

How does strategic communication is integrated to enable cross-departmental collaboration in the context of Brexit?

Case study of the British Embassy in Bulgaria.



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## **ABSTRACT**

Brexit has changed the status quo not only in Europe but worldwide. Inevitably, it will have even more repercussions on future processes as it influences a whole range of aspects - business, economy, education, bilateral relations, security, defence, and others. Therefore, this multilayered historical precedent has to be communicated on all levels of the chain, channels and bodies of the British Government.

In the era of social media this means that the question how to synchronize the information circulated around and along with messages and policies, reflects on the work of every component of the Government. The concept of joined-up government is not new to the United Kingdom but Brexit brought a new blast to the approach because Brexit needs to be communicated all around the world accordingly to a local context and audience.

The purpose of this project is to provide an insight in how Brexit is communicated on social media in Bulgaria in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia where also all departments are involved. Cross-collaboration is not an easy thing especially when it is debated around the question who owns social media channels within one organization. There is no clear answer but many ways to use effectively social media to deliver the messages and policies of your organization. With this project, I seek to explore how representatives of the British Embassy in Sofia interpret the concept of strategic communication and collaboration. I did that by conducting semi-structured interviews and then doing thematic analysis of the data.

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## *INTRODUCTION*

Communication is a fundamental drive in today's world in which any types of organisations operate - both public and private as well as for their decisions and behaviour. Still, when it comes to public sector there are some differences to bear in mind. "Government communication operates in a multilayered and organizationally diverse environment. In relation to the issue of goals, for example, government communication often has to juggle what appear to be conflicting objectives set by political masters" (Canel & Sanders, 2013, p.3). In their work the authors stress out that government communication and related concepts such as political public relations, government public relations and government political marketing has recently attracted the interest of a growing number of researchers. Despite the impact of internet technology this field has been neglected a short time ago (Canel & Sanders, 2013). Discussing the increasing interest, the authors highlight that the issues raised by government communication cut across the disciplinary areas represented in communication research namely, political communication, public relations, corporate communication, organizational and strategic communication (Canel & Sanders, 2013, p. 4)

Some recent events such as the election in the USA and the decision of the UK to leave the European Union or the so-called Brexit have catalysed the debate. They turned the narrative and the focus to social media and its impact on how messages are communicated as both events were intensively commented as a result of social media. Even Donald Trump, the elected USA president, said in November, 2016, on CBS' 60 Minutes: "The fact that I have such power in terms of numbers with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.. I think it helped me win all of these races were they're spending much more money that I spent". The same goes for Brexit campaign as the referendum results were followed by YouGov poll showing that 47% of those who voted for the UK to stay in the EU said their side would have won the referendum if social media did not exist.

Today, when these events are fact, the role of communication is even more crucial as it shapes all the perceptions and decisions coming along with any political changes. Here social media confirms to be a significant factor. According to Wallin (2012) before employing social media

tools, it is imperative that a public diplomacy practitioner must understand the strategic policy objective, and establish a communications goal. In other words, it means that deep and holistic understanding of the goals of the organization is required. Therefore, I found worth investigating how the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union is articulated in the British Embassy in Bulgaria. It is of a great interest how the organization deal with conveying Brexit related messages concerning all aspects - business, security, laws, politics etc. in the local context on social media. This historical event results in completely new way of communicating the image of Britain, its priorities and position within Europe. The process of negotiating Brexit is long and therefore, the context is dynamic and ongoing. Inevitably, it has affected and will keep influencing the work of all the governmental bodies overseas which are representing the British Government and its policies. This new context requires different approach in terms of communication and coordination because all entities need to deliver the same messages but in accordance with a specific context. Therefore, it echoes the question how Britain will remain a trustworthy partner with a strong presence in Europe by applying strategic approach. The U.K. sees the role of every governmental body and is trying to engage it with central concept of how it should operate. How does this work in practice? This is a new area of research due to the recent character of the events. There is a loud call by the British Government to remain strong. One of the leading messages in the speech of the Prime Minister Theresa May when she presented the plans for the UK'S exit from the EU was: "We are leaving the European Union, but we don't leave Europe" (Speech of the PM, 2017, February). This is, one more time, emphasis on the need for working on the strong presence and positive image of the UK.

The British Government has been putting a lot of efforts on producing documents regarding communication, digital capabilities with main focus on joined-up government and cross-collaboration even before Brexit. In 2017 the UK government communications marks 100 years since the establishment of the Department of Information, forerunner to the Ministry of Information which has been transformed several times through the years. From 1946 to 2012 - Central Office of Information (COI), The Government Information and Communication Service (GICS) and Government Communication Network (GCN) from 2004 to 2014. Now it is Government Communication Service which is the professional body for UK government

communications professionals working in central government departments, agencies and arm's length bodies (GCS, Handbook, p.8).

The first Government Communication plan was released in 2013/14 and since then a lot of supporting documents and reviews are conducted such as Foreign and Commonwealth Office Communication Capability Review (Government Communication Service, June 2013), Cross Government Internal Communications Capability Review (Government Communication Service, 2013). They all call for more collaboration and coherence as the British Government is operating on the model of joined-up government.

All the British embassies are part of the Foreign and Commonwealth office to which all general policies and documents are applied even though it has its own characteristics. "The FCO's network of diplomatic missions abroad is the principal platform for delivering HMG's communications effort overseas. This increasingly brings together a joined-up cross-government approach to communications for each of the foreign policy priorities determined by Ministers, both thematically and in every country around the world. The FCO also leads on behalf of the rest of government to ensure that domestic priorities – on growth and security, for example – are communicated effectively in other countries and integrated into the delivery of foreign policy" (Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Communication Capability Review, 2013, June, p.2).

The one created after Brexit is the The Government Transformation Strategy in February 2017. It highlights even more the need for collaboration by stating that "government departments will need to collaborate across traditional organisational boundaries". In the forewords of the strategy the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, Ben Gummer, addresses the transformation of communication in the context of Brexit: "The vote to leave the European Union has heightened the need to be responsive and to be able to adapt to a changing environment. To build services that run seamlessly across government we must take the next steps in transformation. We will strengthen our digital capability. Where it meets user needs and satisfies the appropriate safeguards, we will make data easier to share across government and ensure it is managed securely" (Gummer, 2017).

Now the need for collaboration, synergy and coherence is even more visible and vital. A focal point is that overseas Britain has different positioning in terms of priorities according to the local context but still needs to deliver messages following the global policy of the Government. What is more, the image of the UK should be positively built around all its aspects – business, innovation, culture, education etc. Hence, every agency, embassy and its parts is important. Cross-departmental collaboration can lead to synergy which is necessary to fulfill the objectives of the strategic communication. “The contribution that communication makes into organizational life, growth and success is unarguably indispensable in order to set rolling all the daily internal and external processes, networks and interactions typical for every organization” (Sueldo, 2016, p. 121).

Another aspect of this phenomenon is the time it is happening – when everything is interactive, information demands are unstoppable and in a globalised world where everything is visible. This refers directly to social media which is unarguably part of the way of how Brexit will be communicated overseas. The global strategic communication frames the whole process but it is responsibility of every unit to define the tactics and actions to fulfil the objectives of it in a strategic manner. I am inspired to investigate this in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia because of all the mentioned aspects of the problem as well as I am currently working in the organization as an assistant of the Communication and press officer. Therefore, the focus of my project is how strategic communication is integrated and how it enable cross-departmental collaboration to deliver Brexit-related messages within the British Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria. Therefore, the problem formulation of this paper is posed as follows:

*How does strategic communication is integrated to enable cross-departmental collaboration in the context of Brexit? Case study of the British Embassy Sofia, Bulgaria.*

*Sub-questions:*

*- How does the British Embassy in Sofia align with the British Government’s policies locally in relation to Brexit?*

*-How does the Communication and Press Office (CPO) coordinate the work between departments when delivering messages on Facebook and Twitter in relation to Brexit in Bulgaria? /tactics, actions/*

*- How departments engage with the implementation of the strategic communication when delivering messages on Facebook and Twitter in relation to Brexit?*

The main goal is to track the process of integrating strategic communication within different departments in order to convey post-Brexit messages. The overall strategic communication is set by the British Government and it is a responsibility of its overseas bodies to integrate it in a strategic way to achieve the final goals and objectives. In the field of organizational and leadership studies there is a gap in investigating this issue. It is a new context which will probably remain a very debatable topic for discussion. Furthermore, I believe that this will reframe a lot of concepts in the field of organizational studies. Not only that but also the strategic communication and social media in governmental institutions has not been investigated enough in the context of globalization and digitalization which is also an emerging field. “First of all, digitalization opens up a new dimension of transparency. As a result, the room for discrete, confidential and thorough communication is most likely to shrink: discretion and transparency run the danger of being thrown off balance” (Friede, 2016, p. 3). This context sheds the light on new way of functioning of this world when government is perceived more as any other type of organization. In the context of the new social media challenges, Friede (2016) argues that the function of diplomacy can in this context be regarded as mediator between the political and the public sphere (“setting the stage”), but it is also tempted to satisfy itself with simply “selling the brand” (ibid, p.4).

I believe that this new understanding of how government institutions operates is inevitably part of the future development of the concept of public sector and especially in diplomacy. Therefore, I think my project can contribute to this emerging research area by giving a depth analysis of the problem within the case. I also want to open the room for further discussions and reflections because this is just the beginning of a new adventure.

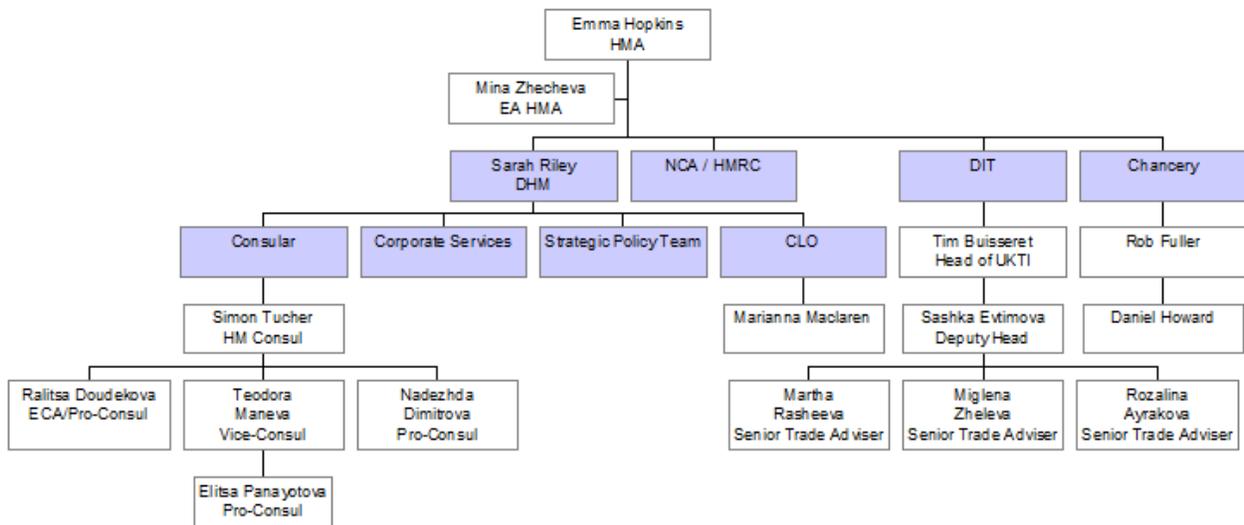
## *INTRODUCTION OF THE CASE*

The paper investigates the case of a governmental institution - the British Embassy in Sofia. The organization is part of the Foreign and Commonwealth office (FCO). FCO is a department of the Government of the United Kingdom and it is responsible for protecting and promoting British interest worldwide as it was mentioned in the introduction. According to the FCO communication capability review from 2013 “FCO differs from other government Departments because communication is core business for the FCO. Exercising influence overseas, in support of the government’s priorities, is central to the FCO’s work, whether through private engagement with host governments, public diplomacy or programme work, all of which incorporate a major professional communications element” (ibid, p.3).

On the main webpage of the Embassy the following is stated as its mission: “We work in Bulgaria to improve reform on areas including the rule of law, organised crime and corruption, public administration and to implement policy on Europe and the single market, building trade for mutual growth” (British Embassy, Sofia). The embassy is a small organization with around 45 people working there. It is divided in the following main departments as shown in the organogram on Figure 1:

- Strategic Policy Team
- Department for International Trade (DIT)
- Corporate Services Team
- Consular Team
- Chancery
- CLO

Figure 1. British Embassy Business Planning, February, 2017



The main objective of the organization is to develop and maintain relations between the UK and Bulgaria. This work covers a range of issues including the economy, energy policy, justice and home affairs and international security. It is related to work with the Bulgarian authorities to minimise harm to the UK from organized crime and to assist British nationals in Bulgaria.

The main important role of the Embassy in terms of communication is to build the image of the UK in Bulgaria and to deliver the British government’s messages in the right way. This is becoming more and more important in the context of Brexit. The strategy has changed by stressing a great emphasis on collaboration in delivering Government’s messages and policies. This is happening through different campaigns which are bringing the messages such as: the UK is still open for business, education, culture etc. and it is a role of the Embassy to communicate them in the local context accordingly. In the communication review of the FCO quoted above strategic planning is mentioned as a main challenge and as “as a result, policy and communications are not fully integrated: communications is not an integral part of the business planning process” (ibid, p 6). Thus, there is a need for research on where and why these problems occur in the context of communication.

## *LITERATURE REVIEW*

The call for integrated approach in delivering messages and policies is defined both by the influential character of Brexit and the context in which it has happened - the era of social media. As mentioned above the British Embassy in Sofia is pretty small but complex organizational structure as part of bigger body as well as its mission. Hence, in the moment when the UK reinforces its strategy to empower the image of the country within all the European partners every cell of the body needs to function in harmony. Based on the nature of the problem literature review in this direction was made. One of the conclusions was that there is a challenge in the field of cross-collaboration in governmental institutions regarding several factors: new technology, accountability and integrity. In other words – in what way and who is in charge when it comes to accomplish the mission of the organization and how resources should be distributed. Namely these challenges are underlined by the British Government in its Global Communication plan: digital communications, communication trends, public trust and engagement, and people and capacity (GCS, 2015).

It is challenging because public and governmental institutions often are associated with bureaucracy in all aspects including communication. The more globalized the world is becoming, the more the need for adaption is emerging. Governmental institutions are not an exception. They also need to reconsider their behaviour and adapt to the new environment. This view is shared among recent studies and analysis as well as the British Government itself.

“First of all, digitalization opens up a new dimension of transparency. As a result, the room for discrete, confidential and thorough communication is most likely to shrink: discretion and transparency run the danger of being thrown off balance” (Friede, 2016, p. 3). This is part of the summary report of the workshop on the Diplomacy in 21st century hosted in Berlin in 2016. This is an essential departing point for the changes that are happening in this field - governmental institutions are no longer self-existing where things can happened beyond the stage. This is coming along with a new ways of communication such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. Digitalization enables diplomacy to provide innovative services for citizens and to connect with them in a new way through all these social media channels which must be trusted in order to

fulfil their functional role of enabling checking information (Friede, 2016). Digital and social media strategies are still rare in diplomacy although they are increasingly needed. The “clarity of mission”, and its adequate processing, are essential for success (Friede, 2016). In the context of the new social media challenges, Friede (2016) argues that the function of diplomacy can in this context be regarded as mediator between the political and the public sphere (“setting the stage”), but it is also tempted to satisfy itself with simply “selling the brand”.

This observation is not new though. In his book “The Art of The State – Culture, Rhetoric, and Public Management” published in 2000, Hood writes that some general assumptions are commonly made about public management: Public management is changing and adopting a new style. The conduct of governmental institutions increasingly resembles that of businesses, where managers play a central role. Basically, what is taking place is modernization – public management institutions realize the effects of globalization and recognize the need to be up-to-date. According to Hood (2000) the out-dated style of public management, which was process-oriented and rule-focused, is being transformed into a results-orientation with a special emphasis on efficient least-cost practice (Hood 2000).

The literature review demonstrates lack of studies in the field but my interest in the research area was also provoked by my personal observations on the case of the British Embassy in Sofia. Especially in the context of Brexit the question how Britain will remain a trustworthy partner with a strong presence in Europe is an outstanding ones. The UK sees the role of every governmental body and is trying to engage it with central concept of how it should happen addressing that whenever it is possible. The latest is in the Government transformation strategy from February, 2017.

“The world is also not standing still. Following the vote to leave the European Union, the need for government and the wider public sector to be agile and responsive to a changed environment across (or sometimes redefining) existing departmental boundaries has become even more important. This has brought clearly into focus that the digital challenge is not simply about online interactions - but fundamentally about how departments operate on the inside” (ibid, Scope of the strategy, 2017).

I am working for the British Embassy in Sofia since the beginning of October, 2016 in the political department of the organization as an intern in Communication and press office. The work objectives include media coverage of all the events organized or supported by all the departments of the Embassy, coordinating the work related to different strategic processes, and promoting central content such as campaigns, key-messages by the British Government. Therefore, two people are responsible for the media coverage but in collaboration with all the teams across the embassy. During the work period a weak cross-departmental collaboration was detected. For example, the Communication and press officer tried to establish a process with the Consular team on how to respond to consular inquiries on Facebook. This is an indicative example because there was serious resistance from the consular team to invest its resources and time as it became clear during one of our meeting arranged to discuss the scope of the process. That was important because after Brexit many people start asking for information via social media. Apparently, the consular team did not recognize this as its responsibility. The process of arranging who and how will be engaged with this process was a hard thing to be done. The Communication and Press office created a Facebook response messages process and then sent it to the consular team. Afterwards, several discussions, team meetings and email conversations had been conducted in attempt the strategy to be finalized. Unfortunately, the consular team did not agree upon many of the points especially the ones which put more responsibilities to its team. This made it extremely difficult to work and managing the process. When someone is requesting information via Facebook, the communication team send the message as an email to the consular team to ask what exactly to answer. This is slow and not efficient way of doing things. What is more, there is always the risk of background noise in this communication which can result in failure to deliver proper service and to fulfil the objectives of the Embassy. What the two teams agreed on was a standard Facebook responses which can be used straight ahead. This is not so useful in the context of Brexit because it is a sensitive information and situation is very dynamic. As I was involved in the process, I felt that this problem needs further investigation and it became departure point for my interest.

As it was mentioned above, there is no or little division between public and private sector when it comes to communication and delivering the messages of an organization. Sueldo (2015) stresses out the need of integrated strategic communication within every organization if it wants

to be efficient and successful. Scheinsohn (2010) goes further by defining the goal of integrated strategic communication as to design a global strategy that articulates all the tactics communications as a system based on the pillars of consistency, collaboration and synergy.

The approach of the British Government is to embed all governmental institutions to the same strategic communication model resembling the one coined by Scheinsohn (2010). He makes a distinction between the set of communication tactics and the overall communication strategy that these tactics are part of. The global strategy is created by the British Government and the British Embassy has to implement tactics and activities accordingly. Thus, the way of working and the created documents should be aligned with the objectives and mission of the Government which frames the goals and every body should find a way to achieve in its particular context.

How the core principles of the communication model are applied in the British embassy will be tracked by answering the posed research question above. I argue that integrating the communication model in strategic manner can lead to better cross-departmental work and respectively to fulfilling the objectives in the context of Brexit. Scholars also provides evident that integrated strategic communication is inevitably related to the collaboration and coordination between the different teams (Englin, n.d.; Everse, 2012;). Hence, the two concepts are closely interlinked. “The main argument for greater interdepartmental coordination seems to remain a desire for more effective government interventions in complex policy fields. In a number of policy areas, there has been a growing recognition that traditional conceptual and administrative divisions no longer reflect the realities of government interventions that are needed (Juliet & Bakvis, 2004).

Even though the work between different departments for the sake of the global goal of the communication model is explicitly established, there is different context-depending variables which can influence the implementation. According to Ackerman et al. (2005) cross-departmental collaborations can take many forms, but face problems due to different management styles, different cultures, and different operating modes of the participant organizations. This is referring to the nature of the case - how a small entity can integrate the big strategy in its specific context. Veliyath and Srinivasan (1995) suggest wider concept by

discussing that cross-departmental collaboration is an organizational form, which is influenced by external environment and internal organizational arrangements. Collaboration is perceived as a key capability by the British Government. Therefore, it is responsibility of the British Embassy in Sofia to integrate this approach. For the purpose of my paper the cross-departmental collaboration is seen through strategic communication perspective. In other words, how Communication and press office engage teams in communicating the messages of the Embassy in the context of Brexit. After the referendum the need for consistency and integrity is even more important in all the fields of operation – education, business, economy, social affairs etc. Thus, every body is engaged in the process of building the strong UK strong in its specific local context. This corresponds with with the concept of joined-up government established by the British Government which was coined by the UK Government in 1997 by the New Labour Government. The model captures its intent for public sector reform. Key features of the British initiative have included: new structures such as cross-departmental policy development and delivery units within the Cabinet Office, research into how the civil service could better manage cross-cutting issues, and the allocation of cross-cutting portfolios to ministers. The communication structure is also determined by this concept because the Government Communication Service is navigating the entire communication process of the government.

According to Ling (2002) joined-up government seeks to align the activities of formally separate organizations towards particular goals of public policy. Therefore, joined-up working aims to coordinate activities across organizational boundaries without removing the boundaries themselves. These boundaries are inter-departmental, centrallocal, and sectoral (corporate, public, voluntary/community).

It was worth noting this briefly as it is mentioned also in the Transformation strategy in 2017. In the context of Brexit this is an important concept because it shows once again the need for shared work and responsibilities, tight collaboration across government bodies and agencies. In the document it is written that by 2020 the areas of priority are 1) to design and deliver joined-up, end-to-end services; 2) deliver the major transformation programmes; 3) establish a whole-government approach to transformation, laying the ground for broader transformation across the public sector. Among the methods to do that are to establish a cross-government mechanism to build a common language, tools and techniques, and share knowledge and experience about how

to approach major transformations from across government, drawing on learning from the private sector and build a framework for the best way to deliver transformation across government. It also includes support to a strategic approach to replace the old technology. This document brings the notion of collaboration where everything is delivered and created in a coherent way. Namely, this is the key component of my research question - collaboration according to the British Government effort but in Bulgaria depending on the culture, diversity, capability and personal assets of the people involved in the process.

### ***THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS***

As it was already outlined in the literature review central to my study are the concepts of collaboration and strategic communication. In this chapter I will look into them in more details in order to understand better the problem at hand. I decided to start my theoretical framework with looking at the diplomacy within the phenomenon of technology or the so-called digital diplomacy. Afterwards, I will outline fundamental models of strategic communication and what are the different phases of strategic management process. By examining strategic communication from this perspective I will gain deep insight of what and how should be done for implementing strategic communication. What is more, this will give me the context to examine cross-departmental collaboration later on from the perspective of strategic management process of communication. For the purpose of my project, collaboration is seen as a key concept for achieving the communication goals in post-Brexit rhetoric in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia. I argue that all these concepts are interlinked and by examining them I will answer my research question. In order to demonstrate that they are all connected, I argue that strategic communication is not possible without adaptation to the new age of communication which is ruled by social media. “Any implementation of strategic communication that includes only traditional communication, such as messaging, press releases, media relations, etc. is all but doomed to fail” (Paul, 2011, p.5)

This quote refers back to the cited earlier in the Introduction chapter and literature review Transformation strategy of the British Government which seeks to find a common standard in implementing new technologies in strategic communication. What is more, many scholars (Hallahan et.al, 2010; Scheinsohn, 2010;) in the field of organisational studies see strategic

communications as a complex combination of actions, tactics and decisions on a managerial level which can lead to successful collaboration between different departments.

### *Digital Diplomacy*

Diplomatic institutions are often late adopters of technology and require long durations of time to adapt to new technological innovations. This may be attributed to the fact that they are large, bureaucratic and risk averse. It is therefore fair to assume that digital diplomacy is only in its infancy (Manor, 2015). The new environment switches the regime of monologue of public diplomacy to dialogue and interactive communication which is referred to transformation also in the style of management. “Not only is the conduct of governmental institutions increasingly being conducted like businesses, where managers play a central role, but the client service aspect is also becoming more important” (Tampere, n.d.,p.1). This per se explains why I am concerned with the concept of digital diplomacy in my project where I argue that new technologies are key aspect of strategic communication.

According to Manor (2015) there seem to be two schools of thoughts regarding digital diplomacy. The first claims that it is a new tool in the conduct of public diplomacy. Others maintain that it increases the ability to interact with foreign publics and actively engage with them thereby enabling the transition from monologue to dialogue. So perhaps the best definition of digital diplomacy according to him incorporates both perspectives and states that:“Digital diplomacy is the growing use of ICTs and social media platforms by a country in order to achieve its foreign policy goals and practice public diplomacy” (Manor, 2015)

To date, scholars have suggested the terms net diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, digital diplomacy, diplomacy 2.0, networked diplomacy, real-time diplomacy and 21st century statecraft. There is no agreement on one universal definition for digital diplomacy. As Manor argues it is challenging to define it when it is still taking shape. In his latest work in March 2017, Manor stresses out that the concept is difficult to be defined because it is an ongoing process and suggests a matrix to show the impact of digitalization on the norms (values/beliefs), behaviours,

working procedures and concepts /metaphors of individuals and organizations as shown on Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Manor's Matrix

Source: <https://digdipblog.com/2017/03/28/the-digitalization-of-diplomacy/>

Conceptual	Procedural	Behavioural	Normative (norms, values, beliefs)	Dimensions of diplomacy
Networked society is a sharing society	Sharing experience/beliefs/feelings online	Self-exposure	Increased, transparency, sharing is caring	Audiences of Diplomacy
Networks as the metaphor of diplomacy	Incorporating audience feedback in policy formulation	Listening to global audiences who offer online feedback	Valuing dialogue	Institutions of Diplomacy
From Club mentality to network mentality (Heine, 2013)	Opening up of diplomacy - diplomats engaging with individuals, groups, organisations	Temporary alliances with various stakeholders	Openness	Practitioners of Diplomacy
Networking	Goal oriented networks with public, civil society, NGOs, diplomatic institutions	Multi-stakeholder diplomacy	Collaboration	Practice of Diplomacy

This matrix shows exclusively how social media is changing the way diplomacy is communicating and being communicated by different actors. Manor (2017) sees this matrix as bringing order to the somewhat chaotic study of digital diplomacy. The term “the digitalization of diplomacy”, as employed thus far, suggests that scholars and practitioners can focus on any dimension of diplomacy (audiences, institutions) and on any realm of influence (metaphors or norms), (Manor, 2017). It applies to the notion of my project as it shows that in any angle of diplomacy integrity is essential. For instance, an Embassy cannot operate without bearing in mind various stakeholders and work in transparency and collaboration are necessity to meet their demands. Openness and dialogue are part of the new working mode when diplomacy is not anymore enigma but exposed to the external world in the era of social media. As the author argues digital diplomacy is a process and is constantly changing so does the context in which it is happening. My case is investigated in the context of Brexit and considers it as new turn in the way of communicating across the British Government which reflects both on the internal communication of overseas bodies and agencies as well as the messages delivered to the external stakeholders.

Unarguably, new ways of communication have led to new policy-making which requires more integrated way from communication perspective. In the context of social media challenges, Friede (2016) argues that the function of diplomacy can in this context be regarded as mediator between the political and the public sphere, but it is also tempted to satisfy itself with simply “selling the brand”. This is focal point in terms of the examined problem in the context of Brexit which is historically new event within the field. Respectively, it raises questions how social media can be used by an organization to communicate it and build positive image of the UK in a concise and coherent manner.

It is relevant to briefly outline fundamental models of communication here - transmission and interactive model. The former conceptualizes communication as one-way emission of information whereas the latter sees communication as the creation of meaning between different parties in communication process. Nowadays, as a result of globalisation and Internet, many scholars agree that communication involves more than one way transmission such as Grunig and

Hunt (1984). This distinction refers back to the new environment which requires interaction, immediate communication and feedback. Even though it is widely accepted that communication is an interactive process, it is still early to identify the Internet's impact on the relations between people across borders and between states. According to Westcott (2008) it is necessary at least to try. "Establishing a framework for analysing the changes—as business has done —will help governments and other international actors take strategic decisions based on reality, rather than on an outdated view of how things happen. The argument is that the Internet has three fundamental impacts on international relations" (Westcott, N, 2008. p. 2):

- it multiplies and amplifies the number of voices and interests involved in international policy-making, complicating international decision-making and reducing the exclusive control of states in the process;
- it accelerates and frees the dissemination of information, accurate or not, about any issue or event which can impact on its consequences and handling;
- it enables traditional diplomatic services to be delivered faster and more cost effectively, both to ones' own citizens and government, and to those of other countries.

These challenges are recognized by the British Government as well. As previously mentioned in some of the documents produced by the British Government, the need for transformation is directly addressed in the overall Modern Communications Operating Model (MCOM) which aims at improving the Government Communications Service (GCS). The model is established by Alex Aiken, Executive Director, in November 2014 and it is applied to all entities of the Government and addresses how to meet the new needs mentioned above. According to the model communications functions of any size, in departments or arms-length bodies, should be built around a central core of: strategic communication planning; media and campaigns; strategic engagement; and internal communications. This documents gave serious push for the direction which should be taken when investigating the posed research question. In relation to the project it is significant because it helps me to understand the overall picture which is important when I undertake steps of examining the case at hand.

In relation to that, it is crucial to discuss that Government communication has changed considerably over the last couple of years taking the direction of transformation. The Government Communications Plan 2014/15 presented for the first time cross-government priorities, with all departments working together on agreed themes. The service has also reduced costs, saving over £2bn during the life of the 2010-2015 administration. Despite this good progress, GCS faces a challenge to further increase the skills and professionalism of GCS communicators, and to ensure the right structure is in place to embed best practice and drive down costs (MCOM, 2015). This is strongly interlinked with the research question. The focus of it is how British Embassy in Sofia functions in order to fulfill the overall goals of the Government. As it was already mentioned in the FCO communication review in the case introduction on page 11, strategic planning is a challenge and it affects integrated communication. The explicit manner of stating the need for alignment with the global approach of the British Government is another evidence in favor of the posed question of my study. The call for working together on departmental level in achieving the common goals is contributing to the concept of strategic communication which is discussed below. Furthermore, this is even emerging as an approach especially in the context of Brexit. Therefore, British organizations overseas have to adapt to the new situations, make changes in their way of working or even structures to be able to face the new challenges.

This framework was essential contribution for the understanding of the concept of strategic communication. As it was mentioned above, strategic communication cannot succeed by using only traditional communication. On the other hand, namely adapting to new and innovative ways of communication is the key for surviving and achieving the goals of any organisation in the new era of digital world.

### ***Strategic Communication***

As it was mentioned above, the new environment requires strategic decision-making process. The following part focuses namely on strategic communication. Firstly, it is important briefly to explain the evolution of the concept strategic communication. “Academic research and training in the fields of management and communication are disconnected from strategic communication

practice. The challenge confronting the field today is to more closely draw the vital linkages between how communication is taught in academia and how it is practiced strategically” (Hallahan et. al, 2010, p. 18).

Therefore, in this part of the theoretical underpinnings I will shortly outline the concept of strategic communication from academic perspective. Afterwards, I will describe different models of strategic communication as well as in which disciplines the concept is applied. I believe that this approach will help me later with the analysis as I want to examine how strategic communication is implemented. I see it as a process which involve the whole organisation. Therefore, I will look into the strategic communication and why it is important for different disciplines and what can be achieved through it.

According to Hallahan et al. (2010) strategic communication can be drawn from four clusters of scholarship: corporate communication; marketing, advertising, and public relations; business communication skills; and academic studies of organisational behaviour in general.

After a serious research, I realised that this concept is still not precisely defined in the field of organisational studies. Thus, I found very relevant the model suggested by Hallahan et al. (2010) which give the practical understanding of the concept. In their article “Defining strategic communication” the authors analyse the concept by applying it to any kind of organisations including government organisations. The authors describe strategic communication as: “purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfill its mission” (ibid, p. 3).

There is no agreement on single conceptual framework of strategic communication in professional communications involving organisations. As Hallahan et al. suggest “the focus of various communications pursuits has been narrowly defined around specific managerial problems such as improving organisational performance, selling more products, motivating donors, or building relationships” (ibid, p.5). The authors argue that no matter in which discipline is the issue at hand, they share common purpose and usually the difference is represented by the used tactics, convergence of media etc. Thus, all organisations seek to find

integration as well as effectiveness through synergy. The authors defined six specialties commonly found within organizations:

- Management communication
- Marketing communication
- Public relations
- Technical communication
- Political communication
- Information/ Social marketing campaign

Each addresses different organisational purposes and is practiced by different staff personnel which are presented detailed in Figure 3. That proves once again the complexity of the concept of strategic communication. This framework will help later on in this project when I am analysing the particular case in question.

Figure 3. Model by Hallahan et al., (2010)

Purpose	Personnel	Specialty
To promote understanding of an organization's mission, vision and goals;	managerial /administrative	Management communication
To promote products and services;	Marketing staff	Marketing communication
To establish beneficial relationships with employees, customers and government officials;	PR, HR, government relations staff	Public relations
To educate employees and improve efficiency;	Technical, engineering support, training staff	Technical communication

To build political consensus including communications in support of public diplomacy;	Government affairs staff	Political communication
To reduce incidence of risky behaviour or to promote social causes;	Employees and corporate staffs	Social marketing campaigns

This division gives more detailed understanding of the implementation of strategic communication in practice. It shows that for strategic communication the integrated approach is a requirement and it always involves more people within the organisation. It also give an outline and overview of where and what is the role of strategic communication. This helps me in the choice of strategic management theoretical perspective which I will outline later on in this chapter.

Strategic communication model coined by Scheinsohn (2010) stresses out the need for new understanding of organizational communication. He makes a distinction between the set of communication tactics and the overall communication strategy that these tactics are part of. The goal of this integrated strategic communication is to design a global strategy that articulates all the tactics communications as a system based on the pillars of consistency, collaboration and synergy (Scheinsohn, 2010). As Carillo (2014) argues “strategic communication is not the same as communication strategies. Strategic communication needs to use all the forms of communication available in the service of its goals” (ibid, p. 85).

Scheinsohn and Saroka (2000) suggest model which includes the following levels of action: strategic, logistic, tactical and technical. In order to understand Scheinsohn model it is necessary to distinguish between two levels of communication - strategic from tactical. The latter embraces techniques that fulfil eminently tactical functions of external communications mentioned before. This is important distinction because it sheds light on the terms tactical and strategic which are fundamental to the understanding of the different responsibilities attached to management and governance. Tactics are the day-to-day actions undertaken to meet the need of the strategic

framework. As it was mentioned the strategic communication gives the holistic frame and the goals which can be achieved by implementing different actions, tactics, plans. This model highlight the role of the person who should be mediator in the process of strategic communication by choosing the tactics to fulfill the goals. Therefore, the concept is seen through the context of strategic management. In relation to my problem formulation this provides an insight to the process itself and who is responsibility for successful strategic communication which can enable collaboration.

Here it is important to discuss strategic communication from the perspective of what is its purpose. Paul (2011) identifies three differences, tensions or disagreements in how people conceive of strategic communication. I think this is crucial for my project because it is not only about implementation of different activities or tactics in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia but also how the individuals perceive and use it for achieving specific goals or objectives.

First, the author points out that some people emphasis broadcast, others - engagement when it comes to the purpose of the strategic communication. Here the former is the traditional messaging or the so-called “the great megaphone approach” to public diplomacy. “If we say our message louder, and clearer, on more channels, “they” will understand and strategic communication will have succeeded” (Paul, 2011, p.2). In tension with this perception, Paul stresses out the engagement as purpose of strategic communication or the so-called “the last three feet” of public diplomacy, establishing relationships, seeking two-way understanding, listening to what others in the world think and have to say (Paul, 2011, p. 2). According to him both are necessary.

Another difference is in terms of the degree of control of the message. At one pole is the desire for complete control of information, which was possible before mass media and before social media. In this view, the themes and messages are centrally developed and all representatives of the government cleave exactly to the approved talking points. While perfect control of messages seems impossible nowadays, the other extreme is no more palatable. If every representative of the government says whatever they feel like saying, each becomes a potential loose cannon in the ship of communication. According to Paul (2011) the balance is somewhere between the two

extremes. There are needs to be central guidance and coordinating mechanisms, but government personnel need the freedom to put what they need to say in their own words, and to respond to changing situations based on their own understanding of that situation, hopefully within a broader context of well articulated strategies and goals. This is crucial point to the problem formulation because the concept of strategic communication is investigated in the context in Bulgaria. Respectively, the people working there should take into account the geographical, cultural and political context when delivering their messages. It is also important to detect the needs and demands of their external stakeholders such as politicians, customers, partners and NGOs.

The third difference that Paul (2011) points out is about informing versus influencing. In his view this dilemma is not existing because “there is no such thing as value free information (Paul, 2011, p. 3). When we are informing we are passing on our attitudes and beliefs as speakers or writers, and seek to serve some purpose. According to him strategic communication should admit to being about influence, but it should also contain a commitment to the truth, a commitment to credibility, and should be undertaken as “virtuous persuasion.”

### *Strategic management process*

For the purpose of my project the strategic management of communication is understood as a process. Therefore, I will look into this process in an attempt to see how managing the implementation of strategic communication can enable cross-departmental collaboration and what are the consequences if it is not executed the right way. The question of my project is how this process happens in Bulgaria and to what extend it involves different people and what drive them to do that. Therefore, the concept of strategic management process is relevant because it shows how the person in charge is helping or integrating the process Bulgaria and to what extend it works in coherent way with the frame set by the Government.

“The strategic management process refers to the methods by which strategies are derived and consists of different phases or steps” (Steyn, 2003, p. 11). According to different scholars in the field, this process is inevitably connected to environmental analysis as a first step (Hambrick 1981, 1982; Bourgeois 1980; Phillips & Calantone 1994; Robbins & De Cenzo 1998, p. 105 in

Steyn, 2002). Environmental analysis can therefore be seen as the linking pin between the organisation and the stakeholder environment (Carroll, 1996). Both were mentioned as key factors for cross-departmental collaboration when discussing the concept in the literature review on p. 15.

Part of the strategic management process is to formulate the goal (Steyn, 2002). According to the author this stage involves the establishment and the prioritisation of goals. Often a politically charged process, goal formulation involves the personal values, perceptions, attitudes and power of the managers and owners involved in the strategic management process.

Strategic thinking is the phase of the process when the manager set the direction and consider aspects such as opinions and even feelings of different stakeholders (Robert, 1997). Strategic thinking produces a framework for the strategic and operational plans and attempts to determine what the organisation should look like, i.e. the strategy. It is related to the stage of strategic planning of the process where strategy is operationalised (Wheeler & Sillanpää, 1997, p. 119 in Steyn, 2003). It is therefore no substitute for strategic thinking, but merely formalises the strategy process. In other words strategic planning puts the strategy into practice. “In the implementation phase, the strategy is turned into reality by means of more detailed and shorter term plans/schedules at progressively lower operating levels” (Digman 1990, p. 54). Operational planning allocates tasks to specific existing facilities to achieve particular objectives in each planning period. According to Pearce and Robinson (1997, p. 304) operational or action plans incorporate four elements:

- Specific functional tactics (actions/activities), to be undertaken in the next week, month or quarter. Each function e.g. marketing/corporate communication/human resources needs to identify and undertake key, routine, but unique activities that help to build a sustainable competitive advantage.
- Each tactic has one or more specific, immediate (short-term) objectives or targets, that are identified as outcomes.
- A clear time frame for completion.

- Accountability, by identifying persons responsible for each action in the plan. In the control phase, management seeks to ensure that the organisation stays on track and achieves its goals and strategies.

Planning is a key work for understanding the process as I see it. “A plan is a set of goals and rules that defines the exact contribution of each actor to a chain of actions in order to reach a desired outcome... [and] planning is above all a process of coordination of decisions (Kaufman 1986, p. 218). This is the final stage where everything should be precisely organised in order to meet the broad goals of the organisation. Therefore, it is not enough to focus only on one of the stages of the process. In relation to my problem formulation, it is significant to explore how this process works in and how the person in charge reinforces strategic communication in integrated way and involve other people in it.

Everse (2012) suggests that managing communications in an integrated or system-wide way will require a new set of behaviors at all levels of an organization — behaviors that embrace a process and apply set standards for all communications efforts. This discipline can be difficult, so you’ll need a strong foundation with executive-level alignment and endorsement to get where you hope to go (Everse, 2012). She suggests the What/How/Who model based on which to be developed a set of tools that guide the planning and creative efforts of your internal team and their external partners. The What/How/Who Model requires that plans be developed at each of the following levels. The “What” requires category plan which captures decisions about the nature of different corporate and product messages - simply put reasons why a consumer should buy your product, or information about your company. The “How” of communications requires channel plans for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of alternative channels for delivering the messages. The “Who” of the communications requires audience plans for the targeted audiences. This identifies specific objectives and strategies for a particular group.

“Planning needs to be further supported by a toolkit of communications standards that set the bar for creative excellence for all team members, regardless of location or function, and regardless of whether they have responsibility for internal or external communication” (Everse, 2012). The tools will vary depending on the size of the organization, the degree that brand management is

embodied in the decisions, and the number of people actually involved in the development of communications. According to the author everyone in the organization communicates, and many of the people come in contact with customers. They can also benefit from explicit tools such as message frameworks that help them deliver strong content related to your brand position and principles of communication that will help guide their behaviors. It is also valid vice versa - they can contribute to the communication process by giving new perspective and helping in delivering the messages of the organisation by collaboration is a central aspect of the entire process. As stated by the British Government in the Digital communication capability review released in 2013, “digital is mainstream and it shouldn’t be owned by a particular team”. This brings me to the next aspect of my problem – collaboration, which is discussed below.

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration as a defined problem-solving or decision-making strategy became popular in the academic world in the 1990s, in part due to increased connectivity through globalization and the development of technology for enhanced communication (Faulkner & De Rond, 2000). Here collaboration between different teams is seen as an outcome of particular strategic management decisions as well as necessity for the strategic communication. By definition collaboration is working “jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor” (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.) or “working with someone to produce or create something” (New Oxford American dictionary, n.d.). In other words, it involves the sharing of resources, information, risks and responsibilities. Collaboration requires participants’ mutual engagement and trust and focuses them on the achievement of a common objective (Msanjila & Afsarmanesh, 2008). Namely, this is the expected outcome of the strategic management process – achievement of common goals.

Paul (2011) says it in very clear way with his vision on strategic communication: “Everyone in government speaks not with one voice like some kind of robot automaton, but with their messages aligned in the same direction, because everyone understands the nested objectives and how their own efforts support those objectives, and because they have (or have access to) requisite communication training and cultural knowledge. In this vision communication is not

just one-way broadcast, but is true two-way communication, engagement, or dialogue. In my vision this leads to policies shaped with our own interests as well as the interests and preferences of others in mind. This is my vision.” (ibid, p. 14)

According to Gill (2016) building a culture of teamwork should be a priority for government organizations as they strategize mission success. Henneman et al. (1995) identified that collaboration “requires competence, confidence and commitment on the part of all parties. Respect and trust, both for oneself and others, is key to collaboration. As such, patience, nurturance and time are required to build a relationship so that collaboration can occur” (ibid, p.108). Identified factors that contribute to successful collaboration were: joint venture, cooperative endeavor, willing participation, shared planning and decision-making, team approach, contribution of expertise, shared responsibility, non-hierarchical relationships and shared power based on knowledge and expertise (Henneman et al., 1995).

But there are also a lot of factors which can inhibit the process. Bringing together the relevant and affected actors in sustained interaction might fail because there is no tradition for interaction, because the experiences with interaction are negative, or because it proves to be difficult to motivate the relevant actors to spend time and energy on participating in interactive arenas (Gray, 1989; Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Collaboration may be prevented by the presence of large power asymmetries, the prevalence of mistrust and opportunistic behavior, strategic and substantial uncertainty, conflicting cognitive and discursive frameworks and the lack of moral-intellectual leadership (Gray, 1989; Straus, 2002; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Ansell & Gash, 2008). As it was already mentioned in the literature review cross-departmental collaborations can take many forms, but faces problems due to different management styles, different cultures, and different operating modes of the participant organizations”. (Ackermann et al., 2005).

As I mentioned above, public sector is perceived as bureaucracy and behind the new technology and all these factors mentioned above can occur and inhibit collaboration. “When it comes to the public sector there is a lot of skepticism with regard to the capacity for innovating public

policies, organizations and services. Many people, and especially a good deal of those employed in the private sector, consider the public sector as a slow-moving bureaucracy characterized by red tape, inertia and stalemate”(Sørensen & Torfing, 2012, p.2). Many of the scholars above in one way or another refer collaboration to organizational structure. Therefore, this is also an important concept to my study.

According to Feigenbaum (n.d.) there are three types of organizational structure in the public sector - vertical, horizontal, and divisional.

Vertical structure is characterized by few people at the top and increasing numbers of people in middle management and lower level positions. Many government organizations use this type because it creates very clear and defined job objectives. Horizontal organization charts are characterized by a few positions at top and then many positions on the next row down. In other words, there are very few supervisors and many peers or equals. In order to deliver services or because they do job sharing, staff may work together cooperatively rather than in hierarchical order. Divisional structures divide function and responsibility based on specialty or geography- such as a market territory. In the case of the public sector, a few organizations such as courts use this system.

This is central to my problem as it was identified that organizational structure influences the level of collaboration. Not only that but it is also recognized as an obstacle to embrace new technology by the British Government in the Cross-government internal communication capability review (2014). Main finding is that on the whole, government internal communication is characterised by top-down, episodic communications which lack the opportunity for discourse. Especially poor are leadership communication behaviours, effective use of digital channels and cross government communications (ibid, p.3). According to Grunewald and Beitzinger (n.d.) the rise of social media calls for a revision of the common understanding of strategic corporate communication, whereby organizations try to reach an advantage for themselves through long-term monitoring and consciously initiating necessary steps accordingly, towards more interactivity, reciprocity, participation and sociality as well as new applications through technological advancement. Bearing in mind this will help me in answering the research question because there is a focus on the personal perception and this is a variable which depend on the

recognizing the new technology, to what extent people use them out of work, and how they see their role in the process of digital inclusion on social media.

To sum up, the theoretical underpinnings and models, give an essential push for empirical examination of the current problem formulation. Strategic communication is a complex concept but there is a lot of different stages and by breaking it into pieces within the context of the particular case, I will try to answer the question at hand.

The concept of digital diplomacy seeks to see what tools are used in the process; strategic communication and strategic management process cover who, how and why in the process; collaboration is seen as the ideal outcome of all these processes. Thus, I will see how by executing strategic management process cross-departmental collaboration can be achieved and how individual actors engage with it and on what it depends.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section gives my considerations in terms of theory and philosophy of science which I followed through my whole project. My aim is to investigate how the British Embassy in Sofia integrates strategic communication in order to enable collaboration between different departments. The problem is ongoing as it is in the context of Brexit and everything which is happening is dynamic and changing. Thus, this context is taken into account especially in the chapter concerned with collecting and analyzing the data which is described later in the project. The chapter is also concerned with my research design and applied methods.

Every research tool or process is inextricably embedded in commitments to particular version of the world and ways of knowing that world made by the researcher using them (Hughes, 1987). Therefore, it is important to every researcher to define the stance which will be followed throughout the project. A paradigm is a basic belief system that includes ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My choice is motivated both by the nature and the purpose of the problem as well as my pre-knowledge and experience. As an author I have my pre-understanding coming from my background, experience, and knowledge. I am a former journalist and both in my practice and academic experience I have

always been driven by curiosity of exploring a particular phenomenon in depth, details and a respectful manner to different views, perspectives and contexts. As I am currently part of the organization which is subject of the project, I am even more inspired to get a better understanding and insight in relation to my research question.

### *My ontological considerations*

“The ontological perspective in social research seeks to answer the question what is the form and the nature of reality, and therefore, what is there that can be known about it” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). Thus, for my project I found that the social constructivist paradigm is the most relevant as I want to find an answer of how the concept of strategic communication is integrated and understood in a specific context by a particular people and what decision are undertaken for achieving common goals.

The constructivist stance argues that the world is constructed by social interactions. This paradigm corresponds with the main idea of the current paper – to understand the world in a particular social context and how people interpret and understand the world around them. As I already mentioned, the context in which the phenomenon is developing, is dynamic, and it is important to see how social actors are perceiving it in different situations of interacting. Furthermore, this paradigm gives the chance to investigate how the different entities within the studied social phenomenon construct their knowledge in an interactive mode. Namely, construction of knowledge is underlined as main concern for scholars - how knowledge emerges and how it comes to have significance for society (Berger & Luckman, 1966). They view knowledge as created by interactions of individuals within society which is central to this stance. A constructivist worldview appears applicable as knowledge is sustained through social process which means that people construct their knowledge in the interaction with other people. Therefore, different kinds of communication and social interactions are of great interest to a social constructionist (Burr, 1995, p. 3).

It is important to bear in mind that difference in culture, geographical background might influence social actors' meaning and social construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This concerns

of this paradigm serves the need of the project - to gain multiple views on the problem. A deep understanding of people's view on the nature of their work is a valuable contribution to my work because I want to know the different factors which are influencing these perceptions such as type of communication and manager's approach, commitment, structure, etc. This stance is embedded through the whole paper and shaped all the decisions made in terms of research design and applied methods discussed later in the chapter.

### *My epistemological considerations*

“The epistemological question is what is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.109). In terms of epistemology I embedded the stance of interpretivism. I already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter that every participant in this project has its own pre-understanding as well as factors which influence behaviour, understanding, and contribution to the paper. Therefore, I think that by using this perspective I can answer what can be known for the problem I examine with the clear idea that the gained knowledge is constructed in a particular context and factors.

Considering the epistemological perspective, very often it is debated by opposing interpretivism and positivism. Positivism advocates that knowledge is arrived through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws and science must be conducted in a way that is value free or in other words objective (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). Contrary to that, interpretivism seeks to understand the world. The term subsumes the views of writers who have been critical of the application of the scientific model to the study of the social world and who have been influenced by different intellectual traditions (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). They share a view that the subject matter of the social sciences - people and their institutions - is fundamentally different from that of the natural science. The study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order (ibid). As positivism is concerned with explaining human behaviour, the interpretivism seeks to understand it in an emphatic manner. Thus, for the purpose of my research I embedded the stance of interpretivism because I aim at understanding the phenomenon of how the British Embassy in Sofia integrates strategic communication in order to enable collaboration between departments in the context of

Brexit. It is relevant also because of the focus on the values of the social actors which means that this stance gives subjective perspective on the world by showing how people interpret the world. Main focus of the study are members of the embassy who are involved in the process of communicating post-Brexit messages in Bulgaria in accordance with the British Government policies. This refers back to my ontological perspective of social constructivist explained at the beginning of the chapter which argues that social world is constructed by interactions between individuals. This secures the logic of my research by providing approach under the same paradigm which seeks to understand the world by examining social processes, people-to-people interactions and their interpretation and understanding of the world.

### *Inductive reasoning*

In my project I apply inductive reasoning in terms of theory. With inductive reasoning I refer to a process where the starting point is the observation of a phenomenon. Specific patterns and regularities might be found leading to some tentative hypotheses. In the end this may become generalized to conclusions of theories. Even though the interest towards the problem was inspired by personal observations and experience, a detailed literature review was made. As I mentioned I am currently working for the British Embassy and I observed different interactions, processes which inspired me and gave me more specific direction of my interest in examining the case.

It is important to stress that inductive approach does not imply disregarding theories when formulating research questions and objectives. This approach aims to generate meanings from the data set collected in order to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory; however, inductive approach does not prevent the researcher from using existing theory to formulate the research question to be explored (Saunders et al., 2012). This is worth noting especially in later phase of the project. When it comes to explaining my methods, collecting and analyzing the data, it should be clear that even though I am not theory-driven in this process, I cannot ignore theories. For example, in my analysis of the data while doing the coding of the transcription I will not try to do it into a pre-existing coding frame, or my analytical preconceptions. However, it is important to note that researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and

epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.12). For instance, when preparing the interview-guide I was bearing in mind all the relevant documents and literature I revised beforehand. Thus, the theory helped me to build overall understanding of the context of my problem. This is essential especially due to the nature of the problem - Brexit is still new area and there is little done on it but previous studies and government documents helped me to understand better what is the approach after the referendum. The theoretical considerations are very applicable in the discussion part when I have my final findings. In this part I will have the potential to see how the conclusions regarding my case are matching in the big picture so I can make more critical reflections on them.

As the main aim of the current study is to explore and understand, it does not intend to test theories but mostly to build and develop existing ones by examining the particular case. This suits the nature of the case study design which is applied as it differs from others in term of seeking to achieve both more complex and fuller explanations of the phenomena (De Vaus, 2001). The research design is discussed further in the following part of this chapter. The inductive reasoning also fits the choice of qualitative approach in the project. As a whole the purpose of the study is to learn more about the problem and inductive reasoning catalyses this process by increasing my knowledge. “The inductive reasoning cannot yield an absolutely certain conclusion but it can increase human knowledge” (All things nittany).

### *Research design*

Research design is an important part of social research. “Social research needs a design or a structure before the data collection or analysis can commence. A research design is not just a work plan. A work plan will flow from the project’s research design. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible” (De Vaus, 2001, p. 8). In other words, any research design can use any type of data collection even though very often cross-sectional surveys are frequently equated with questionnaires and case studies are often equated with participant observations (De Vaus, 2001). Thus, in this section I will refer to a research design as the structure of my project and the logic behind it. It is not a problem of the research design how the data will be collected. The

applied methods will be discussed afterwards. According to Bryman and Bell (2012) a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The central role of research design comes from its influence on decisions made throughout the whole process of the research. “It is suitable for retaining a holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as small groups’ behaviour, organizational and managerial processes etc.” (Yin, 2009, p.4). In this section, I address the sampling of the units within the study, the case itself and how it will help me to answer the research question as well as how I secure my data.

My research design is single case study - the case of the British Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria. A case is chosen either because it is critical, unique, revelatory, or exemplifying in that it will provide a suitable context for the research questions to be answered and allow the researcher to examine key social processes (Yin, 2003; Bryman, 2004).

It is widely debated that the results from single case study cannot be generalize but they are representative for the case in hand and they can tested later on for another case. According to De Vaus (2001), since the purpose of case study is not to generalize to a wider sample of cases there is little point in trying to find a typical case. Furthermore, the gained comprehensive knowledge about the case could be used as a contribution to an existing theories. Mainly, this is the embedded approach for the paper – understanding the case and contribute to existing theories by using the inductive reasoning which gives significant knowledge about the studied phenomenon.

Case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (ibid, p. 23). All these arguments in favour of case study are relevant to my choice for this case. First of all, I am currently working in the organisation in question and therefore, I have the opportunity to know better the context of the examined social phenomenon. I am interested in tracking processes such as communication, collaboration etc. Thus, being present and close to the subjects of the study is of a great importance. What is more,

in the context of Brexit the global strategy of the British government is making a big turn in policy and decision making. The British Embassy in Sofia has the difficult task to adapt all the decisions from London and implement them in the Bulgarian context. Thus, the research is conducted in very dynamic environment - process are ongoing and it is very difficult to catch up with all the developments. To secure the data that I will use for my analysis, at the end of this chapter I will outline the quality criteria for interpreting the data. This will be described in the section with the applied methods on page 42.

There is no formula when to apply and how to develop case study design. “The challenge comes from the lack of comprehensive ‘catalog’ of research designs for case studies” (Yin, 2009, p.20). One of the condition for choosing case study design is ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions which seek to understand how or why social phenomenon works as well as require an extensive and in-depth description of the phenomenon. This refers back to my considerations in terms of philosophy of science. Case study emphasises an understanding of the whole case and seeing the case within its wider context which is essential for my project. I do not investigate members of the organization as a separate units of analysis but trying to understand the connections between them instead.

The selection of the case was mainly inspired by my experience as I was working in the embassy before start writing the project. “The strategic selection of cases means that the researchers know something of the characteristics of a case before the case study proper begins. Since cases are selected because they meet particular requirements (as opposed to being randomly selected) something about each case should be known. This may require extensive case screening before actual cases are finally selected” (De Vaus, 2001, p.239). I did investigation of the context and the case itself before deciding on my research question. By doing that I gained knowledge about the case and formulate the problem based on that. I also did a literature review so I can have holistic view on the phenomenon. The strategic case selection is also securing the external validity of the findings in terms of generalizability as Flyvbjerg (2006) argues.

It is important to know the units of the research which are another focal element of the research design. “It is the unit of analysis about which we collect information. In case study designs it is the unit that we seek to understand as a whole” (De Vaus, 2001, p. 220). In my project the

selected unit of research is the British Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria. It is embedded research design which means that not only the organisation as a whole will be examined but also individual subunits such as organisation members. This will provide multiple views and perspectives on the examined problem which is central to the holistic idea of my project.

Another important element of research design is to impose a set of quality criteria for securing the data. The study adopted case research design by taking into considerations its strengths and weaknesses. Thus, I encounter different criteria to secure my data and answer the research question through the process of data collection and analysis.

“We need to be confident that the research design can sustain the casual conclusions that we claim for it. The capacity of a research design to do this reflects its internal validity” (De Vaus, 2001, p.27). As it was mentioned above repeatedly main purpose of the project is to investigate in deep the problem from multiple perspective. This is one of the main advantages of the case study. The project includes the views of more than one entities within the organization in question and this provides various views on the problem which is crucial for the quality. As one of my main concepts is collaboration between departments this choice serves the need for securing the validity of the data as I will see how different people interpret the concept. I will have the view of the person who is in charge when it comes to communication tactics and activities as well as the people who actually work for fulfilling the goals of them.

External validity refers to the extent to which results from a study can be generalized beyond the particular study (De Vaus, 2001, p. 29). According to the author a study may have good internal validity but its value is limited if the findings only apply to the people in that particular investigation. Thus, the critical question here is whether the results are likely to apply more widely. In this case, I argue that due to the specific context of my problem, the investigation can be replicated. For example, British Embassies from Central and Eastern Europe are dealing with the same problem - Brexit and how to align with the British Government policies and plans. Therefore, the same research design can be tested in different environment and context but still exploring the same question. The findings can help the British Government in exploring its weaknesses and strengths for the particular region, for instance. Furthermore, “case studies enjoy

a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature. They are ‘understood to comprise the first line of evidence’ (Gerring, 2007 , p. 99).

As Flyvbjerg (2006) argues strategic case selection can greatly add to the generalizability of the case study. Still, the main purpose of the project is to understand the case and the final report can open doors for further research as already mentioned. As Johanson (2003) argues the case might be given and studied with an intrinsic interest in the case as such and then the researcher has no interest in generalizing the findings. If generalization happens, this is done by the audiences through “naturalistic generalization”.

Discussing how naturalistic generalizations enable the reader to achieve personal understandings, Lincoln and Guba’s 1985 work noted that this form of generalization builds on readers’ tacit knowledge. In Lincoln and Guba’s view, naturalistic generalizations permit detailed probing of an instance in question rather than mere surface description. As readers consider the in-depth particulars described in case studies, they may view similar circumstances in their lives with new empathy and intentionality. This can be beneficial to the British Government in future decision making process regarding communication. As it was mentioned

Reliability and construct validity are mainly considered during the process of data collection. As a way of ensuring that the findings and subsequent discussion is trustworthy, or reliable as known from quantitative research, Bryman (2008) proposes that the entire research process should be properly documented and that these records are accessible. Regarding this study, the data collection has been sufficiently documented, by means of audio recordings. Moreover, these recordings along with the entirety of relevant and irrelevant notes, transcripts, interview guides, drafts, etc., are saved and stored in an online drive. They will be also included as appendixes at the end of the project. The emphasis is not on replicating the results of one case by doing another case (Yin, 2009). The aim of reliability is to minimize errors in a study.

## *Applied methods*

In this part of the project, I will talk about the methods which I will use in order to answer my research question. I will provide arguments why I have chosen to semi-structured interviews and how they are relevant to my problem and overall approach in this project.

## *Qualitative approach*

As I am trying to understand particular phenomenon in a specific context, I need to apply methods which are ensuring I can get the deepest insight of actors' behaviour, view and attitudes. Thus, the methods I am applying are qualitative. "Most obviously qualitative research tends to be concerned with words rather than numbers" (Bryman, 2012, p.380). The author notes other features associated with the qualitative nature of the research. In terms of theory qualitative research is characterised with inductive approach; the epistemological position is described as interpretivist where the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Last but not least, ontologically the research is seen through the constructionist perspective which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomenon "out there" and separate from rate from those involved in its construction.

Silverman (1993) argues that the advantage of qualitative research is that it recognizes the inherently subjective nature of social relationships. People construe other's behaviour through their own subjective lens of perception, and the others' behaviour, too, is framed within their own subjective and discursive frame of reference. All these arguments are in favor of my choice using qualitative methods in investigating the case of the British Embassy in Sofia.

In particularly, I will conduct semi-structured interviews. This method will help me to build holistic and multiple picture of the problem so I can answer my research question. Therefore, the applied methods and the data extracted from them are seen as sufficient resource purposely collected by me. According to Rapley's categorization (2011) "sources of 'data' can be divided into two categories: data that you have to generate and data that already exists. By that I mean to contrast, say, a research interview you conduct on the topic of genetic disease with, say, a

newspaper article on genetic disease” (ibid, p.2). He gives the following example: the newspaper article, on the face of it, exists independently of your action whereas the research interview exists only due to your action. So we could divide the potential sources of data into these two categories, researcher-generated and already existing data. Unsurprisingly, the author has more active role when it comes to the former category and reasonably ‘passive’ or ‘neutral’ in relation to the latter. The data from the interviews is researcher-generated data as I conducted them for the purpose of the research with representatives of the different teams from the British Embassy in Sofia. The interviews are planned as semi-structured because this method leaves the door open for more elaborations and interpretations both from the interviewer and the interviewee. Here are included the Communication and press-officer, representative of different sections and head of departments. By doing the interviews I aim at finding out how the image of the organization is perceived and how different members collaborate in terms of the common communication goals in the context of Brexit. On one hand, the paper is concerned with the question what is the role of the Communication and Press Officer which is responsible for the social media coverage of all the events of the embassy and the overall communication strategy. On the other hand, the staff is more familiar with the background information of the events and should provide what is necessary for the social media coverage in question. Therefore, collaboration is needed if the organization wants the message to be delivered successfully and to fulfil the objectives of the organization. This topic is extremely interesting in the post-Brexit context because the UK wants to remain a great place and have strong presence and image in the European countries.

### *Sampling of the interviewees*

For the purpose of the project four semi-structured interviews are conducted. The sample of people is based on the job objectives and it covers people from different departments who are in one way or another engaged in communicating the messages of the organization. The working mode is driven mainly by the Communication and press officer who targets other staff members prior to their main work objectives. For instance, in the Trade department, one of the trade advisor is playing the role of communication mediator. Thus, this is the person to ask for when it comes to communicating different messages. Therefore, the sampling is made intentionally in accordance with the research questions. The interviewees and their job titles are as follows:

Nikolay Kolev - Communication and press officer

Joana Bachovska – EU and foreign affairs

Teodora Maneva - Vice consul

Rozalina Ayrakova - Senior Trade Advisor

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Interviews are interactive and thus, interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into any emerging topics. Hence, interviewing is expected to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool and this is why I chose this method. According to Kvale (1996) an interview is “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee” with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the ‘described phenomena’ (ibid, p. 174). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) any type of interview inquiry involves seven different stages such as thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing analyzing, verifying, and reporting. In this section I will focus in depth on the process of designing, interviewing and transcribing. The phase of thematizing was completed at the beginning of the research as this stage is concerned with clarifying the purpose of the study and obtaining pre-knowledge about the problem (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Designing the study is an important phase as it includes different elements such as sampling the interviewees, interview-guide. Namely, after choosing the interviewees, I started preparing the questions for the interviews. “An interview guide is a script that structures the course of the interview more or less tightly. The guide may merely contain some topics to be covered or it can be a detailed sequence of carefully worded questions” (Kvale, p.57). For the semi-structured type of interview discussed here, the guide will include an outline of topics to be covered, with suggested questions. As my endeavour is to explore people’s understanding about particular phenomenon, I prepared open questions. I referred to my main concepts discussed both in the literature review and the theoretical chapter as well as using my pre-understanding based on direct observations. The questions are divided in two groups - more general and problem-

specific. For example, I have questions related to the concept of digital diplomacy, strategic communication and collaboration. You can see the interview guide in *Appendix 1*.

When the interview guide was ready I sent it to the participants. All of them were familiar with my project in advance as I discussed it with them at very initial stage of the working process. I did that because I wanted to examine a phenomenon which is important for the people involved in the process and this would help me later on to clarify the meaning of the concepts in the project. “Interviewers who know what they are asking about and why they are asking, will attempt to clarify the meanings relevant to the project during the interview. Such attempts at disambiguation of interviewees' statements will provide a more secure ground for the later analysis” (Kvale, 2007, p.14). This also can ensure a comfort during the interview as the interviewee can feel that the interviewer is listening to him/her while trying to clear the meaning of what has been said. What is more, it also helps me to prepare more-specific to the problem questions and thus to shorten the time of interviewing. Due to time limitation of the project this was extremely essential. As I mentioned the processes around Brexit are in progress and I tried to conduct the interviews as late as possible so the participants in the project to have as much clearance on the context as possible. The interviews were conducted in the last week of April, 2017.

Next in my process was interviewing itself. First, I arranged the interviews - how, where, and when by having a separate conversation face to face with every participant. Three of the interviews were conducted face to face in a quiet room in the building of the British Embassy in Sofia. One of them was sent in written form from the participant due to unavailability in this period. This is Interviewee 4. They were all in English even though the participants are Bulgarians. The approximate length of the interviews was 15 minutes and conducted as an open conversation following the main themes from the interview-guide. I used recording device but making notes during the conversations. I was writing down mainly notes regarding body language such as face expressions, hand position etc. I think this was helpful for the next phase of transcribing the data and in the analysis later on.

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed them word for word manually. This is an important for the thematic analysis which will be done in the following chapter. I read several times the full

transcriptions in details and doing notes at the same time. I found this useful because every time I was reading the texts I was detecting new nuances and themes. While reading the transcription I was going back and forth my problem formulation and theoretical underpinnings.

A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level (Kvale, 1996). Interview data is inherently qualitative in nature - it does not capture objective facts as such, but rather contains the social reality of the interviewee; the data explicitly reflects the values of the interviewee. As such, analysis is more involved; the researcher does not try to detach themselves from the data but actively immerses themselves in it (Neuman, 2006).

By doing this, I will manage to get deep understanding of how the strategic communication is integrated by the Communication and Press officer in Sofia and perceived by other people involved in the process. It will also show how people are engaged with this process and what is the main motivation or obstacle for that.

### *Thematic Analysis*

The method of analysis which I chose for my research is a qualitative approach of thematic analysis of the data retrieved from the interviews. In this section is the analysis, verification and reporting. In this section I will discuss how I cultivated the data retrieved from the semi-structured interviews and compressed it into themes relevant to the problem. These themes will be analysed one by one, going back and forth the data, combine and compare different themes in order to see how interviewees construct them in terms of meaning, facts and understanding.

Generally, thematic analysis is the most widely used qualitative approach to analysing interviews. The conceptual framework of the thematic analysis for my interviews was mainly built upon the theoretical positions of Braun and Clarke (2006). According to them, thematic analysis is a method used for 'identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998 in Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The reason I chose this method was that 'rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). In addition, this approach complemented the research questions by facilitating an investigation of the interview data from two perspectives: first, from a data-driven perspective and a perspective based on coding in an inductive way; second from the research question perspective to check if the data were consistent with the research questions and providing sufficient information.

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis. It is used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis 1998). Thematic analysis is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations. It provides a systematic element to data analysis. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content. This will confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the research's whole meaning. Qualitative research requires understanding and collecting diverse aspects and data. Namely, this is the aim of my work.

Thematic analysis allows the researcher to determine precisely the relationships between concepts and compare them with the replicated data. By using thematic analysis there is the possibility to link the various concepts and opinions of the learners and compare these with the data that has been gathered in different situation at different times during the project. All possibilities for interpretation are possible. Regarding the purpose of my project, this is seen as a big advantage of this method. For example, I can see how the Vice consul perceives collaboration from one perspective and then oppose it to the senior trade advisor. Furthermore, I have the opportunity to understand the concept of commitment and collaboration through different factors such as management approach, for instance. In this type of analysis the data can be displayed and classified according to its similarities and differences (Miles & Huberman 1994). In order to achieve the above, the process should include coding, categorisation and noting patterns, i.e. different level of themes could be provide (Braun & Clarke 2006), also to provide a relationship between the variables and factors in order to create a reasonable and logical chain of evidence (Creswell 2009; Braun & Clarke 2006; Miles & Huberman 1994). For the purpose of my project, some variables such as structure of teams, job objectives, commitment, are very significant. For instance, by analyzing how different participants perceive

their own role in the process of communication, I can track similarities and mismatch and see connections between them.

My thematic analysis is based on the six phased model suggested by Clarke and Braun (2006). In the following paragraphs I will outline the stages I went through in order to conduct my analysis. In the next section - The analysis these phases will be described in details.

Phases of the thematic analysis according to Clarke and Braun (2006) are:

1. The first phase of the analysis is familiarizing with the data. Here the main element is transcription. However, thematic analysis, even constructionist thematic analysis, does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as conversation, discourse or even narrative analysis. As there is no one way to conduct thematic analysis, there is no one set of guidelines to follow when producing a transcript. However, at a minimum it requires a rigorous and thorough „orthographic“ transcript – a „verbatim“ account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal [e.g., coughs]) utterances (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.17). The authors emphasis on this phase opposing that this is not waste of time as it gives significant initial understanding of the data which is useful later on in the analysis of the data.
2. The second stage is generating the initial codes from the data. It is important to refer back to the inductive reasoning discussed on p. 36 of this chapter as this is emphasised also by Clarke and Braun in their guidelines for doing thematic analysis. “Coding will to some extent depend on whether the themes are more „data-driven“ or „theory-driven“ – in the former, the themes will depend on the data, but in the latter, you might approach the data with specific questions in mind that you wish to code around” (Clarke & Braun 2006, p. 18).
3. Next phase of the process of thematic analysis is to detect the themes which are relevant to the research question but they are defined based on the available data. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, p. 10). Furthermore, the „keyness“ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures – but in terms of whether it captures something important in

relation to the overall research question. This phase, which re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. Essentially, you are starting to analyse your codes, and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme as described by Clarke and Braun in their model.

4. Reviewing the themes according to Clarke and Braun (2006) involves two levels. The first level involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts. The purpose of this is to see if the different codes under the theme form patterns or they prove to be inconsistent. In the latter case, the codes identified for candidate theme can be moved around another theme or crossed out accordingly the purpose of the researcher. According to the authors if codes and themes match and form coherent pattern, the researcher can move to the second level. "Level two involves a similar process, but in relation to the entire data set. At this level, you consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether your candidate thematic map „accurately“ reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole" (Clarke & Braun, 2006, p.21). At the end of this phase, you should have a fairly good idea of what your different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data.
5. Afterwards, the researcher can move on to defining and naming the themes. Here the authors mean to extract the essence of every theme as well as the themes overall. It also should depict what aspect of the data each theme captures. Here every theme should analysed detailed but not too much because the process includes going back and forth to collated data extracts for each theme, and organising them into a coherent and internally consistent account with accompanying narrative. It is not an aim to paraphrase the content of the data. The purpose is to tell the story each theme tells as well as the overall story in relation to the research question.
6. Producing the report is the final phase where it is important to tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis. Choose particularly vivid examples, or extracts which capture the essence of the point you are demonstrating, without unnecessary complexity. The extract should be easily identifiable as an example of the issue. However, your write-up needs to do more

than just provide data. Extracts need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story that you are telling about your data, and your analytic narrative needs to go beyond description of the data, and make an argument in relation to your research question (Clarke & Braun, 2006).

## **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

In this chapter I am going to present the analysis of my data collected from four interviews with representatives of the British Embassy in Sofia. The analysis is conducted as a thematic analysis. I will describe every stage of the process, then analyse every extracted theme in relation to the problem formulation and then discuss the overall story of my data.

I will go back and forth the collected data in order to track what are individuals' perceptions on strategic communication and collaboration in terms of social media activities in the context of Brexit. By doing that I aim at answering my research question and sub-questions which are focused exactly on how people within the case are engaged in the process of collaboration and how it is reinforced by strategic communication. It is also of an interest of my study what is the role of the Communication and press officer in implementing strategic communication process and other people involved in it. For the purpose of the project strategic communication is understood as an ongoing process where particular strategic decisions, activities, tactics are main components. They are all undertaken by the Communication and press officer as well as other staff involved in the process of delivering central and local content. The former is defined by the British Government whereas the latter is tailored according to the local context and audience but still in coherence with the overall narrative of the Government.

As I already discussed in the methodology chapter, for the analysis I will follow Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for doing a thematic analysis. I think this model is clear and well-structured for the purpose of my project. For example, in every phase before the actual analysis there is an element of revising the available data. I believe this is extremely important in order to understand my participants' messages and interpretations.

I started my analysis by familiarizing with the data which I gathered from the conducted semi-structured interviews. Between this process and the actual interviewing there was a period of around two weeks. Therefore, this phase was fundamental because I had four interviews and the duration of each is approximately 15 minutes. One of the interviewee wanted to answer the questions in written form due to unlimited time. This is interviewee 4. But I applied the same approach in operating and analysing the data in order the process to be consistent. I had big amount of data so I read the the full transcriptions of every interview (*Available in Appendix 2,3, 4, and 5*) twice and making notes in a while. For example, I was writing down relevant and related to the problem formulation expressions or just words. This gave me an essential insight into the data along with the notes I was doing during the interviews. Meanwhile, I was going back to the time of the actual interviews and thinking about the participants' behaviour while talking about various subjects.

Afterwards, I started with the second stage of my analysis - generating initial codes. My project is data-driven but I also beared in mind available analysis and theories in the research area. When generating the initial codes I was driven by the data itself but the knowledge I gained beforehand was also needed to understand in the right way the participants. For example, as I mentioned in the introduction, I familiarized myself with documents of the British Government which are related to the big strategy of the UK in terms of communication as well as Brexit. Therefore, I had the big picture in my head. My main interest is to see how the British Embassy in Sofia operates as part of the Government and integrates its policies locally.

I did the coding separately for every transcription. I decided to do this manually. I created a table in Microsoft Office Word document with three columns: the number of question, the answer of the interviewee or the data item, and in the third column I put initially generated codes. Reading carefully the transcriptions I highlighted every expressions or word which I found related to the problem or somehow important to the overall research area. Most of the codes were related to entire expressions instead of single words. On Fig. 4 is a screenshot of an extract of the table to visualise the process of coding. In *Appendix 6, 7, 8, and 9* you can see the coding process for all interviews. When I had the initial codes I read again the transcriptions and discover some new codes. When reading again the codes I was paying attention to repetitions, correlations, and differences between the codes extracted from all interviews. For instance, when I was going

through the initial codes again, I saw that there is an interesting aspect in terms of collaboration in two of the participants. Interviewee 1 and 3 discuss the concept of commitment as a factor for collaboration but in different context. Therefore, initially I did not notice this element because Interviewee 3 discusses it in terms of challenges whereas Interviewee 1 - in terms of organizational structure and collaboration as shared effort. Both participants stressed out that personal commitment is extremely important for the success of working together. Initially, I did not see this as a common code but after I reconsider the context and meaning which is constructed by participants, I realized this is crucial and I highlighted it. It was very important to read the transcripts several times and pay more attention to these details. This way of extracting initial codes was helpful for the next stage - searching for themes.

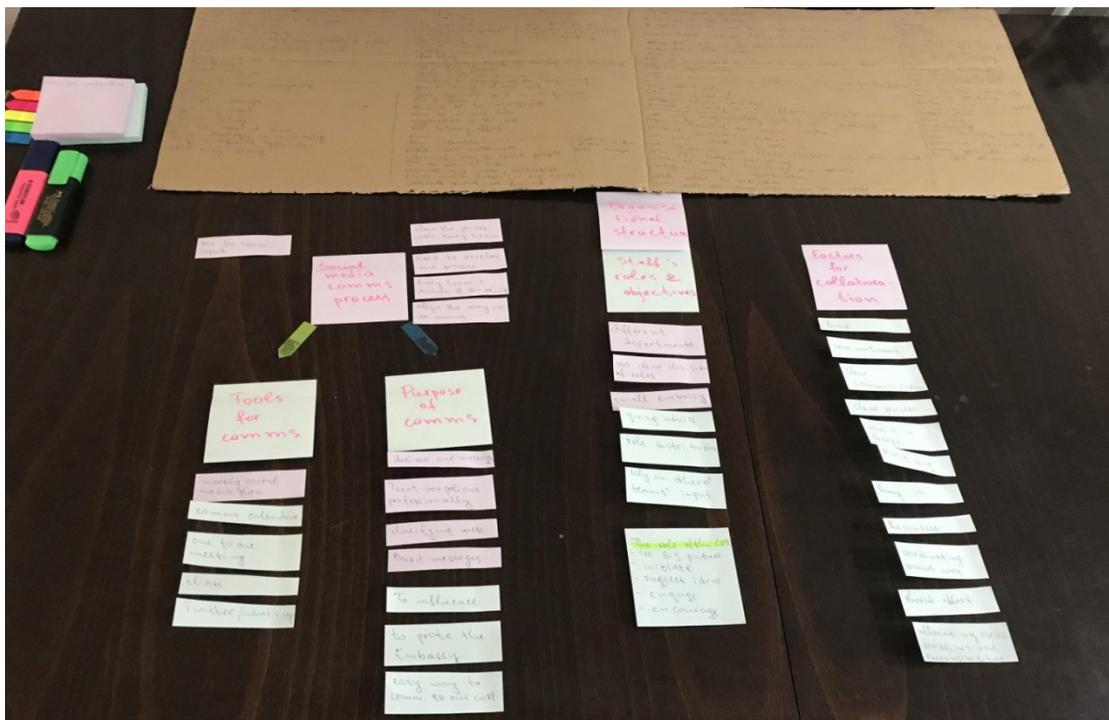
Figure 4. Coding of data

Nikolay Kolev, Communication and Press Officer  
Interview conducted on 26th April, 2017

Question	Data item	Initial codes
1	I believe it's changed, changed diplomacy a whole a lot. I think it become more public facing, (am) more accountable to the public and in a way (...) more influential to the regular people that diplomats would have been traditionally exposed to as much. And (...) I even think a few years back in the university I had a course about diplomacy which mentioned this brand new thing which was amazing - digital diplomacy. And even that was a few years back things have changed so much since then constantly is changing the way it works now.	Benefits Transformation Ongoing process Concepts Descriptions
2	It's very big, it's hard to put a percentage but maybe it's roughly about at least the third of the work that we do in the comms team. (Am) (...) it's definitely very important to us because it's the way to communicate directly with the public whether that is Bulgarians or British nationals. (Am), and we believe it's a way in which we can tell the public directly what we want to tell them and it is an opportunity for us to innovate and also to do, to deliver our messages well. So, (am) it's definitely something very important for us.	Applicability Usage Work Goals Importance Opportunity

The process of searching for themes started by going back and forth the initial codes which I identified from all interviews and combined them in different configurations. I started grouping them based on similarities and relevance both according to the data and the problem formulation. The process was conducted manually by creating different charts and graphics on paper. I ended up with seven themes and then start thinking about what is the overall story and if they match or some of them should be changed or combined. After doing that, I reduced my themes to five. When I cleared better the idea of my themes, I wrote them on separate notes and stick it to a big wooden table. Under every candidate theme, I put relevant codes from all transcriptions. For instance, initially I saw that all participants elaborate on keys for collaboration. I created this theme and put initial codes such as planning, time, clear process etc. Then I went through the transcriptions again and noticed that all interviewee discuss factors for collaboration with different nuance so I decided this theme is suitable for the purpose of my study. Here I used the notes about commitment from the previous phase. Firstly, I thought to have this as a separate theme but then I realized that it should be grouped in one theme with other factors for collaboration. This process helped me to see the overall story of my themes and how they can help to answer the research question. Figure 5 visualises part of this process.

Figure 5. Searching for themes



Then I started the fourth phase - revising the themes in order to see if they are exhaustive enough. For example, at some point I had five themes but after more detailed thinking, I included two of the themes as sub-themes to a bigger theme - social media communication process. The two sub-themes I decided to include are tools for communication and purpose of the communication. Initially, I had separate theme called digital diplomacy but then it was incorporated in the big theme of social media communication process. The argument behind this decision is how the concept of digital diplomacy was embraced in this paper – to explain what the different communication tools are used as well as digital capability as mentioned on p. 33 at the end of the theoretical considerations.

I was driven by the idea to have clear division of the composite elements of this concept because it is central to my problem. As I mentioned strategic communication is seen as process where particular tools, activities and purpose are established. By doing this, I believe I would have more holistic ground for analysing the data later. For instance, participants referred to communication process on different levels in terms of social media. It can be drawn the conclusion that tools refer mainly to internal level of communication whereas in purpose interviewee referred both to internal and external purpose of social media communication process. The overall process of communication is also important because the context of Brexit gives complex angle of the problem at hand.

After detecting my possible themes, I created tables for each of them again in Microsoft Office Word document (*Available in Appendix 10*). The columns included extracts from each interview in accordance to the theme. I made this in order to see where there are patterns between the different themes when participants discuss them. For example, one of my themes is digital ownership. I started reading every transcription again and looking at the codes I was including them in the Word table under this theme. The expressions varies but they all have in common because show participants' attitude towards it. For instance, I have the following expressions from different interviewees: “social media side, he is leading, so I am not involved” (*Appendix 8*), “I find myself as a person that can support the Ambassador” (*Appendix 7*), “it is relatively small embassy and small comms team, so I am fully relying on other people to help me out” (*Appendix 6*). At the same time while working on this phase I noticed something very interesting. While some participants are very certain about their role in the process demonstrating that by

using expressions as “my role” and “my team” in terms of responsibilities others express high level of uncertainty by saying “I am not sure what my role is” and “not really sure structure-wise how this works” in the same context. Therefore, this way of presenting the data cleared the idea of my themes and helped me to see the story they tell.

Creating these tables was also helpful later on for the phase of analyzing the themes because I already had the codes for each theme. I was also going back to the whole transcription and my notes I was doing during the interviews. This was very important because sometimes there were important moments during the conversation. For example, while interviewing participant 3, there were several moments of laughing mainly when sharing more critical view on the work of the organisation so it was important to use my notes.

The next stage of the thematic analysis was to define and name the themes which I will analyse. I ended up with three big themes - factors for collaboration; digital ownership; and social media communication process. Below they are described in details. It is important to be able to define the scope of every theme and how different themes are connected between each other and to the problem formulation.

***Factors for collaboration*** - under this theme I have collected what participants see as key factors for collaboration. It is in terms of both successful and failed. This theme is essential to the main idea of the project because the factors are something that may need to be integrated or something which is available. In both cases, it will help me to understand the problem in depth. I see my themes as complementary and thus during the analysis I will track links and dependencies between them. I see this theme as central to the overall story of my data because I want to see how strategic communication enable collaboration in the case of the British Embassy. Foremost, I need to know what is collaboration for the people part of this organization.

***Digital ownership*** - the theme covers participant’s interpretations on their own role in the process of communication in terms of collaboration as well as other other staff members’ in the working process. Here important aspect are how the role of the Communication and press officer is perceived in terms of strategic communication strategic communication in delivering post-Brexit messages in Bulgaria. This theme is related to the second sub-question posed in order to

answer the problem formulation which is concerned namely with the role of the CPO and how he coordinates the work between departments.

***Social media communication process*** with two sub-themes 1) tools for communication and 2) purpose of the communication. The overall theme covers the process of communication in the embassy and how it is perceived by participants. In the context of the project it will show to what extent people are on the same page regarding it. This is one of the main elements of strategic communication - common goal and objectives. Under this theme are the tools which are used in the embassy for communication in terms of delivering messages on Facebook and Twitter. The second sub-theme covers how different participants define the purpose of the social media communication in their work. This sub-theme is essential because depending on how people see the social media to some extent define their engagement and attitude. This theme is closely related to the third sub-question which seeks to investigate how departments engage with the strategic communication when delivering messages on Facebook and Twitter.

Based on the analysis of these themes I will be able to answer to my first sub-question posed to the problem formulation – How does the British Embassy in Sofia align with the British Government’s policy locally which is related to all themes. Respectively, the story of my overall analysis will help me to answer the main research question - How does strategic communication is integrated to enable cross-departmental collaboration in the context of Brexit.

When defining the themes I already had clear idea what they cover and what the different participants refer to when talking about them. Therefore, I had beforehand the overall story of my data. I see the theme factors for collaboration central to my analysis. First of all, it gives frame of the concept of collaboration for every participant. Secondly, it helps to explain the others themes. For example, factors can be classified in two categories - the ones related to the human factor such as organizational structure, objectives, and roles. The other ones lead to the context and the available resources and how people use them. On the other hand they are also dependable on the human factor such as commitment. Thus, it is inevitable to interlink this theme to digital ownership which covers roles, responsibilities and objectives.

For better understanding of the reader I will discuss every theme separately and afterwards I will analyse them altogether to see correlations and differences between them. The analysis is

structured on the principle of comparing the different interpretations of the interviewees in terms of the extracted themes. The final aim is to see how the participants perceive strategic communication and to what extent it stimulate cross-collaboration between departments.

For the purpose of the analysis I will refer to the participants as Interviewee 1, 2, 3 and 4 when quoting and presenting their views. The quoting will be referred to the number of the interviewee as well as number of appendix and line of the quote as it is in the appendices. For example (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 3, l. 15-17*). When using longer quotes, I will refer to them as Exerpts with continuous numbers within the text. I will also separate them from the actual text. I believe this helps to navigate the reader and make the understanding clearer. It is also helpful for me as I will have immediate access to the important quotes in the text which is important when discussing the findings from the analysis.

### ***Factors for collaboration***

Collaboration is not something that can be framed clearly conceptual without bearing in mind specific context and factors. Thus, I have separate theme under which I will analyse factors for collaboration for the case of the British Embassy in Sofia. This theme covers very important aspect of the investigated problem and all the participants are very clear and precise about their view. My main endeavour is to investigate the process of collaboration in terms of social media engagement in the context of Brexit.

The first thing which I noticed when I started analysing this theme was that all participants refer to collaboration as a result of shared process in one way or another. For example interviewee 1 is the one who elaborates the most on this factor. Here is worth noting that he is perceiving collaboration from the role of Communication and press officer which is the main player in the process of collaboration in terms of social media and how it is communicated around the Embassy. This can be seen in interview with interviewee 1 (Excerpt 1):

*Excerpt 1 (Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 102-103).*

*“I believe it is very much about initially having a very clear process. So, outlining where the lines of responsibilities are. I believe it is also down to good planning.”*

Afterwards, the participant elaborates more by saying that it is a “reciprocal efforts” , “getting the right information from teams” and “shared effort we try to establish”. Therefore, the interviewee talks about factors for collaboration as a common process where all people are responsible for the success. He also stresses out himself as a factor by saying: “..but it is also much about coordinating comms work around the embassy” (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 94-95*) and “very much about also generating the content myself” (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l.96-97*). It makes impression that the main accent is on other people in the process of collaborating. This is highly contrasting to the way in which other participants talk about this theme.

For instance, Interviewee 3 in Excerpt 2 addresses directly the concept of collaboration to the person responsible for communication.

*Excerpt 2 (Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 81-82)*

*“And it’s about who actually does the job because we’ve been in very busy times, so it’s about personal commitment as well - commit time and efforts.”*

Here Interviewee 3 sheds light on another crucial element in this theme - the importance of commitment. It is mentioned also by Interviewee 1 but in the context of shared effort when something should be done. He does not talk about his personal commitment and its role in the process of collaboration but emphasis on others’ people level of inclusion. Contrary, the CPO stresses out that planning, having clear process, and coordinating the work around the embassy are also key factors.

Whereas Interviewee 4 for instance, talks about factors for collaboration on more organizational level by saying that it is about “start planning, allocating strict deadlines and individual’s responsibilities” (*Interviewee 4 Appendix 5, l. 74-75*). Indirectly, the participant refers this objectives to the CPO because he is seen in the leading role in this process. Interviewee 2, on the other hand, sees collaboration from more practical side by saying that “the most important thing is communicating all the time no matter what channels of communications we use” (*Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l.124-125*). The interviewee is the Vice consul in the Embassy and here it is important to mentioned that during the whole interview the participant was outlining the consular team as different. For instance, when talking about social media the participant says “my team is

a bit different from other teams in the embassy” (*Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l. 79*) and about how Brexit influences the work: “I believe it does but actually not in particular my team’s work what can I say” (*Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l.67*). Thus, she talks about from this perspective and it is visible that the participant does not emphasis on collaboration as main element in terms of social media but see it as a smooth process as long as there is communication between different departments and mainly as a “natural process”.

From the analysis of this theme can made the conclusion that factors for collaboration are mainly defined in terms of structure of the teams or organisation; or in terms of people’s asset such as management and objectives. In other words, even if participants see the same factors for working in collaboration, they are driven by different arguments. Thus, I discussed them in details because they enrich the understanding of the concept which helps me to answer the research question. Despite the differences, collaboration in terms of social media communication is seen to some extent as owned by the CPO by all participants in one way or another. Thus, in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia the following conclusion can be made based on the conducted interviews: collaboration is seen through communication and the process of engagement and even though it is seen as shared effort, the role of the CPO is perceived as main catalyst for that. Therefore, the next theme which will be analysed is digital ownership.

### ***Digital ownership***

This theme covers how people from the embassy recognize their role and others’ role when it comes to social media coverage of events, messages, campaigns of the different departments. Is it the role of the CPO central to chose the tactics, the approach in order to make people work together? Or is it natural process? All the participants have different view.

Referring back to the Organogram of the Embassy (Fig. 1) on p. 11 the Communication and press officer is part of the political team. In the sample with interviewees there are people from the trade department, consular department, and political as well. Therefore, it is important to stress out that every interviewee is talking from the point of view of his/her department’s objectives. It also shows that working together is inevitable aspect of the communication as every department at some point use social media channels of the Embassys or wants to promore his/her work.

Interviewee 4 addresses directly this in Excerpt 3:

*Excerpt 3 (Interviewee 4, Appendix 5, l.28-30).*

*“One of our objectives is to support UK business in Bulgaria so we use social media as an additional way to help increase their visibility in the market and work on brand awareness”*

Unarguably, social media is considered as a tool for delivering the messages both of the Embassy as part of the British Government but also of the specific department. The responsibility for delivering Government’s messages and incorporate them in the daily work is shared by all participants. This is not the case with the local campaigns, events, and messages because it depends a lot on the desire to do it. This theme seeks to answer the question who is the one to initiate the process of getting along the messages and put them on the social media channels.

Interviewee 4 elaborates further on that in Excerpt 4:

*Excerpt 4, (Interviewee 4, Appendix 5, l. 34-36).*

*“We are using social media to echo the British Government messages such as “Britain is Open for Business and UK is leaving the EU, but not Europe”, etc.”*

The importance of social media coverage is highlighted also in local context when Interviewee 4 says that the content on social media is responding to the concerns of Bulgarians in the UK such as free mobility and education. The usage of the verb “echo” is worth noting because it is very indicative how the participant sees not only her role but also of the Embassy as an institution. In terms of the way of working in the Embassy it refers to a alignment with the British Government policies. The verb brings the notion of reflection on something coming from the surface. It is seen as a metaphor for the concept of strategic communication which frames the big picture set by the Government. The Embassy should capture it and undertake particular activities to work accordingly to fulfill its goals. Here it is important how locally these activities are effectively delivering the messages coming from London. The participant describes social media as sufficient tool for promoting the work of the embassy and the trade department and clearly see the lines who is in charge to make this happen. This is explicitly demonstrated by Interviewee 4 in Excerpt 5.

*Excerpt 5 (Interviewee 4, Appendix 5, l.97-100)*

*“I am the comms champion for DIT Bulgaria. My role is to make sure we keep track of upcoming events and activities that we could promote on our social media channels and communicate that with the CPO. I am responsible for general comms activities and coordination between our team and the CPO.”*

Here Interviewee 4 elaborates more that the team provides information, pictures but still the CPO is the person who needs to make the decisions which is the best approach. She lists one by one what is the CPO’s responsibility such as “to see the big picture”, “provide strategic advice”, “be initiative”, and “how to best promote the activities of the Embassy” (*Interviewee 4, Appendix 5, l. 52-53*). These are all active verbs which describes the professional profile of the CPO. This is very important in terms of building the picture where lines of responsibilities are in the process of social media communication. In conclusion, it can be said that Interviewee 4 see social media as managed by the CPO but it is two-way communication to get the content on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. The participant has clear perception on the different roles and responsibilities. Exactly these factors were mentioned by the Interviewee as key for collaboration in the previous theme.

Interviewee 3 is part of the political team and there is no communication objective but her profile is EU relations and foreign affairs which is strongly related to the problem formulation. When being asked about her role in social media activities the participant explicitly says: “..social media side, he is leading (referring to the CPO, Ed.), so I am not involved” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 65*). Interviewee 3 has clear view on CPO’s role as demonstrated in Excerpt 6:

*Excerpt 6 (Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 116-120).*

*“I think the press officer holds everything (laughing). Where we should be focusing, on what, be the one encouraging the others to be more active and, and to basically to each event we do or each activity we do, he should encourage us and to think of or suggest even and work on additional things or opportunities we can do. So, we can add value to this particular activity.”*

When discussing factors for collaboration, the participant was the only one talking about factors both for successful and challenging collaboration. She elaborates on that by saying that even

well-planned and prioritized, it had happened collaboration to fail. As reason for failure in her example was “to get the others involved interested”. Now she refers again to this when describing the role of the CPO which is “to encourage the others to be more active”. Therefore, it is main responsibility of the CPO to initiate and to make things happen in terms of collaboration. As argument, Interviewee 3 elaborates on the digital capability - he is updated on what is coming from London, messages, campaigns etc. Crucial moment for the analysis because it reflects on specific job objectives which make it evident that the CPO should undertake actions to make people work together as he has the capacity for that. It also brings the notion of trust to some extent because the initiative of the interviewee can be read as a form of control on the information and nothing to be missed. For example, Interviewee 3 is in the embassy for more than five years whereas the CPO – for one.

But then Interviewee 3 keeps talking about her own role. While Interviewee 3 see clearly the CPO’s responsibilities, she is not that sure what is her role. The participant gives example with an engagement plan following the activation of Article 50 which is about how Brexit should be communicated in Bulgaria and how British Government’s messages to be delivered to the local audience. The participant were responsible for the overall plan which includes media and social media activities. In theory, the participant does not have responsibility to arrange this but should give her input as she is leading on EU and foreign affairs. Thus, here comes the importance of having clear idea of roles and responsibilities but this is not the case as the interviewee says: “But it’s not really clear how (laughing). Case by case rather than who does what.” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 111*).

The last sentence is very important because it detects one of the key factor for successful collaboration - clear process and responsibilities. The expression “case by case” reminds more for accidental decision-making instead of having strategic approach with clear strategy who does what and to what extent other people should be involved. Not only the approach is decided accordingly the case at hand but also “there is no clear division who does what which sometimes bother me” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 99*). Here should be made a reference to the previous theme where Interviewee 3 listed personal commitment as a factor for success. The participant is not responsible for keeping track on what is coming as messages or campaigns, for example, but it is subscribed to the press officers’ distribution list. In other words, the participant compensates

the lack of clear division of roles and responsibilities by taking own initiative to do things. Here is visible that the working mode is focused on short-term phases such as plans, actions but not on the strategic thinking and planning as demonstrated by Interviewee 3 in Excerpt 7.

*Excerpt 7 (Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 92-94).*

*“So far if I have something that I need to promote, I approach the press officer. But (am) in terms of working more on specific things like previously planned we haven’t done much of that”*

The participant says that in terms of communication strategy of the Embassy which is “in the making”. In other words, the lack of clarity is related to the lack of strategy which should frame the responsibilities and roles. The strategy itself is supposed to put in practice every aspect of the strategic thinking in the process of strategic management. Overall, the participant points a lot of weaknesses in terms of delivering messages on the social media in collaboration with other teams. Now the work in the embassy is more on the principle of random decisions according to the situation or as the participant explains: “We always find a way but the question on what price, what’s the price” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 103*).

While Interviewee 3 and 4 had to some extent clear view on what are the roles and responsibilities in the embassy or what they should be, the concept of digital ownership is interpreted in a very fuzzy way by the CPO. In a sense that he is not talking about himself as a separate role or factor but mostly on the behalf of the embassy. For example when being asked how he perceives his role in social media communication, he explains that it is about planning, getting the right information from the teams, delegating to teams, coordinating communication work. There is mismatch between his view and other participants’ in terms of how active the CPO should be. During our conversation he did not discuss explicitly his personal approach such as motivating and encouraging other people to engage them with this process. It makes impression that he talks about a lot of processes which he tried to established in the embassy such as social media process. It deals with the way how messages should be posted on social media as shown in Excerpt 8.

*Excerpt 8, (Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l.74-79)*

*“..so we just made a very clear process which was cleared with all teams in the embassy, am, that whenever they have something coming up and they want to do social media about it these will be the steps, this is how it will work, this is the information they need to provide, this sort of service level that the comms team or personnel would provide and then the quality assurance that will go before posting. This was all set up as a process.”*

This process was not mentioned by the other participants. Thus, it is not established in explicit manner with clear goals, roles, and objectives which is the purpose of strategic communication. It also the first step in the strategic management process. It can said that the CPO does not perceive social media as owned by him but as a social media channels of the Embassy where everybody is responsible for. This can be a reason for the mismatch because the other participants see themselves as part of the process but not in the main role. It is worth noticing that the collective perspective of the CPO is key element for collaboration but it is problematic if he does not recognize himself as the main person who needs to initiate the process itself.

The CPO perceives his work on two scenarios according to his words. The first one is the explained above - day-to-day work. Then he talks about “a bigger push or campaigns” and elaborates further in Excerpt 9:

*Excerpt 9 (Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 109-111)*

*“...it would be also a matter of sitting down and having a bigger strategy and planning, meetings and so on. But that is, that is, something else and it is a bigger, it's more of an exception to day to day work.”*

This attitude is indicative for how the CPO sees his role - coordinating other teams but not taking the initiative himself unless it is needed. Respectively, again it is shown short-term decision-making process which depends on the event and campaign themselves. The Embassy

does not have established strategic approach but decisions are undertaken accordingly the situation.

It is characteristic that he also discusses another process for social media messaging as part of his responsibilities - how to deal with consular messages on Facebook. For example, when on the Embassy's Facebook page someone send a message related to consular issue such as visa inquiries, crimes, status of citizens after Brexit etc. how to distribute the work. This is more sensitive because the consular team is dealing with different issues instead of promoting, advertising and informing people on social media which is the case of the trade department. For this process the CPO says: "It is a challenge to establish where those lines are and exactly who do what and how much of. (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 132-133*)". When talking about lines the participant refers to lines of responsibilities and in the context of social media and Brexit, it is called a challenge. It can be referred to the social media communication process and the organizational structure because as mentioned earlier the consular team is seen as different. Respectively, the representative of the consular team does not recognize the same way the importance of social media especially when it comes to urgent cases. While the CPO describes this process as "negotiation" the representative of the consular, Interviewee 2, is a bit more laconic when talking about her role in social media activities and more certain about what is already established. She talks about urgent cases and consular informative campaigns targeting their customers. For the former, the CPO will send just a standing reply on Facebook in agreement with the consular team, for instance. When it comes to events or informative campaigns, Interviewee 2 describes the process of social media coverage as a "natural thing" because everything around the event can be arranged very easy as the participant says in Excerpt 10.

*Excerpt 10 (Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l. 135-137)*

*"..just send a text message, send in what's up, send pictures. We can have a chat over the phone or chat over what's up asking and (pause), I mean just agreeing what we are going to do together."*

The Interviewee perceives social media as an important asset to the consular work but to do not understand it as a process where responsibilities and lines should be established. It can be made conclusion that here more communication is required in order to have smooth and fair process for both sides. In other words, Interviewee 2 somehow prioritizes the cases even though it says several times that social media is a way to reach customers easily and quickly. At the same time “it’s quite an informal way but our channel is a bit different from the Embassy’s social media because we don’t brand it” (*Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l. 38-39*). Again the participant distinguishes her team from the others. The purpose of social media will be discussed in more details in the theme of social media communication process.

Interpretations on different roles in terms of social media engagement depend considerably on their own role but also how people in the Embassy recognize social media. It can be drawn the conclusion that objectives and team characteristics affect the way people perceive social media and who is in charge of its efficient usage when it comes to delivering the messages of the organization. Again, from this theme the discussion leads to the role of the CPO who is explicitly perceived as a catalyst for the process of strategic communication especially by Interviewee 3 and 4. Interviewee 2, the Vice consular, does not emphasis so much on the overall process. The reason for that are the team characteristics and the fact that the consular daprtnent, has different objectives. Respectively, it is evident that there is correlation between organizational structure and objective when it comes to social media and how messages on it should be communicated strategically. It is also important how social media is perceived and what is the purpose of it in order to see how this build the perceptions on collaboration and digital ownership.

### ***Social media communication process***

As discussed earlier in the project, strategic communication is seen as a process which means that it has purpose, objectives, goals, and person who is in charge. The analysis of the themes above showed that it is commonly shared view among participants that the Communication and press officer is the one who needs to take the initiative to make people work collaboratively in terms of delivering Embassy’s messages on social media. Thus, this lead to the next theme - social media communication process. This theme has two sub-themes: 1) tools for

communication and 2) purpose of communication. The theme is central to the overall story of my data as it showed what particular activities and tactics are undertaken in the embassy especially from the CPO as well as what is the purpose of this communication for everyone when engaging in this process. Therefore, this will show if people have the same attitude towards social media. It was proven in the theme of digital ownership that different purpose can lead to difficulties in establishing working model in terms of collaborative work. The analysis of this theme is closely related to the factors for collaboration because it shows how, for example, planning is reflected in the tools for communication and purpose of it. This is indicative for how people's perceptions on social media communication are related to their roles and what they see as key factor for collaboration.

The theme of social media communication process is rich itself because it covers the overall process of communication and how it is established to fit the strategic framework of the Government. In terms of tools for communication, participants are in agreement and mention one-to-one meetings, chats, updates on upcoming events. Only the CPO mentions more specific things such as the social media plan and the communication calendar. They are distributed periodically around the embassy and inform about events of all departments. It makes impression that he is talking about a lot of planning, writing processes but no one from the participants refer to them. Interviewee 3 makes very significant comment in Excerpt 11:

*Excerpt 11 (Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 142-143).*

*"I think we are very good writing strategies and plans, we failed on the implementation phase."*

This refers back to the concept of strategic management which should execute the strategic thinking and planning when goals are set. This secures that when making short-term plans and actions, they will not fail.

All participants admit and elaborate on the benefits of social media in modern world in terms of digital diplomacy. They see social media as a way to promote the work of the Embassy, echo British Government's and Brexit-related messages, influence and engage with stakeholders by

saying it in a different way. Interviewee 1, the CPO, sees it again in more organizational context when discussing social media purpose by saying “treat it (Brexit) professionally” (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 42*) and “these are the instructions that we receive from London and we effectively have to communicate this in Bulgaria, that is our role as an Embassy” (*Interviewee 1, Appendix 2, l. 114-116*). As in the themes of factors for collaboration and digital ownership, the CPO elaborates more on what is the role of the Embassy, its objectives and mission as an organization. He does not elaborate on his own role and work as a factor. Contrary, Interviewee 4 discusses the purpose of social media as a tool to be “closer to people and interact with them on various levels – even by sharing personal experience and thoughts” (*Interviewee 4, Appendix 5, l. 23-24*). The participant demonstrates clear understanding of the mission of her team which is indicative because it shows that it is important to work efficiently. Not only Embassy’s mission is important but every element on every level. Interviewee 4 proves that by saying that one of the main objectives of her team is to help business and social media is a good tool for that.

Overall, all participants has put a great emphasis on the role of the social media in achieving organization’s goals and objectives. This is essential commonly shared view in argumentation for the problem formulation. First, because for being strategic you need to have the same direction, goals, and vision. Secondly, if people have the same attitude it is easier to improve the process of communication. It is worth noting that the different nuances on the concept as discussed above can be a serious obstacle in successful collaboration. In conclusion, it can be said that the lack of clear process and strategy lead to too many different final goals according to the specification of particular job, events, and campaigns. Thus, there is necessity this energy to be synchronized in one process with coherence and clarity.

The tools and the purpose of communication come under the big theme of social media communication process in the Embassy. Here the views of participants vary enormously. When discussing this theme it is important to stress out that the CPO has been working in the Embassy for the last year. He discusses all the processes he is trying to establish as change, something new and as a success even though at the beginning people were resistant to change. While the CPO sees that as finalised and well-working process, other participants do not share this view. For example, participant 3 explains that “it’s difficult for us to plan” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l.*

47) and “we could be better at that” (*Interviewee 3, Appendix 4, l. 61*). This correlates to the discussed example with the Facebook response process earlier in the digital ownership theme. Again, there is a different direction of the way of thinking which can be serious issue for collaboration.

In conclusion, people in the embassy have the same idea regarding social media and how they can benefit from it but the lack of clearance on the process causes different issues such as missed opportunities; undelivered messages. This refers back to the theme of digital ownership. Apart from the CPO all the other participant see him as a leading person in the process of communication. Whereas he understands it from organizational perspective and shared effort and does not seem to recognize himself as a main catalyst. He does not elaborate on his own role and skills which would enable collaboration between departments but prefer to use “we in the embassy”, “as an embassy” and other collective expressions. He discusses a lot of documents and processes but no one else refer to them. Therefore, they are not communicated in the right way and people do not recognize them as established way of working.

Clear process, responsibilities, and commitment are the key factors according to the participants but when look back to the process of communication and digital ownership, the Embassy should work more on that. Now the process of successful collaboration is result of random decisions and a lot of efforts from some people from the embassy. Strategic communication is not clearly-understood within the case. There are a lot of weaknesses especially regarding the question who owns social media channels of the Embassy and what is the horizon of the activities which are undertaken. For example, from all the interviews it is clear that there is no strategic planning and thinking in the overall approach to social media activities. This make the process of collaboration very vulnerable because many factors play key role such as roles, objectives, team characteristics, purpose – all discussed within the different themes above. Respectively, without clearance very easy the collaboration can get in trap.

## *DISCUSSION*

Brexit is a new context and it creates many new angles for research in terms of communication. I found that in the era of social media it is compelling to see how the British Embassy in Sofia is dealing with the messages coming from London and how it build post-Brexit image in the local context.

My findings gave significant insight to the research area and even though they cannot be generalized to a bigger sample, they can be applied to other cases. This is essential because the British Government produces various documents regarding the overall communication but every separate entity can be indicative for some systemic weaknesses and problems. The detected issues can be easily tested in other cases which will show if they are specific for Bulgaria or it is systematic problem. If so, the British Government may need to pay more attention to the individual bodies in order to achieve the desired strategic communication.

From the thematic analysis of the data several exhaustive findings can be listed. In the case of the British Embassy in Sofia collaboration is seen through communication and the process of engagement. Even though collaboration is widely seen as a shared effort, the role of the CPO is perceived as main catalyst for that. Based on Excerpt 8 the main issue which was detected is that the CPO himself does not discuss his personal attitude and contribution but see everything as process that should be established and his role is mainly supportive and coordinating.

Another finding is that objectives and team characteristics affect the way people perceive social media and how it should be used when it comes to delivering the messages of the organization. Consequently, it is evident that there is correlation between collaboration and the organizational structure. In the studied case, there are no established lines of responsibilities in terms of social media activities but decisions are undertaken accordingly the event, campaign, and messages as demonstrated in Excerpt 7 and 9. Therefore, there is need for more work on that department in order to communicate strategically. As discussed in the theoretical chapter strategic communication is seen as a process closely related to the strategic management process. Going back to this process discussed by Styen (2002; 2003) it is visible that in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia there is no set goal as well as no strategic thinking and planning. They all refer

to the overall mission of the organization and long-term perspective. In the investigated case the focus is on the planning phase, separate actions, and tactics. It is good that the CPO tries to establish clear process, to negotiate and coordinate it with the other departments in terms of social media but the mentioned missing phases can cause issues regarding collaboration because there is no clarity on the long-term goals which a subject to the strategic thinking phase when aspects such as opinions and even feelings of different stakeholders are considered (Robert, 1997). As discussed by Styen (2002) strategic thinking produces a framework for the strategic and operational plans and attempts to determine what the organisation should look like, i.e. the strategy. It is related to the stage of strategic planning of the process where strategy is operationalised. In other words strategic planning puts the strategy into practice. In the case of the British Embassy the emphasis is on the tactical level – producing separate short-term plans and missing crucial elements to the overall process. Referring back to the metaphor of strategic communication as a body in which every cells and organs need to work in harmony, it can be said that the lack of strategic thinking and planning is the same as the heart for the body.

This finding correlates with the conclusions discussed in the introduction from the communication review of the FCO. According to the document produced by the Government communication service, strategic planning is a main challenge and as “as a result, policy and communications are not fully integrated: communications is not an integral part of the business planning process” (ibid, p 6). Thus, this problem is not only in the British Embassy in Sofia but widely spread around other overseas bodies representing the Government. Thus, there is a need for further research on where and why these problems occur in the context of communication in order solution to be found.

As discussed in the introduction the main endeavor of the British Government is to establish coherent and universal model in order to navigate how policies are communicated. In other words, all governmental bodies should comply with the overall policies, messages, campaigns, values. It is not a new approach of the British Government to aim at synchronizing its policies by navigating the framework of the narrative of the messages. What is new is the emphasis on social media and working together. The conclusion drawn from the Digital capability report of the Government communication service explicitly states: “Digital is mainstream. It shouldn’t be owned by a particular team” is important in the context of my study. In relation to the findings in

my project, it can be said that the British Embassy in Sofia needs to work on that – to shape social media as a common value for the people who are supposedly involved in the process in one way or another. The findings from my paper show weakness in terms of collaboration and how it is reinforced by different activities. Contrary to that, all participants demonstrate understanding of the British Government's policy and claim to align with it. This is positive news for the Government but in terms of having strategic approach on how to promote the UK in Bulgaria, there is a lot of work to be done.

The government produces big amount of messages and policies which should be not only amplified but also adapted to the local audience and political context. From the collected data, it is obvious that all participants bear in mind the Government policies but failed to find a way to take the initiative on producing local content in strategic manner. From my study several reasons can be mentioned for that: 1) lack of initiative from the CPO; 2) lack of clear process recognized by all the staff; 3) lack of strategic approach to the overall process. Therefore, there is need for more efforts to be invested in strategic communication. The situation now demonstrates weaknesses which inhibit collaboration between departments. Collaboration happens but difficult and there are a lot of potential issues which can occur in the process. Therefore, the Embassy needs to work more on the strategic thinking and planning in order to have all the elements of the strategic communication.

The study can be developed in many directions as Brexit is ongoing phenomenon and many new developments are about to come. In terms of digital diplomacy and digital ownership, it would be interesting to track how senior people such as Ambassadors, Deputy head of mission, Head of departments are engaged in this process. This can be related to this study as a reason for the issues detected in my case, for instance. Thus, the study does not pretend to exhaustively cover a big piece of the pie but to give food for thoughts instead. Inevitably, strategic communication and collaboration are topics which will find place for further discussions. Therefore, I find my study as contribution to the newly open field for research. Furthermore, strategic process and in particularly planning, is detected as a problem in the overall communication of the FCO which is the main body for promoting the policies of the Government overseas. I believe that this study pave the ground for future research because the need for coherence will not disappear soon but will increase instead. Therefore, it is essential for the British Government to pay attention to

every single case and see how the overall communication strategy is articulated in every cell of the body.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is not enough to understand particular policies and pretend to align with them but to find a way to communicate it in the right way according to your audience, cultural, political and geographic context. This can sum up what is the main weakness of the British Embassy in Sofia in regards to the posed research question. Brexit is a sensitive topic not only for the British Government but worldwide. It will be on the spotlight for a long time and certainly it will keep opening new doors for researching from different angles. I focused on strategic communication in the case of the British Embassy in Sofia and how Brexit-related messages are conveyed via social media.

Social media is a strong tool to lead to impact on external environment and stakeholders but should be communicated in the right way also on internal level. The overall conclusion of my project is that social media cannot be owned by particular department but to be integrated as organizational tool for achieving its goals and mission instead. For this purpose, clear process and structure, established responsibilities and roles, personal commitment and engagement are required. And in the center of this process is the person responsible for coordinating everything who should realized the importance of his work and the application of strategic thinking and planning in order to engage all people in the process. All these factors should be incorporated through the prism of the big picture taken by the Government.

As recognized by Interviewee 2 “social media is the future of FCO kind of diplomacy, public diplomacy” (*Interviewee 2, Appendix 3, l.158-159*). As such, the area of research that I focused in this project is demonstrating a wide horizon for more investigations. Brexit is ongoing process and will attract more attention in the field of communication.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview-guide

#### General questions:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. What is your position at the British Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria?
5. How long you have been working in the British Embassy in Sofia?

#### Problem-specific questions:

##### *Public diplomacy theme*

1. In your view, how does social media has changed the way of communication in terms of diplomacy?
2. What is the role of social media in your work?
3. Does Brexit affect your work in relation to social media related activities? If yes, how?

##### *Strategic management communication theme*

1. How does the Communication plan of the British Government is articulated in your organisation especially in the context of Brexit? Can you give examples of particular tactics/activities?
2. On internal level, how do you communicate with the Communication and press officer (CPO) to ensure social media coverage of your organisation's messages as well as Government policies?
3. According to you, what is the role of the CPO when it comes to social media coverage of your organisation?
4. How does the (CPO) engage you in social media activities? Can you give examples of specific actions/tactics?

*Collaboration theme*

1. From your perspective, what are the key factors for successful collaboration with other departments in terms of social media activities (e.g. clear instructions/time frame/strategy/task distribution/planning)?
2. Can you give examples of successful or challenging experience of collaboration in terms of social media?
3. Do you feel your role is important in relation to building post-Brexit image of the UK in Bulgaria? If yes, can you elaborate more?
4. Do you perceive the communication goals of your organisation as shared responsibility? If yes, where do you place yourself and the CPO in this process?

*CPO additional questions:*

1. How do you coordinate the work between different departments when it comes to social media activities?
2. What are the challenges when you need to engage people from different departments in social media activities?

**APPENDIX 2**

1 Appendix 2  
2 Nikolay Kolev,  
3 Communication and press officer at the British Embassy, Sofia  
4 The interview is conducted on 26.04.2017

5 *Interviewer: In your view, how does social media has changed the way of communication in*  
6 *terms of diplomacy?*

7 Interviewee 1: I believe it's changed, changed diplomacy a whole a lot. I think it become  
8 more public facing, (am) more accountable to the public and in a way (..) more influential to  
9 the regular people that diplomats would have been traditionally exposed to as much. And (..) I  
10 even think a few years back in the university I had a course about diplomacy which mentioned  
11 this brand new thing which was amazing - digital diplomacy. And even that was a few years  
12 back things have changed so much since then constantly is changing the way it works now.

13 *Interviewer: Okay, and what is the role of this transformation and in particularly social media*  
14 *in your work?*

15 Interviewee 1: It's very big, it's hard to put a percentage but maybe it's roughly about at least  
16 the third of the work that we do in the comms team. (Am) (..) it's definitely very important to  
17 us because it's the way to communicate directly with the public whether that is Bulgarians or  
18 British nationals. (Am), and we believe it's a way in which we can tell the public directly  
19 what we want to tell them and it is an opportunity for us to innovate and also to do, to deliver  
20 our messages well. So, (am) it's definitely something very important for us.

21 *Interviewer: So, to great extent you rely on social media a lot to deliver your policies,*  
22 *messages and service?*

23 Interviewee 1: Yes

24 *Interviewer: Okay, and in relation to that does Brexit affect your work in terms of social*  
25 *media related activities? And if yes, how?*

26 Interviewee 1: Yes, of course. As an EU-based embassy, (am) (..) we obviously include Brexit  
27 messages in the work that we do (am) obviously it is a sensitive subject. (Am) but we try to  
28 communicate clearly Government's position to the public regardless of whether this is  
29 concerns of Bulgarians living in the UK or concerns for British nationals are living in  
30 Bulgaria. (Am), there are also considerations around events that don't necessarily (am), or

31 events rather that are political in nature in the UK but they reflect on the work that we do such  
32 as elections. So, for example, before the referendum for Brexit and also now (am) with the  
33 general elections coming up, there is purdah. So, we can't really talk about this during this  
34 time so definitely it changes a lot the way that we work.

35 *Interviewer: Okay, I would like to move on, in relation to what you've just said about how the*  
36 *UK Government is navigating your work. How does the Communication plan of the British*  
37 *government is articulated in your organization? Especially in the context of Brexit and can*  
38 *you give maybe some specific activities, tactics as a communication and press officer?*

39 Interviewee 1: Mhm. (Am), Brexit and the Communication plan around it by the British  
40 Government is, for us, as an embassy it is treated as any other plan or strategy or strategic  
41 priority that we have (am), we are well aware that it is more sensitive for the public but we  
42 try to treat it very professionally and approach it in the same way as we would any other  
43 Government's policies that we have to communicate. So, it is very much about amplifying the  
44 messages coming out of London, clarifying them for the public (am) and then in terms of how  
45 does particularly reflects in our work it is very much about doing media engagement, giving  
46 interviews, generating that kind of online content, public events and appearance as in public  
47 lectures, so those kind of things.

48 *Interviewer: But do you think that different departments within your organisation are aware*  
49 *of this communication plan and they are trying to engage with it?*

50 Interviewee 1: Yes, this is something that every team has been made aware of the Government  
51 communications plan so they amend their approach to how they are doing their day-to-day  
52 work accordingly. (Amm), and obviously that applies more to some teams rather than for  
53 others. For example, the political and the commercial team, this would influence more than it  
54 would some of the other teams in the embassy. (Am), but obviously for anything that is  
55 coming up especially if it's Brexit related event (amm), that changes the way that we do work  
56 but also very much goes into the other typical processes that we have - (am) for the embassy's  
57 events or projects that we do. So, we just go down those, the message is different because it's  
58 a Brexit event rather than, let's say, Education is Great, or something like that, but the process  
59 and the way that we do our work is the same.

60 *Interviewer: So, maybe in your role of communication and press officer, you can elaborate*  
61 *more on how you engage other departments in social media activities?*

62 Interviewee 1: Yeah. (Am) so, our aim at the embassy is to align the way that we do  
63 communication and (pause) it is something that we've been working on very hard to develop  
64 our processes so that other teams are more in tune with how to do this, as a best practice, and  
65 also be easier for all teams regardless of whether it's comms or some of the other teams to sort  
66 of to make that that happen. So, in terms of practical things that we are down to make this  
67 happen we have the weekly social media plan, we (am) distributed out to teams sort of  
68 planning how we will communicate about events especially on social media but also off social  
69 media. (Am), we ask for teams' input before and after we send this out. We have  
70 communications calendar at the embassy which we circulate periodically, usually once a  
71 month - asking teams to input and say this is what we have coming up and this is the kind of  
72 engagement or media activities that we would like around this. And then also one of the first  
73 things that we sort of stated when I started in the embassy was to create a social media process  
74 because we wanted to streamline how we post things, so we just made a very clear process  
75 which was cleared with all teams in the embassy, am, that whenever they have something  
76 coming up and they want to do social media about it these will be the steps, this is how it will  
77 work, this is the information they need to provide, this sort of service level that the comms  
78 team or personnel would provide and then the quality assurance that will go before posting.  
79 This was all set up as a process.

80 *Interviewer: So all these documents and processes are something new when you stepped here*  
81 *in the embassy?*

82 Interviewee 1: Yes, yes.

83 *Interviewer: How would you say people react to that?*

84 Interviewee 1: (Am), I think in the beginning people obviously people were a bit resistant to  
85 change (am), but at the end I believe that teams were very open to this change ultimately and  
86 they took it on board even if obviously was learning for both sides. (Am), but I believe it  
87 made our work much better now and we are much more organised and much quicker now  
88 because of it in terms of how we do comms and social media.

89 *Interviewer: And how do you perceive your role and skills, maybe, in this process of matching*  
90 *all the stuff?*

91 Interviewee 1: Well, so, there have been different elements to it and I think the main part is  
92 still very much about the planning and identifying opportunities. (Am), sort of planning the

93 best way to do activity whether that is smaller plan or just one off post that we do, or a bigger  
94 strategy that we develop but it is also much about coordinating comms work around the  
95 embassy. So, getting the right information from different teams streamlines that into a finished  
96 product that we can put out. (Am) and also very much about also generating the content  
97 myself. Even though we try most of the time to delegate that to teams as well. So, it is a  
98 shared effort that we try to establish.

99 *Interviewer: Okay, you answered my next question - how do you coordinate different teams*  
100 *but maybe you can share from your perspective what are the key factors for successful*  
101 *collaboration with other departments, again, in terms of social media?*

102 Interviewee 1: I believe it is very much about initially having a very clear process. So,  
103 outlining where the lines of responsibilities are. I believe it is also down to good planning. I  
104 know the time is a very valuable asset and we don't always have it. But even within a limited  
105 timeline or time frame is important to account for the comms element and I am happy to say  
106 that this is increasingly the case at the embassy. Then it is very much about reciprocal efforts  
107 so sticking to the arrangements that was made and just distributing the tasks accordingly and  
108 everyone sticking and to do what they should do within the arranged time line. And then,  
109 obviously, as I said, a bigger push or campaign, it would be also a matter of sitting down and  
110 having a bigger strategy and planning, meetings and so on. But that is, that is, something else  
111 and it is a bigger, it's more of an exception to day to day work.

112 *Interviewer: And I guess you accept the communication plan of the British government as a*  
113 *frame for your work.*

114 Interviewee 1: Yes. well, it has to be because these are the instructions that we receive from  
115 London and we effectively have to communicate this in Bulgaria, that is our role as an  
116 Embassy.

117 *Interviewer: Can you think of examples of successful or challenging collaboration with other*  
118 *departments?*

119 Interviewee 1: Yeah, sure. (Am), there are, I think, many success stories, especially when it  
120 comes to communicating with other departments. I believe our commercial team have become  
121 very good at doing that. They organised events, promoting trade and investment in Bulgaria  
122 and (pause) they've taken on board every recommendation they've been given and  
123 communicate effectively and quickly with us, giving the content that we want and even if they

124 have something that they have the slightest concern about or they want to be more ambitious  
125 about it - they always come to us and talk about. And I think, was it the Science and  
126 Innovation forum, is a prime example, they've took on board something as a template of how  
127 they want to communicate and they sort of implemented that working with you and I believe  
128 that was also very, very successful. (Am), in terms of challenges, as I say, anytime there is  
129 change, there is obviously (pause), it's tricky because it has to change the way that people  
130 work. (Am) in terms of establishing processes, for example, we want to streamline the way  
131 that we deal with consular messages on our social media channels, and that has been  
132 something that we've been working with the consular team to establish process there. It is a  
133 challenge to establish where those lines are and exactly who do what and how much of. (Am),  
134 but it is ultimately offer the best, so I believe this will be a success at the end as well.

135 *Interviewer: Would you say it is more personal, when it comes to convincing people that*  
136 *something would work out? For example, if some members of the consular team are resistant*  
137 *..*

138 Interviewee 1: It's a negotiation in the end and we have to find the best scenario that works  
139 for everyone so there might be a misunderstanding or disagreement on a subject but that  
140 doesn't stop us and we continue to have those conversations until we find the scenario that  
141 works best for everyone.

142 *Interviewer: Maybe in this regards you can share your view on how people in the embassy*  
143 *perceive their role in post-Brexit process. Do you think there is the value and shared*  
144 *responsibility in this process?*

145 Interviewee 1: So, am, are we talking about the Embassy's role in general for post-Brexit or..?

146 *Interviewer: Yeah, and maybe in particularly, for people who are engaged in social media*  
147 *activities.*

148 Interviewee 1: Yeah, sure. So, I think in terms of the role of (pause) in terms of building the  
149 opinion of people, the public opinion around Brexit and that in Bulgaria, that is something  
150 very important. (Am), obviously the comms angle to social media, angle to it is much more  
151 important than it might have been if this have happened 10 or 20 years ago. Ultimately, the  
152 negotiations between governments, and the UK Government and the EU and different  
153 governments will be ultimately decide the future relationship but it also, I believe, it will be  
154 very much about the public perception of how that is going and how the UK is presented in

155 Bulgaria. And the Embassy is in a large way responsible for that I believe as well. Not just in  
156 communicating what London is saying but also in their own right with their projects here. So,  
157 I believe it is very important for the image of the UK in Bulgaria post-Brexit and in terms of  
158 well saying, was it shared responsibility - yes. I personally believe very much that this is an all  
159 embassy effort to do communications and to communicate externally. Communications and  
160 especially digital is increasingly growing importance, it's changing the way that diplomacy  
161 works. Not just because of the way traditionally media works but especially because of social  
162 media and I believe that more and more people from the embassy and foreign ministries from  
163 everywhere will become involved in digital and social media work. And I believe that people  
164 ultimately more and more be included in generating their own content. Probably different  
165 teams having different channels, just talking into the future. I believe that's where things will  
166 go. So, probably this is the way it's gonna look in a few years but for now we are doing the  
167 best that we can with the resource and time that we have and it is still a shared embassy push  
168 even though most of the things go through the comms person or team.

169 *Interviewer: To finish our conversation, would you say it is all about having the strategic view*  
170 *about how things should happen in your role of communication and press officer and maybe*  
171 *where is collaboration for you and your work?*

172 Interviewee 1: Yeah. I believe, having a strategic approach is very important. I think that was  
173 one of the big ambition both for the embassy when I started, we tried to be as strategic as  
174 possible. Not just reactive in the way that we do our messaging. I think we definitely made  
175 progress in that sense and because we tried to look as much forward as we can and plan  
176 accordingly, we have been able to deal with some big challenges and big pushes. And I  
177 believe because we've been able to put much more and more effectively otherwise it would be  
178 a day by day thing. So in terms of (pause) strategic, I believe yes. What was your second  
179 question?

180 *Interviewer: In terms of collaboration with other departments..?*

181 Interviewee 1: Oh, it's absolutely key, the way that it is in the embassy now it is relatively  
182 small embassy and small comms team, so I am fully relying on other people to help me out  
183 because if we are more strategic and ambitious like I said, it has to be be all embassy effort.  
184 And I believe that is from commitment of people here at the embassy.

185 *Interviewer: Thank you.*

186 Interviewee 1: Pleasure.

1 **APPENDIX 3**

2

3 Teodora Maneva (referred as Interviewee 2 in the project)

4 Vice consul at the British Embassy, Sofia

5 The interview was conducted on 26.04.2017

6

7 *Interviewer: Thank you for participating. So, let's start with some general questions. What is*  
8 *your name?*

9 Interviewee 2: My name is Theodora Maneva.

10 *Interviewer: How old are you?*

11 Interviewee 2: I am 35.

12 *Interviewer: Where are you from?*

13 Interviewee 2: Bulgaria.

14 *Interviewer: And what is your position at the British Embassy in Sofia?*

15 Interviewee 2: I am the vice consul.

16 *Interviewer: How long you have been working here?*

17 Interviewee 2: (Am), for eight years, I think, yeah.

18 *Interviewer: Okay, so now let's move on to more specific to the problem questions. In your view*  
19 *how does social media has changed the way of communications in terms of diplomacy?*

20 Interviewee 2: I believe that communications before social media were a bit limited and now  
21 there is a little bit of a risk with social media. For example, you are the Ambassador or the  
22 Deputy head of mission or somebody important and you tweet about something, I mean  
23 politically, this might be grabbed by the local media or international media, just at the spur of the  
24 moment. But if you have, haven't thought about it beforewards, it might be a risk of losing your  
25 job even. It has happened before.

26 *Interviewer: But how do you think - is it more beneficial or..?*

27 Interviewee 2: I think it is quite beneficial and it is an easy way to communicate with everyone. I  
28 mean, not only with the media but also with the every day, I mean, with all the people around - I  
29 mean local expats, also people within the foreign office, people in the UK, whoever picks it up.

30 *Interviewer: And talking about social media, what is the role of social media for your work?*

31 Interviewee 2: In my work, it's very important to reach our customers. So, because, as you are  
32 aware, the consular team is dealing with British nationals who are either residence in Bulgaria or  
33 tourists in Bulgaria. So, we have campaigns which are (am) we target British nationals in  
34 Bulgaria mainly the tourist part. We have a social media campaign which is called "Take your  
35 pic" and our targets, target is your people between 14 and 35. And actually the idea is to give  
36 them some guidance, top tips, how to stay safe in Bulgaria while they are here. But also (am) to  
37 communicate with them, engage with them, find out what they are interested in. So it's quite an  
38 informal way but our channel is a bit different from the Embassy's social media because we  
39 don't brand it. There is nothing to say in our campaign that actually it is a FCO or government  
40 branded Facebook or, because we have Twitter and Facebook. It's just something that comes out  
41 easily and (pause) how can I say, something that's natural to people, they just communicate with  
42 us because sometimes we have very good things to post and they are interested in what we are  
43 posting. We are also interested in events in Sunny Beach, finding out more about what people  
44 wish to get as an entertainment in the resort and everything like this. We also engaged with them,  
45 not only posting things.

46 *Interviewer: But I guess also a lot of British nationals or expats are using social media for*  
47 *asking for service..*

48 Interviewee 2: Yes. So this is the other part. The other part are our residents and actually we are  
49 trying to reach them through our official channels. So, mainly Facebook because what I see as  
50 the most popular social media in Bulgaria, let's say, social media channel is Facebook not  
51 Twitter.

52 *Interviewer: Yeah.*

53 Interviewee 2: And most of our residents are elderly people. They are age 40 plus (am) 70th,  
54 80th. So, people who are retired coming to Bulgaria as well. So, most of them use Facebook to  
55 reach us, to find out more about our services, to inquire about a lifestyle thing while they are in  
56 Bulgaria. (Am), and the other way around is, we are also trying to reach them by doing project  
57 work with them, by asking them to take part in surveys that we.. We do last year, as far as I  
58 remember, we made a project and it was (am) targeting British nationals who live in bigger cities  
59 and they would like to register and they would like to become permanent residents in Bulgaria.  
60 So what we did is we first surveyed with them, how they feel about registering with the  
61 Bulgarian authorities - is it an easy procedure, if they need something more. And then we

62 decided to actually implement the project when we worked with the migration director and  
63 actually facilitated the process of registering in Bulgaria. So, this was a way of doing our own  
64 project but also reaching out our residents here.

65 *Interviewer: So, talking about this, do you think that Brexit influence somehow social media*  
66 *related activities here in Bulgaria?*

67 Interviewee 2: I believe it does but actually not in particular my team's work what can I say. I  
68 believe that it affects mostly how the political team or other teams at the embassy actually react  
69 on this but it does, yeah.

70 *Interviewer: But not to that great extent. Okay, now let's move now to a bit different topic. As*  
71 *part of the British Government you need to use and to somehow correspond with the policies of*  
72 *the government. So, how does the communication plan of British government is articulated here*  
73 *in your organisation? Can you give some specific tactics or activities?*

74 Interviewee 2: Yeah, we have a very strict policy, I can say. But the thing is that we on one hand,  
75 the FCO has their own guidance on how to work and how to post things on Facebook/Twitter or  
76 any other Instagram if we are using, for example, we are using Instagram sometimes. The thing  
77 is however, we have these strict rules, we are, we are trying to abide them but we also wish to  
78 reach people so actually we are kind of flexible in a way. And as I said, my team is a bit different  
79 from other teams in the embassy. So, I can speak mostly about our policy which is a bit different.

80 *Interviewer: Yeah, of course.*

81 Interviewee 2: So, our policy is to be more light hearted, to communicate with younger people  
82 and to give them more information, to try to help them actually. And social media for us, I can  
83 give you an example of a recent case that we had in Macedonia. We had the guy who was robbed  
84 in the middle of nowhere, obviously. He was going by bike through different countries but it  
85 happened in Macedonia. So, he was really afraid, he went on a tree and hid there for a while.  
86 So, what he did was, meanwhile he texted his father on Facebook explaining the situation, giving  
87 his location by actually setting the location where he was in Macedonia and this is how we found  
88 him, how the Macedonian police found him and on the next day they actually resolved almost  
89 the whole case. They found the perpetrators and, they were obviously sentenced.

90 *Interviewer: So, social media definitely is a good asset to your work.*

91 Interviewee 2: Yeah, I can tell you a good example of how social media helped us in case.

92 *Interviewer: I know that your team is a bit different but you are still communicating with the*  
93 *Communication and press officer. So, how would you say that this work is happening in terms of*  
94 *social media if you can give some examples, how you coordinate your work if we take into*  
95 *account the specific aspect of what you are doing?*

96 Interviewee 2: Mhm. I work actually with the Communication and press officers in three  
97 countries - in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. And actually communication is quite smooth,  
98 quite good because we have been in touch initially before we started doing any consular work on  
99 social media, find out what our strategies are and how we will approach people on Facebook.  
100 In Bulgaria, our most recent things that we receive on Facebook, oh sorry, Facebook, are British  
101 nationals trying to find more information about our services. But also we get quite a lot of  
102 Bulgarians and other third country nationals contacting us for visas or for any type of lifestyle  
103 inquiries. So, this is what we are doing here most often but we also have a strategy when we  
104 have any types of projects and campaigns and we would like to give more information about our  
105 projects. And reach some of our residents, let's say, it's the easiest way to communicate  
106 information when we would like to invite somebody to our events. We do sometimes outreach  
107 events in different parts of Bulgaria, let's say Veliko Tynovo which is popular with British  
108 nationals. So, whenever we have such an event we will advertise it on social media and actually  
109 quite a lot of people come to this event because of social media. Because we have our own  
110 contacts and we email them and say go and tell your neighbours about this event but still social  
111 media is quite grand and it's an easier way to reach people.

112 *Interviewer: Okay, I guess for events it's a bit easier but when it comes to something sensitive*  
113 *and you have a question or something else on social media, how do you work with other teams and*  
114 *particularly with the comms team?*

115 Interviewee 2: Okay, so the idea is that most of our cases, if it's urgent consular case, we won't  
116 discuss it on Facebook. Definitely, or Twitter. What we will do, we will send them a standing  
117 reply and this is usually drafted and done by our communications officer agreed with the  
118 consular team. And then actually ask them to just email us directly or contact us on our phones,  
119 switchboard number. So, this is the easiest way to communicate. Because sometimes there is  
120 quite a lot of (am) things which are just like data protective sensitive and we can't give  
121 information (am) - date of births or names of the people over Facebook.

122 *Interviewer: According to you, what's the most important factor for successful teamwork and*  
123 *collaboration?*

124 Interviewee 2: I think that the most important thing is communicating all the time no matter what  
125 channels of communications we use. I think that one to one meetings and the personal contact is  
126 really very important but in our modern times even if you are not in the office, you can just send  
127 a message to someone, what's up him or her, do send a picture or anything. So, It's easier to  
128 communicate, the idea is that you have the desire to do it.

129 *Interviewer: Can you give some specific examples of successful collaboration or challenging?*

130 Interviewee 2: I think that we have good examples here at the embassy because we communicate  
131 quite well. We are small embassy, we are just based on two floors so it's very easy to go and say  
132 something to somebody. You don't have to send an official email or anything like this if it's not  
133 very, very sensitive or very important to discuss it in a particular way. (Am) I can give good  
134 examples, for example, if we have an event somewhere outside Sofia, let's say, and I have to  
135 communicate this information to our comms team here, it's very easy - just send a text message,  
136 send in what's up, send pictures. We can have a chat over the phone or chat over what's up  
137 asking and (pause), I mean just agreeing what we are going to do together.

138 *Interviewer: Is this process coming naturally or it's something strategically that you have*  
139 *arranged in advanced?*

140 Interviewee 2: No, it's just natural thing. And I believe that we are doing quite well on this and  
141 it's the same, as I said to you, I communicate also with the comms teams in Romania and  
142 Macedonia which are quite different. Because in Macedonia we have only one person and a half  
143 doing the job. So, they don't have enough time to reply to any types of lifestyle inquiries. So,  
144 they will spend a little bit of time to do this but they would like to have targeted answers so we  
145 have provided them with such. And so far they didn't have any complaints. On the other hand,  
146 we have a big team in Romania with like 4 people working for comms in one way or another.  
147 (Am), and they are very enthusiastic to do more staff on consular. So, whenever we have let's  
148 say, music festival, like we have in the summer in Romania, we are just doing quite a lot of  
149 outreach but also communicating with the festival organizers and posting some of their staff and  
150 agreeing with them also to post our staff. So, it's a very, very good communication. It's like a  
151 threefold communication - it's the comms team, our consular team, I am based in Sofia but two  
152 of my colleagues are based in Romania, in Bucharest, in the office there and we also have the

153 organizers of the event. So, it's quite a good way to communicate. When you offer somebody to  
154 retweet him, let's say, or to advertise their message if it's obviously (am) according to FCO  
155 policies, they are really very happy to also do the same for you.

156 *Interviewer: So, would you say that organisational structure and resources to some extent*  
157 *influence the good work?*

158 Interviewee 2: Yes, I do. I really believe that social media is the future of FCO kind of  
159 diplomacy, public diplomacy.

160 *Interviewer: Amm, okay and maybe just to come back to the Bulgarian context. How do you*  
161 *perceive your role here in building the post-Brexit image? I mean, when it comes to social*  
162 *media. I mean, do you see yourself as an important person when the comms team have to deliver*  
163 *the messages of the British government and the British embassy here?*

164 Interviewee 2: Actually, Brexit is a bit sensitive because what has happened so far is we don't  
165 have quite a lot of information about what's going to be, I mean what is going to happen in a few  
166 months. So, it's a bit difficult to say to people something and if you are going out, saying  
167 something in a video, let's say, to the British residents, there will be quite a lot of questions. I  
168 mean, you have to have some strategy and to say something which is substantial. Just not go out  
169 and say to people - I really don't know but I do want to tell you something. So, I find myself as a  
170 person that can support let's say, the Ambassador whenever she does public announcement and I  
171 can explain this to Brits. I mean in more details because we have our consular lines on Brexit,  
172 obviously. They are not very clear as you know and some of the things are, it's a very first stage  
173 at the moment and it is difficult to give out any information.

174 *Interviewer: Okay, do you think that, to finish our conversation.. Do you think that all these*  
175 *processes are perceived as a shared responsibility here in the Embassy within the different*  
176 *departments?*

177 Interviewee 2: You mean on Brexit?

178 *Interviewer: Yes.*

179 Interviewee 2: Yeah, I believe, yes, in a way. I know that your team, comms team, is working  
180 quite a lot with the DIT, our commercial team, with us as well, with the political team mainly, of  
181 course. And I mean, my opinion is that it works well but you should tell us how you feel about it.  
182 Because it's a two way communication, I mean if my team, for example, are not responding to  
183 your team in a good way, I really want to know that.

184 *Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, thank you.*

185 Interviewee 2: Thank you.



1 **APPENDIX 4**

2

3 Yoana Bachovska, EU and Foreign affairs (Referred as Interviewee 3 in the project)

4 The interview was conducted on 26.04.2017

5

6 *Interviewer: Thank you for participating in my project. First, we can start with some general*  
7 *questions. What is your name?*

8 Interviewee 3: I am Yoanna.

9 *Interviewer: And how old are you?*

10 Interviewee 3: 32 (laughing)

11 *Interviewer: Where are you from?*

12 Interviewee 3: Bulgaria.

13 *Interviewer: What is your position at the British embassy in Sofia?*

14 Interviewee 3: I am economic and EU officer at the political section at the embassy.

15 *Interviewer: How long you have been working here?*

16 Interviewee 3: Amm, five and a half years.

17 *Interviewer: Okay, so let's move on to some specific to the problem questions. First of all, I*  
18 *would like you to share your view on how does social media has changed the way of*  
19 *communication in terms of diplomacy?*

20 Interviewee 3: Well, everything now is much quicker I would say and you can get your  
21 messages, to target your messages better to the audience that you would like to influence or  
22 engage with. (Am) it's also easier to work with (am) other partners or influencers and share (am)  
23 joint content, for example. And I think, generally, it's easier to have campaigns there.

24 *Interviewer: So, would say that it's, you are mainly benefiting from this transformation?*

25 Interviewee 3: I would say yes, probably (am), one thing that we should bear in mind is that  
26 social media does not cover everything and we should also keep doing interviews, on TV and  
27 other channels as well.

28 *Interviewer: But what is the role of social media in your work, particularly?*

29 Interviewee 3: (Am), well in my work I can promote what we have been doing (am) on let's say  
30 improving the business environment which is an economic side or EU-related issues (pause), so  
31 it's mostly about promoting own content and working with others.

32 *Interviewer: What about post-Brexit situation, does Brexit affect your social media related*  
33 *activities? If so, how?*

34 Interviewee 3: Not really, no. After the referendum nothing has changed.

35 *Interviewer: Okay, so maybe we can talk about something a bit different. I would like to move on*  
36 *to more management aspect of the problem. So, how does the communication plan of the British*  
37 *government is articulated in your organization and can you give some specific examples of*  
38 *activities or tactics when it comes to deliver British government policies or messages as well as*  
39 *to your organization?*

40 Interviewee 3: Mhm, I think that's mainly for the communication officer (am) in relation to  
41 Brexit for example, when we prepare the ambassador for interviews I do give my input. But in  
42 terms of sharing or amplifying messages that are coming directly from the centre, I've got no  
43 involvement on that.

44 *Interviewer: So, how do you perceive collaboration between different departments? I mean, the*  
45 *communication and press officer with, let's say, what are you doing.*

46 Interviewee 3: Well, I think we need more coherence here. But because the central content is  
47 usually kind of amplify this (laughing) or retweet that, it's difficult for us to, to plan. But for  
48 example, even though I am not press officer, I have subscribed to the press officers' distribution  
49 list so I see what's coming from London. Although it's not my responsibility to act on it, I am  
50 basically involved in terms of the information.

51 *Interviewer: You still need to amplify the British government channels official, but you need to*  
52 *adjust it to local context, how does work?*

53 Interviewee 3: Well again, that's not my job. I am aware of what's coming from London. If an  
54 advice is needed, the press officer approaches me.

55 *Interviewer: And you're giving your input?*

56 Interviewee 3: Yes.

57 *Interviewer: So how would you define the communication and press officer's work? Do you think*  
58 *that the approach is helping this work to go through and be successful?*

59 Interviewee 3: Well, actually I am not sure what deal of content is coming, we actually retweet  
60 or amplifyin' or we actually us in a sense. Unless I go and check Embassy's accounts. So, I think  
61 (pause) we could be better at that, probably. (Laughing) I guess. Yeah, but.. yeah.

62 *Interviewer: When it comes to social media, to what extent you are engaged and how does the*  
63 *communication and press officer is engaging you or this is something that you are not*  
64 *particularly involved?*

65 Interviewee 3: No, social media side he is leading so I am not involved.

66 *Interviewer: Okay, but can you give some examples of successful collaboration or challenging*  
67 *one when it comes to social media? Examples from your own experience even though you are not*  
68 *directly involved?*

69 Interviewee 3: Yeah, they are kind of centrally generated campaigns (am). Before the purdah, we  
70 had the Global Britain campaign (am) and I felt there were some really good visuals we can use  
71 and we can tailor for the local audience, really nice pictures, with some content, promoting  
72 things that the UK is leading on or UK excellence. So, I was really keen to do that but because it  
73 had to involved the press officer, the commercial section, political section.. It was more like a  
74 joint effort and probably because we didn't have enough buy-in, or some other reasons, I am not  
75 really sure, but we couldn't do that. Which I found was (pause) unfortunate and missed  
76 opportunity.

77 *Interviewer: Talking about that, what do you think are the key factors for successful*  
78 *collaboration? Is it about planning, is it about task distribution or organizational structure,*  
79 *resources..?*

80 Interviewee 3: It's about planning (am), it's about prioritizing, it's about buy-in, it's a lot about  
81 camping things, why you have to do it (am). And it's about who actually does the job because  
82 we've been in very busy times, so it's about personal commitment as well - commit time and  
83 efforts. And even that sometimes we have had this, we haven't always been successful at using  
84 what has been on offer.

85 *Interviewer: What do you think are the reasons for that or just..?*

86 Interviewee 3: Work pressure (am), probably is the most, this the key factor, the leading factor  
87 but also to get the others involved interested.

88 *Interviewer: Okay, you mentioned commitment and talking about that, how do you see your role*  
89 *in building the image of the UK here in Bulgaria as a member of the British Embassy?*

90 Interviewee 3: Well, I think our work, our strategy, overall comms strategy, is (pause) in the  
91 making. So, I am not really sure, if I have to be frank, I am not really sure what my role is (am),  
92 what.. I've been trying different approaches. So far if I have something that I need to promote, I

93 approach the press officer. But (am) in terms of working more on specific things like previously  
94 planned we haven't done much of that. (Am) are we talking about only social media now?

95 *Interviewer: Well, basically social media but yeah, comms as a whole..Internal communication..*

96 Interviewee 3: Yeah. Also I am not really sure, with interviews who should be leading. I mean,  
97 as someone responsible for EU affairs, I realised I have to give my input but I think probably  
98 because the press officer usually gets all the lines and everything, the most up-to date and most  
99 recent scripts, should be.. There is no clear division who does what which sometimes bother me  
100 (laughing). I am not really sure to what extent I should be involved, should I, shouldn't be  
101 involved. So, yeah, I think we need more clarity on that.

102 *Interviewer: To what extent you think that this inhibit the collaboration?*

103 Interviewee 3: We always find a way but the question on what price, what's the price.

104 *Interviewer: Yeah, what's the easier and sufficient what and how..*

105 Interviewee 3: Yeah. I (pause) mean. For example, I will give you an example. I worked on an  
106 engagement plan following (am) the activation of article 50 and part of this overall engagement  
107 was media plan and a social media plan. So, I didn't have basically the press officer was  
108 responsible for the media and the social media part of the overall engagement plan. So my  
109 involvement is not that much into that. He is basically leading on that. But when it comes to  
110 organising the individual bids of this plan let's say interviews etc, etc, then my involvement  
111 comes in. But it's not really clear how (laughing). Case by case rather than who does what.

112 *Interviewer: As you mentioned from the beginning the communication and press officer is the*  
113 *person who is aware of the communication plan of the British Government. So, does that mean*  
114 *that he is the one who needs to give this clearance and he is the one who has to activate this*  
115 *collaboration between different departments?*

116 Interviewee 3: I think so, I think the press officer holds everything (laughing). Where we should  
117 be focusing, on what, be the one encouraging the others to be more active and, and to basically to  
118 each event we do or each activity we do, he should encourage us and to think of or suggest even  
119 and work on additional things or opportunities we can do. So, we can add value to this particular  
120 activity.

121 *Interviewer: The example that you gave me makes me think that you still need to work on that*  
122 *and maybe to discuss it more with the press officer..*

123 Interviewee 3: Probably (laughing). As I say, I am not really sure how structure-wise how this  
124 works, so yeah.

125 *Interviewer: Anyway, he is leading on this things but do you think that all this work on building*  
126 *the image of the UK here in Bulgaria is shared responsibility?*

127 Interviewee 3: Of course.

128 *Interviewer: How would you asset this here, in your organization?*

129 Interviewee 3: We did a research with a marketing research agency and we were told that we  
130 enjoy good brand, the UK is well-perceived in the country but we need to increase our visibility  
131 cause more people don't know, for example, that we do support business relations. They think  
132 that the embassy is just an organization, a fancy one, reputable one but without much (am), how  
133 to put it, activities behind. So, I think, we need to, we are actually working on this, but to  
134 promote ourselves and the activities we do better.

135 *Interviewer: How do you think you can do that? Is social media one of the tool?*

136 Interviewee 3: Yes. social media is one of the tools but also increased visibility in terms of us  
137 organizing own events. Of course, this very much depends on the availability of the senior  
138 management, their views, of course. (Am), more public appearances, more active relations with  
139 different set of organizations not just the usual suspects but having more regular contacts, yeah.  
140 So, many ways to do that.

141 *Interviewer: So, I guess the need for clear strategy now is even more urgent..?*

142 Interviewee 3: Well, I think we are very good writing strategies and plans, we failed on the  
143 implementation phase (laughing). Yeah, we have a very nice plan of engagement but things  
144 changed now with the elections announcement etc, etc., we have to reconsider what we do. We  
145 had few events scheduled but we need to cancel them so..we have to think about plan B now  
146 already. But that's only the engagement plan I am talking about which is following the triggering  
147 of article 50. Of course, we need a big one, big strategy.

148 Interviewer: Thank you for this conversation.

149 Interviewee 3: Thank you.

1 **APPENDIX 5**

2 Appendix 5

3

4 Rozalina Ayrakova (Referred as Interviewee 4 in the project)

5 Senior Trade Advisor and comms mediator for the Department for International Trade.

6 The interview questions were answered in written form from the participant.

7

8 *What is your name?*

9 Interviewee 4: Rozalina Ayrakova

10 *How old are you?*

11 Interviewee 4: 28

12 *What is your nationality?*

13 Interviewee 4: Bulgarian

14 *What is your position at the British Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria?*

15 Interviewee 4: Senior Trade Advisor, Department for International Trade

16 *How long you have been working in the British Embassy in Sofia?*

17 Interviewee 4: Around 4 years

18 *In your view, how does social media has changed the way of communication in terms of*  
19 *diplomacy?*

20 Interviewee 4: Nowadays more and more diplomats use social media to reach out to a huge  
21 number of people and deliver their messages in a powerful and cost-effective way. Although,  
22 social media cannot replace the traditional diplomacy, I think diplomats use today's technologies  
23 and trends so they can be closer to people and interact with them on various levels – even by  
24 sharing personal experiences and thoughts.

25 *What is the role of social media in your work?*

26 Interviewee 4: We, at the Embassy use Facebook and Twitter mainly. As part of DIT, I consider  
27 social media as an effective way to promote the role of my team and the huge variety of activities  
28 and events we organise both locally and abroad. One of our objectives is to support UK business  
29 in Bulgaria so we use social media as an additional way to help increase their visibility in the  
30 market and work on brand awareness. Social media helps people learn more about the role of the

31 Embassy, especially when it's related to non-policy issues but on the opposite – on real business  
32 matters.

33 *Does Brexit affect your work in relation to social media related activities? If yes, how?*

34 Interviewee 4: Yes. Brexit is a hot topic all over the world. We are using social media to echo  
35 the British Government messages such as “Britain is Open for Business and UK is leaving the  
36 EU, but not Europe”, etc. Of course, the Ambassador and other colleagues deliver more public  
37 speeches and interviews on Brexit-related topics and this has to be rightly reflected in our comms  
38 plans. Additionally we think carefully about our comms content so it responds to topics that are  
39 of particular concerns locally, such as free mobility and the education for Bulgarians in the UK.  
40 Overall, Brexit made us have even more strategic and active engagement on social media.

41 *How does the Communication plan of the British Government is articulated in your organisation  
42 especially in the context of Brexit? Can you give examples of particular tactics/activities?*

43 Interviewee 4: Engaging with key stakeholders and influencers, speaking at public conferences,  
44 providing info about topics that of concerns/interest locally.

45 *On internal level, how do you communicate with the Communication and press officer (CPO) to  
46 ensure social media coverage of your organisation's messages as well as Government policies?*

47 Interviewee 4: Mainly by having chats, being updated with official information on any priorities  
48 or even restrictions.

49 *According to you, what is your role of the CPO when it comes to social media coverage of your  
50 organisation?*

51 Interviewee 4: I think the CPO should be able to see the big picture, spot the key moments, be  
52 initiative and provide strategic advice on i) how to best promote the activities of the Embassy ii)  
53 how to successfully engage with our key stakeholders and influencers iii) build positive image  
54 and raise the visibility of the Ambassador and the Embassy iv) respond to any outside issues  
55 (fore example, social media comments) that might be of risk to the reputation of the organisation

56 *How does CPO engage you in social media activities? Can you give examples of specific  
57 actions/tactics?*

58 Interviewee 4: By having chats about upcoming activities, by asking me to provide content and  
59 draft messages, then if necessary discuss on the best way to amend the post and of course on  
60 keeping me updated on the result - number of people reacted to the post, any interesting  
61 engagement with our stakeholders and lessons learned if any.

62 *What are the challenges when you need to communicate with people from different departments*  
63 *in terms of social media activities?*

64 Interviewee 4: On comms activities I mainly communicate with the CPO at our post. Maybe the  
65 challenge there is to get them on board as an expert to help with some strategic thinking so we  
66 can make the most of the DIT activity on social media. Given that the CPO is communicating  
67 with all sections at the Embassy and a lot of the focus is on the Ambassador's programme,  
68 sometimes it might be challenging.

69 *From your perspective, what are the key factors for successful collaboration with other*  
70 *departments in terms of social media activities (e.g. clear instructions/time frame/ strategy/task*  
71 *distribution/planning)?*

72 Interviewee 4: The most important factor to me is good and clear communication between teams.  
73 It is important to have chats and discussions on upcoming events so teams can agree on comms  
74 strategy in advance. This is very helpful to start planning allocating strict deadlines and  
75 individual's responsibilities.

76 *Can you give examples of successful or challenging experience of collaboration in terms of*  
77 *social media?*

78 Interviewee 4: Yes, we recently organised a big event on science and innovation which took place  
79 at Sofia Tech Park (STP). The event involved prominent British speakers, Bulgarian high-level  
80 Government officials, businesses and academia representatives. Based on the programme and the  
81 outcomes we wanted to achieve, DIT and CPO discussed our comms strategy and created a clear  
82 plan on how we were going to use different media channels to promote our work and the  
83 important guests. We shared photos and messages from the event, recorded videos with the  
84 speakers, promoted an interview with some of them on a popular TV news channel. During this  
85 process, we kept communicating with the comms officer of our co-partner (STP) which was of  
86 great importance for the overall media plan.

87 *Do you feel your role is important in relation to building post-Brexit image of the UK in*  
88 *Bulgaria? If yes, can you elaborate more?*

89 Interviewee 4: Yes. We communicate with companies both in Bulgaria and the UK and we often  
90 discuss with them post Brexit consequences and the impact it might have on the business.  
91 Together with colleagues from Political Section we make sure we keep engaging with our key  
92 stakeholders – i.e organising business breakfasts where prominent business can raise and discuss

93 their concerns, briefing them about latest news and information from London, deliver key UK  
94 Government messages.

95 *Do you perceive the communication goals of your organisation as shared responsibility? If yes,*  
96 *where do you place yourself and the CPO in this process?*

97 Interviewee 4: Yes- to an extent. For example, I am the comms champion for DIT Bulgaria. My  
98 role is to make sure we keep track of upcoming events and activities that we could promote on  
99 our social media channels and communicate that with the CPO. I am responsible for general  
100 comms actiities and coordination between our team and the CPO. However, of course, we're a  
101 team of 5 and each of us leads on different sectors, so it is their responsibility they feed back the  
102 necessary information and help with the particular messages we want to deliver.

## APPENDIX 6

Coding of data retrieved from interview with Nikolay Kolev

Question	Data item	Initial codes
1	<p>I believe it's changed, changed diplomacy a whole a lot. I think it become <b>more public facing</b>, (am) <b>more accountable to the public</b> and in a way (..) <b>more influential</b> to the regular people that diplomats would have been traditionally exposed to as much. And (..) I even think a few years back in the university I had a course about diplomacy which mentioned this <b>brand new thing</b> which was <b>amazing</b> - <b>digital diplomacy</b>. And even that was a few years back <b>things have changed so much</b> since then <b>constantly is changing</b> the way it works now.</p>	<p>Benefits Transformation Ongoing process Concepts Descriptions Brand new thing Constantly changing</p>
2	<p>It's very big, <b>it's hard</b> to put a percentage but maybe it's roughly about at least the third of the work that we do in the comms team. (Am) (..) it's <b>definitely very important</b> to us because <b>it's the way to communicate directly</b> with the public whether that is Bulgarians or British nationals. (Am), and we believe it's a way in which we can <b>tell the public directly</b> what we want to tell them and it <b>is an opportunity</b> for us to <b>innovate</b> and also to do, <b>to deliver our messages</b> well. So, (am) it's definitely <b>something very important for us</b>.</p>	<p>Applicability Usage Work Goals Importance Opportunity</p>
3	<p>Yes, of course. As <b>an EU-based embassy</b>, (am) (..) we obviously <b>include Brexit messages</b> in the work that we do (am) obviously it is a <b>sensitive subject</b>. (Am) but we try to</p>	<p>Organization's characteristics Job objectives</p>

	<p>communicate clearly Government's position to the public regardless of whether this is concerns of Bulgarians living in the UK or concerns for British nationals are living in Bulgaria. (Am), there are also considerations around events that don't necessarily (am), or events rather that are political in nature in the UK but they reflect on the work that we do such as elections. So, for example, before the referendum for Brexit and also now (am) with the general elections coming up, there is purdah. So, we can't really talk about this during this time so definitely it changes a lot the way that we work.</p>	<p>Policy Alignment Audiences/target groups Influential events Consequences</p>
4	<p>Mhm. (Am), Brexit and the Communication plan around it by the British Government is, for us, as an embassy it is treated as any other plan or strategy or strategic priority that we have (am), we are well aware that it is more sensitive for the public but we try to treat it very professionally and approach it in the same way as we would any other Government's policies that we have to communicate. So, it is very much about amplifying the messages coming out of London, clarifying them for the public (am) and then in terms of how does particularly reflects in our work it is very much about doing media engagement, giving interviews, generating that kind of online content, public events and appearance as in public lectures, so those kind of things.</p>	<p>Approach Job objectives Attitude Strategic Plans</p>
4.	<p>Yes, this is something that every team has been made aware of the Government communications plan so they amend their approach to how they are doing their day-to-day work</p>	<p>Projects Day-to-day work Changes</p>

	<p>accordingly. (Amm), and obviously that applies more to some teams rather than for others. For example, the political and the commercial team, this would influence more than it would some of the other teams in the embassy. (Am), but obviously for anything that is coming up especially if it's Brexit related event (amm), that changes the way that we do work but also very much goes into the other typical processes that we have - (am) for the embassy's events or projects that we do. So, we just go down those, the message is different because it's a Brexit event rather than, let's say, Education is Great, or something like that, but the process and the way that we do our work is the same.</p>	<p>Brexit-related events Departments</p>
5	<p>Yeah. (Am) so, our aim at the embassy is to align the way that we do communication and (pause) it is something that we've been working on very hard to develop our processes so that other teams are more in tune with how to do this, as a best practice, and also be easier for all teams regardless of whether it's comms or some of the other teams to sort of to make that that happen. So, in terms of practical things that we are down to make this happen we have the weekly social media plan, we (am) distributed out to teams sort of planning how we will communicate about events especially on social media but also off social media. (Am), we ask for teams' input before and after we send this out. We have communications calendar at the embassy which we circulate periodically, usually once a month - asking teams to input and say this is what we have coming up and this is the kind of engagement or media activities that we would like around this. And then also one of the first things that we sort of</p>	<p>Efforts Working in progress Aims Alignment with the British Government Tactics Activities Agreement Management Management tasks Task distribution Clear process</p>

	<p>stated when I started in the embassy was to create a social media process because we wanted to streamline how we post things, so we just made a very clear process which was cleared with all teams in the embassy, am, that whenever they have something coming up and they want to do social media about it these will be the steps, this is how it will work, this is the information they need to provide, this sort of service level that the comms team or personnel would provide and then the quality assurance that will go before posting. This was all set up as a process.</p>	
6	<p>(Am), I think in the beginning people obviously people were a bit resistant to change (am), but at the end I believe that teams were very open to this change ultimately and they took it on board even if obviously was learning for both sides. (Am), but I believe it made our work much better now and we are much more organised and much quicker now because of it in terms of how we do comms and social media.</p>	<p>Transformation Organizational change Process of learning Improvement Evaluation Timing</p>
7	<p>Well, so, there have been different elements to it and I think the main part is still very much about the planning and identifying opportunities. (Am), sort of planning the best way to do activity whether that is smaller plan or just one off post that we do, or a bigger strategy that we develop but it is also much about coordinating comms work around the embassy. So, getting the right information from different teams streamlines that into a finished product that we can put out. (Am) and also very much about also generating the content myself. Even though we try most of the time to</p>	<p>Elements of successful collaboration Establishment of values Shared responsibility Coordination Cross-departmental work</p>

	<p>delegate that to teams as well. So, it is a shared effort that we try to establish.</p>	
8	<p>I believe it is very much about initially having a very clear process. So, outlining where the lines of responsibilities are. I believe it is also down to good planning. I know the time is a very valuable asset and we don't always have it. But even within a limited timeline or time frame is important to account for the comms element and I am happy to say that this is increasingly the case at the embassy. Then it is very much about reciprocal efforts so sticking to the arrangements that was made and just distributing the tasks accordingly and everyone sticking and to do what they should do within the arranged time line. And then, obviously, as I said, a bigger push or campaign, it would be also a matter of sitting down and having a bigger strategy and planning, meetings and so on. But that is, that is, something else and it is a bigger, it's more of an exception to day to day work.</p>	<p>Day-to-day work Time factor Shared responsibility Common awareness</p>
9	<p>Yes. well, it has to be because these are the instructions that we receive from London and we effectively have to communicate this in Bulgaria, that is our role as an Embassy.</p>	<p>Alignment Mission Effective communication</p>
10	<p>Yeah, sure. (Am), there are, I think, many success stories, especially when it comes to communicating with other departments. I believe our commercial team have become very good at doing that. They organised events, promoting</p>	<p>Sharing experience Organizational change is a challenge</p>

	<p>trade and investment in Bulgaria and (pause) they've taken on board every recommendation they've been given and communicate effectively and quickly with us, giving the content that we want and even if they have something that they have the slightest concern about or they want to be more ambitious about it - they always come to us and talk about. And I think, was it the Science and Innovation forum, is a prime example, they've took on board something as a template of how they want to communicate and they sort of implemented that working with you and I believe that was also very, very successful. (Am), in terms of challenges, as I say, anytime there is change, there is obviously (pause), it's tricky because it has to change the way that people work. (Am) in terms of establishing processes, for example, we want to streamline the way that we deal with consular messages on our social media channels, and that has been something that we've been working with the consular team to establish process there. It is a challenge to establish where those lines are and exactly who do what and how much of. (Am), but it is ultimately offer the best, so I believe this will be a success at the end as well.</p>	<p>Successful stories of collaboration Communication process Characteristics of communication process</p>
11	<p>It's a negotiation in the end and we have to find the best scenario that works for everyone so there might be a misunderstanding or disagreement on a subject but that doesn't stop us and we continue to have those conversations until we find the scenario that works best for everyone.</p>	<p>Agreement on the process Working in progress Negotiation</p>
12	<p>Yeah, sure. So, I think in terms of the role of (pause) in</p>	<p>Embassy's</p>

<p>terms of building the opinion of people, the public opinion around Brexit and that in Bulgaria, that is something very important. (Am), obviously <b>the comms angle to social media, angle to it is much more important than it might have been if this have happened 10 or 20 years ago.</b> Ultimately, the negotiations between governments, and the UK Government and the EU and different governments will be ultimately <b>decide the future relationship</b> but it also, <b>I believe, it will be very much about the public perception of how that is going and how the UK is presented in Bulgaria. And the Embassy is in a large way responsible for that I believe as well.</b> Not just in communicating what London is saying but also in their own right with their projects here. So, I believe it is very important for the image of the UK in Bulgaria post-Brexit and in terms of well saying, was it shared responsibility - yes. <b>I personally believe very much that this is an all embassy effort to do communications and to communicate externally. Communications and especially digital is increasingly growing importance, it's changing the way that diplomacy works.</b> Not just because of the way traditionally media works but especially because of social media and <b>I believe that more and more people from the embassy and foreign ministries from everywhere will become involved in digital and social media work.</b> And I believe that people ultimately more and more be included in generating their own content. <b>Probably different teams having different channels, just talking into the future.</b> I believe that's where things will go. So, probably this is the way it's gonna look in a few years but for now <b>we are doing the best</b> that we can <b>with the resource and time that we have</b></p>	<p>responsibility in Brexit-context Social media and perceptions Future developments Comparison Digital diplomacy and social media Transformation New capabilities Shared effort Bulgarian context Organizational structure More social media channels More involvement in social media</p>
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	<p>and it is still a shared embassy push even though most of the things go through the comms person or team.</p>	
13	<p>Yeah. I believe, having a strategic approach is very important. I think that was one of the big ambition both for the embassy when I started, we tried to be as strategic as possible. Not just reactive in the way that we do our messaging. I think we definitely made progress in that sense and because we tried to look as much forward as we can and plan accordingly, we have been able to deal with some big challenges and big pushes. And I believe because we've been able to put much more and more effectively otherwise it would be a day by day thing. So in terms of (pause) strategic, I believe yes. What was your second question?</p>	<p>Planning Ambitions Progress Effective work</p>
14	<p>Oh, it's absolutely key, the way that it is in the embassy now it is relatively small embassy and small comms team, so I am fully relying on other people to help me out because if we are more strategic and ambitious like I said, it has to be all embassy effort. And I believe that is from commitment of people here at the embassy.</p>	<p>Organizational structure Shared effort for successes Commitment of staff</p>

## APPENDIX 7

Coding of data retrieved from interview with Theodora Maneva

Question	Data item	Initial codes
1	I believe that <b>communications before social media were a bit limited</b> and <b>now there is a little bit of a risk with social media.</b> For example, you are the Ambassador or the Deputy head of mission or somebody important and you tweet about something, I mean politically, this might be grabbed by the local media or international media, just at the spur of the moment. But if you have, haven't thought about it beforewards, it might be a risk of losing your job even. It has happened before.	Digital diplomacy The role of social media Risks
2	<b>I think it is quite beneficial and it is an easy way to communicate with everyone.</b> I mean, not only with the media but also with the every day, I mean, <b>with all the people around - I mean local expats, also people within the foreign office, people in the UK,</b> whoever picks it up.	Social media advantages Way of approaching people
3	In my work, it's very important <b>to reach our customers.</b> So, because, as you are aware, <b>the consular team is dealing with British nationals who are either residence in Bulgaria or tourists in Bulgaria.</b> So, we have campaigns which are (am) we target British nationals in Bulgaria mainly the tourist part. We have a social media campaign which is called "Take your pic" and our targets, target is young people between 14 and 35. And actually the idea is to give them some guidance, top tips, how to stay safe in Bulgaria while	Informal communication Consular team objectives Target groups Campaigns

	<p>they are here. But also (am) to communicate with them, engage with them, find out what they are interested in. So it's quite an informal way but our channel is a bit different from the Embassy's social media because we don't brand it. There is nothing to say in our campaign that actually it is a FCO or government branded Facebook or, because we have Twitter and Facebook. It's just something that comes out easily and (pause) how can I say, something that's natural to people, they just communicate with us because sometimes we have very good things to post and they are interested in what we are posting. We are also interested in events in Sunny Beach, finding out more about what people wish to get as an entertainment in the resort and everything like this. We also engaged with them, not only posting things.</p>	
4	<p>Yes. So this is the other part. The other part are our residents and actually we are trying to reach them through our official channels. So, mainly Facebook because what I see as the most popular social media in Bulgaria, let's say, social media channel is Facebook not Twitter. And most of our residents are elderly people. They are age 40 plus (am) 70th, 80th. So, people who are retired coming to Bulgaria as well. So, most of them use Facebook to reach us, to find out more about our services, to inquire about a lifestyle thing while they are in Bulgaria. (Am), and the other way around is, we are also trying to reach them by doing project work with them, by asking them to take part in surveys that we.. We do last year, as far as I remember, we made a project and it was (am) targeting British nationals who live in bigger cities and they would like to register and they would like to become permanent residents in Bulgaria. So what we</p>	<p>Customer approach Services Social media channels Usage of Facebook Targets Two-way communication Collaboration with external partners</p>

	<p>did is we first surveyed with them, how they feel about registering with the Bulgarian authorities - is it an easy procedure, if they need something more. And then we decided to actually implement the project when we worked with the migration director and actually facilitated the process of registering in Bulgaria. So, this was a way of doing our own project but also reaching out our residents here.</p>	
5	<p>I believe it does but actually not in particular my team's work what can I say. I believe that it affects mostly how the political team or other teams at the embassy actually react on this but it does, yeah.</p>	Brexit influence
6	<p>Yeah, we have a very strict policy, I can say. But the thing is that we on one hand, the FCO has their own guidance on how to work and how to post things on Facebook/Twitter or any other Instagram if we are using, for example, we are using Instagram sometimes. The thing is however, we have these strict rules, we are, we are trying to abide them but we also wish to reach people so actually we are kind of flexible in a way. And as I said, my team is a bit different from other teams in the embassy. So, I can speak mostly about our policy which is a bit different.</p> <p>So, our policy is to be more light hearted, to communicate with younger people and to give them more information, to try to help them actually. And social media for us, I can give you an example of a recent case that we had in Macedonia. We had the guy who was robbed in the middle of nowhere, obviously. He was going by bike through</p>	<p>Strict policy and rules</p> <p>Adapting to Bulgarian context</p> <p>Team's characteristics</p> <p>Policy approach</p>

	<p>different countries but it happened in Macedonia. So, he was really afraid, he went on a tree and hide there for a while. So, what he did was, meanwhile he texted his father on Facebook explaining the situation, giving his location by actually setting the location where he was in Macedonia and this is how we found him, how the Macedonian police found him and on the next day they actually resolved almost the whole case. They found the perpetrators and, they were obviously sentenced.</p>	
7	<p>Mhm. I work actually with the Communication and press officers in three countries - in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. And actually communication is quite smooth, quite good because we have been in touch initially before we started doing any consular work on social media, find out what our strategies are and how we will approach people on Facebook. In Bulgaria, our most recent things that we receive on Casebook, oh sorry, Facebook, are British nationals trying to find more information about our services. But also we get quite a lot of Bulgarians and other third country nationals contacting us for visas or for any type of lifestyle inquiries. So, this is what we are doing here most often but we also have strategy when we have any types of projects and campaigns and we would like to give more information about our projects. And reach some of our residents, let's say, it's the easiest way to communicate information when we would like to invite somebody to our events. We do sometimes outreach events in different parts of Bulgaria, let's say Veliko Tarnovo which is popular with British nationals. So, whenever we have such an event we will advertise it on social media and actually quite a lot of</p>	<p>Planning in advance          Prepare strategy and approach          Strategy for social media          Service on social media          Strategy of campaigns/projects          Social media usage          Advertisement</p>

	<p>people come to this event because of social media. Because we have our own contacts and we email them and say go and tell your neighbours about this event but still social media is quite grand and it's an easier way to reach people.</p>	
8	<p>Okay, so the idea is that most of our cases, if it's urgent consular case, we won't discuss it on Facebook. Definitely, or Twitter. What we will do, we will send them a standing reply and this is usually drafted and done by our communications officer agreed with the consular team. And then actually ask them to just email us directly or contact us on our phones, switchboard number. So, this is the easiest way to communicate. Because sometimes there is quite a lot of (am) things which are just like data protective sensitive and we can't give information (am) - date of births or names of the people over Facebook.</p>	<p>Case specification Confidentiality Process Team coordination Collaboration</p>
9	<p>I think that the most important thing is communicating all the time no matter what channels of communications we use. I think that one to one meetings and the personal contact is really very important but in our modern times even if you are not in the office, you can just send a message to someone, what's up him or her, do send a picture or anything. So, It's easier to communicate, the idea is that you have the desire to do it.</p>	<p>Communication Ways of communication Technology</p>
10	<p>I think that we have good examples here at the embassy because we communicate quite well. We are small embassy, we are just based on two floors so it's very easy to go and say something to somebody. You don't have to send an</p>	<p>Organizational structure Embassy's location Evaluation of the</p>

	<p>official email or anything like this if it's not very, very sensitive or very important to discuss it in a particular way. (Am) I can give good examples, for example, if we have an event somewhere outside Sofia, let's say, and I have to communicate this information to our comms team here, it's very easy - just send a text message, send in what's up, send pictures. We can have a chat over the phone or chat over what's up asking and (pause), I mean just agreeing what we are going to do together.</p>	<p>communication Collaboration through social media</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>No, it's just natural thing. And I believe that we are doing quite well on this and it's the same, as I said to you, I communicate also with the comms teams in Romania and Macedonia which are quite different. Because in Macedonia we have only one person and a half doing the job. So, they don't have enough time to reply to any types of lifestyle inquiries. So, they will spend a little bit of time to do this but they would like to have targeted answers so we have provided them with such. And so far they didn't have any complaints. On the other hand, we have a big team in Romania with like 4 people working for comms in one way or another. (Am), and they are very enthusiastic to do more staff on consular. So, whenever we have let's say, music festival, like we have in the summer in Romania, we are just doing quite a lot of outreach but also communicating with the festival organizers and posting some of their staff and agreeing with them also to post our staff. So, it's a very, very good communication. It's like a threefold communication - it's the comms team, our consular team, I am based in Sofia but two of my colleagues are based in Romania, in Bucharest, in the office there and we also have</p>	<p>Factors for collaboration Organizational resources/capacity Team characteristics Organizational structure Commitment External partnerships</p>

	<p>the organizers of the event. So, it's quite a good way to communicate. When you offer somebody to retweet him, let's say, or to advertise their message if it's obviously (am) according to FCO policies, they are really very happy to also do the same for you.</p>	
12	<p>Yes, I do. I really believe that social media is the future of FCO kind of diplomacy, public diplomacy.</p>	<p>Future of digital diplomacy FCO goals Social media</p>
13	<p>Actually, Brexit is a bit sensitive because what has happened so far is we don't have quite a lot of information about what's going to be, I mean what is going to happen in a few months. So, it's a bit difficult to say to people something and if you are going out, saying something in a video, let's say, to the British residents, there will be quite a lot of questions. I mean, you have to have some strategy and to say something which is substantial. Just not go out and say to people - I really don't know but I do want to tell you something. So, I find myself as a person that can support let's say, the Ambassador whenever she does public announcement and I can explain this to Brits. I mean in more details because we have our consular lines on Brexit, obviously. They are not very clear as you know and some of the things are, it's a very first stage at the moment and it is difficult to give out any information.</p>	<p>No clarity on Brexit Communicate Brexit in Bulgaria Evaluation Strategic planning</p>
14	<p>Yeah, I believe, yes, in a way. I know that your team, comms team, is working quite a lot with the DIT, our commercial team, with us as well, with the political team</p>	

	<p>mainly, of course. And I mean, my opinion is that it works well but you should tell us how you feel about it. Because <b>it's a two way communication</b>, I mean if my team, for example, are not responding to your team in a good way, I really want to know that.</p>	
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**APPENDIX 8**

Coding of data retrieved from interview with Yoanna Bachovska,

Question	Data Item	Initial codes
1	<p>Well, <b>everything now is much quicker</b> I would say and you can get your messages, <b>to target your messages better to the audience</b> that you would like <b>to influence or engage with</b>. (Am) it's also <b>easier to work with (am) other partners or influencers and share (am) joint content</b>, for example. And I think, generally, <b>it's easier to have campaigns there</b>.</p>	<p>Social media advantages Improvement</p>
2	<p>I would say yes, probably (am), one thing that we should bear in mind is that <b>social media does not cover everything</b> and we should also <b>keep doing interviews, on TV and other channels as well</b>.</p>	<p>Combination of methods</p>
3	<p>(Am), well in my work I can promote what we have been doing (am) on let's say <b>improving the business environment</b> which is an economic side or EU-related issues (pause), so it's mostly about <b>promoting own content and working with others</b>.</p>	<p>Social media usage</p>
4	<p>Not really, no. <b>After the referendum nothing has changed</b>.</p>	<p>post-Brexit context</p>

5	Mhm, I think that's mainly for the communication officer (am) in relation to Brexit for example, when we prepare the ambassador for interviews I do give my input. But in terms of sharing or amplifying messages that are coming directly from the centre, I've got no involvement on that.	Collaboration Input Sharing knowledge
6	Well, I think we need more coherence here. But because the central content is usually kind of amplify this (laughing) or retweet that, it's difficult for us to, to plan. But for example, even though I am not press officer, I have subscribed to the press officers' distribution list so I see what's coming from London. Although it's not my responsibility to act on it, I am basically involved in terms of the information.	Need for improvement Challenging factors Commitment Initiative
7	Well again, that's not my job. I am aware of what's coming from London. If an advice is needed, the press officer approaches me.	Approach
8	Well, actually I am not sure what deal of content is coming, we actually retweet or amplifyin' or we actually us in a sense. Unless I go and check Embassy's accounts. So, I think (pause) we could be better at that, probably. (Laughing) I guess. Yeah, but.. yeah.	Evaluation Need for improvement
9	No, social media side he is leading so I am not involved.	Clearance on tasks Roles Objectives
10	Yeah, they are kind of centrally generated campaigns (am). Before the purdah, we had the Global Britain campaign (am) and I felt there were some really good visuals we can use and we can tailor for the local audience, really nice pictures, with some content, promoting things that the UK is leading on or UK	Build the UK image Unsuccessful collaboration Disagreement

	<p>excellence. So, I was really keen to do that but because it had to involved the press officer, the commercial section, political section.. It was more like a joint effort and probably because we didn't have enough buy-in, or some other reasons, I am not really sure, but we couldn't do that. Which I found was (pause) unfortunate and missed opportunity.</p>	<p>Problems</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>It's about planning (am), it's about prioritizing, it's about buy-in, it's a lot about camping things, why you have to do it (am). And it's about who actually does the job because we've been in very busy times, so it's about personal commitment as well - commit time and efforts. And even that sometimes we have had this, we haven't always been successful at using what has been on offer.</p>	<p>Factors for collaboration People in charge Management of task and time Commitment Experience</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Work pressure (am), probably is the most, this the key factor, the leading factor but also to get the others involved interested.</p>	<p>Factors for failure</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Well, I think our work, our strategy, overall comms strategy, is (pause) in the making. So, I am not really sure, if I have to be frank, I am not really sure what my role is (am), what.. I've been trying different approaches. So far if I have something that I need to promote, I approach the press officer. But (am) in terms of working more on specific things like previously planned we haven't done much of that. (Am) are we talking about only social media now?</p> <p>Yeah. Also I am not really sure, with interviews who should be leading. I mean, as someone responsible for EU affairs, I realised I have to give my input but I think probably because the press officer usually gets all the lines and everything, the most up-to date and most recent scripts, should be.. There is no clear</p>	<p>Experiments Comms strategy Approaches Task distribution Need for more certainty No clearance</p>

	<p>division who does what which sometimes bother me (laughing). I am not really sure to what extent I should be involved, should I, shouldn't be involved. So, yeah, I think we need more clarity on that.</p>	
14	<p>We always find a way but the question on what price, what's the price.</p>	
15	<p>Yeah. I (pause) mean. For example, I will give you an example. I worked on an engagement plan following (am) the activation of article 50 and part of this overall engagement was media plan and a social media plan. So, I didn't have basically the press officer was responsible for the media and the social media part of the overall engagement plan. So my involvement is not that much into that. He is basically leading on that. But when it comes to organising the individual bids of this plan let's say interviews etc, etc, then my involvement comes in. But it's not really clear how (laughing). Case by case rather than who does what.</p>	
16	<p>I think so, I think the press officer holds everything (laughing). Where we should be focusing, on what, be the one encouraging the others to be more active and, and to basically to each event we do or each activity we do, he should encourage us and to think of or suggest even and work on additional things or opportunities we can do. So, we can add value to this particular activity.</p>	<p>CPO's role Tasks Expectations</p>
17	<p>Probably (laughing). As I say, I am not really sure structure-wise how this works, so yeah.</p>	<p>No clear structure</p>
18	<p>We did a research with a marketing research agency and we were told that we enjoy good brand, the UK is well-perceived in</p>	<p>Visibility Image of the</p>

	<p>the country but we need to increase our visibility cause more people don't know, for example, that we do support business relations. They think that the embassy is just an organization, a fancy one, reputable one but without much (am), how to put it, activities behind. So, I think, we need to, we are actually working on this, but to promote ourselves and the activities we do better.</p>	<p>organization Need for better promotion</p>
19	<p>Yes. social media is one of the tools but also increased visibility in terms of us organizing own events. Of course, this very much depends on the availability of the senior management, their views, of course. (Am), more public appearances, more active relations with different set of organizations not just the usual suspects but having more regular contacts, yeah. So, many ways to do that.</p>	<p>Social media's role Senior management's role</p>
20	<p>Well, I think we are very good writing strategies and plans, we failed on the implementation phase (laughing). Yeah, we have a very nice plan of engagement but things changed now with the elections announcement etc, etc., we have to reconsider what we do. We had few events scheduled but we need to cancel them so..we have to think about plan B now already. But that's only the engagement plan I am talking about which is following the triggering of article 50. Of course, we need a big one, big strategy.</p>	<p>Strategy Failure More efforts</p>

## APPENDIX 9

Coding of data retrieved from interview with Rozalina Ayrakova

Question	Data item	Initial codes
1	Nowadays more and more diplomats use social media to reach out to a huge number of people and deliver their messages in a powerful and cost-effective way. Although, social media cannot replace the traditional diplomacy, I think diplomats use today's technologies and trends so they can be closer to people and interact with them on various levels – even by sharing personal experiences and thoughts.	Purpose of social media Influence Outreach Traditional diplomacy Interaction Personal influence
2	We, at the Embassy use Facebook and Twitter mainly. As part of DIT, I consider social media as an effective way to promote the role of my team and the huge variety of activities and events we organise both locally and abroad. One of our objectives is to support UK business in Bulgaria so we use social media as an additional way to help increase their visibility in the market and work on brand awareness. Social media helps people learn more about the role of the Embassy, especially when it's related to non-policy issues but on the opposite – on real business matters.	Usage of social media Promotion Objectives Additional tool Help
3	Yes. Brexit is a hot topic all over the world. We are using social media to echo the British Government messages such as "Britain is Open for Business and UK is leaving the EU, but not Europe", etc. Of course, the Ambassador and other	Brexit More strategic

	<p>colleagues deliver more public speeches and interviews on Brexit-related topics and this has to be rightly reflected in our <b>comms plans</b>. Additionally we <b>think carefully about our comms content</b> so it responds to topics that are of <b>particular concerns locally</b>, such as free mobility and the education for Bulgarians in the UK. Overall, <b>Brexit made us have even more strategic and active engagement on social media</b>.</p>	
4	<p>Engaging with key stakeholders and influencers, speaking at public conferences, providing info about topics that of concerns/interest locally.</p>	
5	<p>Mainly by <b>having chats</b>, being updated with official information on any priorities or even restrictions.</p>	<p>Ways of communication</p>
6	<p>I think the <b>CPO</b> should be able to <b>see the big picture, spot the key moments, be initiative and provide strategic advice</b> on i) how to <b>best promote the activities</b> of the Embassy ii) how to <b>successfully engage with our key stakeholders and influencers</b> iii) <b>build positive image and raise the visibility</b> of the Ambassador and the Embassy iv) <b>respond to any outside issues</b> (for example, social media comments) that might be of <b>risk to the reputation of the organisation</b></p>	<p>Role of the CPO</p>

7	<p>By having <b>chats</b> about upcoming activities, by <b>asking me to provide content</b> and <b>draft messages</b>, then if necessary <b>discuss on the best way to amend the post and of course on keeping me updated on the result</b> - number of people reacted to the post, any interesting engagement with our stakeholders and lessons learned if any.</p>	<p>Ways of engagement Feedback</p>
8	<p>On comms activities I mainly communicate with the CPO at our post. Maybe the <b>challenge</b> there is <b>to get them on board as an expert</b> to help with some <b>strategic thinking</b> so we can make the most of the DIT activity on social media. Given that the <b>CPO is communicating with all sections</b> at the Embassy and a lot of the focus is on the Ambassador's programme, sometimes it might be challenging.</p>	<p>Task distribution Challenges Time limitation</p>
9	<p>The most important factor to me is <b>good and clear communication</b> between teams. It is important to have <b>chats and discussions</b> on upcoming events so teams can agree on comms strategy in advance. This is very helpful to <b>start planning allocating strict deadlines and individual's responsibilities.</b></p>	<p>Factors for collaboration Clearance Communication</p>
10	<p>Yes, we recently organised a big event on science and innovation which took place at Sofia Tech Park (STP). The event involved prominent British speakers, Bulgarian high-level Government officials, businesses and academia representatives. Based on the programme and the outcomes we wanted to achieve, DIT and CPO <b>discussed our comms strategy of the event and created a clear plan</b> on how we were going to use different <b>media channels to promote</b> our work</p>	<p>Concepts for comms strategy and plan Comms activities on social media Variety of activities Role of the CPO</p>

	<p>and the important guests. We shared photos and messages from the event, recorded videos with the speakers, promoted an interview with some of them on a popular TV news channel. During this process, we kept communicating with the comms officer of our co-partner (STP) which was of great importance for the overall media plan.</p>	
11	<p>Yes. We communicate with companies both in Bulgaria and the UK and we often discuss with them post Brexit consequences and the impact it might have on the business. Together with colleagues from Political Section we make sure we keep engaging with our key stakeholders – i.e organising business breakfasts where prominent business can raise and discuss their concerns, briefing them about latest news and information from London, deliver key UK Government messages.</p>	
12	<p>Yes- to an extent. For example, I am the comms champion for DIT Bulgaria. My role is to make sure we keep track of upcoming events and activities that we could promote on our social media channels and communicate that with the CPO. I am responsible for general comms activities and coordination between our team and the CPO. However, of course, we're a team of 5 and each of us leads on different sectors, so it is their responsibility they feed back the necessary information and help with the particular messages we want to deliver.</p>	<p>Perceptions Communication role /tasks responsibilities Shared responsibility</p>

**APPENDIX 10**

Revising and naming the themes

**Theme 1: Social media communication process**

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Hard to develop our process	Communications before social media were a bit limited	everything now is much quicker	Brexit made us have even more strategic and active engagement on social media
Align the way we do comms	the FCO has their own guidance on how to work and how to post things on Facebook/Twitte	After the referendum nothing has changed.	
Clear the process with every team	we have these strict rules, we are, we are trying to abide them but we also wish to reach people so actually we are kind of flexible in a way.	more coherence here	
Ask for teams input	communication is quite smooth, quite good because we have been in touch initially before we started doing any consular work on social media, finded out what our strategies are and how we	it's difficult for us to, to plan	

	will approach people on Facebook.		
Resistant to change at the beginning	it's the easiest way to communicate information when we would like to invite somebody to our events.	we could be better at that	
Delegate to teams	we communicate quite well. We are small embassy, we are just based on two floors so it's very easy to go and say something to somebody.	our strategy, overall comms strategy, is (pause) in the making	
Having bigger strategy for campaigns but it is an exception from our day-to-day work	social media is the future of FCO kind of diplomacy, public diplomacy.	we are very good writing strategies and plans, we failed on the implementation phase	
In terms of establishing processes, for example, we want to streamline the way that we deal with consular messages on our social media channels	it's a two way communication		
we tried to look as			

much forward as we can and plan accordingly			
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**Sub-theme: Tools**

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Social media plan	Social media	Social media	social media as an additional way
Communication calendar	Official channels		Comms plans
Come and talk to us	one to one meetings and the personal contact is really very important but in our modern times even if you are not in the office, you can just send a message to someone, what's up him or her, do send a picture or anything.		Mainly by having chats, being updated with official information on any priorities or even restrictions.
	we communicate quite well. We are small embassy, we are just based on two floors so it's very easy to go and say something to somebody. You don't have to send an official email or anything like this if it's not very, very sensitive or very important to		By having chats about upcoming activities, by asking me to provide content and draft messages, then if necessary discuss on the best way to amend the post and of course on

	discuss it in a particular way.		keeping me updated on the result
	just send a text message, send in what's up, send pictures. We can have a chat over the phone or chat over what's up asking and (pause), I mean just agreeing what we are going to do together.		discussed our comms strategy of the event and created a clear plan

**Sub-theme: Purpose**

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Deliver messages, clarifying, amplifying	Communications before social media were a bit limited but now there is a bit of a risk	to target your messages better to the audience	deliver their messages in a powerful and cost-effective way. Although, social media cannot replace the traditional diplomacy,
Brexit messages	An easy way to communicate and reach our customers	to influence or engage with	closer to people and interact with them on various levels – even by sharing personal experiences and

			thoughts.
Treat Government's policies professionally	it's quite an informal way but our channel is a bit different from the Embassy's social media because we don't brand it. There is nothing to say in our campaign that actually it is a FCO or government branded Facebook or, because we have Twitter and Facebook.	it's easier to have campaigns there.	social media as an effective way to promote the role of my team
More influential: more public-facing	advertise it on social media	social media does not cover everything	Social media helps people learn more about the role of the Embassy
Our role as an embassy is to effectively communicate instructions coming from London		to promote ourselves and the activities we do better	social media to echo the British Government messages

**Theme: Factors for collaboration**

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Planning	the most important thing is	It's about planning (am), it's about prioritizing, it's about	good and clear communication

	communicating all the time no matter what channels of communications we use.	buy-in, it's a lot about camping things, why you have to do it (am). And it's about who actually does the job because we've been in very busy times, so it's about personal commitment as well - commit time and efforts. And even that sometimes we have had this, we haven't always been successful at using what has been on offer	
Identifying opportunities	Resources		chats and discussions on upcoming events so teams can agree on comms strategy in advance.
Coordinating comms work around the embassy			start planning allocating strict deadlines and individual's responsibilities.
Getting the right information from teams			

Shared effort we try to establish			
Having very clear process			
Time			
Commitment of people			

**Theme: Digital ownership**

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Generating the content for myself	the consular team is dealing with British nationals who are either residence in Bulgaria or tourists in Bulgaria.	After the referendum nothing has changed. mainly for the communication officer (am) in relation to Brexit	I think the CPO should be able to see the big picture, spot the key moments, be initiative and provide strategic advice on i) how to best promote the activities of the Embassy ii) how to successfully engage with our key stakeholders and influencers iii) build positive image and raise the visibility of the Ambassador and the

			Embassy iv) respond to any outside issues (for example, social media comments) that might be of risk to the reputation of the organisation
Coordinating comms work around the embassy	Brexit affects mostly how the political team or other teams at the embassy actually react on this but it does, yes	I do give my input	On comms activities I mainly communicate with the CPO at our post. Maybe the challenge there is to get them on board as an expert to help with some strategic thinking so we can make the most of the DIT activity on social media.
Getting the right information from teams	my team is a bit different from other teams in the embassy.	Although it's not my responsibility to act on it, I am basically involved in terms of the information.	My role is to make sure we keep track of upcoming events and activities that we could promote on our social media channels and communicate that with the CPO. I am responsible for general comms activities and coordination between our team and the CPO
It is relatively small embassy and small	I find myself as a person that can support	If an advice is needed, the press officer approaches me.	

<p>comms team, so I am fully relying on other people to help me out</p>			
		<p>social media side he is leading so I am not involved.</p>	
		<p>we didn't have enough buy-in, or some other reasons,</p>	
		<p>It's about planning (am), it's about prioritizing, it's about buy-in,</p>	
		<p>about who actually does the job because we've been in very busy times, so it's about personal commitment as well - commit time and efforts.</p>	
		<p>to get the others involved interested.</p>	
		<p>I am not really sure what my role is</p>	
		<p>no clear division who does what which sometimes</p>	

		<p>bother me (laughing). I am not really sure to what extent I should be involved, should I, shouldn't be involved</p>	
		<p>I think so, I think the press officer holds everything (laughing). Where we should be focusing, on what, be the one encouraging the others to be more active; suggest even and work on additional things or opportunities we can do. So, we can add value to this particular activity.</p>	
		<p>not really sure structure-wise how this works</p>	