluding meetings, employees benefit from the experiences of each other and develop their own practices for the better. Here, it is relevant to draw forward an issue that also emerged in the Swedish business unit: not having the time and resources when it comes to conducting closure meetings. Amongst our Finnish interviewees, there also seems to be a pattern of *regular* project work taking precedence over the closure meetings, along with a lack of time and resources:

"[...]our quality system tells about that we need to keep opening meeting and this closing meeting and it is more or less like the project managers just want to keep what the quality system says and that they capturing that quality report that this quality meeting has been done, this data that is all. We are not using that knowledge and I think it is because there are five projects going on at the same time [...]" (F4, p.12)

A similar account can be found in F1, where a lack of time and resources at the end of a project leads to closure meetings being skipped. Another interesting fact is that F1 and F2 refer to the closure meetings as a specific requirement set out by management. If closure meetings are indeed a part of a project plan, then employee tendency to skip them is a good example of how local practices are very influential on organisational behaviour.

If we now turn to the issue of organisation-wide KS, we find a mixed picture when it comes to participation. Both interviewee F2 (p.7) and F3 have participated in collaboration with colleagues from other country business units, and in the account of F3 he refers to RamLink when talking about his participation in an international network with members from several countries (F3, p.7):

"[...] you get a long list of people, it is very difficult to fade out a person who fits what you are looking for. So then it is easier to just turn to the person you know in Sweden and say 'hello I have this and this project [...]'it is easier in that way because they know people from face-to-face better than you can get, they are going to choose or to forward a request and what you can get out of RamLink for example." (F3, p.8)

As can be seen in the excerpt, the employee finds RamLink to be a bit overwhelming when it comes to finding a colleague with specific competencies. However, since he has established social connections with colleagues working within waste management across the Ramboll organisation, he can turn to these people for guidance and after consulting them; he can then use RamLink to find the people that they have recommended. In other words, using RamLink becomes meaningful for him when it is combined with an international network where people share a practice. An interesting issue to mention here is the fact that all employees are able to follow colleagues' activity and updates in RamLink and by default, all employees are following all colleagues from their own local department. Employees' are however not following any colleagues from other country business

units, as this is something that they need to set up themselves. We therefore argue that RamLink, to a certain extent, is confined to the local practice where already established practices in different communities present preferred alternatives.

Having elaborated upon participation in KS both locally and internationally, we will now look at how reification influences KS at Ramboll Finland.

Reification

Looking at local KS in the Finnish business unit; we argue that both the yearly meetings and closure meetings are reified, at least at an individual level. The fact that the interviewees see such occasions for KS as beneficial in their work indicates that they project their own experiences onto the world and this creates meaning from KS – it relates to their daily practice. However, if we look at how the closure meetings are reified, there is once again a tendency of them being in a form that makes it hard for employees outside the given project to relate to it:

"Yeah it is often, it is more like on conversation for the most, more often than not; you just talk with different people at different times. You don't seem to get it and go through it." (F3, p.10)

Employee F2 further touches upon how the actual memos of meetings tend to be of a poor quality;

"Well yeah, I think maybe, I don't know if it is that people don't think that it's so important as a project work to make the conclusion memo or maybe it is because they don't have time to make so detailed memos. I don't know, but it might be, they might be better I think." (F2, p.10)

If we link this together with the fact that employees in Finland do in fact appreciate concluding upon projects, we gain a picture of a social environment that values learning and reflection, yet the reification of closure meetings, occasions for KS, are kept at a very local and individual level, making it hard for the wider organisation to learn from other projects and departments. Where RamLink falls short, is perhaps not in the specifications of the system, but in the fact that employees feel there is little time to actually come together and reflect upon things, as getting on with new or additional projects takes precedence. A fitting example of this also emerged from interview F4. He describes how project managers go through the meetings because it is required of them, but at a very superficial level that does not involve the employees who are aware of the projects' details (F4, p.13).

To further investigate how KS unfolds in this particular way and its consequences for the RamLink platform, we will now look at how the three modes of belonging influence the way employees in Ramboll Finland perceive their own work.

7.1.1.2 Belonging to Ramboll Finland

Our interviewees are again highly influenced by *engagement* as a mode of belonging. Their daily line of work and engagement with professional colleagues is something that they all place as fundamental in their daily work – the quotes below elaborate this in further detail:

“[...] the good nice people where I work with colleagues, maybe that is what is the most important.” (F4, P.4)

“Well, of course the professional skills, but you also have to be able to work with people, social skills are very important to work with clients, to work with the colleagues. In almost every project I never work alone it's always with other people.” (F2, P.2)

What can be seen here is the participation of engaging in practices that create meaning for the employees. Their meaning is created through engaging with ‘nice’ people they work with and having the social skills to be able to work effectively with their colleagues. As a consequence, these social interactions are significant enablers of KS within the present social environment. Secondly, being able to work with professional colleagues having the skills again reinforces the importance of being an expert. It is the interconnection of being able to socialise and having the expertise that is vital:

“Well, expertise, knowledge and the ability to cooperate [...]” (F3, p.3)

If we draw on the yearly gatherings and closure meetings described in the previous section (7.1.1), these are perhaps meaningful precisely because these activities connect with engagement as a mode of belonging. Employees have the opportunity to engage with colleagues, establish connections and discuss work related problems with others, allowing for KS to take place:

“Yes we have those too. So it is also good because then you meet the people from the other office, so you know, at least you have seen them once or twice – so the face is familiar” (F2, p.8)

Engaging with other employees that are in the same boat is therefore seen as a beneficial way of sharing knowledge. We also found that there was participation and individual reification at closure meetings, depending on the size of projects at hand. This was a finding that was present in three out of our four interviews; they see it as being a meaningful part of their projects:

“[...] well it helps to avoid the same mistakes of course if there has been some problems, well you should learn most about the problems and mistakes. But also if things have gone well, you can think what went well and why and how can we use it also in other projects so.” (F2, p.9)

From this quote (see also F3, p.10 and F4, p.10), we find that interaction and the distinct feeling of being involved in these closure meetings contribute to a meaningful experiences of the work with projects. Employees are able to reify their individual meanings with others locally and vice versa – having a reality, which members of the meetings can relate to, either with those issues of a positive

or negative nature in the meeting. In summary, engagement as a mode of belonging affects how KS takes place at Ramboll Finland; members share their basic view of the world, i.e. through conversing on how things went in the projects' happenings.

Even though these closure meetings are confined to local practice, employees at Ramboll Finland also seem to see the advantages of sharing knowledge on a more organisation-wide level. This can be related to imagination; being the second mode of belonging.

Bearing in mind that imagination enables one to see practices through new meanings and broader perspectives, it entails being able to be open-minded and having the willingness to explore in order to imagine the world and oneself in a new way (Wenger, 1998). As a result, we now find it relevant to show how employees relate their local practices with that of Ramboll's desire for international KS to take place. Our data reveals the role of imagination showing varied beliefs – the first however elaborates on cooperation on a global scale, i.e. illustrating how KS on an organisation-wide level can be proven to be valuable:

“On a global scale there could be maybe some more cooperation. But of course it depends on the projects you are working with and the ones I have been involved in are usually quite local.” (F1, p.1)

Here interviewee F1 is indicating that local KS perhaps could be lifted to a level where KS on an organisational-wide level could be realised. As a result, we found it appropriate to put forward a question at a later stage in the interview concerning whether he thought his local knowledge could become relevant for some of his colleagues in other parts of the organisation:

“Yes and no.[...] take for instance some environmental research, of course the law says what you are supposed to do, but on the other hand, the biology is the same everywhere.[...] No matter in what country you are in. So of course you can learn from such issues. So it really depends on the type of things you are working with.” (F1, p.10)

From this quote, it seems that to some extent sharing practices with business units in other countries can connect local expertise with that found in other countries. He does note however, that it depends on the type of work at hand. Nonetheless, what we find interesting here is the issue of him being able to imagine how the two can be interconnected. Biology issues in Finland are also biology issues in other countries and as a result employees can share their own knowledge of a certain field and just as easily learn from those employees in overseas units. This is also an issue F3 touches upon when a specific problem cannot be answered by himself or found in his local department. He then turns to a waste management network involving Scandinavia and the UK. In this network, his query or problem can be resolved through colleagues sharing the same fields of expertise (F3, p7).

In contrast to this, one interviewee does not seem to share the same enthusiasm concerning the sharing of knowledge with other countries. When asked where he turns to if a problem occurs and how he would try to resolve it - he answered with the following:

“But not from colleagues of other cities or Ramboll companies. Because I might know about that they might know but it is not our, how can I say: we don’t do it that way in Finland.” (F4, p.7)

This quote reveals that this project manager seems to have a hard time imagining how other units in the Ramboll organisation can be of assistance regarding his field of expertise. If a problem or challenge occurs, he would prefer to stick with local employees in his own department. His reasoning for this is something he relates to as a cultural-bound matter. We find that there may be a further explanation in addition to his reasoning of it being culturally-bound, e.g. it could be an issue of the; *us and them* syndrome. Therefore we find it relevant to revisit this particular issue in our power and politics section (7.1.4).

Interviewee F4 also explains how he finds it difficult to imagine collaborating at an international level, due to limited language skills. This finding suggests that this particular employee cannot connect imagination with his own identity. Since shared meanings are sustained through the development and use of common language (Walsh & Ungson, 1991; in Weick, 1995, p.39), in this case locally through one’s mother tongue. From this, we argue that language can be considered a part of one’s identity as it is culturally bound. As a result, F4's participation is restricted to a local level; the aspect of organisation-wide KS is not broadening his horizon.

Conversely, imagination as already stated in our theory section (5.3.1.2) involves willingness to explore and make connections with others. A recent experience F4 had with an employee from Ramboll Norway seems to have kick-started his willingness to share knowledge at a broader level:

“[...] this week a guy from Ramboll Norway he wrote me an email concerning one system here Finland and railway systems and I was amazed,[...] Yeah, it was very nice I was very happy and you know excited about that one, I am still. ” (F4, p.14).

Amazed and excited are his words; he sees the collaboration with the Norwegian employee as a beneficial experience. This particular experience enables him to see certain issues in a new perspective, i.e. through imagination he is able to interconnect his local daily practice with one of an organisation-wide experience. He also mentions that his experience with Ramboll Norway has potential for the future as his interactions can act as an example for additional employees to see how knowledge can be shared across borders (F4, p.14). We find it to be very important to mention that an interviewee from both Ramboll Sweden and Ramboll Finland have experienced being contacted by colleagues from Ramboll Norway. Whether or not Ramboll Norway has been successful in

incorporating organisation-wide KS with their Scandinavian counterparts is something we cannot answer to the full. On the other hand, we can identify that it is having an effect on the Swedish and Finnish interviewees' imagination concerning the benefits organisation-wide KS.

Recalling Wenger, the ability to imagine broader meanings does not necessarily result in employees aligning their actions with the broader context of the organisation (1998). As a result we will now address the final mode of belonging; alignment amongst the employee's at Ramboll Finland.

If we briefly recap upon alignment it, was mentioned earlier in our theory section (5.3.1.2) that properties of it share similarities with imagination, due to this mode of belonging having the ability to view the world in a broader sense. Alignment also addresses boundary objects which can define these broader visions and aspirations for employees at Ramboll Finland to align themselves with.

As in Sweden (6.1.1.2), our exploration of KS and RamLink reveals that the recently installed system called LYNC seems to be acting as a boundary object within the social environment in Ramboll Finland. We further established that the LYNC system, having the aim to connect employees efficiently through interactive social channels, seems to show a more intensified interest and greater involvement throughout the organisation. From this, we now find it appropriate to bring forward observations of how the LYNC system, is found to be a functional tool for the employees at Ramboll Finland:

"[...] then we have this LYNC messaging system that I use it a lot, chatting a bit and video conferencing [...]" (F3, p.10)

"But same kind of, I could see about which of my colleagues or I could add like this; my Norway guy there that I could see that ok he is online I could also send him like - also like a chatting him straight from online." (F4, p. 17)

The excerpts reveal that the interviewees seem to find the LYNC system works better for them when addressing the issue of being able to follow, chat and interact with other employees. The reason why employees seem to find the LYNC system valuable becomes apparent when it is compared with what the RamLink platform lacks in the eyes of the Finnish employees. According to one of interviewees, the RamLink platform is not dynamic enough. It needs functions like instant messaging and post notifications, so employees can have interactive exchanges (F3, p.18). The LYNC system has the ability to interconnect employees on a local and organisation-wide level where KS can take place on an ongoing basis due to the 'follow-a-colleague-when-online' function. Consequently, employees are able to see the connection with their daily work practice and the interactive interaction LYNC offers.

However, our findings also reveal similarities found in Ramboll Sweden concerning how employees feel inadequately equipped to make use of the RamLink platform. It seems that turning to alternative

boundary objects for sharing or receiving knowledge from their colleagues, e.g. as seen with the LYNC system being the preferred option. If RamLink is not supporting the sharing of knowledge, and employees are confused about it, this will then also spread to other employees during day-to-day conversation's concerning RamLink. As a result a negative atmosphere can become all the more apparent, this is the impression we got when we asked F4 if he talks with others about RamLink:

"Yeah, yeah sure we have. We have actually talked about that what, why this has been a not so good success and why this system have even been built about because it's like useless." (F4, p. 19)

This quote reveals that the communication around the platform also has an effect on how employees interpret it. This being so, communication around the purpose of the RamLink platform therefore plays a substantial role in alignment. As it was put forward in our theory section concerning alignment (5.3.1.2); common ground should be coordinated through the ability to communicate purpose, needs, methods and criteria (Wenger, 1998).

The three modes of belong have shown how employees share knowledge and how they are having a hard time connecting this with the RamLink platform. However, in our next section we will be moving onto those challenges that occur from the over concentration with a given practice at Ramboll Finland.

7.1.1.3 The Challenges of Social Practices

If we look at our theoretical section concerning the challenges that the processes in CoP can pose for an organisation, there are indeed relevant findings to draw forward from our interviews with Finnish employees.

Remembering Wenger; a community's own practice can become so ingrained that it can become blind to the outside world, allowing little room for anything that will obstruct the established way of doing things. The challenge of communities adhering strictly to the established way of doing things seems to be a likely scenario in Ramboll Finland. Interviewee F1 describes how he experiences a difference in the attitude towards RamLink depending on the tenure people have in the organisation:

"So among the new people I think that there is not as much of a negative attitude. They accept it much more than the ones who have been used to seeing a different way of... Not a system, but a way of doing things. And now, when you have a new system they don't really see the point why this is so much better. Because it isn't so much better. It's just a bit better." (F1, p.16)

Apart from expressing the interviewee's own perception of RamLink bringing little advantages to his daily practice, the excerpt also provides us with an indication that RamLink is facing a challenge of

people adhering to their established practices at Ramboll Finland. When new employees enter the organisation, there is substantially less resistance towards the platform than among those that have an already established practice. In F1's account, it is also revealed that an existing tradition of storing ones' CV locally on the hard drive of your PC is still being practiced (F1, p.15, see also F4, p.6). Hence, the established practices that the communities in Ramboll Finland are used to, do not change easily, especially when RamLink does not offer any clear advantages in the eyes of those employees.

The fact that people can become deeply focussed and centred around their own practice, isolating themselves from other practices can be a challenge for KS between departments and units, as collaboration becomes harder if it is hard to find a common ground. An example of how employees can distance themselves from others is also apparent in our collected data from Ramboll Finland:

"I get a feeling about that also the units inside of the building like here in Espoo they are. They are not so tight together, there is not this kind of a one company feeling in Finland [...] it is those people that have been on this company like 40 years that it's very strange; they think about that we cannot be one company that there are no borders between any companies that they will just keep the work by themselves. I think it is also because this is project work."
(F4, p.2)

Through the excerpt, we get a picture of a social environment that is challenged by a low level of interconnectivity between different units and departments, possibly emerging from people being very much involved in their own local projects. As another employee remarks, people tend to become very focussed in their work and things start to run on tracks, like a train, where you just get accustomed to do things in a certain way (F1, p.9). If we once again highlight the importance of opening for connections to be made between similar practices (5.3.1.5), we can see that connections are possible in Ramboll Finland. Apart from the previously mentioned example, where F3 collaborates with colleagues from other countries in the waste management network (F3, p. 7-8), we can also highlight employee F1, who describes similar practices within climate change as a thing which colleagues in numerous countries have in common (F1, p.6). If we bring in RamLink here, an interesting finding is the fact employee F1, who has participated in very few international activities, sees little advantages in RamLink, whereas F3, combining the international waste management network and RamLink, sees it as more useable.

Having elaborated on how the practices within communities can pose a challenge for KS in Ramboll Finland and RamLink and highlighted the importance of connecting similar practices in order to facilitate KS, we will now look at the four additional concepts that we see as influencing the social environment.

7.1.2 Local Values

We will now look at the values that we see emerging from our interviews with the Finnish employees. As in our analysis of the Swedish business unit, the interviewed employees from Ramboll Finland place great importance on their roles as experts within their respective fields:

"Well of course we are an expert organisation so your own expertise and developing that. Always being up to date in your own field and then of course this kind of work commitment" (F1, p.2)

Once again, there is an emphasis on having the expertise required to deliver a quality project to the customer at hand (See also F2, p.4). And as we have already touched upon in the analysis concerning the modes of belonging in Ramboll Finland (7.1.1.2), the fact that employees are highly influenced by engagement as a mode of belonging makes the value of being an expert even more central. Indeed, there is an indication that professionalism, through the role of being an expert, is likely to be one of the core values that guides Ramboll's' employees. Connecting this value with the practice of KS, we have also seen how occasions for sharing ones knowledge is meaningful to employees when connected with their local practice as experts.

Another value that we see emerging in the interviews from Ramboll Finland is the appreciation of the ability to cooperate with colleagues. The importance of possessing the ability to work together with colleagues became apparent on several occasions:

"Well, expertise, knowledge and the ability to cooperate and as a project manager it is the ability to cooperate and some expertise [...]" (F3, p.3, see also F2, p.2)

Employees value collaboration as an important facilitator for KS, but as we have seen in our data, when collaboration is confined to the local environment, organisation-wide KS is also limited. The people who have had the possibility to extend or see similarities between their own practices and that of employees outside the local organisation, seem to be more open to cross unit KS.

7.1.3 Reward and Recognition

When looking at how reward and recognition influences KS and the RamLink platform, a very relevant issue to bring forward, is the RamLink competition held by the Finnish business unit. Here, employees and units that contributed with the most satisfactory project profile, CV's and good stories concerning the use of the system were awarded with monetary prizes. If we look at the account of F3, whose department won part of the competition, an interesting finding emerges:

"Because we thought of that if we all concentrated and tried to make this, let's say about this basic information to this whole programme that then it would start to be like very usable. But, you know after a few months I think the same feelings about this whole programme have been come backed at that it is not very usable". (F4, p.19)

Here, the competition, acting as an extrinsic motivator, did in fact result in more contribution to the platform. Yet once the competition ended, the attitude towards RamLink returned to a state of scepticism. This can be seen as an example of how employees can lose interest if extrinsic motivators, which fuelled their participation, are then removed. Using such extrinsic motivators is however, not to be seen as a purely negative thing: e.g. employee F3 stated - how the Finnish competition had resulted in a slightly more positive attitude; the competition being a positive signal from management. Furthermore, F1 expresses a somewhat indifferent attitude toward the competition, acknowledging that some people may be motivated by it (F1, p.18). However, recalling that extrinsic motivators, or hygiene factors, can increase the quantity of contributions to a KS platform but often with a short-lived improvement (5.3.3), the account of F4 above seems to agree with the claim that extrinsic motivators are perhaps not the most fitting facilitators of KS.

If we look at what motivates Finnish employees in their daily work and when sharing KS locally, there are also indications of why RamLink is struggling to become part of their daily practice. As we have already touched upon (7.1.2), employees in Ramboll Finland feel motivated by challenging work and collaboration with colleagues, related very much to intrinsic motivators such as *achievement* and *challenge of work*. If we relate these motivational factors with the employees' description of RamLink as a *phonebook* or *database*, part of their reluctance to use the system could be connected with the absence of a connection between what the employees value in their work and their image of RamLink. If we remember our analysis of the Swedish business unit, we saw employees calling for some good examples of how the system could actually benefit their daily work, something that F3 also emphasises:

"Yeah good experiences, if you have had experiences that it works you are more inclined to use it." (F3, p.17)

In other words, they were looking for ways to connect the platform with the intrinsic motivators that they focus on in their daily practice. A relevant example to bring forward here concerning motivation and KS can be found in F4's eye opening experience when contacted by a colleague from Ramboll Norway (F4, p.14). The employee found the new connection with a Norwegian colleague very exciting and positive, something that can easily be connected with his appreciation of learning new things (P.3-4), as the knowledge this colleague possessed can help him in his future practice (p.15). Furthermore, the Norwegian's choice to contact interviewee F4 can be related to intrinsic motivation through recognition, i.e. the colleague from Norway recognised F4 as an expert. When talking about RamLink in the interview, the employee made a connection between this positive experience and the potential of RamLink:

"Yeah, but you know about that, [...], I said that I don't actually know anything about this guy and I haven't, now I just get a thought that I could check him from RamLink. I didn't even know about that. You know I didn't get even my idea that I could check him about from RamLink - who is this guy, how is he looks like, what is he doing there in Norway." (F4, p.22)

The employee sees a potential in RamLink, as he sees a possibility of developing his connection with the employee from Norway through the platform. As he becomes aware that RamLink can be used to support the development of this positive connection, the platform is then connecting with an intrinsic motivator: social recognition.

Having established how there may be a lack of connection between the RamLink platform and intrinsic motivators that employees in Ramboll Finland find appealing, we will now look at another influential factor in the social environment for KS and RamLink; the processes of power and politics.

7.1.4 Power and Politics in Ramboll Finland

If we refer back to the latter part of our theory concerning the *not-invented-here* syndrome in relation to power and politics, we find an interesting aspect in our data that reveals how different country units within the Ramboll organisation are perceived to have diverse roles. One of our interviewees elaborated further on the matter as such:

"Maybe we are a little bit more casual [...] DK and UK it seems to be a bit more formal organisation [...] Finns are more down to earth" (F3, p.3)

F3 finds that Ramboll Finland seems to be more down to earth in comparison to their British and Danish counterparts as being more reserved and formal. In addition to the quote above, he further explained about the positive sides of being more formal. In his own words he reveals a feeling of 'them' being 'slightly bigger' than in Finland, or put another way; he feels the Brits and Danes are 'at the forefront of things'. In contrast to the positive aspects, he further elaborated on those drawbacks concerning those business units in the UK and DK as they tend to talk more about the strategies of a project - which for him creates an impression that the Brits and Danes tend to deal with projects in a fashion that is; 'a bit more flung into the air' (F3, p.3). As an alternative, F3 would prefer to talk things through in a less formal manner, e.g. by explaining how one expects a given project to take form and to be able to discuss and interact upon the ins and outs of a project. As a result, this could indicate a feeling of *us and them*, as the Brits and Danes do things differently than 'us' in Finland and as a result 'we' will therefore stick to our own ways of doing things in Ramboll Finland.

The above mentioned perceptions can help illustrate how power relationships between different country units can take form. The issue of power and politics plays a role here as outside forces such as the UK and DK business units have various suggestions or hold diverse ways of conducting projects than that of Ramboll Finland. As a consequence the various business units could be showing signs of

what Huber has labelled as the *not-invented-here* syndrome (2001), where the local entity displays bias against initiatives originating from outside sources. Nevertheless, we would like to point out here that we are not trying to suggest that interviewee F3 is displaying bias toward the ways British and Danish business units conduct projects. Rather, it is his present experience with them that could have an effect on his future interactions with them, which as a result could also affect how he chooses to share his knowledge and with whom.

In addition to the *not-invented-here-syndrome* we also find it relevant to bring forward another example, which is directly related to the RamLink platform. This example shows how F3 finds the Ramlink platform to be yet *“another toy from the Danes [...] you get our money”* (F3, P.16). This quote is an example of how the RamLink platform is perceived to be a Danish tool, again relating to the *'us and them'* issue and could also explain why there is little organisation-wide KS through the Ramlink platform, as it is perceived to be *their* tool and not *ours*.

Another aspect relating to power and politics is brought to our attention by interviewee F4. In this particular example interviewee F4 mentions that he deliberately avoids colleagues in other cities or Ramboll companies when he encounters a challenge (F4, p. 7):

“[...] we don't do it that way in Finland. We don't ask from our, because we don't ask from other Ramboll companies colleagues from this kind of things. [...] It is our culture [...] I think it is more like culture, the Finnish have always fight their wars by themselves.” (F4, p. 7)

F4 chooses not to ask for help on an organisation-wide level. He has difficulty explaining why to the full, he chooses not to do so, yet he does mention that it is more likely to be a culturally bound phenomenon. In relation to our theory here, it could be suggested that this particular behaviour leans towards Wenger's *politics of reification and participation*; F4 is avoiding specific associations with certain people (Wenger, 2010), which as a result will also limit his own and colleagues' reification of sharing knowledge, i.e. there will be no given practice to reify upon. This means that the politics of participation and reification can each be employed to avoid the other (Wenger, 1998). In continuation to this, we also found that F4 finds it quite the norm for Finnish people to keep their business to themselves. Asking other employees across borders for help runs the risk of a loss of pride; especially if you find you are not able to help solve a challenge. If we draw in the value of being an expert, having a feeling that you are not knowledgeable will present a threat to this value. From this, we speculate whether this type of behaviour is in fact a common issue throughout Finland. Yet, we can only base our own speculations on those aspects F4 has expressed above; it is out of our reach for us to establish to the full whether this is common

throughout Ramboll Finland. However, we do argue that this particular finding could explain why KS and the use of the RamLink platform are not reaching the desired levels in Ramboll Finland.

7.1.5 Employees' Perception of Management

We now turn to the Finnish employees' perception of management when it comes to KS and the RamLink platform. As an introduction, we would like to touch upon whether or not employees in Ramboll Finland feel encouraged to share their knowledge with others. This is something that we asked our interviewees:

"Interviewer: Do you feel that you are encouraged to share what you have learned with other colleagues in Ramboll?"

F1: "Not really... [..] I don't... There is not system that encourages it and there also has not been a need to do it." (F1, p.10)

What is worth noticing in this quote is not only the fact that the employee does not feel encouraged to share his knowledge – it is also his opinion that there is no system that can help him do it. Remembering that KS is a social practice, the absence of RamLink in the mind of the employee indicates that the system is not associated with the employees' social KS practices.

In our conducted interviews from Ramboll Finland, a scenario similar to that of Ramboll Sweden occurs, where employees seem to doubt management's commitment towards RamLink. As we will also touch upon in the analysis concerning sensemaking (7.2.5), the employees in Ramboll's Finnish business unit did in fact have some positive expectations prior to the implementation of the system. This is an indication of what was also put forward in our theoretical section (5.3.5); that management's act of investing and developing an ICT platform for KS is a way of signalling that the issue of sharing knowledge is important to the organisation. However, if we look at the employees' description of management's behaviour concerning RamLink, there seems to be a feeling of management being less committed:

"So yeah, of course they understand that we have a new system that we are supposed to use it, so in that way.... We have organised these kinds of trainings where somebody shows how the RamLink is working, and what you supposed to fill in and so on... So it's about the basic functionality... but apart from that, it is not really encouraging to do anything extra." (F1, p.16-17)

We see management taking action by arranging training sessions on how to use the platform, but employees do not feel that it encourages people to actually take the time needed to use RamLink. Yet, the account of the employee indicates that his local management is only doing these things because they are *supposed* to do it and not as something they are investing themselves in. A similar account can be found with interviewee F3, who describes management's behaviour as being '*more or less okay*' (F3, p.16).

Recalling that earlier empirical studies indicated that support from ones immediate manager also plays an important role KS (5.3.5), our conducted interviews with Finnish employees also reveal an interesting finding:

"I think at a bit higher level, they are involved because there are these instructions from the Group and of course those instructions first hit the higher level. When it then climbs down the hierarchy I think the more the resistance grows. I think also especially let's say the team managers or department managers, if they have a negative attitude then I think that will kind of translate into the whole department." (F1, p.16)

As F1 describes, employees will not feel encouraged to use RamLink if they perceive their managers as having a negative attitude towards the platform. That management can act as facilitators of KS and RamLink can also be seen by F2, where she does in fact feel that her immediate manager is encouraging the use of RamLink:

"Well I think the management tries to be an example (laughing), so a little bit I think. But yeah, they try to bring it to us in a positive way and try to listen to our problems, if we have any." (F2, p.14)

The importance of one's immediate manager as an important influence can also be connected with the fact the interviewee describes that she has little knowledge of the general management of RamLink (p.14), i.e. it is the immediate managers who interact and are close to the employees on a daily basis and act as a link between top management and employees. An interesting matter to bring forward in this connection is the fact that F2s' manager is one of our other interviewees. The one that we found was trying to help his colleagues make sense of RamLink by arranging regular meetings where RamLink was discussed and making room for employees to reach a clear sense of RamLink. This will however be covered in depth in the analytical section concerning sensemaking in Ramboll Finland.

7.1.6 Recapping on the Social Environment in Finland

Before we move on to the analysis of the Finnish employees' sensemaking, we find it necessary to draw together the central findings concerning the social environment.

In general, the social environment for KS in Ramboll Finland is characterised by the forming of social relationships where people predominantly seek out knowledge within formed communities and where practices of how to contact each other have been agreed. Sharing ones knowledge with others is meaningful to employees when the act itself is connected with their daily work as experts. Yearly gatherings with colleagues and closure meetings represent occasions for organisational KS within Ramboll Finland. The social environment sees these as meaningful, as they connect with the engagement in project work and socialisation between colleagues that employees seem to place

central in their identity at Ramboll. In spite of employees seeing closure meetings as meaningful and relevant for their practices, there is a tendency to rush through such occasions for KS, as people need to move on with additional projects. Additionally, there are instances where project managers conduct the closure meetings simply to meet the demands in the quality system. This results in meetings being held by the managers alone, leaving out the employees that have actually been deeply involved in the details of the project. As a result, reification of the closure meetings is confined to an individual level, with the result that other employees have little chance of discovering the knowledge and lessons that emerge from their colleagues' projects. The social environment practice, where reflecting on completed projects is put aside in order to get on with new ones, may have a consequence for the RamLink platform. Filling in and updating ones CV and projects is also a task that requires reflection from employees – hence, RamLink will also be set aside in favour of regular project work.

Also affecting the use of RamLink is the fact that some employees have had little contact with colleagues from other country business units, thus inhibiting their ability to imagine how their local knowledge can be of use to colleagues. Supporting this finding is the example of how one of our interviewees sees relevance in RamLink out off his ability to combine its functionality with a previously established international network within waste management. People without international contacts have a harder time finding a purpose for RamLink, as the platform is then competing with already established local practices without offering additional advantages.

Adding to RamLink's difficulties in becoming a part of the Finns' practice is the absence of a connection to the intrinsic motivators that the social environment seems to value. Social recognition, a motivator connected with the local value of being an expert, is more likely to be found through a competing IT system; the LYNC system. Being a more interactive way of sharing ones knowledge, LYNC does perhaps relate better to the existing practice in Finland, where KS is based on finding similarities in the practices of one's colleagues by actively engaging with one another. RamLink leaves little room for such interactions, but demands effort from employees – efforts that do not result in recognition from the social environment and which become even more demanding when an employee does not feel competent when writing in English.

Our analysis of the social environment in Finland has also revealed perceptions of management that influence the employees' view on RamLink. Little perceived commitment and involvement from both higher level and immediate managers mean that employees are prone to adopt a similar behaviour. The low level of commitment from management can be related to the issues of power and politics unfolding between Ramboll's country business units; e.g. a feeling of *us and them*, exemplified in the

description of RamLink as *just another Danish toy*. The perceived distance between the business units can fuel the *not-invented-here syndrome*, resulting in employees rejecting ideas and practices originating from outside Finland.

7.2 Does RamLink Make Sense in Finland?

7.2.1 Influenced by Identity

An issue we have found representative in all four of our interviews at Ramboll Finland addresses that of having the appropriate language skills to fulfil ones daily practice. If we recap upon the essence of identity construction, it was put forward in our theory section that people negotiate their identities around three self-derived needs (5.4.1); the need for self-enhancement, the desire to perceive oneself as competent and effective, and lastly, a desire to experience consistency and continuity (Weick, 1995). In relation to language skills, here we find that the desire to perceive oneself as a competent and effective employee correlates well with that of having the language skills required in order to share knowledge on an organisation-wide level through the RamLink platform. This was also briefly touched upon in our section concerning imagination (7.1.1.3). The following quote shows what role language skills play in relation to employee daily work practices:

“Well, it might be just the language and perhaps also the time you need to update the projects, it’s of course faster in your own language, to do then you have to translate in English, it takes more work and takes more time. Maybe also because we work more in local projects than international ones, so perhaps people don’t think it’s that important” (F2, p.12)

The quote above shows how employees find that a lack of skill in the English language presents them with challenges when having to upload written material into the RamLink platform (see also F3, p.17). Not being able to perform to the full is connected to employees wish to perform as knowledgeable experts. In relation to KS what can be encountered here is a preferred desire to stick to one’s local language and those work practices employees are familiar with and can identify themselves with locally. Put differently, employee identities are influenced by them wanting to be perceived by others as competent individuals having the expertise. Yet, they feel they can only do this in-depth when it is in their own language. It is important to mention here that we are not contradicting our findings in section (7.1.1.3) concerning employees’ having the ability to imagine their own practice in a broader perspective. Though, we can presume that limited English skills and the feeling of being uncomfortable in another language than one’s own can play a role in the limitation of organisation-wide KS and the reluctance towards using the RamLink platform.

Recalling that the behaviour and accounts of individuals can be used to identify wider held beliefs, the issue of all our interviewees feeling less comfortable in a language than their own mother tongue indicates that they find local KS connects better with their organisational identities. As F2 described; a heavier involvement in local activities than international ones, may make people think that international KS is of less importance (F2, p.12). We agree, as this could only increase and further

isolate activities on a local level and as a result further restrict the use of the RamLink platform and the desire for organisation-wide KS.

7.2.2 Retrospective Sensemaking

Remembering our section concerning that of retrospective sensemaking at Ramboll Sweden, we still interpret our Finnish data to be of a retrospective nature, as it is the Finnish interviewees' retrospective accounts of their own experiences with the RamLink platform that we are dealing with. That is, we wish to highlight the accounts of a; *'meaningful lived experience'* that can be found within the social environment at Ramboll Finland in connection with KS and its facilitating KS platform - RamLink.

As put forward in our theory section (5.4.2), sensemaking is created through lived experiences found in the past. However, our thoughts and feelings of something that has happened in the past are still influenced by our reflections found in the present. Employees at Ramboll Finland could very well be in the midst of several projects at one time. Their thoughts of a previous project can very much influence that of a present project, due to employees reflecting on their projects when they are actually happening there and then. Retrospective sensemaking holds many possible meanings that may need to be synthesized, as many projects are under way at the time reflection is taking place. However, throughout our data it became clear that RamLink does not seem to play a large part in the sensemaking process found in projects, since employees do not find the platform meets their expectations. As can be seen in the extract below:

"But I think in RamLink situation I get very bad disappointment, because it wasn't what I expected [...] I cannot see as a tool in my daily work or for my project work." (F4, P14 & 17)

What can be seen here is an expectation of RamLink not matching his own thoughts and ideas. F4 further elaborates upon those issues he thinks RamLink should be capable of delivering. Looking back retrospectively he brings forward issues such as; having the intranet incorporated into RamLink, information about Ramboll Finland and the whole Ramboll group, issues he cares about himself and having the connection of personal and project folders – the list is many. However, frustrated by the fact that these issues were not a part of the platform today, his current sensemaking does not match the expectations he had of RamLink prior to its launch. As a result he feels disappointed and confused and now finds it to be a useless tool that he does not use in his daily practice. In relation to this we also put forward the positive experience F4 had when being contacted by Norway. This example can also be understood as retrospective sensemaking, as he is referring back to a recent experience with Norway which was, as indicated, a positive one:

"Yeah, it was very nice I was very happy and you know excited about that one [...] But you know, there needs to be some kind of an open channel, [...] I thought about this Ramlink in few years ago: I thought about that it will be some kind of Facebook or forum for the people that they can you know discuss and have more like this kind of interactive and interact to each other." (F4, p.14)

Here, it is also illustrated how he thought RamLink would allow him to discuss matters interactively, yet his retrospective thoughts did not live up to his present experience of RamLink. As he believes RamLink is nothing else but a very difficult phone book (F4, p.14).

Referring back to that of sensemaking being found in organisations, we again point to the common misunderstanding; that in times of confusion and need for sensemaking; an increase in information will be sufficient (Weick, 1995). Except this will not support sensemaking as an increase will only add to the uncertainty. In its place, employees need the support from management as they can provide clarity and prioritisation of the importance of KS and the RamLink platform. As touched upon in an earlier section, one of the Finnish employees found guidance with her manager (7.1.5). However, our other three interviewees show a much smaller amount of enthusiasm when asked to elaborate on their managers' behaviour and communication of RamLink; as it is only found on a mere *acceptance* level (F1 p.17 & F3 p.16). The following excerpt will therefore act as a representation of all three expressions on the matter:

"Actually, nothing - I don't know nothing about how it has been in other countries actually nothing. It's nothing (laughing)." (F4, p.21)

Here we can see that the majority of Finnish employees find their managers' communication of the RamLink platform to be modest or next to none, having little clarity for those within the social environment. This was also mentioned in our section concerning employees' perception of management. Not only will employees be without a clear sense of what they are facing, they can easily be influenced by these less positive perceptions, which as a result will also have an overall affect on their own sensemaking of the RamLink platform.

7.2.3 Enacted Sensible Environments

In continuation of the little communication and engagement with RamLink coming from managers, it could result in a less desirable environment for the rest of the organisation and its employees. This relates to the enactment of sensible environments, where we are concerned with the fact that every employee is a part of the social environment; they are just as much a part of creating the environment as will their colleagues. Through their actions or non-actions organisational members will create their own environment and environments for others depending on their perceptions. An

example given from F1 shows how the less positive attitude around RamLink coming from a team manager can translate to others within that environment:

“I think also especially let's say the team managers or department managers if they have a negative attitude then I think that will kind of translate into the whole department. Then everybody will also have this.” (F1, p.16)

Our interviewee also mentions that he does not believe this particular attitude is only found in his department, he thinks that this kind of attitude can also be found in many other departments throughout the organisation. This could also explain why a large majority of employees are not uploading or filling in the correct data, which could have the ability to increase organisation-wide KS through the use of RamLink, i.e. it is their *non-actions* that enact a certain environment. As a result, the actions of the above mentioned team manager are also creating an environment that pose constraints rather than opportunities for those employees involved.

On the other hand, one of the interviewees seems to be aware that a less positive attitude and little participation in KS and the RamLink platform can just as easily spread and create further undesirable enacted environments for others. He explains how the opposite is needed for desirable environments to grow:

“So we have weekly meetings with our department or group and they happy now that I have been commenting there is something new RamLink or it might be useful or saying about CV's to update them or things like that. Also how to use it, someone has a problem and cannot find something and wants to find something. Try to know that how can we do it.” (F3, p.15)

F3 feels there is a need to hold weekly meetings where comments and recommendations can be discussed in a collective sense. The idea here pays attention to activities, processes and continuous change in the hope that a more positive environment can be created. He is attempting to create his own environment, mutually holding opportunities for himself but perhaps more importantly for his colleagues through collective social interaction.

7.2.4 Social Sensemaking

Sensemaking as a social aspect relates to the intersubjective sense that is made concerning the RamLink platform. In Finland the intersubjective sense around RamLink reveals little more than a phone book, CV extractor or simply another IT tool on top of the many others tools and systems employees are to make use of. As a result the sensemaking of RamLink is one that reveals it is quite useless at Ramboll Finland (F3, F4 & F1).

If we revisit what Weick states concerning the processes of making sense and that they are never solitary, but take place in the interaction between social actors. We offer the following illustration put forward by F4:

"[...] you've heard from your friend about some movie, about that okay don't go there it's crap or go see about that movie it is very good and very good actors and then you'r there and you get your first feeling about it even before that movie has started, you are in the feeling or some other expression and then it can be like bad or it can be very good. But I think in RamLink situation I get very bad disappointment, because it wasn't what I expected." (F4, p.14)

This example shows how social interaction with others can create various types of social sensemaking. It is quite the norm that friends or other individuals create sense amongst each other when going to watch a film. However, in relation to RamLink here, F4 might have initially found RamLink to be a great tool, where KS could really take off – as was seen above in our retrospective section. Yet, as time passes the attitude amongst other employees can easily be of a less positive nature. Consequently, these collective and negative attitudes will also have an effect on F4s' sensemaking as an individual. This relates to the social aspect of sensemaking also being present when employees think internally by themselves. For example, if the majority of the social environment finds the RamLink platform to be useless, this could then also influence those employees that still have not been introduced to the platform. Yet, even though certain employees may not have used RamLink to the full – they can still very easily have created a perception of it, based on the negative attitudes formed by colleagues within the social environment that have tried to make sense of it.

7.2.5 Ongoing Sensemaking

When addressing sensemaking as an ongoing process, we are interested in identifying how employees at Ramboll Finland make sense in an ongoing fashion, or as equally important; how they reached their current sensemaking of the intended KS platform.

In Ramboll Finland, employees are always in the midst of the ongoing sensemaking process. Often, it takes place very subtly, yet it becomes all the more apparent when projects or daily work practices are interrupted (Weick, 1995). As with Ramboll Sweden, we argue that the launch of the RamLink platform can also be classed as an interruption, as preferred methods for sharing knowledge are now being challenged by a marketed platform wanting people to change their ways, especially concerning the sharing of knowledge at a more organisation-wide level.

This issue of concern is very much the case for interviewee F4, if we relate back to our section concerning retrospective sensemaking (7.2.2). Here we found that in general employees had little positive relations with the RamLink platform. Sensemaking was taking place for many of the

employees at Ramboll Finland well before the system was planned for launch - their expectations of it at this stage were positive, and having reached a sense about what was to come, employees could then carry on with their daily practice. Yet, it is the essence of this so called interruption that changes their given expectations, as the RamLink platform simply did not live up to their expectations:

“But then I found that RamLink is nothing else but a very difficult used phone book for myself (laughing) [...] But I think in RamLink situation I get very bad disappointment, because it wasn't what I expected” (F4, p.14)

Here we find that F4 becomes frustrated as the RamLink platform is not living up to his expectations, the interruption causes certain emotions to come into play, especially when these interruptions are at conflict with his own expectations and sensemaking of the KS platform. It is at these times when confusion and frustration prevail, an issue Eccles and Nohria point to the use of *events*, i.e. exercises and meetings (1992; in Weick, p. 45). This is an aspect interviewee F3 is attempting to do, as he takes on the responsibility of being a super user, and creates his own environment, as described above (7.2.3). The, weekly meetings can therefore become the focal point in the ongoing sensemaking process, as they can, amongst other issues, *set in motion future actions and spin new stories*. Therefore, employee sensemaking may change course and find its way back to that of RamLink being a useful KS platform.

Still, we also find it relevant to bring forward a topic that was brought to our attention whilst interviewing employee F1. He mentions that those employees who have been employed more recently, together with those employees that have become Ramboll 'assets' through various acquisitions in Finland have not really experienced RamLink as an interruption in their daily work practices and projects. This could therefore mean that they are more likely to accept the new platform, having an easier time incorporating it into their daily work practices than those who have been employed at Ramboll Finland for a number of years (F1, p16). F1 illustrates how recently employed workers find the platform makes more sense:

“So among the new people I think that there is not as much of a negative attitude. They accept it much more than the ones who have been used to seeing a different way. Not a system, but a way of doing things.” (F1, p. 16)

As new employees seem to approach the system more acceptingly, we could interpret this as a result of them being able to direct their attention towards the tangible cues that they will be dealing with. As stated above in the excerpt: new employees may not perceive RamLink as a platform, but as a way of doing things. This could also prove useful as new employees could pass on their sensemaking

of the platform to others that are having a harder time making sense of its potential. This then brings us to the sixth property of sensemaking; that concerned with extracted cues.

7.2.6 Cues for Sensemaking in Finland

Extracted cues are the simple and familiar structures from which employees at Ramboll Finland can develop a sense of what is occurring in relation to the RamLink platform. As stated in our Swedish analysis concerning extracted cues (6.2.6), we argue that RamLink can be regarded as a cue for the employees at Ramboll Finland. In our ongoing section, we established that it seems it is those employees that have been a part of the organisation for a number of years that need additional cues for sensemaking to occur. The establishment of weekly meetings acts as cues for some employees as they are able to gain insight into a new sensemaking process. However, the majority of employees find that there are few relevant cues that can assist them in their sensemaking process. As a result, their own behaviour of having little participation in the platform can also act as cues for their colleagues. F1 explains how employees have received communication through the intranet, via email and in the internal magazine; however he states how employees find these possible cues irrelevant:

“So of course there is information coming all the time, but I think many people skip it.” (F1, p.18)

We have no doubt that information concerning the platform is important as this can keep employees posted of the current situation concerning RamLink. Yet, F1 finds that this kind of information is bypassed. Recalling Weick here, he states that certain cues also have the ability to limit sensemaking (1995), and in connection with employees disregarding official communication can perhaps be connected with their perception of management as being uncommitted when it comes to RamLink (7.1.5), i.e. the behaviour of managers is downplaying the mediated communication. Real life experiences with the platform and the conversations with colleagues seem to be of more importance for employees. This was also mentioned in our section concerning employees' retrospective sensemaking (7.2.2), that in times of confusion employees do not need more information or written material. Instead, social interaction with other employees, success stories and the involvement from management are by far greater cues for employee overall sensemaking. These examples are also closely linked to plausibility and Weicks' *small wins*, which will be further elaborated upon in the following section.

Most vital when addressing the aspect of extracted cues in sensemaking is the need to create faith (Weick, 1995). However, as we have found in our previous sections; little assurance and faith from management seems to be having an effect on employees' sensemaking. The cues that management put forward do not seem to be very supportive due to their lack of involvement.

7.2.7 Plausibility

The final property of sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy; employees at Ramboll Finland are not looking for complete and accurate accounts when frustrated or confused with the RamLink platform. Rather, they will search for accounts, which may help them to move on (Weick, 1995).

So far we have found that employees at Ramboll Finland find little connection between their daily work practices and RamLink, in fact we found that one of the interviewee's sensemaking of the platform was put into a single word: 'useless' (F4, p. 16). Yet, coming to terms with the fact that the Ramlink platform in Finland has little meaning for them, they may find it plausible to avoid it and get on with those issues that do make sense for them, i.e. being an expert and being committed to their local work practices.

As stated in our analysis concerning Ramboll Sweden, employee sensemaking of the RamLink platform need not be locked and unchangeable, due to the fact that sensemaking is very much an ongoing process where change can easily occur depending on how the social environment alters, either for the worse or the better. Evidently, the latter would be the preferred choice for Ramboll Finland and for the organisation as a whole. As a result, we once again bring forward the concept of *small wins*, an issue we find relevant here. As already established, a small win is a concrete, implemented outcome of moderate significance (Weick, 1995). Throughout our interviews with the Finnish employees we have encountered some positive experiences with the RamLink platform. The weekly meetings F3 organised enabled employees to interact on issues concerning the RamLink platform. Employees had the opportunity to reflect upon issues holding a positive nature with RamLink, which can be seen as a small win, i.e. as a positive experience which one person can pass onto another. Secondly, the positive experience interviewee F4 had with his colleague in Norway can also be seen as an opportunity. By themselves, these small wins may seem less significant – yet a series of such 'small wins' could attract further employees, deter opponents and lower resistance to subsequent proposals. As Weick puts forward himself; "*small wins are controllable opportunities that produce visible results.*" (Weick, 2001, p. 431).

7.2.8 Recapping on Sensemaking in Finland

Summarising on how employees at Ramboll Finland make sense of KS and the RamLink platform, we will now bring together our central findings on the seven properties of sensemaking.

Our findings concerning Finnish employee identities revealed that limited language skills are obstructing the degree to which employees at Ramboll Finland find themselves to be competent and

effective workers. As a result this is affecting organisation-wide KS and the use of RamLink, as employees seem to be sticking to their local work practices in their own language.

When addressing employees' retrospective sensemaking, we found that employees' current sensemaking of RamLink did not meet their expectations of RamLink prior to its launch. It seems to be nothing more than a difficult phone book or CV extractor, causing confusion, as they feel frustrated that it does little more for their daily work practices. In times of confusion, employees need clarity, yet the majority of our interviewees feel that managements' communication concerning the advantages of RamLink is of little use – as they perceive management to have little involvement in the platform. This is very much a central finding when addressing the enacted environments at Ramboll Finland. Here it has been established that the negative behaviour of management is creating enactive environments that constrain employees' sensemaking to that of a less positive nature. On a more positive note, F3 took the initiative to create his own enacted environments with the use of weekly meetings, where social interaction and discussions took place concerning RamLink. However, the less positive attitude around RamLink is being socially interacted with others, which runs the risk of employees not being able to make sense of it and as a result perceive it negatively. Social events such as weekly meetings are places where employees can share stories in the hope that their ongoing sensemaking around RamLink will change for the better. In continuation of this we also found that recently employed workers seemed more open to accept RamLink and had a more positive attitude towards it. This was put down to new employees having less established practices, consequently finding it easier to connect it to their daily practice.

Lastly, we found that there were few relevant cues for employees to create sense from. Furthermore, the employees own reluctance towards RamLink is also acting as a negative cue for others sensemaking around the platform.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore and answer the following research question: *'Given the substantial efforts to meet the technical specifications for Ramboll's KS platform, why are employees still reluctant to use it?'* Through seven semi-structured interviews, three in Sweden and four in Finland, we gained in-depth knowledge of how employees mutually practice KS in their daily work and perceive the RamLink platform. We applied a theoretical framework consisting of a two dimensional character. Firstly, our concept of the social environment allowed us to examine how employees interact and carry out their daily work tasks. More importantly it also allowed us to distinguish how employees in the two business units share their knowledge with others. The second part of our theoretical framework focussed on how employees make sense of the RamLink platform, and in this connection, their sensemaking of KS.

Our findings made it clear that KS and the use of ICT are heavily influenced by the various social processes in the social environment – an environment that influences employee sensemaking. We will now focus on our findings and present the common traits found both at Ramboll Sweden and Ramboll Finland. Where relevant, we will also draw on factors specific for each of the two.

One of the central findings that the social environments in Finland and Sweden share in common is the high importance of their role as experts in their field. This acts as the core value in their organisational identity and drives the high level of engagement in their daily work and furthermore guiding them in the sensemaking process. In both Ramboll Finland and Sweden, KS is therefore meaningful for the employees when it can be related to their work as expert consultants. However, in both the investigated business units, there are occurrences where KS is inhibited especially when the two communities become too self-focussed and ingrained in their way of doing things, resulting in knowledge from outside the community being regarded as irrelevant.

Equally important for KS is the presence of common ground or common practices, for example at yearly gatherings where employees find KS can be expanded to a national level. When employees in both business units are in need of knowledge, they seek out the colleagues with whom common ground has been established. It is the social process of interacting and establishing familiarity that drives KS, together with the value of being an expert. That employees see occasions for KS as meaningful is indeed a positive finding. Yet, the practice of getting on with new projects or additional projects takes precedence over reflecting on ones work and reifying it so that others may benefit from it. Such reflection is also needed in RamLink, but through employees' retrospective

perception, such activities are perceived to be less important. Employee reluctance can therefore be ascribed partly to the practice of social environments pushing such processes aside.

In both business units, KS seems to be confined predominantly to the national arena and this is where RamLink is meant to enter the scene and expand KS to an organisation-wide level. The introduction of RamLink does however seem to be subject to issues of power and politics between the two country business units and the Danish mother company. Perceptions of the Danish business unit being more formal and '*tough on things*' can create distance, thus contributing to feelings of *us* and *them*. Such feelings can foster the *not-invented-here* syndrome, exemplified in the description of RamLink as '*just another Danish toy*'. In Sweden, there is also an indication of a feeling of being less skilled compared to Ramboll's other business units (international) and thereby less significant – an issue that can inhibit KS to a view of one's knowledge becoming irrelevant.

Employees do see potential in collaborating across borders. However, with the importance of common practice being a facilitator of KS, employees without established connections outside their respective business unit see little relevance in RamLink. Part of the reluctance therefore arises from employees seeing little sense in expanding established national practice when RamLink offers little advantages. However, examples from both business units also show that when employee practices are extended across borders through social connections, RamLink becomes meaningful as something that can be used together with these connections. In both business units, employees express a need to see how RamLink can be used in a beneficial way, meaning that they are still searching for ways to connect it with their local practice of being experts; the very thing that makes KS meaningful for them. It is noteworthy that the reluctance of the Finnish employees also stems from insecurity when it comes to writing in English. This insecurity increases the risk they feel of not coming across as competent, i.e. contributing in a foreign language may be at odds with the value of being an expert.

Employees display confusion and frustration towards RamLink, as it has not met their expectations of a platform that could help them share knowledge. They do not seem to connect the social process of sharing one's knowledge with RamLink as opposed to the LYNC system, which is described as holding more opportunities for social interaction through video conferencing and the ability to share documents. The need for interaction is connected with the importance of intrinsic motivators such as social recognition and achievement. Employees see little connection between these and RamLink and as a result, they turn to their local practice where recognition can be found. Whether their reluctance towards the RamLink platform is a result of little extrinsic motivators is questionable, as our results also showed a competition held at Ramboll Finland did not result in a lasting improvement.

Interestingly, we also found that employees were not reluctant towards the RamLink platform at the early stages. Employees in both business units expressed positive expectations prior to the platform's launch, yet when RamLink was launched, the failure for it to meet their initial expectations resulted in frustration. A relevant aspect to draw forward is that several interviewees expressed a lack of knowledge of how the platform actually works, thus contributing to further confusion and frustration. A perceived lack of commitment from management in both Finland and Sweden added to a less than positive and/or indifferent sensemaking around the platform. In spite of attempts to market the system, management's perceived behaviour or lack of action came across as a more influential cue for employee sensemaking. Adding further to the reluctance towards the system is an enacted environment, an environment where employees themselves render RamLink less usable through their lack of contributions.

The low presence of social events where employee frustration and confusion can be resolved is also making it harder for RamLink to obtain a more meaningful status. Left somewhat alone in the sensemaking process, employees tend to turn towards each other for guidance. In this social sensemaking process the perception of RamLink as something that has little relevance is reified; turning this particular perception into an intersubjective meaning in the two business units.

Indeed, Swedish and Finnish employee reluctance towards RamLink cannot be ascribed to a single factor or phenomenon. The platform's poor start was a result of the various social processes that unfolded in the two business units – processes that indeed influenced employee sensemaking around the platform. Luckily for Ramboll and RamLink however, sensemaking is an ongoing process that is subject to continuous change. By focussing on and considering the social processes that we have established as influencing KS and the use of ICT, it may be possible to change course of RamLink so that it may yet deliver organisation-wide KS.

This thesis has found a number of reasons explaining why employees at Ramboll Finland and Ramboll Sweden seem reluctant to use the RamLink platform. In conclusion however, the most dominant factor is that Ramboll have unknowingly neglected and ignored the *social* aspect of KS. RamLink must be considered as a facilitator for KS and not as a substitute for the social processes that we found as vital enablers of KS.

Chapter 9 - Suggestions for Ramboll

This particular section is directed at both the Ramboll Group and the local business units. Our intention is to use our findings and propose ideas and recommendations concerning how the social processes connected with KS in the organisation can be addressed and help employees make sense of the RamLink platform. Our suggestions are listed as follows:

Facilitating KS and sensemaking around RamLink

- **Reify small wins on an organisational level. Examples of employees who have experiences where RamLink has benefitted them as experts. Interviewees express a wish for such examples.**
- **Establish social events where colleagues who are knowledgeable in regards to RamLink can help colleagues resolve confusion and frustration. The local governance organisations represent a relevant group of such knowledgeable people.**
- **Increase efforts to make employees' aware of practices in other country business units share similarities with their own. Academic disciplines form a common ground that employees can connect through.**
- **Incorporate existing networks, such as the waste management network, into RamLink – combining the social with the platform. Knowing that Ramboll has plans for a *network module* in RamLink already, we urge them to continue with the development of such a module.**
- **Having established that management's behaviour influences the employees' sensemaking, we suggest that Ramboll encourages management locally in the different business units to be involved and contribute to the system themselves. This is however also relevant on a corporate level in Ramboll. As an example, the new CEO, whose CV in RamLink was blank for 4 months before anything was entered, represents a key figure that the employees direct their attention towards.**
- **Address the issues of rushing through or skipping closure meetings. It is suggested that efforts are made to ensure employees have the time and support needed to reflect on their work. Such reflecting processes are also needed when employees need to contribute to RamLink. Hence, facilitating such processes in the local social environments can help the platform become a part of the employees' daily practice.**
- **Be mindful of the collaboration with the local governance organisations. At the moment, the perceived distance between the mother company and our two examined business units is contributing to RamLink being disassociated with the local environment. Recognising the local employees' thoughts as valid and competent connects with intrinsic motivators such a social recognition.**

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