

# Social Media as Organizing Vision?

An Interpretive Field Study of How Formal Organizations  
Respond to Social Media

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## Dansk resumé

Afhandlingen bidrager med nogle af de første brikker til en teoretisk funderet forståelse af, hvordan private og offentlige organisationer håndterer innovation inden for sociale medier. Afhandlingen indikerer, at medarbejdere i danske virksomheder og kommuner har igangsat brugen af sociale medier, men også, at teknologileverandører, nyhedsmedier og konsulentvirksomheder har bidraget til denne proces. Afhandlingen undersøger, hvorvidt sociale medier fungerer som en 'organiserende vision' for denne innovationsproces.

Afhandlingens empiriske udgangspunkt er, at private og offentlige organisationer er blevet aktive på sociale medier som Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube og Instagram inden for det seneste årti. Interessen for disse aktiviteter samler sig ofte om, hvor mange likes et Facebook-opslag har fået, hvorvidt sociale medier kan udnyttes af business-to-business virksomheder, og hvordan sociale medier kan bidrage til borgerinddragelse i en kommune. Selvom disse problemstillinger alle er interessante og relevante, så indfanger dette markedsvendte perspektiv imidlertid kun de sidste 100 meter af den maraton i sociale medier, som private og offentlige organisationer aktuelt gennemfører. Afhandlingen anlægger derfor et organisatorisk perspektiv, der inkluderer de processer, der går forud for og sker bagved den synlige aktivitet på sociale medier.

Det står imidlertid ikke lysende klart, hvad der sker i disse processer, og hvordan vi kan forklare dem. Dette kalder på studier af, hvad der er på færde, og hvordan vi begrebsliggøre området. Det er netop med henblik på at bidrage til denne forskning, at afhandlingen undersøger, hvordan private og offentlige organisationer reagerer på innovation inden for sociale medier.

Afhandlingen trækker på institutionel teori, herunder især 'organizing vision' litteraturen. Ud fra dette perspektiv fokuserer afhandlingen på organisatoriske processer for at kunne forstå og forklare, hvad der er på spil, når private og offentlige organisationer tager kampen op med sociale medier som Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn og YouTube. Betegnelserne innovation og sociale medier vedrører derfor ikke den tekniske dimension, men hvordan udfordringen fra de sociale medier håndteres organisatorisk.

Det empiriske grundlag i afhandlingen er organiseringen af sociale medier blandt de største 100 danske virksomheder, de 98 danske kommuner samt de tilknyttede aktører i det organisatoriske felt. For at afgrænse det meget sammensatte felt af sociale medier, er det alene

de sociale medier, som virksomheder og kommuner hver især aktivt har taget i brug, som afhandlingen undersøger. Det er primært Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+ og Instagram. Afhandlingen benytter en fortolkende tilgang, og undersøgelsen har fundet sted som et eksplorativt feltstudie i perioden 2011-2015.

Afhandlingens bidrag består af et litteraturstudie og tre empiriske artikler. Artikel 1 er et litteraturstudie af den eksisterende forskning i sociale medier inden for forskningsområderne informationssystemer, marketing og management. Studiet viser, at forskningen i sociale medier hovedsageligt fokuserer på online fællesskaber. Teoretisk benyttes teorier, der prognosticerer, og metodisk er baseret på spørgeskemaer og eksperimenter. Det viser også, at der kun findes få studier af, hvordan formelle organisationer reagerer på udfordringen fra sociale medier. Sidstnævnte findes imidlertid i forskningsbaserede tidsskrifter henvendt til praktikere. Litteraturstudiet bruger derfor disse studier sammen med institutionel teori som udgangspunkt for et forslag til fremtidig forskning.

Artikel 2 undersøger, hvordan de 100 største danske virksomheder og de 98 danske kommuner samt tilknyttede aktører i det organisatoriske felt reagerer på innovation inden for sociale medier. Artiklen viser, at der skabes et organisatorisk felt omkring sociale medier, og at blandt andet konsulentvirksomheder fungerer som iværksættere inden for feltet. Artiklen redegør for, hvordan de 100 største danske virksomheder og de 98 danske kommuner har brugt Facebook i perioden 2007-2015. Undersøgelsen viser, at der sker en stabil vækst i antallet af virksomheder og kommuner, som starter en Facebook side i perioden 2007-2015. Studiet viser imidlertid også, at brugen varierer meget. Det indikerer en adoptions- og implementeringsproces, hvor kommuner og virksomheder tøver eller eksperimenterer med brugen af Facebook. Artiklen afslutter derfor med en analyse af, hvorvidt betegnelsen sociale medier fungerer som en 'organiserende vision' eller snarere ligner et 'airline magazine syndrome'.

Artikel 3 zoomer ind på det organisatoriske niveau og undersøger, hvordan en stor dansk kommune reagerer på innovation inden for sociale medier. Ganske interessant viser studiet, at kommunen ikke driver en officiel Facebook side, men at den til gengæld har en vidtforenet aktivitet på sociale medier skabt på initiativ af lokale afdelinger og græsrodder. Studiet viser, at der eksisterer tre modsætningsfelter for kommunens praksis på sociale medier, bl.a. mellem lokale initiativer og central styring. Artiklen analyserer også, hvordan kommunen navigerer i dette felt af modsætninger. Den argumenterer for, at der frem for en

rational planlagt og fremadskridende proces er tale om en læreproces, hvor kommunen indgår i 'brydekampe' med modsætningerne.

Artikel 4 undersøger, hvordan en stor dansk multinational virksomhed reagerer på sociale medier. Artiklen fokuserer især på, hvordan enkeltaktører medvirker til at starte virksomhedens aktiviteter på sociale medier, og hvordan disse aktiviteter forandrer sig over tid. Artiklen afdækker et forløb i tre faser, der hver især bliver drevet frem af bestemte aktører, som indgår i bestemte modsætningsforhold og anvender bestemte retoriske træk for at navigere i processerne. Artiklen argumenterer for, at der ved en implementering af sociale medier ikke nødvendigvis sker en institutionalisering, da brugen af sociale medier ikke bliver legitimeret som 'den rette praksis'.

Afhandlingen viser, at der sker en stadig stigende adoption og implementering af sociale medier i danske private og offentlige organisationer. Til trods for dette indikerer afhandlingen, at sociale medier kun i et begrænset omfang tjener som en organiserende vision.



## Summary in English

The thesis contributes with some of the first building blocks for a theoretically founded understanding of how private and public organizations respond to social media innovation. The thesis indicates that employees in Danish firms and municipalities have initiated the use of social media, but also that technology vendors, news media and consultants have contributed to this process. The thesis studies whether social media function as an ‘organizing vision’ for this innovation process.

The empirical point of origin of the thesis is that private and public organizations have become active on social media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram within the past decade. The interest in these activities often concerns how many likes a Facebook posting has got, whether social media can be utilized by business-to-business corporations, and how social media may contribute to the involvement of citizens in a municipality. Even though these issues are all interesting and relevant, this market-oriented perspective does only capture the last 100 meters of the social media marathon that private and public organizations currently run. The thesis establishes an organizational perspective that includes the processes that precede and happen behind the visible activity on social media.

However, it is not entirely clear what is happening within these processes and how we can explain these. This calls for research on what is going on and how we can conceptualize the area. It is exactly in order to contribute to this research that the thesis investigates how private and public organizations respond to social media innovation.

The thesis draws on institutional theory, especially the organizing vision literature. From this perspective, the thesis focuses on organizational processes in order to understand and explain what is at stake when private and public organizations wrestle with social media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Therefore, the labels innovation and social media do not concern the technical dimension but rather how organizations cope with the challenge from social media.

The empirical basis of the thesis is the organization of social media among the 100 largest Danish companies, the 98 Danish municipalities and the associated actors within the organizational field. In order to delimit the very diverse area of social media, the thesis only investigates social media that companies and municipalities actively use. It is primarily

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+ and Instagram. The thesis uses an interpretive approach and the study has taken place from 2011-2015 as an explorative field study.

The contribution of the thesis consists of a literature review and three empirical papers. Paper 1 is a literature review of the recent research on social media within the disciplines of information systems, marketing, and management research. The review shows that research on social media predominantly focuses on online communities. The theories used are predictive and methodologically based on surveys and experiments. It furthermore shows that there are only a few studies of how formal organizations respond to the challenge from social media. The latter can, however, be found in research-based journals for practitioners. The literature review therefore uses these studies together with institutional theory as the point of departure for a suggestion for future research.

Paper 2 examines how the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities and associated actors within the organizational field respond to social media innovation. The paper shows that an organizational field around social media is created and that consultancies act as entrepreneurs within the field. The paper maps how the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities have used Facebook between the years 2007-2015. The study shows that there is a steady growth in the number of firms and municipalities that initiates a Facebook page in the period between 2007-2015. However, the study also reveals that the use is varying. This indicates an adaption and implementation process where municipalities and firms hesitate or experiment with the use of Facebook. Therefore, the study is completed by an analysis of whether the term social media functions as an 'organizing vision' or rather resembles an 'airline magazine syndrome'.

Paper 3 zooms in on the organizational level and studies how a large Danish municipality responds to social media innovation. Somewhat interesting the study shows that the municipality does not have an official Facebook page but also, however, that it has a ramified level of activity in social media created by local departments and grass roots. The study shows that there exist three fields of contradiction for the municipality's social media practice, among other things contradictions between local initiatives and central control. The paper furthermore analyses how the municipality navigates within this field of contradictions. It argues that what is happening is not a rationally planned and developing process but rather a learning process where the municipality wrestles with the contradictions.

Paper 4 studies how a large Danish multinational corporation responds to social media. The paper especially focuses on how individual actors help to initiate the corporation's social media activities and how these activities change over time. The paper reveals a process in three phases, each driven forward by certain actors who engage in certain contradictions and use specific rhetorical moves to be able to navigate in the processes. The paper argues that the implementation of social media not necessarily incurs an institutionalization process since the use of social media is not legitimized as 'the right thing to do'.

The thesis shows that there is a growing level of adoption and implementation of social media in Danish private and public organizations. Despite of this the thesis indicates that social media only to a limited extent serve as an organizing vision.



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# Introduction



# Introduction

“The popular IT literature insists on interpreting present conditions against future possibilities, while the OS literature interprets the present in terms of the past. What would be more effective for both technological and organizational analyses would be an empirical description of what is actually going on in practice today”.

(Orlikowski and Barley, 2001)

During the last two decades, we have witnessed a rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies commonly known as social media. Among the best known are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. Over two decades, hundreds of millions of people have started to connect and communicate on these social media websites. Figure 1 shows a timeline for some of the most proliferated social media websites in the western hemisphere.

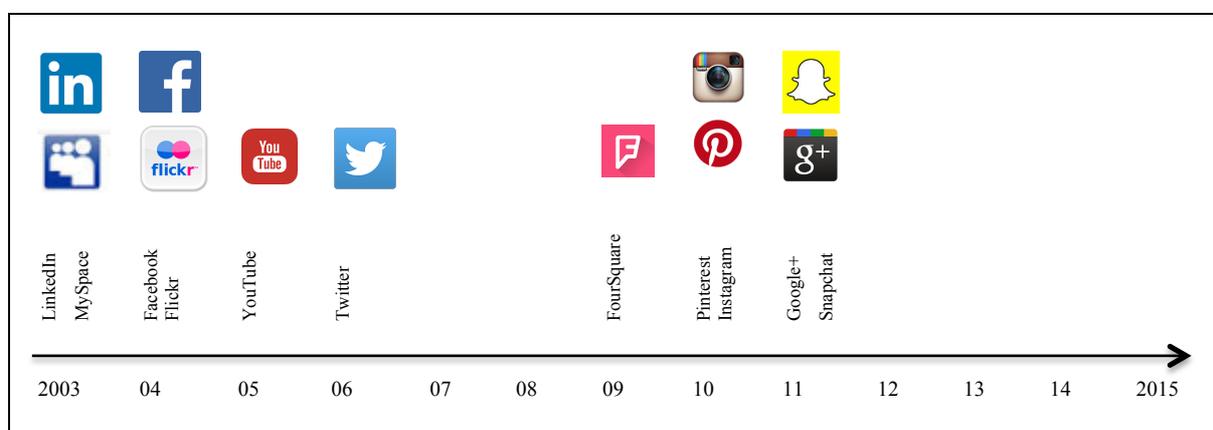


Figure 1. Timeline for some of the most proliferated social media websites.

The rapid proliferation of these social media websites, however, does not only concern individuals' private use. During the last two decades there has been a rise in formal organizations' use of social media. Surveys show that a large number of public and private organizations have started to use social media (Barnes & Lescault, 2014; Lundø, 2013), and that managers have great expectations about social media (Kiron, Palmer, Phillips, &

Kruschwitz, 2012). Formal organizations' use of social media, therefore, represents an important area for information systems research. Figure 2 shows two examples of formal organizations being present on Facebook: the pharmaceutical Novo Nordisk and Copenhagen Municipality.

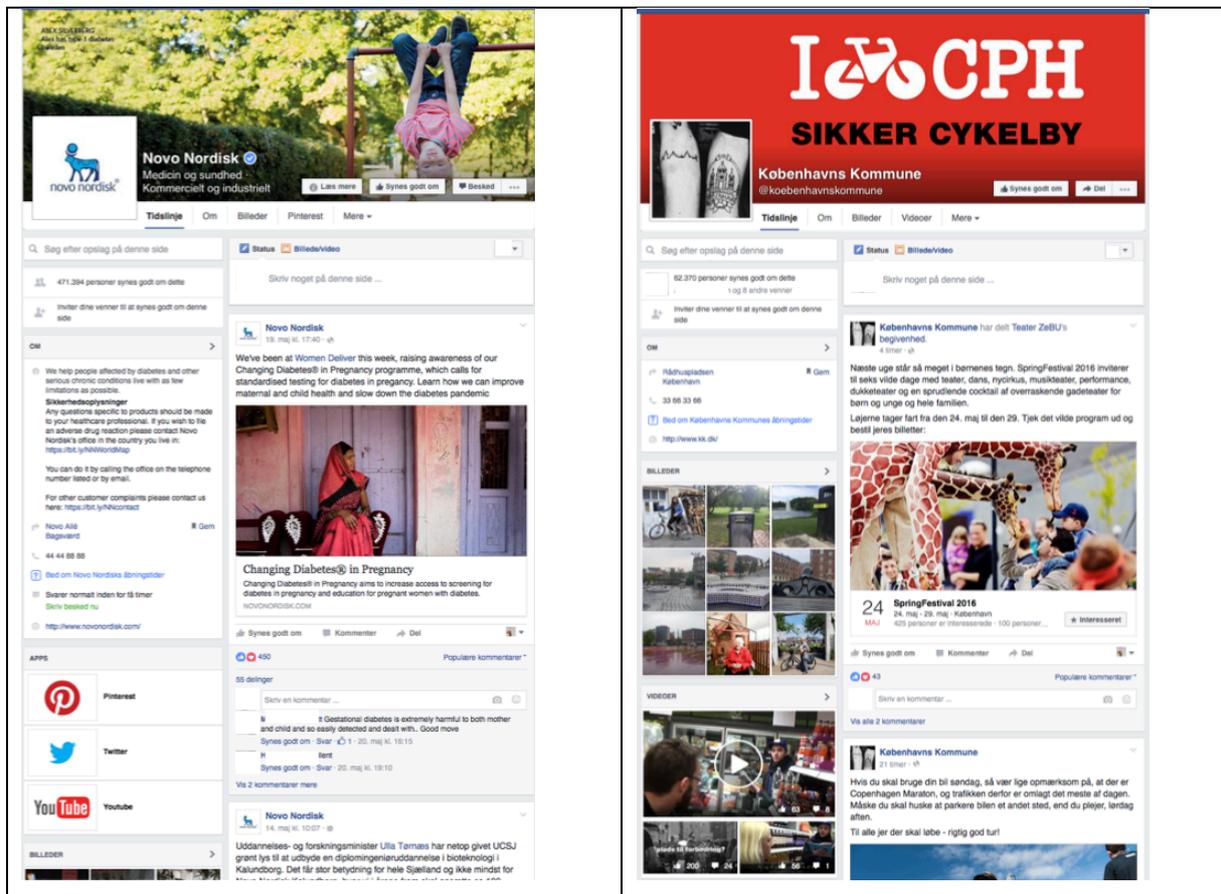


Figure 2. Novo Nordisk and Copenhagen Municipality on Facebook.

On this backdrop, I conducted a review of research on social media in major marketing, organization and information systems research journals. The review indicated that the majority of contributions focus on online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments (Haahr, 2014). The review furthermore indicated a paucity of literature on how formal organizations respond to social media, a finding confirmed by a former survey on social media research (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). While studies of interaction in online communities are relevant, this exclusive focus might constrain our understanding of social media. This thesis therefore prioritizes to study how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

How formal organizations respond to social media innovation is not entirely clear, and understanding the theoretical implications for information systems research is also challenging. While some of the managerial challenges associated with social media might be consistent with those already studied and conceptualized by information systems scholars, others might demand new theoretical understandings (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014). Part of this challenge is caused by the emergent state of social media as information and communication technologies. The technologies known as social media are evolving rapidly and include a variety of technological features. New social media platforms continuously dawn, and the existing ones undergo significant innovation processes. Part of this challenge is caused by the diverse and changing organizational use of social media. Organizations use social media in a variety of ways, in a variety of contexts, and change how they do so over time.

While some scholars have responded to this situation by suggesting definitions and giving managerial advice on social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011), others have argued that social media should be understood as evolving practices (Germonprez & Hovorka, 2013; Spagnoletti, Resca, & Sæbø, 2015).

To cope with these challenges, this thesis narrows the empirical scope by focusing on a specific set of social media websites and a specific set of organizations. The selected social media websites are those that in particular have caught interest and been adopted by formal organizations. These websites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, FourSquare, Flickr and Google+. The selected organizations belong to two organizational fields: the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities, including the associated institutional actors like technology vendors, business media, universities, and consultancies.

In order to investigate how formal organizations respond to social media innovation, the thesis draws on institutional perspectives as these have evolved within the information systems research discipline. Information systems scholars have argued in favor of using institutional perspectives for studying the intricate relations between IT and organizations (Avgerou, 2000b; Barley, 1986; Markus & Robey, 1988; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001; Orlikowski, 1992; Currie & Swanson, 2009). Recently, information systems scholars have argued for using the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997) and rhetorical perspectives to grasp social media innovation (Barrett, Heracleous, & Walsham, 2013;

Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010; Miranda, Kim, & Summers, 2015; Huang, Baptista, & Galliers, 2013). The thesis thus in particular draws on the organizing vision literature and recent rhetorical institutionalism in order to study social media with regard to innovation processes, multi-level interaction and agency.

The thesis employs interpretive principles for field studies as these are practiced within the information systems discipline (Klein & Myers, 1999; Walsham, 2006). The thesis hereby aims to study how formal organizations respond to social media as an emergent and contextual phenomenon and thereby extends interpretive approaches used in recent information systems research on social media (Germonprez & Hovorka, 2013; Scott & Orlikowski, 2009).

Drawing on institutional perspectives and employing an interpretive field study approach, the overall research question of the thesis is thus: *How do formal organizations respond to social media innovation?*

To summarize, the thesis is directed by a research question, a theoretical framework, a methodology, and an area of research, all leading to the contributions. To illustrate this, I have placed the thesis elements into Checklands (1985) seminal figure. See Figure 3.

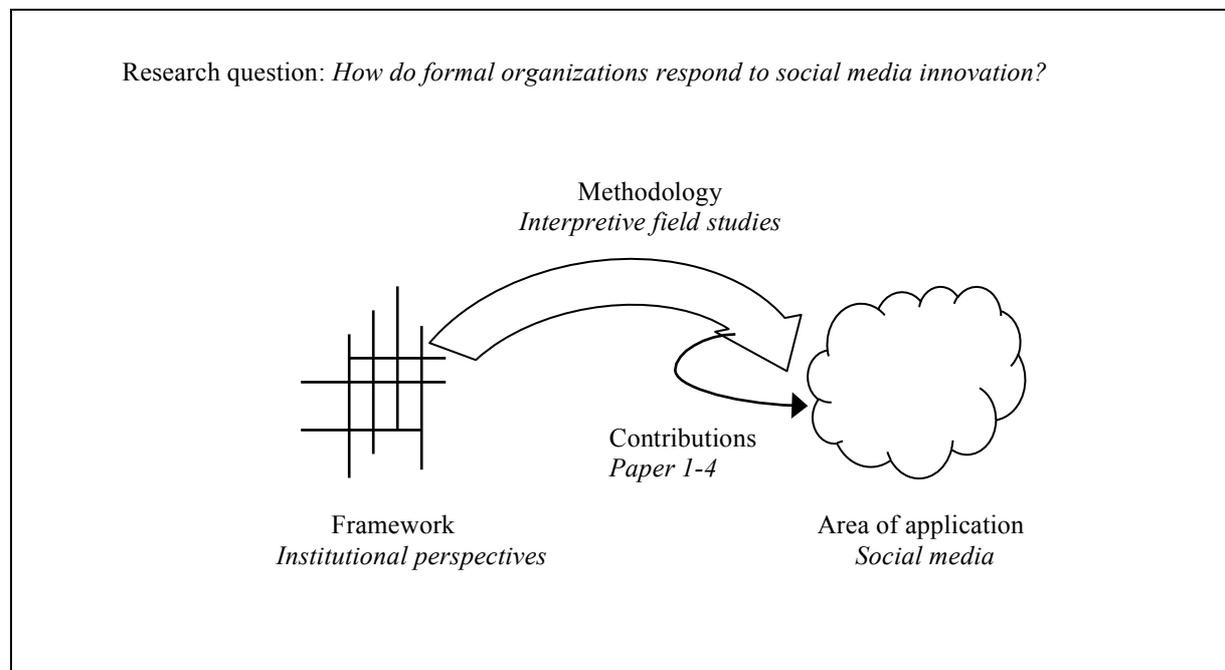


Figure 3. Thesis elements

The thesis investigates the research question through a literature review and three empirical papers. Paper 1, the literature review, covers recent research on social media in major journals within the disciplines of marketing, organization, and information systems research. Each empirical paper has a specific point of departure, and aims to include multi-level perspectives. Paper 2 studies how the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities, including associated actors, respond to social media. Paper 3 investigates how a large Danish municipality responds to social media. Finally, paper 4 analyzes how actors in a Danish multinational corporation respond to social media. See Table 1.

Paper 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reframing Social Media into an Institutional Perspective. A Literature Review</li> <li>• <i>What characterizes recent literature on social media?</i></li> <li>• Paper 1 reviews 20 major journals within the disciplines of information systems, marketing, and organization research with regards to area of research, conceptual framework, and employed research method.</li> </ul>
Paper 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Media as Organizing Vision? Behind the Facebook Adoption Curve</li> <li>• <i>How do private and public organizations respond to social media over time?</i></li> <li>• Paper 2 presents a field study of the 100 largest Danish firms, the 98 Danish municipalities, and the associated institutional actors conducted in the period 2011-2015.</li> </ul>
Paper 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrestling with Contradictions in Government Social Media Practices</li> <li>• <i>How is contradiction present in government social media practices?</i></li> <li>• Paper 3 presents a field study of a large Danish municipality conducted in the period 2012-2013.</li> </ul>
Paper 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracing an Organizing Vision on Social Media in a Multinational Corporation</li> <li>• <i>How do formal organizations respond to social media over time?</i></li> <li>• Paper 4 presents a field study of a large Danish multinational corporation conducted in the period 2011-2015.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Title, research question, and research setting for paper 1- 4.



## Recent Research and Theoretical Framework

A quick perusal in a broad scholarly database like Scopus shows that research on social media has experienced a considerable growth during the last decade. A search for contributions on how formal organizations respond to social media innovation, however, only results in a few hits. On this background I conducted a systematic review of recent research on social media in major journals within the disciplines of marketing, organization, and information systems research. This review showed a predominance of studies that focus on interaction in online communities, employ predictive theories and are based on surveys and experiments. Further, the review showed a paucity of research that focus on formal organizations, draws on process theories and is case-based. Paper 1 in this thesis accounts in detail for the review.

While studies of interaction in online communities are relevant for understanding social media, this exclusive focus may constrain our understanding of social media. Fortunately, research based contributions in information systems practitioner journals have focused on how formal organizations respond to social media and employed qualitative methods. While these contributions suggest guidelines for practitioners and hereby voice normative approaches, they can also work as points of departure for future research on how formal organizations respond to social media.

An interesting starting point for studying how formal organizations respond to social media is to cast light on the actual practices behind the adoption curves. In a study of the Fortune 500 US firms, Culnan et al. (2010) point to contrasts between formal adoption of social media and actual practices. The study of the Fortune 500 US firms reveals that 48% have fewer than 1000 fans, and 16% fewer than 100 fans on Facebook. This points to a discrepancy between the immense hype on social media in industry white papers and business media (Bergquist, Ljungberg, Zaffar, & Stenmark, 2013) and an illusory assimilation of social media (Fichman and Kemerer, 1999).

Another interesting starting point concerns the organizing of social media activities. Gallagher and Ransbotham (2010) in a study of Starbucks identify six challenges or dilemmas firms experience in organizing their social media practices. One of these challenges is balancing centralized and decentralized control of social media. However, despite the fact that decentral approaches are said to sustain innovation, Starbucks have chosen to employ central control of social media activities. Related to this issue, Deans (2011) focuses on how

corporate top management is best organized to harness social media. Studying how IT management is challenged by social media is highly interesting because it points to the need for conceptual rethinking of CIO roles and also to practical implications for who we address as relevant players in future empirical research on social media. While the focus on top management is relevant, it is also important to include how individual actors through informal activity often contribute to social media innovation (Gallaughar & Ransbotham, 2010).

Finally, Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen (2013) in a study of the Finnish airline company Finnair cast light on how a firm hires boundary spanning agents in order to fuel a social media campaign. The study in marginal notes reveals how a firm involves a marketing agency, hires boundary-spanning employees, and establishes a new department and formal roles as part of its response to emergent social media.

Other recent studies focusing on the very latest historical developments of information systems indicate that social media differs from acknowledged models. Yoo, Henfridsson, & Lyytinen (2010) focus on the new organizing logic of digital innovation and identify an architecture of modular layers of devices, networks, services, and content. Tilson, Lyytinen, & Sørensen (2010) suggest to reconceive digital infrastructures as a category of IT artifacts characterized by paradoxes of change and control.

In line with these studies of digital infrastructures, Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen (2013b) take social media as their point of departure for theorizing IT enablement and synergistic relationships between IT assets such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Social media are thus used to illustrate the need for new conceptualizations by pointing to how value production on these platforms today transgresses the traditional boundaries of the firm, and therefore are not necessarily beneficial for existing organizations, a phenomenon that is conceptualized as generative capacity (Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen, 2013b).

As a common demarcation, these recent contributions point to contradictions in various forms as central for understanding how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. The contradictions are manifested as discrepancies between industry discourse and daily practice, as dilemmas in management of innovation, as paradoxes of change and control, and as a generative capacity that transgresses the traditional boundaries of the firm,

### *Theoretical framework*

In order to cope with the issues indicated by recent research on how formal organizations respond to social media innovation, this thesis draws on institutional theory as it has evolved within the information systems research discipline over the last three decades (Currie, 2011; Nielsen, Mathiassen, & Newell, 2014). In particular the thesis draws on the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997) because of its analytical focus on the intricate interplay between practice and discourse in IT innovations.

The motivation for drawing on institutional perspectives is a result of the literature review conducted in Paper 1. Paper 1 shows that while there are many possible approaches to studying social media, the predominance of recent research in major journals focuses on online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments. By drawing on institutional theory, it is the aim of the thesis to supplement the predominant theoretical approaches found in recent research. Institutional perspectives can facilitate such a focus on formal organizations through interpretive field studies. As a supplement to recent research, it is in particular the aim of the thesis to prioritize empirical richness and thereby grasp the emergent and contextual perspectives in how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

The choice of institutional theory as the fundamental conceptual framework for this thesis is thus fundamentally motivated by its ongoing critique of rational-actor and functional theories (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001). Within the information systems discipline, this continuous critique of deterministic and rationalistic approaches has for example resulted in arguments for prioritizing process studies and for contextualizing the IT artifact (Currie, 2009).

Before accounting for the conceptual framework used in this thesis in detail, it is important to stress that institutional theory is a diverse theoretical body spanning both economics, political science, and sociology (Scott, 2008). It is further worth noting that despite the wording ‘institutional theory’ might signal a consistent and finalized theoretical body, it is not a settled science (Weick, 2016), but rather an ongoing theoretical grounding (Scott, 2008). The motivation for drawing on institutional theory is thus also this history of an ongoing theoretical grounding, that is, a conversation among scholars: how do we better account for the observations we make than contemporary theories ask us to talk? (March & Olsen, 1984). During the past decades this ongoing theoretical grounding has in particular

concerned how to surpass macro level perspectives, for example in contributions on micro-foundations (Powell & Colyvas, 2008) and in contributions on rhetorical institutionalism (Hoeftler & Green Jr., 2016). This ongoing grounding of institutional theory has also taken place within the information systems discipline. As accounted for in recent receptions of institutional perspectives within the discipline of information systems research, this process reaches at least back into the nineteen eighties, and in particular concerns bridging macro and micro perspectives, and related to this, extending institutional theory into the realms of sense making and rhetoric (Currie, 2011; Nielsen et al., 2014; Nielsen, Mathiassen, & Newell, 2016).

The motivation for drawing on institutional perspectives is in particular recent emphasis on the necessity of considering not only social and materiality aspects, but also symbolic dimensions in order to adequately understand contemporary IT innovation processes in organizations (Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011). This interest in symbolic dimensions points back to seminal institutional contributions (Feldman & March, 1981), and forward to the most recent works on rhetoric (Hoeftler & Green Jr., 2016). In regard to this interest in symbolic dimensions in IT innovations, the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997) adds a dedicated focus on the intricate interplay between practice and discourse in early phases of IT innovation. The organizing vision literature therefore in particular is relevant for studying how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

By including the rhetorical perspectives in the organizing vision literature (Ramiller, 2001, 2006), the thesis aims to extend not only recent interest for rhetorical perspectives in institutional theory (Green, 2004; Hoeftler & Green Jr., 2016), but also recent contributions by information systems researchers who have argued for the relevance of such rhetorical perspectives for the study of social media (Barrett et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2013; Huang, Baptista, & Newell, 2015; Miranda et al., 2015). The rhetorical perspectives in particular are relevant in order to study the micro foundations of how formal organizations respond to social media, for example as communicative ambidexterity (Huang et al., 2015). Further, rhetorical perspectives are relevant in order to study how social media innovation to a large degree involve meaning systems and processes and capabilities that transgress the boundaries and practices of formal organizations (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013b; Mohajerani, Baptista, & Nandhakumar, 2015; Tilson et al., 2010).

Recent accounts for the historical development of institutional theory within the information systems research discipline indicate that it includes a diversity of research approaches (Currie, 2011; Nielsen, Mathiassen, & Newell, 2014). In order to describe the unique theoretical approach employed in this thesis, I have found it clarifying to focus on three constitutive dimensions in institutional theory. In the following attempt to specify the theoretical position of the thesis, I will thus draw on the seminal distinction between causal agency, logical structure and level of analysis by Markus & Robey (1988). Despite not explicitly referring to this seminal paper, a recent editorial on a special issue on institutional theory in information systems research exactly draws on these dimensions when it points to the importance of exploring the role agency plays in altering institutional patterns of behavior, calls for process-oriented studies, and expresses hope that multi-level analysis will enhance our understanding of institutional effects and processes pertaining to IT (Currie & Swanson, 2009).

The first central issue for positioning the theoretical approach employed in this thesis concerns causal agency or how we conceive an actor in institutionalization processes. Regarding causal agency, Markus and Robey (1988) distinguish between technological determinism, organizational determinism and emergent perspectives (Markus & Robey, 1988). The technological determinism perceives technology as an external force that causes change. It often uses terms such as pressure, impact and effect, and has recently been categorized as institutional effect literature (Nielsen et al., 2014). Such a technological imperative appears to be at play when social media is described as having a transformative impact on organizational processes and structures (Aral et al., 2013).

The organizational determinism regards IT innovation processes as a result of rational decisions and intended objectives. It seems that this organizational imperative is at stake when it is assumed that a specific combination of top managers will ensure success in social media management (Deans, 2011).

Finally, the emergent perspective of causal agency understands change as a process created by unpredictable interactions between people and events (Markus & Robey, 1988). In this thesis I draw on this emergent perspective of causal agency in the investigations of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. Therefore, the theoretical approach in this thesis will not be on technology as an isolated phenomenon (Currie, 2009) or on formal

decisions and declarations of intent, but instead on the evolving interplay between actions, events, and discourse.

Two seminal papers thus function as source of inspiration for this thesis. First, the emergent perspective employed by Barley in his study of the implementation of the same CT scanner technology at two different hospital units (Barley, 1986). This study is interesting because it shows that although the technology artifact is identical, various changes of practice happen when the technology is implemented. Barley therefore considers the technology as ‘occasions’ for changes and he consequently shifts focus to the relationship between action and institution in order to explain what is at stake (Barley, 1986). Second, the emergent perspective employed by Orlikowski in her conceptualization of dialectical relationships between actor, technology and institutional properties (Orlikowski, 1992). These seminal papers by Barley and Orlikowski, as well as several other papers (Avgerou, 2000; Baptista, 2009), that have contributed to move beyond deterministic perspectives on IT innovation have been a fundamental source of inspiration for this thesis.

The thesis follows the organizing vision literature in its conceptualization that the generative environment is located in the inter-organizational field (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). What distinguishes the organizing vision literature from seminal institutional perspectives (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), however, is that this agency is attributed to the discursive community and the organizing vision it produces (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). While the organizing vision literature recently has been categorized as institutional *discourse* literature (Nielsen et al., 2014), the literature itself often stress that discourse works in an interplay with material processes (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). How the organizing vision literature attributes agency to discourse and how this is connected to material processes is perhaps best illustrated by the title: Talking the IS innovation walk (Swanson, 2003). While commonsense and many institutional perspectives regard discourse as a product of practices, for example that discourse is a means of manifesting institutional logics (Suddaby, 2011), this thesis in line with the organizing vision literature then conceptualizes the relationship as an interplay.

Further, the organizing vision literature qualifies its theoretical understanding of agency by introducing the concept of institutional entrepreneurs (Wang and Swanson, 2007). The introduction of the concept of the institutional entrepreneur represents a shift in focus from the organizing vision itself as a discourse manifestation, to how this manifestation is

brought about through the activities of actors in the discourse community. Drawing on former identification of such actors as constituents in the organizational field (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991), the organizing vision literature designates actors specifically relevant for IT innovation. These include, among others: IT research firms and analysts, technology vendors, IT professional services organizations and consultants, conference firms and organizers, trade publishers and journalists, universities and academics, and prospective users (Wang and Swanson, 2007). It is cautioned that the introduction of institutional entrepreneurs could lead to a focus on the actors as autonomous subjects, and therefore it is restated that we should focus on the actions and activities, and that it takes a discourse community to produce an organizing vision (Wang and Swanson, 2007).

Finally, the thesis draws on the organizing vision literature when it suggests employing rhetorical perspectives in order to analyze how actors' use of arguments function in IT institutionalization processes. The thesis are thereby in line with other recent contributions that argue for applying rhetorical perspectives in an effort to understand social media innovation (Barrett et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2013; Miranda et al., 2015). Drawing on rhetorical frameworks, we become able to analyze how actors navigate the inherent ambiguities or how managers make sense of IT innovation waves (Swanson, 2012). To study in empirical detail how actors navigate, Ramiller (2006) suggests a framework consisting of five knowledge modes: what, why, when, where and how. This framework suggests that the 'how' mode of knowledge has two rhetorical figures, the figure of implementability and the figure of accomplishment (Ramiller, 2006). Concerning sequence, scholars have studied how arguments change from early phases of institutionalization processes to later phases of adoption and implementation, and finally how they may collapse as an indication of taken-for-grantedness (Barrett et al., 2013). By drawing on the three classical forms of rhetorical appeal: pathos, logos, and ethos, scholars have therefore suggested that we study how these forms change over time and if possibly they play an active role in institutionalization (Barrett et al., 2013; Green, 2004). Such a rhetorical analysis is important for understanding the micro-foundation of the social media innovation process and in particular for analyzing if social media as organizing vision becomes an institutionalized practice. This rhetorical perspective has been used throughout the field study, but is only explicitly applied in paper 4.

A second central issue in the thesis concerns the logical structure or the temporal aspect of theory. This issue regards whether we consider organizations as static or dynamic, and how we understand the relation between antecedents and outcomes. While variance studies operate with variables independent of time, process studies focus on how change happens over time (Langley, 1999). While variance studies operate with dependent and independent variables, process studies have expressed criticism hereof through the dictum 'necessary but not sufficient' (Markus & Robey, 1988). This dictum is highly relevant for scrutinizing what is at stake in social media innovation processes. In the study of Fortune 500 firms, Culnan et al. (2010) showed that adoption of social media was not identical with successful implementation, and they pointed to conceptualizations of this as an assimilation gap (Fichman & Kemerer, 1999). Markus and Robey (1988) take the issue a step further by offering it an institutional perspective. Drawing on the dictum, they argue that routinization is necessary, but not sufficient for institutionalization. While some studies find institutionalization (Nielsen et al., 2014), others point to a situation of high adoption, but without high institutionalization, and caution against conflation of diffusion with institutionalization (Green, 2004).

Regardless whether there is institutionalization or merely routinization, it is noteworthy how institutional scholars all alike seem to prefer process models consisting of three stages (Barley, 1986; Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Nielsen et al., 2014; Orlikowski, 1992). These models seem to indicate that the change process reaches a final state, and thereby downplay provisional practices.

Highly important for the thesis is institutional scholars' advice, that instead of focusing on the most apparent manifestation of change, i.e. the diffusion, we must investigate how this diffusion is undertaken by the organizational actors (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). This has been a central theoretical reason for moving behind the social media adoption curve of the Danish firms and municipalities, and thus for extending the initial field level study into studies of how individual organizations and individual actors in organizations respond to social media.

Concerning the study of social media innovation processes, the thesis draws on two alternative frameworks offered by the organizing vision literature. The framework first introduced by the organizing vision literature consists of the concepts interpretation, legitimation and mobilization, and explains these as basic functions for facilitating the

innovation process (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The interpretative function explains the innovation's existence and purpose, and thereby reduces the perceived uncertainties. Legitimation provides the basic rationale why organizations should use the innovation. Mobilization helps to activate, motivate and structure the entrepreneurial and market forces in order to support the material realization of the innovation. While the purpose of the three basic functions is to create and promulgate an IT innovation, it is stressed that the process in the beginning is typically undertaken in exploratory ways, subject to experiments by pioneers and advanced in sketch forms (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997).

The second framework consists of four elements termed process components: comprehension, adoption, implementation and assimilation (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004). Comprehension as the initial phase concerns the understanding of the innovation in terms of the community's organizing vision for it. Adoption covers the decision to undertake the innovation and making a resource commitment, whereas implementation brings the innovation to life for its users. Finally, assimilation happens when the implementation becomes part of everyday routine. In contrast to the emphasis on exploration related to the basic function framework, the examples illustrating the sequential process framework emphasize innovation as a process of progression through four stages.

Finally, a third central theoretical issue in the thesis concerns the multiple levels of analysis. Institutional scholars have long argued for the importance of conducting multi-level studies. Markus and Robey (1988) suggest what they label a mixed-level strategy for research and point to Barley's (1986) study of CT scanners in a hospital setting as an illustration of such a strategy. While institutional theory appears to have focused on the macro-level (Scott, 2008), information systems scholars for three decades have included both the organizational and the individual level in their studies (Barley, 1986). The reason for this can be explained by Barley and Tolbert (1997), who argue that the conceptualization of the actor is not tied to a particular actor's identity, and therefore it applies to individual, group, organization and greater social formations. Drawing on this argument, this thesis will aim to include multiple levels of actors in the study of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

Concerning multi-level interaction, the thesis draws on the organizing vision literature in its emphasizing of the interaction between the organizational field and the individual organization as essential for understanding how an organizing vision functions. An

organizing vision is precisely defined by being a discursive driver for and manifestation of this interaction, that is, a focal community idea for the application of IT in organizations (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The issue of multi-level interaction is thus, so to speak, built into the concept of an organizing vision. However, only the organizational field level has to my knowledge so far been subject to investigations of how organizing visions work. In particular, the micro level has not yet been empirically researched. Wang (2010) mentions that individual employees function as actors in an IT fashion wave (Wang, 2010), and as accounted for already, Ramiller (2001, 2006) has focused on how rhetorical figures are employed in IT innovation processes. Otherwise, this thesis takes the first steps to apply the concepts of institutional entrepreneurs and the discourse utterances of an organizing vision to an individual level of analysis.

To summarize, this thesis employs an emergent perspective on causal agency, prioritizes a process perspective, and focus on multi-level interactions (Markus & Robey, 1988) in order to study how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. Concerning the emergent perspective on causal agency, the thesis in particular pay attention to the interplay between practice and discourse as this recently has been framed as a matter of rhetorical practice. Concerning the process perspective, the thesis in particular finds it important to distinguish between implementation and institutionalization in order to understand what is at stake in how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. Finally, concerning the level of analysis, the thesis by drawing on the organizing vision literature intends to study how responses to social media innovation by formal organizations are best conceptualized as responses to interactions between macro and micro foundations.

# Methodology

In order to study how formal organizations respond to social media innovation, this thesis aims to follow the principles for interpretive field studies suggested by Klein & Myers (1999). Klein and Myers (1999) draw on hermeneutics like Ricoeur and Gadamer, phenomenologists like Husserl, but also on critical theorists like Adorno, Habermas and Foucault. The implied philosophy of science and the contribution to knowledge about information systems is described as follows:

”IS research can be classified as interpretive if it is assumed that our knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions such a language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artifacts. Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges” (Klein & Myers, 1999: 69)

Further, Klein and Meyers quote Walsham (1993) for the importance of context and process:

“Interpretive methods of research in IS are “aimed at producing an understanding of the *context* of the information system, and the *process* whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context””(italics in original/LH) (Klein and Myers, 1999: 69).

By drawing on these principles for interpretive field studies, in particular by emphasizing the importance of context and process, this thesis aims to continue field study approaches employed in recent information systems research on social media (Scott and Orlikowski, 2009; Germonprez and Hovorka, 2013).

However, due to the positivist origins, journals impose discrete and sequential categories, and the interpretive research principles are thus challenged by positivistic norms for journal presentation: theory, data collection, data analysis, and results. The iterative and simultaneous process of literature consultation, data collection and analysis in interpretive research processes is thus violated by the positivistic tradition which dictates a specific sequence and separate order of things (Suddaby, 2006). In order to avoid the methodological blurring, which this results in, Suddaby (2006) suggests that authors make sure to account for the iterative nature of the study. Due to the influence of positivistic norms on not just the final presentation, but also the process of analysis, Suddaby (2006) furthermore warns against coding and content analysis that adopt positivistic approaches, for example a neurotic

overemphasis on coding in which the researcher as a book keeper codes text into nice conceptual categories and thereby produces passable results, but ends up with research that lacks the spark of creative insight (Suddaby, 2006).

In terms of science of philosophy, this thesis positions itself on pragmatic middle ground between extremes of relativism and empiricism. In the thesis, I follow a pragmatic approach that regards scientific truth as both the observed empirical world and the emerging interpretation hereof within a research community (Roy Suddaby, 2006). In line with such an approach, I aim to contribute with new and relevant knowledge by contrasting the interpretations made by participants and what is actually going on in practice today (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001).

### *Research Setting*

Motivated by Culnan et al.'s (2010) study of Fortune 500 US firms' use of social media, I started the research process in 2011 by focusing on the social media activity among the 100 largest Danish firms. The 100 largest Danish firms were selected according to annual turnover (Børsen, 2013). These 100 firms represent all traditional industries and are herein similar to the U.S. Fortune 500 firms. This choice was motivated by the fact that these 100 firms are the Danish equivalent of Fortune 500 firms in the U.S., and would thus enable comparison, and because these firms have a wide societal agenda setting impact (Scott, 2008).

Informed by institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008) and the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997), I moved forward from focusing solely on these firms to study how other institutional actors participated in the social media innovation process among these 100 largest firms. This included an investigation of how institutional players like IT and marketing consultancies, business media, technology vendors, industry affiliations, and research and educational institutions took part in the social media innovation process. This study of the 100 largest Danish firms and institutional actors continued to 2015. Figure 4 shows two examples of websites for institutional players in the Danish field of social media: the digital consultancy Seismonaut and the Danish School of Media and Journalism.

From the very beginning in 2011, one of the largest 100 Danish firms, the manufacturing firm BlueTech, grasped my interest due to its surprising state of social media innovation. Although BlueTech did not have any official social media presence or employees

specifically assigned to social media, there was a vibrant grass root social media activity driven by local actors dispersed around the globe. Due to this contrast between what was actually going on and the official response from BlueTech, when I contacted the firm, I found BlueTech to be an interesting research site to investigate and learn from. Motivated by calls for multi-level institutional analysis, I was at the same time on the outlook for a research site where I could gain access to individual actors, and thereby explore the micro-foundations of social media innovation. The study of BlueTech continued into late 2015.

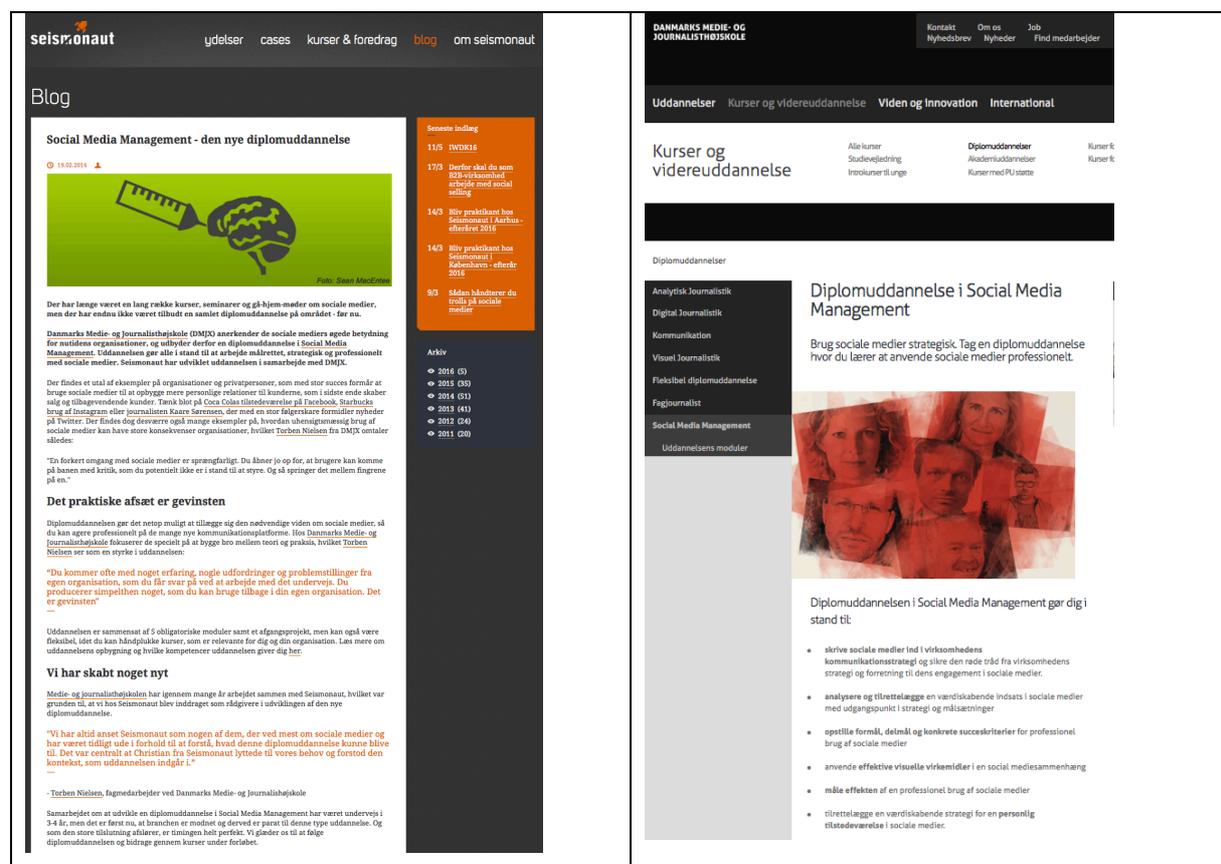


Figure 4. Examples of websites for institutional players in the Danish field of social media

In 2012 I expanded the empirical research context by including the organizational field of all 98 Danish municipalities. This extension of the field study was motivated by a study that focused on large municipalities in the European Union (Bonsón, Torres, Royo, & Florenc, 2012). Studying the 98 Danish municipalities would therefore establish ground for future comparative studies.

Similar to the field of the 100 largest Danish firms, one of the organizations among the 98 municipalities, a large municipality, hereafter named LargeMuni, grasped my interest due to

its surprising case of social media innovation (Yin, 2003). Again it was a matter of contrasts related to LargeMuni that caught my research interest: an enormous hype about social media in government institutions like municipalities, lack of official presence and managerial set up in LargeMuni, but at the same time a lively grass root activity on social media. I therefore selected LargeMuni and dedicated special attention to the tensions at stake in the social media innovation process that took place in this organization. Like in the study of the 100 largest Danish firms, my field study of municipalities was expanded to include the other actors in the organizational field, for example the national association of municipalities, industry affiliations, and social media consultancies specialized in public organizations.

### *Data collection*

As suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), multiple data collection methods are combined in this thesis' field study of how organizations cope with emerging social media. Related to the individual papers presented in this thesis, I have used a variety of data collection methods over time. Table 2 gives an overview of the data collection methods used over time. The following paragraphs give a detailed account of each of these data collection methods.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Paper 1		Literature review		Literature review	Literature review
Paper 2	Observation (100+ hrs) Interview (10) Participation (20+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Participation (20+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Document (8) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Document (6) Participation (10+ hrs)
Paper 3		Observation (50+ hrs) Document (3) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (3) Document (4) Participation (10+ hrs)		
Paper 4	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (1)	Observation (50+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (1) Document (2) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (5) Document (3) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (6) Document (4) Participation (10+ hrs)

Table 2. Data collection methods used over time

Online observation of how firms and municipalities are active on social media sites has been one of the springboards in this thesis' study of how formal organizations respond to social

media. In addition, I have used the Internet to make online observation of corporate websites, news media, social media conferences, white papers, and other materializations relevant for the study of how formal organizations respond to social media.

I have made real time online observation of all the 100 largest Danish firms' social media practices in the period 2011-2015. In addition, I have made online archive observation of their posting activity on Facebook in the period 2007-2011. The focus of my observations was Facebook activity, but the observation also included posting activity on LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Slideshare, Google+, and Pinterest.

Initially I searched the Internet and the relevant corporate websites to identify which of the 100 firms were active on what social media website. For observation of the posting activities, I used my personal account on the specific social media websites. For example, I used my personal Facebook account to browse the so-called 'timeline' to observe and count postings on Facebook. I first established an overview of which firms were active on which social media platforms in 2011 and presented this study in a conference paper titled "Exploratory Framework for Organizations' as Actors on Facebook" (Haahr, 2012). The Facebook 'timeline' gave me access not only to present but also past postings and thereby functioned as a digital archival tool.

In order to contextualize the Facebook activities by the 100 largest Danish firms during the period 2007-2015, I extended the scope of the study to other relevant institutional actors in the field. Guided by the institutional perspective, in particular the organizing vision lens (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997; Wang & Swanson, 2007), these actors included consultancies, business media, industry affiliations, government agencies, technology vendors, and research and educational institutions.

Finally, I zoomed in on one of these 100 largest Danish firms: BlueTech. The online observation of BlueTech started in 2011, and surprisingly I found that despite the presence of an emergent grass root activity distributed around the globe on a diversity of social media platforms, BlueTech had no 'official' social media presence. The online observation of BlueTech included the firm's presence on Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, Slideshare, Google+, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. In order to investigate the emergent grass root activity, which was not, registered anywhere, this online observation of BlueTech had an explorative form from its start in 2011 to its end in late 2015. The online observation of BlueTech also included the firm's corporate website, a blog produced by employees involving

an employee advocacy project, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts belonging to individual employees, and the firm’s exposition in business media, and on the website of the marketing agency to whom BlueTech outsourced its Facebook branding project.

Further, I have made online observation of the 98 Danish municipalities in the period 2012-2015 and online archive observation covering the period 2007-2012. I here used similar approaches as in the online observation of the 100 largest Danish firms. The observations of the 98 Danish municipalities have primarily focused on Facebook activity. The field level study of the 98 Danish municipalities was likewise prolonged in a case study of one large Danish municipality. The online investigation of this particular municipality also included several grass root activities happening under the radar of the central municipality management. Paper 3 in the thesis is the result of this study of one specific municipality.

A note on the practical management of my online observations: I started to use a Nvivo feature to grab the Facebook activity in an Excel-like format, but preferred to manually create a copy of the timeline in order to provide an empirically more realistic representation of the posting activity. To record the activity, I have thus manually browsed through Facebook posting activity of the active firms and municipalities, copied the timeline of activity, sorted the activity out on a yearly basis, counted the activity on a monthly basis, and filed everything as text and picture documents. This went well until 2014 when Facebook blocked for immediate access to the complete timeline. Figure 5 shows a screenshot of the total digital file cabinet and a partial selection of the observations of the 100 largest Danish firms.

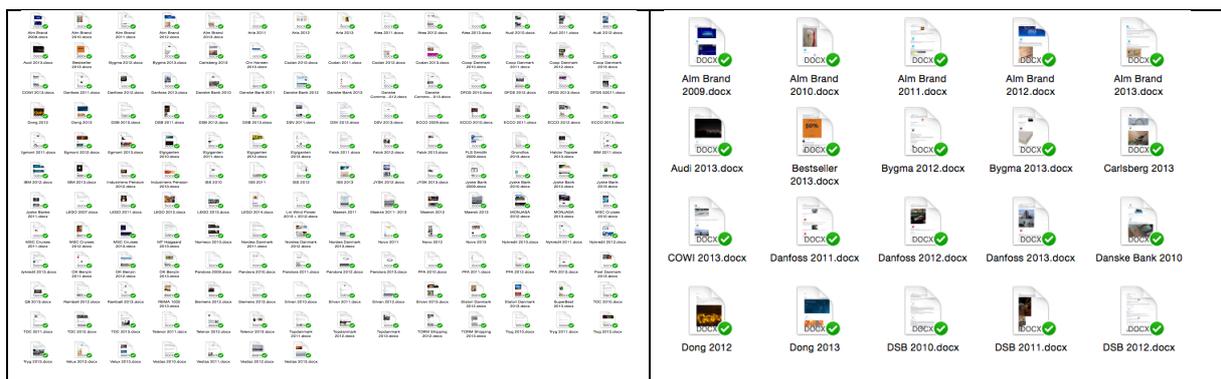


Figure 5. Total digital file cabinet of Facebook postings and partial screenshot of file cabinet

Figure 5 shows how I have filed the observation for all active firms among the 100 largest Danish firms and 98 municipalities in files covering one year’s activity. In the files pictured

in Figure 5, I thus have the actual posting activity of the 100 Danish firms covering the period 2007-2015 ordered by firm. Figure 6 shows two postings from LEGO's Facebook timeline.

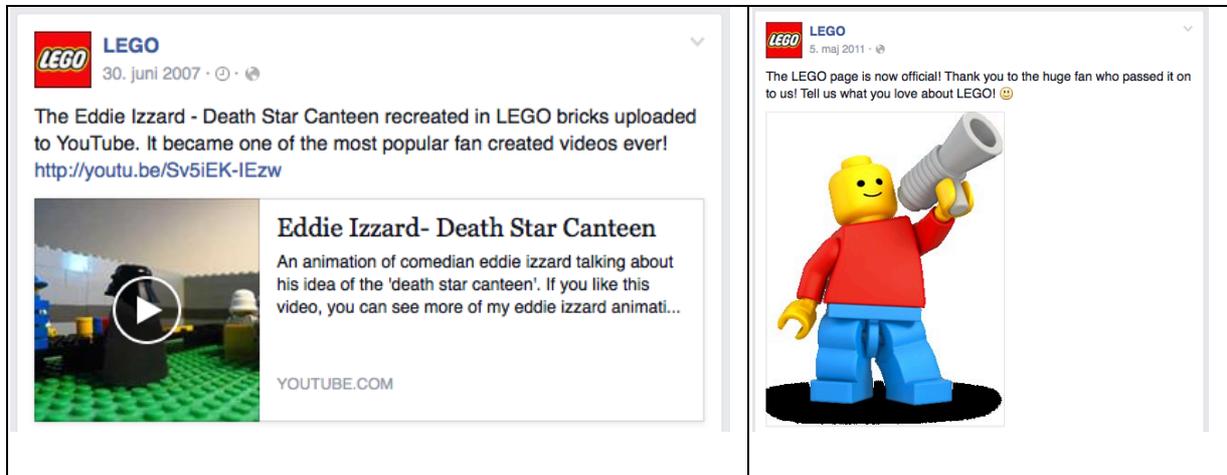


Figure 6. LEGO posting on Facebook in 2007 and LEGO posting on Facebook in 2011

In Figure 6, the picture to the left shows the first un-official LEGO posting on Facebook from June 30 in 2007. The picture to the right shows the first official posting by LEGO on Facebook from May 5 in 2011. After my original screenshot of these postings took place in 2011, LEGO has placed a number of so-called landmarks into the timeline on Facebook, for example the release of the collectible LEGO Minifigures in 2010. Although the timeline on Facebook at first glance appears to be a fixed archive of activity, administrators of the page have access to edit the activity afterwards. Thus, the Facebook timeline is not a rock solid archive of past activities (Howison, Wiggins, & Crowston, 2011).

A final note on conducting online observations: Despite off-line observation and online observation as realms of reality have obvious differences in terms of communicative cues and conditions, recent information systems research argue that they belong to the same experienced phenomenological world (Cranefield, Yoong, & Huff, 2015; Yoo, 2010). In line with this argument, I therefore perceive the off-line and online manifestations not as separate, but rather as complementary realms for understanding how formal organizations respond to social media.

Interviews were generally made in continuation of online observations of the social media practices and investigated the potential contrasts between actual organizational practices and

sense making (Suddaby, 2006). The interviews followed the principles and guidelines for qualitative interviews (Kvale, 1996; Myers and Newman, 2007).

I made 10 interviews in continuation of my first online observations of the 100 largest Danish firms' social media practices. These interviews were made with firms among the 100 largest firms. The interviews included firms that were active on social media as well as inactive firms. Apart from introducing the research project and myself, the interview guide used in these interviews had three main subjects. First, I interviewed to have my online observations about the firm's social media activities confirmed or corrected. Second, I interviewed with focus on the firms' fundamental reasoning for being active or not being active on social media. Third and lastly, I interviewed the firms about their understanding of and future expectations for social media activity. In hindsight, this interview agenda largely resembles the three basic functions of an organizing vision, the mobilization, legitimation, and interpretation (Swanson and Ramiller, 1997).

In 2011, I conducted the first interview with BlueTech. The interview took place after initial difficulties to get in touch with a person able to account for the firm's social media activities due to the firm's official response about not being active on social media. The interview agenda followed the guide used for the initial 10 interviews described above, but additionally focused on the discrepancy between the lack of official presence and emergent activities, and how the firm responded to this state of things.

In 2013, I had an informal meeting and organized a seminar with the manager of the employee advocacy project at BlueTech. In 2014, I interviewed the director, the project leader, a senior engineer, and a social media specialist at BlueTech. Later in 2014, I organized a seminar in which the director and the project leader participated as keynote speakers. During this process, I had informal telephone conversations and email correspondences with the firm. In 2015, I conducted interviews with the newly appointed manager, the social media specialist, the senior engineer, and two social media consultants. To provide a deeper understanding of practices and getting more informal knowledge, I joined informal meetings and participated in work sessions with social media consultants. I also followed up on conversations with one of the social media consultants about a draft of the timeline of events in the micro-foundational analysis of BlueTech as presented in paper 4. Finally, I organized a public seminar at my university in which the social media consultants participated, one of them as keynote speaker.

While the field study at BlueTech initially created difficulties in getting access to relevant organizational actors and getting inside knowledge, I later succeeded in getting informal relations to central organizational social media players and obtained access to confidential documents.

Regarding the field study of the 98 Danish municipalities, I interviewed in 2013 organizational actors associated with the social media process in LargeMuni. The interviewees were selected to include possible differences in interpretations among the directors of the different municipal departments and followed the principles and guidelines for qualitative interviews (Kvale, 1996; Myers & Newman, 2007). Firstly and in order to establish a historical perspective and an overview of the practices within the municipality, I interviewed the director of communications in the mayor's office, and at the same time I made online observations of the municipality's social media practices. Next and in order to ensure variance and a deeper understanding in prolongation of the insights from the first interview, I interviewed the directors from the six main departments of the municipality. Finally and to test and saturate my analysis, I interviewed the director and manager responsible for one of the most active social media sites within the municipality. The interviews and observations were conducted from February 2013 to April 2013 and took place in the town hall of the municipality. The interviews most often lasted 45 minutes. The progression of the interviews was designed to facilitate a saturation of the analytical findings in observations and interviews and to clarify unclear issues.

In both the LargeMuni study and the BlueTech study, I have collected formal organizational documents in order to obtain data about the social media innovation process from different sources and thereby get a glimpse at contrasts between what was said and what was done (Roy Suddaby, 2006). In the LargeMuni field study, I collected the overall and official strategy paper, but also got access to confidential documents revealing a rather diverse and autonomous use of social media in decentral departments of the municipality. In the BlueTech field study, I collected documents related to both the Facebook branding project and the employee advocacy project. These documents included internal administrative planning and promotion material as well as official presentations and promotion pamphlets. In 2015 in the later stages of the field research, I further more got access to otherwise confidential

documents related to an internal review of the Facebook branding project in 2014 and to a strategy workshop held in early 2015. The documents from the LargeMuni and the BlueTech study have provided examples of tensions and contradictions, and thereby they have contributed to a deeper understanding of the social media innovation processes at stake here. Figure 7 shows part of a document from a strategy workshop at BlueTech in 2015: Mapping of channels. Notice how the mapping positions Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook as least corporate.

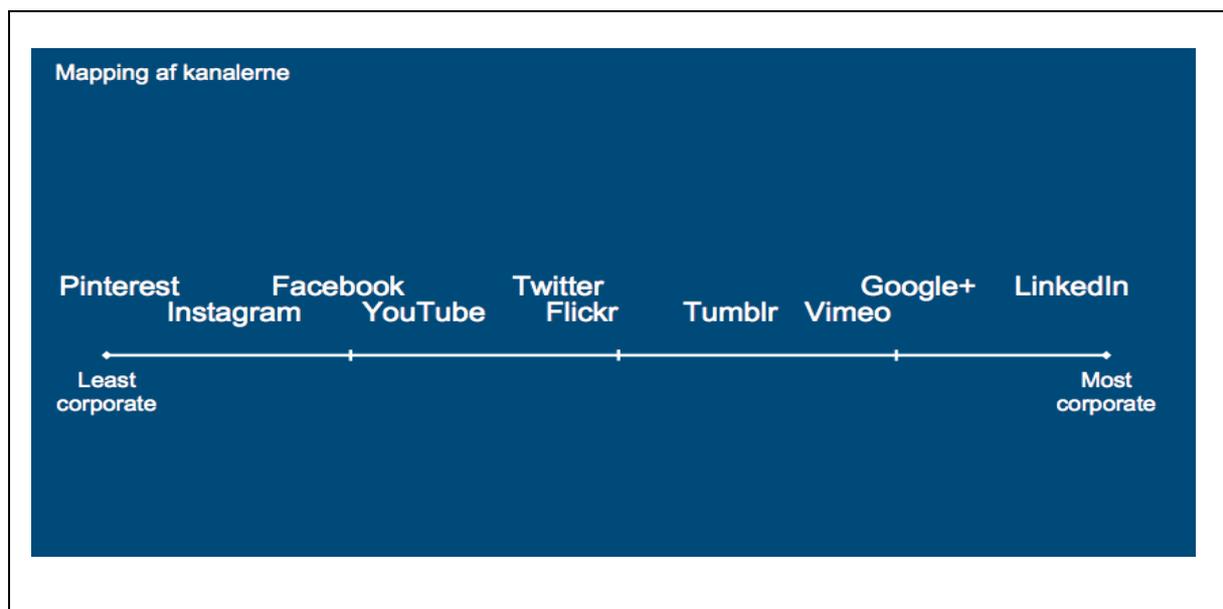


Figure 7. Mapping of channels. Document from strategy workshop at BlueTech in 2015

### *Data analysis*

In carrying out my data analysis, I have prioritized to pay careful attention to contrasts between current social media practices and discourse about these practices as diverse institutional actors voice them.

My prioritization to scrutinize contrasts has driven my data analysis forward. An example of this is: From the very beginning of the study, I found an important contrast between business media hype, as well as research aspirations about firms' use of social media, and the actual practice I observed among the 100 largest Danish firms in 2011. To analyze this discrepancy, I therefore searched for descriptions and explanations in literature specifically on social media. In this search, one tiny, but important, word appeared to describe and perhaps even conceptualize the state of things about firms' use of social media, namely

the term 'hesitate' (Morsing, 2011), being an indicator of the importance of time or process in social media innovation. As a first result of an emerging literature review, another concept also seemed important to help frame and explain the contrast between the overtly optimistic discourse about social media, and the actual practice, namely the seminal information systems concept of 'formative context' (Stenmark, 2008). Informed by these concepts about the significance of process and context, I decided to extend my empirical investigation by a longitudinal tracing of the 100 largest Danish firms' social media practice in the period 2007-2015 on Facebook. My investigation was to go beyond the context of official social media presences and it was to include other institutional players. The decision to include the unofficial presences was mainly motivated by the large amount of data indicating such social media presences. The decision to include other institutional actors was, however, motivated by the organizing vision literature. The extended empirical investigation revealed a more complex pattern of the firms' social media practices and consequently demanded enhanced conceptual assistance.

The above example is meant to demonstrate how my data analysis in an attempt to dig deeper into contrasts has been moved forward in alterations between empirical observations and theoretical concepts. As such, the data analysis has followed 'constant comparison' and 'theoretical sampling' methods as suggested in seminal grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and in contemporary receptions of grounded theory as a genuinely interpretive analytical practice (Suddaby, 2006; Urquhart et al., 2010).

My data analysis processes have alternated between inductive and deductive coding practices, that is, they followed an abductive or analytical induction method. The data analysis in paper 3 can illustrate informed inductive data analysis, whereas the analysis in paper 2 illustrates a deductive path.

The analysis in paper 3 of how a social media innovation process was manifested in LargeMuni was informed by literature on contradictions in IT innovation processes (Robey and Boudreau, 1999). Before starting the coding of transcribed interviews, I first listened through the recorded audio files a couple of times. The aim of my listening through the audio recordings was to avoid getting caught in details and avoid a parceling of the total narrative of the interview. Instead, I wanted to catch inherent tensions about the innovation process as they were expressed in the overall account manifested in the interview. This emphasis on pre-coding analysis I regard as an effort to match the principle of parts and wholes in interpretive

research. In the next wave of data analysis, I read through transcripts and looked for specific instances that embodied interesting contradictions, not least contradictions that could help describe and explain the overall 'hesitating' pattern of social media practice. This preliminary or open coding of contradictions resulted in a sharpened focus in the following interviews, that is, a sharpened focus on "how, what, and why" concerning the tentatively identified contradictions. In this process, the grounded theory methods of constant comparison as well as theoretical sampling were thus in play (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In paper 3, I have provided a table to sustain the identified lines of contradiction with verbal illustrations taken from the interviews and a figure illustrates and names the domains of contradictions. Figure 8 shows the initial part of the coding process of interview transcript from LargeMuni study

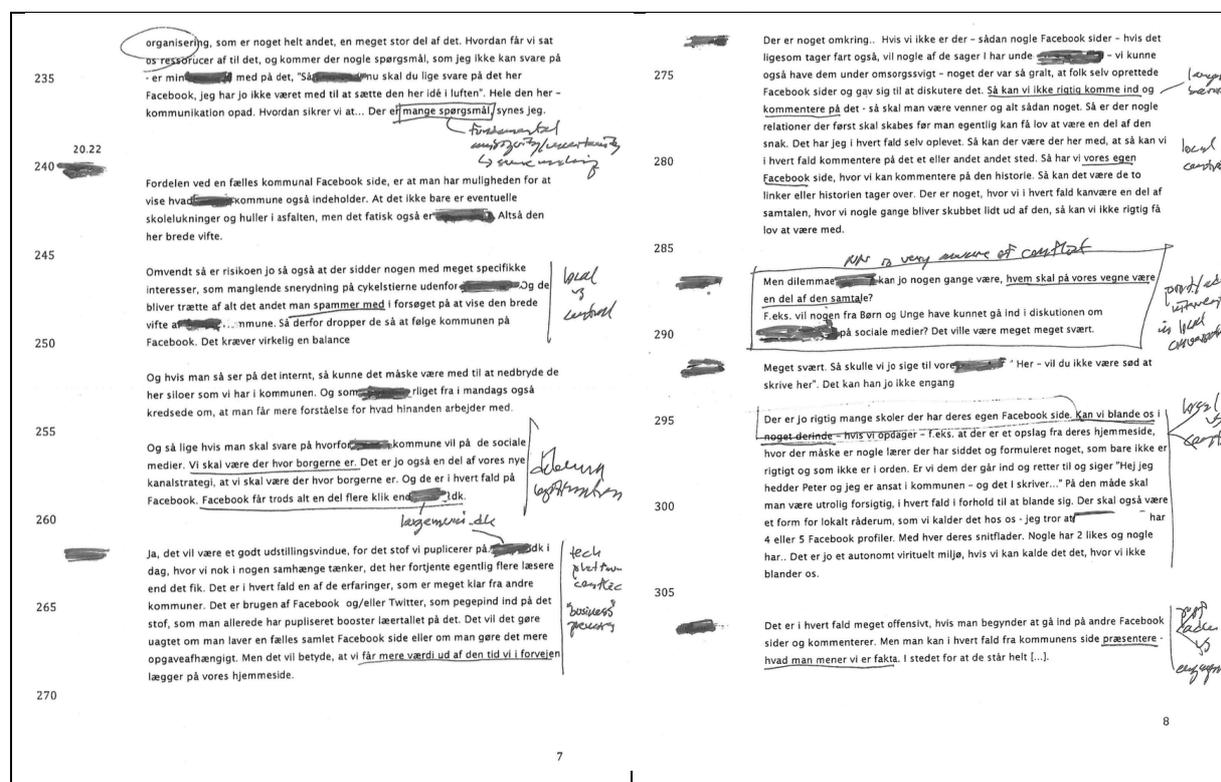


Figure 8. Part of coding process of interview transcript from LargeMuni study.

In paper 2, I drew more explicitly on concepts from the organizing vision literature to analyze the data of the 100 largest Danish firms' use of Facebook, as well as the other institutional players at stake in this innovation process. I first operationalized and applied the sequential concepts of comprehension, adoption, implementation and assimilation on the firms' use of Facebook in the period 2007-2015. However, due to data that did not fit into the emerging

conceptualization provided by these sequential process concepts, I supplemented the analytical framework to include the less sequential concepts of interpretation, legitimation and mobilization, and I then compared the two sets of findings. Likewise, I used a list of institutional entrepreneurs as a guide for my investigation of the other institutional players' role in producing social media as organizing vision. Focusing only on institutional entrepreneurs, however, excluded the strong institutional voices about emerging technologies advocated by established marketing and branding agencies. Similar to the issues brought up in applying sequential process concepts, the analysis of institutional actors ended up by pointing to the presence of contradictory organizing visions for the emerging information and communication technologies we commonly label social media. The somewhat forced use of analytical concepts in paper 2's deductive data analysis, however, appeared to become analytically creative in casting light on contrasts in the empirical data between the formal adoption and actual activity on the one hand, and the emergent activity under the radar on the other hand. The deductive approach also ended up in casting critical light on the conceptual framework from the organizing vision literature.

#### *Evaluating research approach*

In recognition of the muddling through nature of abductive analytical processes within the interpretive field studies, Klein and Myers (1999) have constructed an evaluative artifact in order to cope with the question of rigor in a systematic and explicit way. The use of such an artifact is also found in information systems action research, for example by Lindgren et al. (2004) who employ the five criteria of canonical action research suggested by Davidson et al. (2004), and by Germonprez and Hovorka (2013), who create four evaluation criteria inspired by diverse sources, including Klein and Meyers (1999).

In order to cast light on the analytical method used in my analysis of empirical material, I will now apply the seven principles for interpretive field research. I hereby aim to evaluate the process and to communicate to the reader of this introduction what might not have been communicated in the papers. See Table 3.

No.	Summary of principle	Use of principle in this thesis
1	<p>The fundamental principle of the hermeneutic circle</p> <p>This principle suggests that all human understanding is achieved by iterating between considering the interdependent meaning of parts and the whole that they form. This principle of human understanding is fundamental to all the other principles.</p>	<p>A holistic approach integrating parts and wholes has been the analytical impetus during the whole study.</p> <p>Example: My study of how BlueTech and LargeMuni respond to social media innovation iterates between the individual actors as parts, and the organizational structure or the processes unfolded over time as a whole.</p>
2	<p>The principle of contextualization</p> <p>Requires critical reflection of the social and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged.</p>	<p>Drawing on institutional perspectives has lead to a high degree of contextualization.</p> <p>Example: In the tracing of social media entrepreneurs in the BlueTech field study, I detected how institutional forces - through established marketing consultancies - were at play concurrent with emergent processes.</p>
3	<p>The principle of interaction between researchers and the subjects</p> <p>Requires critical reflection on how the research materials (or "data") were socially constructed through the interaction between the researchers and participants.</p>	<p>Participation as fundamental method of investigation as well as feedback from participants during analytical iterations has helped to provide interaction.</p> <p>Example: The repeated interview and analysis process in the field study of BlueTech involved interaction and feedback from participants that cast light on my conceptual presumptions and made me reflect on these.</p>
4	<p>The principle of abstraction and generalization</p> <p>Requires relating the idiographic details revealed by the data interpretation through the application of principles one and two to theoretical, general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action.</p>	<p>Institutional perspectives and the organizing vision lens have sustained the process of abstraction and generalization carried out in the papers.</p> <p>Example: In the field study of the 100 firms and 98 municipalities, the concept of the institutional entrepreneur is used to grasp and explain the emergent social media processes.</p>
5	<p>The principle of dialogical reasoning</p> <p>Requires sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings ("the story which the data tell") with subsequent cycles of revision.</p>	<p>I have reflected upon my preconceptions by being explicit about the fundamental research approaches and concepts central for my investigation and interpretation.</p> <p>Example: In the field study of BlueTech, I am explicit about my focus on contradictions in IT innovation processes and its intellectual historicity.</p>
6	<p>The principle of multiple interpretations</p> <p>Requires sensitivity to possible differences in interpretations among the participants as are typically expressed in multiple narratives or stories of the same sequence of events under study. Similar to multiple witness accounts even if all tell it as they saw it.</p>	<p>The search for contradictions as a fundamental approach in the studied innovation processes has helped to grasp and investigate multiple interpretations among participants.</p> <p>Example: In the BlueTech study, I used the differences in interpretations between the actors involved in the branding project and the employee advocacy project as central means for understanding the social media innovation process.</p>
7	<p>The principle of suspicion</p> <p>Requires sensitivity to possible "biases" and systematic "distortions" in the narratives collected from the participants.</p>	<p>The field study indicated more instances of participants expressing "great expectations" about social media, and my literature review confirms how "researchers are nearly as prone as industry participants to chase after innovation fads" (Ramiller 2006).</p> <p>Example: In the field study of firms and municipalities, some social media employees used rhetoric closer to <i>Fast Company</i> hyperbole than a balanced approach.</p>

Table 3. Principles of interpretive research and examples from thesis

Regarding my position as researcher, I have followed recommendations not to limit the field

study to individual organizations, but rather to probe the larger community terrain, and like organizational sense makers venture out to practitioner conferences, read practitioner publications, and join employees in their work processes (Swanson and Ramiller, 1997). In line with recent information systems research on social media, I have aimed to provide a deepened understanding of social media innovation processes by practicing community engagement (Germonprez and Hovorka, 2013), for example by interacting with industry and community actors in summits and seminars, by being active in online communities, for example Twitter, by organizing seminars in which the organizational actors have taken active part. My style of involvement has thus been deeper than that of an outsider (Walsham, 2006). As a part of this engagement, I have interacted with organizational actors in order for them to point out relevant issues to investigate and to give feedback on my interpretations (Klein & Myers, 1999).

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# Paper 1



# Reframing Social Media Research into an Institutional Perspective. A Literature Review<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to reframe social media research by drawing on institutional perspectives. First we review recent research on social media in major information systems, marketing and organization research journals. The review indicates that while there are many possible approaches to studying social media, the majority of research focuses on online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments. While these studies of online communities are relevant for understanding social media, this exclusive focus on the obvious locus of interaction may constrain our understanding of social media. A predominant focus on online communities appears to have created a blind spot for the impact of technology vendors, consultancies, business media, and other institutional players. In particular, there is a noteworthy paucity of literature on how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. Moving forward, we suggest that future research draw on institutional perspectives in order to grasp the complexities in emergent social media innovation. Taking our point of departure in recent case studies of social media in organizational contexts, the paper argues a number of research priorities.

**Keywords:** social media, review, future research, institutional perspectives, organizing vision.

## 1. Introduction

A quick review of the broad, scientific database Scopus reveals that the upsurge of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and other social media sites has caught much

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<sup>1</sup> A previous version of paper 1 has been published as Haahr, L. (2014) Wrestling with Social Media on Information Systems' Home Ground. In *Nordic Contributions in IS Research. 5th Scandinavian Conference on Information Systems, SCIS 2014, Ringsted, Denmark, 10-13 August, 2014. Proceedings. Springer 2014*. Paper 1 is currently in the second round of revision in a major information systems journal.

attention among scholars. However, despite the fact that formal private and public organizations in large numbers have become players in the field of social media, research seems to focus predominantly on online communities. An interesting review reflecting this focus on online communities was recently conducted by Berger, Klier, Klier and Probst (2014). This focus on online communities not only leaves out organizational perspectives on social media practices but also the significance of other institutional actors at stake in social media innovation such as technology vendors, consultancies and business media.

On this backdrop we find it relevant to review what characterizes recent literature on social media, not only with regard to conceptual framings but also research area and methodological approaches. Because of the emerging state of social media research, and because of the identified paucity of institutional actor perspectives, the review will be more exhaustive than a traditional concept centric analysis (Webster and Watson, 2002). While a concept centric mapping of information systems research on social media understood as online community interactions was recently made Berger et al. (2014), this paper will in addition review theory type and research approaches because these have a high impact on the questions asked, how they are investigated and thereby the resulting contributions (Holmström & Robey, 2005; Markus & Robey, 1988; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). The aim of this paper is thus to review recent research and to suggest priorities in future studies (Webster & Watson, 2002).

To guide both the review and the suggestions for future research, the paper develops a framework that focuses on three dimensions: research area, theory type, and method (Avgerou, 2000; Mathiassen, Chiasson, & Germonprez, 2012). The paper conducts a systematic review of relevant articles from eight major information systems journals, and due to the interdisciplinary nature of both information systems research and social media, the review includes six major journals from each of the disciplines of organization and marketing studies.

The paper has two main contributions. First, the review indicates that even though there are many possible approaches to studying social media, the main body of research studies online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments. At the same time, the focus on other institutional actors is limited. In particular, there is a noteworthy paucity of literature that studies social media in an organizational perspective. Second, the paper suggests a future research strategy that as its principle

complements recent literature on social media. In terms of method and theory, this strategy prioritizes case-based process studies that draw on institutional theory adapted to IT innovation (Currie & Swanson, 2009). Concerning research area, the paper suggests that future research should prioritize including all institutional players in its effort to understand how formal organizations wrestle with social media.

The paper is structured as follows: In section two, we provide an overview of recent research on social media, and suggest to draw on institutional perspectives in order to improve our understanding of the complexities in current social media innovation. In section three, we account for the employed method, including the analytical framework used in the review. In section four, we present the analysis. In section five, we discuss the implications of the review findings, suggest future directions, point to limitations, and conclude on the paper.

## **2. Recent Social Media Research**

Social media has mainly grown outside traditional organizations, and its adoption and implementation in these organizations is no straightforward process. In the wake of private and public organizations' adoption of social media, researchers thus in early contributions discussed the fundamental characteristics of social media, searched for definitions, developed theoretical frameworks, gave managerial advice, and suggested agendas for future research. The contributions by Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) are illustrative of these first introductions. Both contributions introduce social media by applying a historical perspective in which the development of the Internet is understood as a paradigm shift facilitating exchange of information between users in ways unseen before. The papers argue that whereas firms once were able to control communication processes, in the age of social media they are faced with user communities that connect and communicate beyond the control of firms. Both contributions also take the Internet-enabled user creation process as locus. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. In line with this perspective on social media, (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) differentiate the emerging forms of user interaction into seven functional forms: identity, relationships, presence, sharing, conversations, groups, and reputation. Reflecting the emergent state of social media innovation among formal organizations, a common element in

these early introductions is the considerable prioritization of prescriptive managerial advice. Despite taking formal organizations' adoption and implementation of social media as point of departure, these early introductions however took the interactions in online communities as their locus of interest.

Taking an organizational perspective on the Facebook era of digital practices and infrastructures, recent comments by Tilson, Lyytinen and Sørensen (2010) diagnose a shift in how firms interact with customers, employees, and suppliers, namely from command-and-control to connect-and-coordinate. Tilson et al. (2010) point to paradoxes of change and control as important in future research. Likewise, Krogh (2012) employs a firm's knowledge management perspective, and identifies the changes in challenges and opportunities that firms are faced with in the new conditions of social media. Krogh (2012) in particular emphasizes that the knowledge-constituted boundaries of the firm are challenged and have to be rethought as a consequence of social media. These latter contributions focus on paradoxes in emerging social media practices, and encourage us to rethink the fundamental constituents in organizational social media practices.

Concerning public organizations' use of social media, scholars have also discussed the fundamental features of social media, pointed to research issues and made suggestions for future research. Similar to private firms facing both opportunities and challenges, scholars studying social media in the public sector, for example, point to dilemmas between innovative opportunities for stakeholder interaction and the existing hierarchical organizational settings, and in that way identify a number of innovation challenges in the public sector (Mergel, 2012). Setting this dilemma into a larger perspective, the emergent social media practices in the public sector challenge existing regulatory frameworks. Research on how government policies can address current social media practices in the public sector is therefore called for (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012).

However, despite these first research introductions prioritizing an organizational perspective on social media, empirical studies on how private and public organizations respond to social media are not immediately published. We reviewed recent research in 2013, and found that research in the disciplines of information systems research, marketing research and organization studies seemed only to prioritize the most obvious manifestation of social media, namely user interaction in online communities. Illustrative examples of this focus on online communities include studies of membership turnover and collaboration success

(Ransbotham & Kane, 2011), studies of how community commitment impacts participation in online communities (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2011), and studies of disclosure in online communities (Posey, Lowry, Roberts, & Ellis, 2010). While these studies of online communities are both interesting and relevant for understanding social media, this exclusive focus on the obvious locus of activity may constrain our understanding of social media. In addition it is worth noting that these studies are predominantly survey and experiment based and consequently do not provide the empirical richness and focus on processes found in interpretive case studies (Markus & Lee, 1999; Markus & Robey, 1988). The organizational perspectives addressed in the initial introductions to social media indicated several promising areas of research. It therefore seems likely that much valuable knowledge about social media lies beyond the studies exclusively focusing on online communities.

The indicated lack of research on social media in an organizational perspective was confirmed in the conclusion of a 2013 special issue process on social media (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). The editors in conclusion point to not only how many questions remain unanswered, but also unaddressed. In particular, the editors point to research on high-level social media firm strategies as an attractive opportunity for future research.

If, however, we turn to information systems practitioner journals, recent contributions in contrast have focused on social media innovation from the perspective of formal organizations. These studies are based on case studies, and thus provide rich empirical material such as which specific actions are taken in which part of a social media innovation process. Drawing on recognized theoretical foundations, these studies by senior information systems scholars, among other issues, focus on adoption, governance, community building, and absorptive capacity. Deans (2011) studies how firms manage cooperation between the CIO, CEO and CMO. Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen (2013) study how a firm reorganizes in order to socialize customers through the use of boundary spanners. Heath et al. (2013) study how a firm can obtain industry thought leadership through competence building strategies. Gallagher and Ransbotham (2010) study how firms can manage interaction with customers and competitors. Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga (2010) study adoption, community building, and absorptive capacity.

Drawing on institutional perspectives on IT innovation, we suggest including the role of the remaining organizational field players in future studies of emerging social media practices: technology vendors, consultancies, business media, conference organizers,

educational institutions, etc. (Swanson and Ramiller, 1997; Currie, 2004; Wang and Swanson, 2007). Technology vendors obviously play a major role in the ongoing innovation of the social media sites themselves, but also impact the strategic and operational practices in organizations from within, for example when Facebook provides management software with significant governance implications (Facebook, 2012). Consultancies and business media play an important role in promoting and implementing social media as an IT innovation (Wang and Swanson, 2008; Swanson, 2010). And conference organizers and educational institutions play a role in the interpretation and legitimation of IT innovations (Wang & Swanson, 2007). By drawing on institutional perspectives, we can improve our understanding of the complexities in current social media innovation, surpass the constraints in recent research area, and produce knowledge relevant for a managerial sense making perspective (Swanson, 2012).

### **3. Review Method**

The journals for the study were selected prioritizing empirical evidence, high-quality articles and a representative body of literature (Webster and Watson, 2002; Chen and Hirschheim, 2004). First eight major information systems journals (AIS, 2015) were selected. Furthermore we wanted to incorporate the interdisciplinary dimension of information systems research, and consequently included six major journals from the field of marketing and six major journals from organization studies. The interdisciplinarity is for example seen when scholars publish their research on social media in for example both information systems journals and marketing journals. By including top tier organization journals in the review, potential sociological perspectives on social media will be covered. See Table 1.

In order to establish a relevant list of search terms for the selection of articles, we mapped various concepts and definitions of social media. To cover the diversity in reference to social media in the best possible way, we produced two categories of search terms. The first category lists abstract terms used by scholars: Social media, social software, social computing, social network site, social network service, web 2.0, social IT, social technology, and online community. The second category lists specific names of relevant social media sites: Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, FourSquare, Pinterest, Instagram, MySpace, Google+, TripAdvisor, and Trustpilot. By using both the specific and

the abstract search terms, we aimed to conduct a broad review and to find as many relevant articles as possible.

Information systems research	Marketing research	Organization research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)</li> <li>• Information Systems Journal (ISJ)</li> <li>• Information Systems Research (ISR)</li> <li>• Journal of Association for Information Systems (JAIS)</li> <li>• Journal of Information Technology (JIT)</li> <li>• Journal of Management Information Systems (JMIS)</li> <li>• Journal of Strategic Information Systems (JSIS)</li> <li>• MIS Quarterly (MISQ)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal of Marketing (JM)</li> <li>• Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)</li> <li>• Marketing Science (MS)</li> <li>• Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)</li> <li>• Journal of Retailing (JR)</li> <li>• Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)</li> <li>• Academy of Management Review (AMR)</li> <li>• Administrative Science Quarterly (ASQ)</li> <li>• Organization Science (OSc)</li> <li>• Organization Studies (OSt)</li> <li>• Strategic Management Journal (SMJ)</li> </ul>

Table 1. Major information systems, marketing and organization research journals

The result of the computerized search in the research databases provided by Scopus and Business Source Complete was manually filtered in order to match the delimitation of social media to external social media and the criteria of empirical research. In each case we carefully evaluated whether the paper matched the criteria. Because research on social media was scarce before 2009, we limited the time scope of the reviewed literature to the period 2009-2015.

A framework to ensure structure and transparency in both the review and the future agenda for social media research was developed. The emergent state of research in social media motivated a more exhaustive review than the otherwise recommended conceptual analysis (Webster and Watson, 2002). Informed by Avgerou (2000) and Mathiassen et al. (2012), we constructed a three-dimension framework consisting of research area, theory type, and method. For an overview of the framework, see Table 5. Concerning *research area*, the

framework was developed with the purpose of uncovering focal organization field actors in studies of social media. Drawing on institutional theory and its application in IS research (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Swanson and Ramiller, 1997; Currie, 2004; Wang and Swanson, 2007), we constructed an exploratory list of actors: online communities, formal organizations, technology vendors, consultancies, and business media. Concerning *theory*, we wanted to examine which theory types are used in existing social media research contributions. The framework draws on Gregor’s (2006) theory typology for information systems research: analyzing, explaining, predicting, explaining and predicting, and design and action. Concerning *method*, the framework differentiates between surveys that prioritize generalizability, case studies that prioritize empirical fidelity, and experiments that prioritize accuracy.

#### 4. Analysis

The review shows a predominance of studies that focus on online communities, use predictive theories, and are based on surveys and experiments. Only four articles focus on formal organizations’ use of social media, and are based on case studies. Talking number of articles, the review major journals in marketing, organization and information systems research shows that most articles are published in information systems journals, followed by marketing journals, while only two articles on social media are published in organization studies journals. See Tables 2-4 for an overview.

Journal	EJIS	ISJ	ISR	JAIS	JIT	JMIS	JSIS	MISQ
Articles on social media	7	7	19	6	4	10	4	14

Table 2 Articles on social media in eight major information systems research journals 2009–2015

Journal	AMJ	AMR	ASQ	OSt.	OSc.	SMJ
Articles on social media	0	0	0	2	0	0

Table 3. Articles on social media in six major organization research journals 2009–2015

Journal	JM	JMR	MS	JAMS	JR	JCR
Articles on social media	3	9	6	3	1	3

Table 4. Articles on social media in six major marketing research journals 2009–2015

Moving forward, we next review research area, theory type, and method. First, concerning *research area*, the review indicates that among the possible institutional actors, there is a striking paucity of studies that focus on how formal organizations cope with social media, and a prevalence of studies that focus on online communities. The review identified 92 contributions focusing on online communities, and four studies focusing on formal organizations' social media innovation. The review found two studies focusing on technology vendors, but did not find any indication of research focusing on consultancies or business media. See Appendix 1 for the complete listing of articles. See Table 5 for an overview.

Literature Body	Research Area					Theory Type					Method		
	Online communities	Technology vendors	Formal organizations	Consultancies	Business media	Analyzing	Explaining	Predicting	Explaining and	Design and action	Survey	Case study	Experiment
Information systems studies	65	2	4	0	0	0	13	0	55	3	54	12	5
Organization studies	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	1	0
Marketing studies	24	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	23	0	13	1	10

Table 5. Number of journal articles with regard to research area, theory type, and method.

Regarding information systems research that focuses on online communities, we identified seven main subjects of interest: First, community participation, for example Campbell, Fletcher and Greenhill (2009), Germonprez and Hovorka (2013), and Faraj, Kudaravalli and Wasko (2015). Second, disclosure and privacy, for example Tow, Dell and Venable (2010), Zeng and Wei (2013), and Gerlach, Widjaja and Buxmann (2015). Third, buying and branding, for example Dewan and Ramaprasad (2012), and Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013). Fourth content production, for example Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) and Shi, Rui and Whinston (2014). Fifth, intelligence, for example Chau and Xu (2012) and Xin Xu and Zhang (2013). Sixth, disaster and crisis response, for example Nan and Lu (2014) and Leong, Pan, Ractham and Kaewkitipong (2015). Seventh, health, for example Kallinikos and Tempini (2014) and Yaraghi, Du, Sharman, Gopal and Ramesh (2015). Besides these subjects, there are miscellaneous subjects, for example, temporal coordination (Khan &

Jarvenpaa, 2010), learning (Shi & Whinston, 2013), lurking (Cranefield, Yoong, & Huff, 2015), and finally politics (Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, & Williams, 2010).

The information systems research that focuses on technology vendors has strategies for business innovation (Gnyawali, Fan, & Penner, 2010) and motivational management in application development (Claussen, Kretschmer, & Mayrhofer, 2013) as its main research subjects.

Regarding information systems studies that focus on formal organizations' social media innovation processes, we found four studies: Thorén, Ågerfalk and Edenius (2014) conduct an ethnographic study of how the Swedish newspaper industry responds to IT innovation, for example presence on social media; Spagnoletti, Resca and Sæbø (2015b) frame social media as a design process in which traditional organizational boundaries may be challenged; Kallinikos and Tempini (2014) investigate how social media practices work as a new model for organizing medical knowledge creation; and Miranda, Kim and Summers (2015) draw on the organizing vision theory in a study of how the co-presence of clarity and diversity works in social media innovation. In addition four studies tangentially touched upon innovation processes in formal organizations, but only from the marketing perspective of online communities: Goh, Heng and Lin (2013) investigate how community content from consumers and marketers impacts purchase expenditures; Luo, Zhang and Duan (2013) study the predictive relationships between social media and firm equity value; Miller and Tucker (2013) investigate how Facebook users' content creation is related to the focus of postings; and Rishika, Kumar, Janakiraman and Bezawada (2013) scrutinize how community participation is related to the intensity of customer-firm relationship; Orlikowski and Scott (2014) study how hoteliers respond to a shift from well defined to open ended apparatuses of valuation.

We did not find any articles that focused on how consultancies or business media participate in social media innovation.

Next, concerning *theory type*, the review indicates a predominance of theories of the type that Gregor (2006) terms 'explaining and prediction'. The review identified a total of 15 contributions in the 'explaining' category, 80 in the 'explaining and prediction' category, and 3 in the 'design and action' category. See Table 5 for an overview. The studies by Adjei, Noble and Noble (2010) and Bateman et al. (2011) illustrate theories of the 'explain and

predict' type establishing theory-based hypotheses and testing these through a survey or an experiment. An overabundance of the reviewed papers belongs to this theory type. The studies by Jayanti and Singh (2010) and Germonprez and Hovorka (2013) are examples of the 'explaining' theory type. These contributions explain events, actions and sense making related to a specific case. The studies by Cheng, Sun, Hu, and Zeng (2011), Chau and Xu, (2012), and Garg, Smith and Telang (2011) belong to the 'design and action' theory type.

The analysis of theory type indicated two additional characteristics worth mentioning. The first characteristic is that the theories employed were restricted to very specific domains indicating an early stage of research. The second characteristic is that only a few contributions reflect upon the dialectical nature of social media, where social media has an interactive relation between a technological instantiation and organizational context and processes. Examples of contributions that include interaction between IT and the organizational context are Khan and Jarvenpaa (2010), Germonprez and Hovorka (2013), Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013), Scott and Orlikowski (2014), and Spagnoletti, Resca and Sæbø (2015).

Finally, concerning *research method*, the review indicates a predominance of survey and experiment. The review identified 69 survey-based studies, 15 experiments, and 14 case-based studies. See Table 5. The survey method is thus by far the most common in information systems journals and account for half the studies in the marketing journals. Studies by Miller and Tucker (2013) and Moser, Ganley and Groenewegen (2013) illustrate the survey method. The organization theory journals do not include any experiment-based contributions. Among the 32 research contributions in the information systems journals, there is only one experiment-based study. The 18 contributions in the marketing journals only include eight studies based on experiments. Studies by Adjei et al., (2010) and Gerlach et al., (2015) are examples of contributions based on experiments. Case-based studies are the least represented in the reviewed journals. Altogether there are 12 case-based studies in the information systems journals, one in the organization theory journals, while in the marketing journals we found one single case-based study. Studies by Germonprez and Hovorka (2013) and Jayanti and Singh (2010) draw on the case study method.

## **5. Conclusion**

This review of recent research on social media in major journals has several implications for future research. We next highlight some of the findings and implications, and suggest research questions that can help a reframing of social media research into an institutional perspective.

The review identified a surprisingly small number of articles on social media into an organizational perspective. This is paradoxical in light of the omnipresent social media use by private and public organizations, and in the perspective of calls for research, editorials, and research notes that all stress the importance of studying social media (Aakhus et al., 2012; Zammuto et al., 2007; Aral et al., 2013; Haefliger et al., 2011). This paradox may tentatively be explained by a differentiated publication profile and because social media is a new and still to be defined object of study. Social media may also be regarded as only a variant of already well-known and studied subjects, for example as just another example of a marketing channel or an information systems, and therefore covered by existing research. The limited number of research contributions may also be related to the perception that social media are a fashion fad promoted by the popular press (Bergquist, Ljungberg, Zaffar, & Stenmark, 2013) and therefore do not merit serious scientific investigation.

Regardless of the explanations, the lack of research on social media published in high-quality journals may deprive scholars of the possibility to take part in the discourse on social media in industry publications and business media having social media as focal issue on their agendas (Kiron, Palmer, Phillips and Kruschwitz, 2012; Larcker, Larcker and Tayan, 2012). A lack of high-quality research will ultimately produce a divide between research communities and practitioners (Ramiller, Swanson, & Wang, 2008). We there suggest that future research on social media takes the large amount of industry and business media publications as its point of departure in a critical and constructive analysis of the discourse promulgated here. Research on management fashions in the field of information systems (Baskerville and Myers, 2009; Ping and Wang, 2010), critical discourse analysis of industry whitepapers (Bergquist et al. 2013) and critical study of hyperbole in IT innovations (Ramiller, 2006) can facilitate such a venture into the exciting world of social media. To guide future research on social media, not least how social media are constructed as discourse in industry and business media, and for example work as an organizing vision (Swanson &

Ramiller, 1997), we suggest this overall research question: *How can we as scholars conduct rigorous research on social media that is relevant for practitioners?*

Concerning *research area*, the review indicated that among the possible institutional actors at stake in social media innovation processes, there is a striking paucity of studies that focus on how formal organizations cope with social media, and a prevalence of studies that focus on online communities. To complement recent research, we suggest that future research address social media in an organizational perspective.

The moment we depart from organization theory and start questioning the role of formal organizations in social media innovation, it will appear that firms' organizing is just as complex as the complexities found in online communities (Scott and Orlikowski, 2009; Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen, 2013b). For a long time research has pointed to a gap between what formal organizations know about online communities and what these same organizations are capable of doing with this knowledge (Armstrong and Hagel III, 1996; Star and Ruhleder, 1996; Paramewaran and Whinston, 2007; Krogh, 2012; Haefliger et al., 2011). These indications suggest that today the once solid organizational structures are in a process of transformation and therefore merit critical focus in future studies.

The digital infrastructure and capabilities manifested in social media (Tilson et al., 2010; Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen, 2013a) indicate that preceding models of IT innovation (Barley, 1986; Orlikowski, 1992) are too organization centric and need to be developed into more complex models for them to match the interaction of organizations with social media. The advent of social media indicate that what information systems and organization theory once regarded as internal organizational architecture has become a question of cooperation between multiple actors in an inter-organizational field.

To facilitate future research of social media in such an organizational perspective, recent empirical studies communicated in information systems practitioner journals may function as points of departure. First, a case study of the Finnish airline company Finnair indicates that new managerial functions, new organizational departments and new outsourcing procedures emerge as strategies to cope with the complexities resulting from engagement in social media (Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen, 2013b). In line with Krogh (2012), the Finnair study indicates that redrawn boundaries (Kellogg, Orlikowski and Yates, 2006; Orlikowski and Scott, 2014; Scott and Orlikowski, 2014) or loose coupling (Orton and Weick, 1990) may be

pertinent conceptual frameworks in future studies of social media. To grasp these indications, we suggest the following research question as guide for future studies: *How can we understand boundary organizing of social media innovation?*

Second, a study of the convergence of IT and marketing departments indicates that specific constellations of managers are essential for success (Deans, 2011) while recent studies of social media challenges (Gallaughier and Ransbotham, 2010; Miranda et al., 2015; Thorén et al., 2014) indicates that management must take governance of contradictions into consideration. These studies indicate that contradictions in IT innovations (Robey and Boudreau, 1999) and ambidextrous management (Smith and Lewis, 2011) are relevant concepts for investigating how firms wrestle with social media. To guide the investigation of this important issue in future studies, we propose the following research question: *How can we understand management of contradictions in social media innovation?*

Concerning *theory type*, the review identified a predominance of theories of the ‘explaining and predicting’ type (Gregor 2006). Seen from a marketing point of view, this theory type is argued as relevant by Asari (2011), but the predominance of explaining and predicting theory implies a loss of empirical fidelity found in theories which prioritize an emergent and contextual perspective (Markus and Robey, 1988; Kling and Scacchi, 1982). Among the reviewed articles, an illustrative example of empirical richness is found in a study of the Digg social media platform (Germonprez and Hovorka, 2013). High empirical sensitivity is also found in a study of how conflicts are played out in a financial specialist online community (Campbell et al., 2009).

The review only identified a few contributions that draw on theories otherwise used in information systems and organization research, such as institutional theory, structuration theory, and discourse theories. Most of the identified theories, irrespective of type, are restricted to social media as domain theories and not developed into independent conceptual frameworks (Mathiassen et al., 2012). This restriction to a very specific domain indicates that the reviewed research on social media is in an early stage of development. Despite interaction between IT and organizational processes is regarded as a central issue within the information systems discipline (Markus & Robey, 1988; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001), only a few of the reviewed contributions deal with this perspective (Germonprez and Hovorka, 2013, Khan and

Jarvenpaa, 2010, Scott and Orlikowski, 2014, Spagnoletti et al. 2015b; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013)

To complement and broaden the theories employed in recent social media research, we suggest an institutional perspective adapted to the field of IT innovation, for example the organizing vision lens (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The organizing vision lens combines institutional and discursive streams of research, applies these to studies of IT innovations at both the macro and micro levels, and prioritizes empirical context. The organizing vision lens extends theories applied in recent information systems research on IT diffusion (Barrett, Heracleous, & Walsham, 2013) and on social media (Miranda et al., 2015). A guiding question in future research on social media into an organizational perspective may therefore be: *How can we understand social media as an organizing vision?*

Concerning *method*, the review identified a high proportion of studies based on survey and experiment. In combination with the predominance of predictive theory, the review confirms the previously documented dominance of the positivist stance in information systems research (Markus and Robey, 1988; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Avgerou, 2000). This predominance is surprising when considering that social media is an emergent phenomenon, and that the likely initial research strategy would be the case method in order to prioritize the realism of context and concept development (Brinberg & McGrath, 1985). Recent research in social media with a positivist stance argues that even minor technological differences may violate the assumptions of established theory (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014) thereby confirming that case studies could have been the likely prevalent type of method.

In order to promote broader and complementing research methods, two recent studies on social media can work as points of departure. Germonprez and Hovorka's (2013) study of the Digg social media platform emphasizes the ever-changing nature of social media and that the methods of investigation therefore must be chosen accordingly, for example, participatory strategies of investigation. Likewise, a study of TripAdvisor by Scott and Orlikowski (2009) emphasizes the importance of a method that prioritizes historical contextualization and the diversity of the object studied. Similar to the study of Digg, the TripAdvisor study stresses the importance of a method that is sensitive to the continuously changing and distributed nature of social media. The case or site of research is here described as the dynamic and negotiated assembly and reassembly of agencies, interests and issues (Spagnoletti, Resca, & Sæbø,

2015). Drawing on these studies, a guiding research question concerning methodology may be: *How can we develop methods that grasp the ever-changing and virtual nature of social media?*

The paper certainly has some limitations. Due to the prioritization of major journals, the review has ignored emergent research on social media in other journals and in conference proceedings. The scope of the review to information systems, marketing and organization studies as well might have omitted potentially relevant literature on social media in other disciplines. Finally, the criterion of empirical research might have excluded interesting conceptual contributions.

We begin this paper by considering the focus of recent research on social media. The upsurge of Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media sites has recently created a wealth of valuable research contributions. Reviewing contributions in major journals in the disciplines of information systems, organization, and marketing research, we however found that while there are many possible approaches to studying social media, a majority of recent research focuses on online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments. The paper points out specifically, that despite the growth in private and public organizations as players in the field of social media, there is a paucity of case based literature on formal organizations' wrestling with social media. This exclusive focus and approach in recent research may constrain our understanding of social media. Moving forward, we therefore propose that future research draws on institutional perspectives in order to grasp the complexities in emergent social media innovation. To that end, the paper argues a number of research priorities and suggests research questions by taking recent case studies of social media in organizational contexts as point of departure.

## Appendix 1

Literature Body	Research Area					Theory Type					Method		
	Online communities	Technology vendors	Formal organizations	Consultancies	Business media	Analyzing	Explaining	Predicting	Explaining and predicting	Design and action	Survey	Case study	Experiment
Bateman et al. (2011)	X								X		X		
Beekhuizen et al. (2015)	X						X					X	
Campbell et al. (2009)	X						X					X	
Chang et al. (2014)	X								X		X		
Chau and Xu (2012)	X									X	X		
Chen et al. (2015a)	X								X		X		
Chen et al. (2015b)	X								X		X		
Chen and Sharma (2015)	X								X		X		
Cheng et al. (2011)	X									X	X		
Chiu and Huang (2014)	X								X		X		
Claussen et al. (2013)		X							X		X		
Cranefield et al. (2015)	X						X					X	
Dewan and Ramaprasad (2012)	X								X		X		
Dewan and Ramaprasad (2014)	X								X		X		
Dong and Wu (2015)	X								X		X		
Faraj et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Füller et al. (2014)	X								X		X		
Garg et al. (2011)	X									X	X		
Gerlach et al. (2015)	X								X				X
Germonprez and Hovorka (2013)	X						X					X	
Gnyawali et al. (2010)		X							X		X		
Goh et al. (2013)	X								X		X		
Hu et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Johnson et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Kallinikos and Tempini (2014)			X				X					X	
Khan and Jarvenpaa (2010)	X								X		X		
Krasnova et al. (2010)	X								X		X		
Krasnova et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Kuan et al. (2014)	X								X				X
Kudaravalli et al. (2014)	X								X		X		

Lang et al. (2015)	X							X				X
Leong et al. (2015)	X						X					X
Luo et al. (2013)	X							X		X		
Maier et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Maier et al. (2015)	X							X				X
Matook et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Matook et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Miller and Tucker (2013)	X							X		X		
Miranda et al. (2015)			X					X		X		
Moser et al. (2013)	X							X		X		
Nan and Lu (2014)	X						X				X	
Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013)	X							X		X		
Oh et al. (2013)	X							X		X		
Oh et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Posey et al. (2010)	X							X		X		
Ransbotham and Kane (2011)	X							X		X		
Ray et al. (2014)	X							X		X		
Ren et al. (2012)	X							X				X
Rishika et al. (2013)	X							X		X		
Scott and Orlikowski (2014)	X						X				X	
Shi and Whinston (2013)	X							X		X		
Shi et al. (2014)	X							X		X		
Silva et al. (2009)	X						X				X	
Spagnoletti et al. (2015a)	X						X				X	
Spagnoletti et al. (2015b)			X				X				X	
Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013)	X							X		X		
Susarla et al. (2012)	X							X		X		
Tang et al. (2012)	X							X		X		
Thorén et al. (2014)			X				X				X	
Tow et al. (2010)	X						X			X		
Turel (2015)	X							X		X		
Wattal et al. (2010)	X							X		X		
Xie and Lee (2015)	X							X		X		
Xin Xu and Zhang (2013)	X							X		X		
Xu et al. (2011)	X							X		X		
Xu et al. (2014)	X							X		X		
Yan and Tan (2014)	X							X		X		
Yan, et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Yaraghi et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Yu et al. (2015)	X							X		X		
Zeng and Wei (2013)	X							X		X		

Table A. Research on social media in eight major information systems journals 2009–2015

Literature Body	Research Area					Theory Type					Method		
	Online communities	Technology vendors	Formal organizations	Consultancies	Business media	Analyzing	Explaining	Predicting	Explaining & predicting	Design and action	Survey	Case study	Experiment
Adjei et al. (2010)	X								X				X
Aguirre et al. (2015)	X								X				X
Asari (2011)	X								X		X		
Berger and Iyengar (2013)	X								X				X
Danaher and Dagger (2013)	X								X		X		
Ghose et al. (2012)	X								X		X		
Goldenberg et al. (2012)	X								X				X
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Homburg et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Jayanti and Singh (2010)	X						X					X	
Kumar et al. (2013)	X								X				X
Ma et al. (2015)	X								X		X		
Naylor et al. (2012)	X								X				X
Netzer et al. (2012)	X								X		X		
Ransbotham et al. (2012)	X								X		X		
Rapp et al. (2013)	X								X		X		
Schulze et al. (2014)	X								X		X		
Schweidel and Moe (2014)	X								X		X		
Stephen and Galak (2012)	X								X		X		
Toubia and Stephen (2013)	X								X				X
Trusov et al. (2009)	X								X		X		
Trusov et al. (2013)	X								X		X		
Tucker (2014)	X								X				X
Wilcox and Stephen (2013)	X								X				X
Zhu et al. (2012)	X								X				X

Table B. Research on social media in six major marketing journals 2009–2015

Literature Body	Research Area					Theory Type					Method		
	Online communities	Technology vendors	Formal organizations	Consultancies	Business media	Analyzing	Explaining	Predicting	Explaining & predicting	Design and action	Survey	Case study	Experiment
Faraj and Johnson (2011)	X								X		X		
Orlikowski and Scott (2014)	X						X					X	

Table C. Research on social media in six major organization journals 2009–2015

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# Paper 2



# Social Media as Organizing Vision? Behind the Facebook Adoption Curve<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

- Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to explore how formal organizations respond to social media innovation over time.
- Framework: The paper draws on institutional perspectives, in particular the organizing vision literature.
- Methodology: The paper has an explorative approach, and includes multiple methods – online observations, interviews, documents, and participation.
- Research setting: The field study took place in the organizational field of the largest 100 Danish firms, 98 Danish municipalities, and associated field actors.
- Contribution: The paper draws on the organizing vision literature in a study of how formal organization responds to developments in social media. The paper contributes to the first steps in understanding how entrepreneurs through mobilization and legitimation enable social media institutionalization, and how resisters create counter-direction and deviation. Finally, we argue that social media have elements of both an organizing vision and an airplane magazine syndrome.

Keywords: social media, IT innovation, institutional theory, institutional entrepreneurs, organizing vision, airline magazine syndrome, mobilization, legitimation, sense making.

## 1. Introduction

The global proliferation of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media sites among millions of individual users, and millions of private and public organizations, has made it into an important information systems research area.

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While early research on social media sought definitions and gave managerial advice (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), recent research has stressed that it is not entirely clear how these new technologies will impact organizations, and that the theoretical implications of social media for organizational research is challenging (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015; Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014). Surprisingly, a review of the most recent research on social media indicates a paucity of contributions about firms and formal organizations, thereby confirming a 2013-social media special issue editorial (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). The review shows a predominance of contributions focusing on online communities. While research about online communities is important and has provided many interesting results (Johnson, Safadi, & Faraj, 2015; Miller & Tucker, 2013), user behavior in online communities is only the last 100 meters of today's social media innovation marathon. On this backdrop, we find it timely to conduct a *field level study of how private and public organizations respond to social media innovation*.

As the theoretical framework for studying this social media innovation process, we suggest drawing on institutional perspectives (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 2008) as they have been explored within the discipline of information systems research over the last decades (Currie & Swanson, 2009; Nielsen, Mathiassen, & Newell, 2014; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001). Whereas most institutional perspectives on IT innovation have highlighted the effect of institutional arrangements (Wang & Swanson, 2007), we suggest focusing on how IT innovations are brought about, and therefore draw, among others, on the entrepreneurial perspectives as these have been used in organizing vision literature (Wang & Swanson, 2007).

For our empirical context we chose the social media innovation process in the 100 largest Danish firms, the 98 Danish municipalities, and associated actors, including business media, consultancies, technology vendors, academics, and government agencies. The time frame of the study is the recent decade of social media innovation. In particular we focus on how firms and municipalities adopted and implemented Facebook in the period 2007-2015.

Based on our field study findings, we argue that the discursive community behind social media as organizing vision includes both entrepreneurs and institutional actors representing institutionalized practices. Drawing on the concepts of mobilization and legitimation, the study shows an institutionalization process in progress, but also indicates elements of counter-direction and deviation. Finally, we therefore argue that social media have elements of both an organizing vision and an airplane magazine syndrome.

The paper is organized as follows: In section two we introduce recent research on social media and the organizing vision literature as the theoretical framework for the paper. In section three we account for the empirical context, the data gathering and data analysis. Moving forward, in section four we give a narrative account of the empirical context. Finally in sections five and six we present and discuss the analysis, and in section seven point to limitations, future research opportunities, and implications practice.

## **2. Recent research and theoretical framework**

Despite the fact that private and public organizations have been engaged in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media sites for more than a decade, there is a surprising lack of research on how such formal organizations respond to social media.

A review of recent research revealed a predominance of studies focusing only on the most obvious manifestation of social media, namely behavior in online customer communities, and a paucity of studies investigating how formal organizations and other institutional actors participate in the social media innovation process (Haahr, 2014). This predominating focus on user communities apparently mirrors a widespread understanding of social media as constituted through user contribution (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and community engagement (Germonprez & Hovorka, 2013). The surprising lack of especially studies on social media from the perspective of formal organizations is confirmed in a recent special issue on social media (Aral et al., 2013). In addition, the studies focusing on online communities are characterized by being quantitative and being based on cross-sectional surveys or experiments. Therefore they lack contextual and empirical fidelity (Markus & Robey, 1988).

If we turn to information systems research communicated in practitioner journals, we find research on social media innovation from the perspective of formal organizations and studies that have employed qualitative methods. Drawing on recognized theories, these studies by senior information systems scholars focus on adoption and absorptive capacity (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010), governance and management of customer interaction (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010), cooperation among top-level managers (Deans, 2011), boundary spanning and organizational design (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013), and

community building and industry leadership (Heath, Singh, Ganesh, & Taube, 2013). Compared to recent research in major journals, the research communicated in practitioner journals therefore contributes with both theoretical frameworks and an empirical foothold to our research on social media innovation.

Research that accounts for private and public organizations' actual adoption is scarce. Culnan et al. (2010) mapped the presence of the U.S. Fortune 500 Companies on selected social media sites, thereby providing important empirical knowledge on the actual adoption of social media within a specific population of private organizations. We found only one mapping of public organizations' social media presence, namely a listing of social media presence among the five largest municipalities in each of the old EU countries (Bonsón, Torres, Royo, & Floresc, 2012). Despite the valuable knowledge about actual practice among firms and municipalities that these two studies represent, both studies are cross-sectional survey snapshots that disregard that change processes unfolded over time (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991); and not least in light of the rapid proliferation of social media adoption among private and public organizations, these studies would benefit from an update to the 2015 state of social media practices.

Motivated by the studies of private firms by Culnan et al. (2010), and public organizations by Bonsón et al. (2012) at the organizational field level, and in an effort to update and extend these studies, we found it relevant to investigate how private and public organizations have responded to social media over time. Inspired by the use of the organizing vision lens, we draw on institutional perspectives and next introduce this theoretical framework.

Responding to calls for institutional perspectives that prioritize context and process (Currie & Swanson, 2009), we suggest prioritizing the emerging organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997) as a framework for investigating how formal organizations respond to social media.

First, in order to emphasize institutionalization as a process and not solely as an effect (DiMaggio, 1988), in other words to direct research attention to how institutionalization is undertaken by actors and through actions, we in particular find the institutional entrepreneur perspective in the organizing vision literature interesting (Currie, 2004; Wang & Swanson, 2007). As part of conceptualizing the agency behind an organizing vision, both the seminal

paper on the organizing vision (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997) and later empirical studies (Wang & Swanson, 2007, 2008), identify a number of institutional actors who participate as entrepreneurs of organizing visions. However, IT innovation processes are often marked by contradictory interests (Robey & Boudreau, 1999), and from the point of view of prospective adopters, institutional entrepreneurs are most probably challenged by institutional actors promoting a competing organizing vision or neglecting it altogether. Although the organizing vision literature conceptualizes an organizing vision as being produced in a process of both cooperation and contention, recent response to the organizing vision literature indicates that the organizing vision lens does not seem to account for actors concurrently promoting alternative discourses in the contemporary landscape of IT innovations (Barrett, Heracleous, & Walsham, 2013). On this background, we find it interesting to investigate *how institutional entrepreneurs participate in social media innovation*.

Second, in order to conceptualize how these social media entrepreneurs more specifically contribute to a process of institutionalization, we draw on the concepts of mobilization and legitimation (Wang & Swanson, 2007). Mobilization concerns two aspects: the development of leadership in institutional arrangements and the resource allocation related to the IT innovation in question. Legitimation likewise concerns two aspects: the presence of cognitive coherence and the promotion of social success stories. However, despite the fact that the concepts of mobilization and legitimation are presented as constituting a forward working engine of institutionalization, the use of these concepts in empirical case studies have revealed interesting tensions between forward moving processes of institutionalization and counter-direction processes (Wang & Swanson, 2007). In line with such tensions, recent information systems studies point to contradictory or incoherent elements in organizing visions (Barrett et al., 2013; Miranda, Kim, & Summers, 2015). With these inherent tensions as point of origin, we found it relevant to study *how mobilization and legitimation are manifested in social media innovation*.

Third, in order to finalize our analysis, we focus on the career of an organizing vision (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The concept of an organizing vision is understood as a discursive product aimed at guiding prospective adopters of an IT innovation, more precisely defined as a focal community idea for the application of information technology in organizations (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The organizing vision is, however, not solely a discursive product. It is also intertwined with the material circumstances of the IT innovation.

The career of an organizing vision thus depends on how well it facilitates the material and the discursive promotion of an IT innovation process among adopting organizations (Ramiller & Swanson, 2003; Swanson & Ramiller, 1997; Wang & Swanson, 2007). In order to understand the career of an organizing vision, the concept of the airline magazine syndrome (Ramiller, 2001) readily epitomizes how words can extend away from matters and is therefore relevant as an alternative conceptualization of what is at stake in a given context of IT innovation (Ramiller, 2001). An example is how management fashion labels can be drenched in exaggerations (Ramiller, 2006). On the background of these tensions, we finally want to investigate *how social media work as an organizing vision*.

### **3. Methodology**

We conducted an interpretive field study (Klein & Myers, 1999) in order to trace the participation of institutional actors in the social media innovation processes, and if and how social media worked as an organizing vision in this process. In the field study, we aimed at employing adequate methodologies in perspective of the emergent state of social media and by extending approaches used in recent research on social media (Germonprez & Hovorka, 2013; Scott & Orlikowski, 2009). Motivated by these recent social media studies, by studies of ongoing innovation processes in the organizing vision literature, and by a call for empirical investigations of what is actually going on today (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001), we took the unique opportunity to monitor the launch of social media among private and public organizations in Denmark.

The empirical context of the study was the 100 largest Danish firms, the 98 Danish municipalities, and the associated institutional actors. The 100 largest Danish firms were selected because of their societal impact (Scott, 2008), and as an equivalent to the U.S. Fortune 500 firms. These large firms included globally known firms like Maersk, LEGO, Carlsberg, and Bang & Olufsen, but also firms primarily operating in the local context of Denmark. The 98 Danish municipalities were selected because of their public presence and wide impact and in order to find an equivalent to the 100 largest firms among public organizations. The 98 Danish municipalities included major city municipalities like Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense, but also regional and small-town municipalities.

We furthermore included associated institutional actors in the study because we wanted to investigate how their participation contributed to the social media innovation among the 100 firms and 98 municipalities. These associated institutional actors included technology vendors, IT research firms and analysts, consultancies, business media, conference organizers, research and educational institutions, industry affiliations, and government agencies (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983; Wang & Swanson, 2007). Some of these actors specifically belong to the Danish context, for example, the business newspaper Borsen, the research and educational institution Copenhagen Business School, and the government agency the Danish Business Authority. Other actors were global actors also present in the Danish context, for example, technology vendors (Facebook and LinkedIn), business media (Harvard Business Review), and the international conference organizer behind the Copenhagen Social Media Week.

Data collection followed interpretive (Klein & Myers, 1999) and multi-methods approaches (Eisenhardt, 1989). The investigation started in 2011 by online observation of the social media action among the 100 firms and the 98 municipalities in order to establish an overview of their actual practice. Although these observations were interpretive, we quantified the observations of firms' and municipalities' Facebook activity in order to account for and illustrate the actual activity. See table 1 for an overview of data collection methods 2011-2015.

As the next step in our gathering of data, we interviewed 10 organizations to investigate their reasoning on their social media presence or lack hereof, and therefore interviewed active as well as non-active organizations. Later in the research process, we selected one private organization, BlueTech, and one public organization, LargeMuni, in order to prioritize individual organizations' perspectives on the social media innovation process. The study of the BlueTech firm was conducted in the period 2011-2015. The study of the municipality LargeMuni was conducted in 2012-2015. In these studies we also employed online observation, interviews, documents, and participation as data collection methods. The investigation of the associated actors furthermore included online observation, document gathering, workshop and conference participation.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Observation (100+ hrs) Interview (10) Participation (20+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Participation (20+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Document (8) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Document (6) Participation (10+ hrs)

Table 1. Data collection methods 2011-2015

The study continued to the end of 2015, in real time thus covering a time period of more than four years. Via digital archival access, we managed to gather time stamped data back to 2007 for the Facebook use of 100 largest Danish firms and 98 Danish municipalities. In total this data thus covers the first eight years of Facebook's adoption by private and public organizations.

We analyzed the data in four steps. First, in an effort to provide a contextual understanding of the investigated innovation process (Klein & Myers, 1999), we connected data from various sources and constructed a narrative account. We present this narrative account as an empirical preamble to our analysis. Second, to identify which actors participated in what way, the literature on institutional entrepreneurs (Wang & Swanson, 2007) was used to code the innovation process. Our coding structure was both deductive and inductive. We first took a deductive approach in using the a priori established list of institutional entrepreneurs to trace and identify which actors were participating in the social media innovation process. The coding, however, also became inductive when we became aware of the concurrent presence of institutional entrepreneurs and actors advocating institutionalized media practices. This inductive coding approach led to the differentiation of actors into social media entrepreneurs, marketing campaign actors, and social media critics. These actor attributes did not exist in advance but were an analytical product of our coding of the empirical data. Third, in a similar fashion we used the dual concepts of mobilization and legitimation to code the actions of the institutional actors. Drawing on former studies of IT innovation (Robey & Boudreau, 1999) and based on specific empirical results in former organizing vision lens case studies (Currie, 2004; Wang & Swanson, 2007), we paid special attention to data indicating conflicts in mobilization and legitimation processes. While much data indicated social media as a successful organizing vision, we also found data indicating hesitation and crises among adopting organizations [See paper 3 and paper 4]. Zooming in on the discursive dimension of

the social media innovation process, we furthermore found indication of social media hype that were in contrast to the actual material practices we witnessed in our field study. Fourth and finally, we found it relevant to analyze to what extent the social media worked as an organizing vision. Initially, we intended to use solely the concept of organizing vision for our analysis of the social media innovation process. However, in order to grasp and conceptualize all data from our study of the social media innovation process, we found it relevant also to draw on the concept of the airline magazine syndrome (Ramiller, 2001).

The data gathering and the data analysis worked in tandem. We drew on institutional and organizing vision literature to sensitize our understanding of the emerging social media practices. In particular we focused on the contrasts between what was actually going on and the interpretations of those actions undertaken by the participating actors (Suddaby, 2006) in our effort to describe and explain the empirical material. Without adhering to specific grounded theory procedures, our data collection and analysis included constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Suddaby, 2006) and followed the principles of interpretive research (Klein & Myers, 1999).

#### **4. Behind the Facebook Adoption Curve**

When Maersk, the world's largest shipping line, in the spring of 2011 became active on Facebook, it created a lot of attention in the media and among business professionals in Denmark. Not only was Maersk a business-to-business corporation, Maersk was also regarded as conservative and closed in its public communication approaches. Maersk's Facebook entry in many ways thereby epitomizes what was at stake in the field of social media among private and public organizations' emergent social media practices. Therefore, it is a suitable starting point for telling the story of social media making in Denmark. Like Maersk, many firms and municipalities were early attentive of social media. For instance, this attention is demonstrated in an interview that took place less than two years before Maersk's entry on Facebook. The Danish business newspaper *Borsen* interviewed the vice president of Maersk's commercial activities, Hanne Sorensen, about the competitive landscape and future innovation in late 2009; she explained how Maersk in a globalized world wanted a stronger customer focus, and in that context she said that "in the long term, Maersk may even become active on Facebook" (Rechnagel, 2009).

The Maersk story of social media also illustrates a central value in much promotion of social media, namely authenticity and engagement: In line with a much hyped phrase about social media, “It’s communication, not marketing” (Katona & Sarvary, 2014), much of Maersk’s activities has been to feature employees and fans as protagonists in the firm’s presence on Facebook, for example, by having a captain report on cargo transportation around the world, or by having employees voice that they are on the outlook for new colleagues.

However, Maersk is only one single player in a field of players with a focus on business opportunities on Facebook and other social media sites: private and public organizations, business media, consultancies, technology vendors, and government agencies. These players were all present and eager to take part in the social media hype, and when Facebook in 2007 launched ‘Facebook pages’, both private firms and public municipalities in Denmark soon opened a Facebook page account. While LEGO and Pandora opened an account right away in 2007, the first Danish municipalities started Facebook pages in 2008. See Figure 1 for Danish firms’ and municipalities’ adoption of Facebook over time.

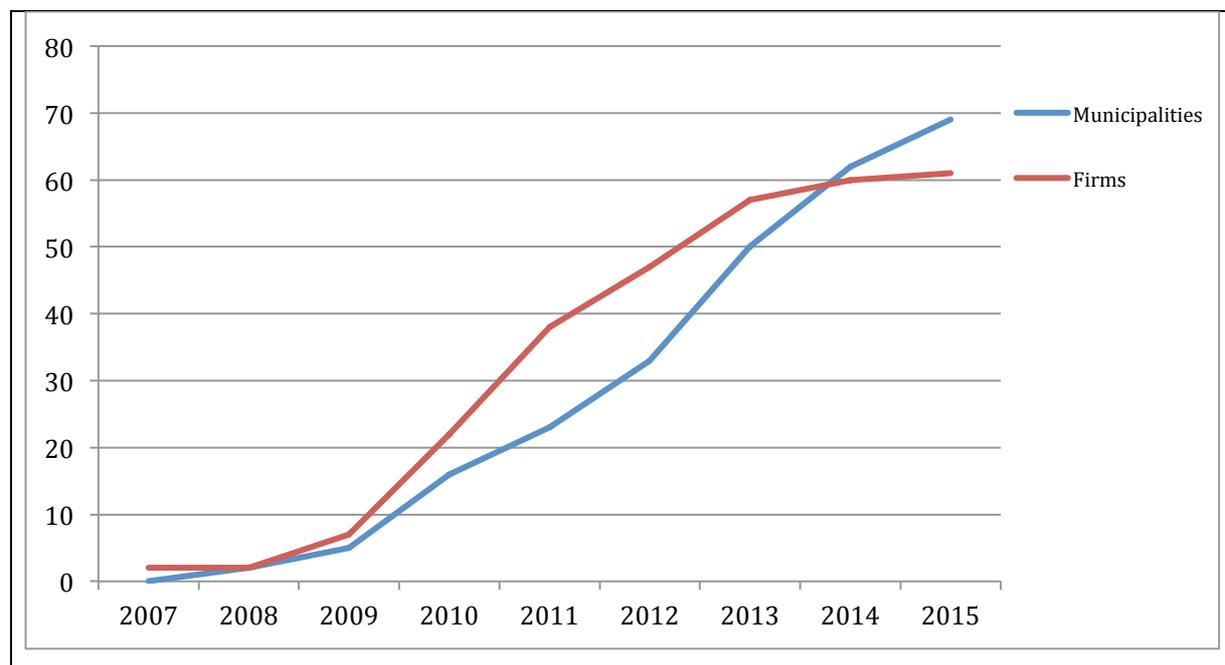


Figure 1. Facebook adoption by the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities

It is worth noting, however, that despite the attention and early adoption, these first-mover firms and municipalities did not immediately start posting on Facebook. For these first-movers, there is between one and four years separating the creation of a Facebook page and

their first posting. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning how the level of monthly posting activity varies considerably. Figure 2 shows the number of monthly Facebook postings by the 10 largest Danish firms in the period 2009-2015. Figure 3 shows the number of monthly Facebook postings by the 98 Danish municipalities in the period 2009-2015. The graphs illustrating the monthly posting activity are best characterized as a zigzag pattern. In comparison to other professional communication or marketing activities, for example online newsletters, this variation is noteworthy.

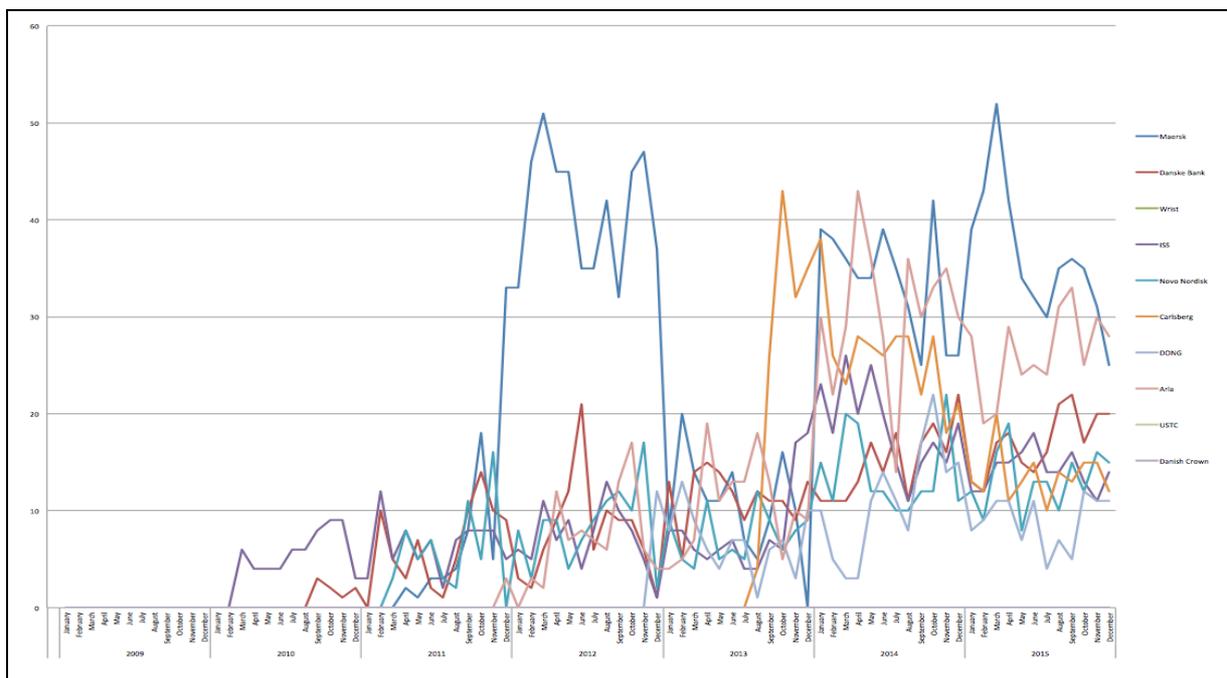


Figure 2. Facebook postings per month by the 10 largest Danish firms 2009-2015

Apart from firms and municipalities, business media were present on the social media stage. Business media had a remarkable rise in number of features about social media in the period from 2007 to 2009. A quick perusal of the Danish business newspaper Borsen, the municipal sector news media Danish Municipalities as well as of the U.S. business magazines Harvard Business Review and MIT Management Sloan Review shows a significant rise in the number of articles about social media in the years 2007-2009.

It is also remarkable how private and public organizations' social media adoption happens at the same time as numerous consultancy entrepreneurs dedicated to social media are born. Three of these, Seismonaut, Komfo, and Social Semantic started in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively; they are worth mentioning because of their initiatives beyond specific consultancy tasks. In 2011 Social Semantic started conducting a yearly survey on social

media in formal organizations and also initiated a research project in collaboration with Copenhagen Business School in early 2014 (“Networked Business Initiative,” 2014). The social media consultancy Komfo is noteworthy for its focus on Danish governmental institutions; in cooperation with the Confederation of Danish Municipalities, Komfo, for example, in 2011 produced a whitepaper based on four municipalities being active on Facebook (Kommunernes Landsforening and Komfo 2011). Finally, Seismonaut is remarkable due to numerous promotional activities in collaboration with the municipality of Aarhus, and because of its cooperation with the Danish School of Media and Journalism, which in early 2014 resulted in the launch of a social media manager study program (Seismonaut, 2014).

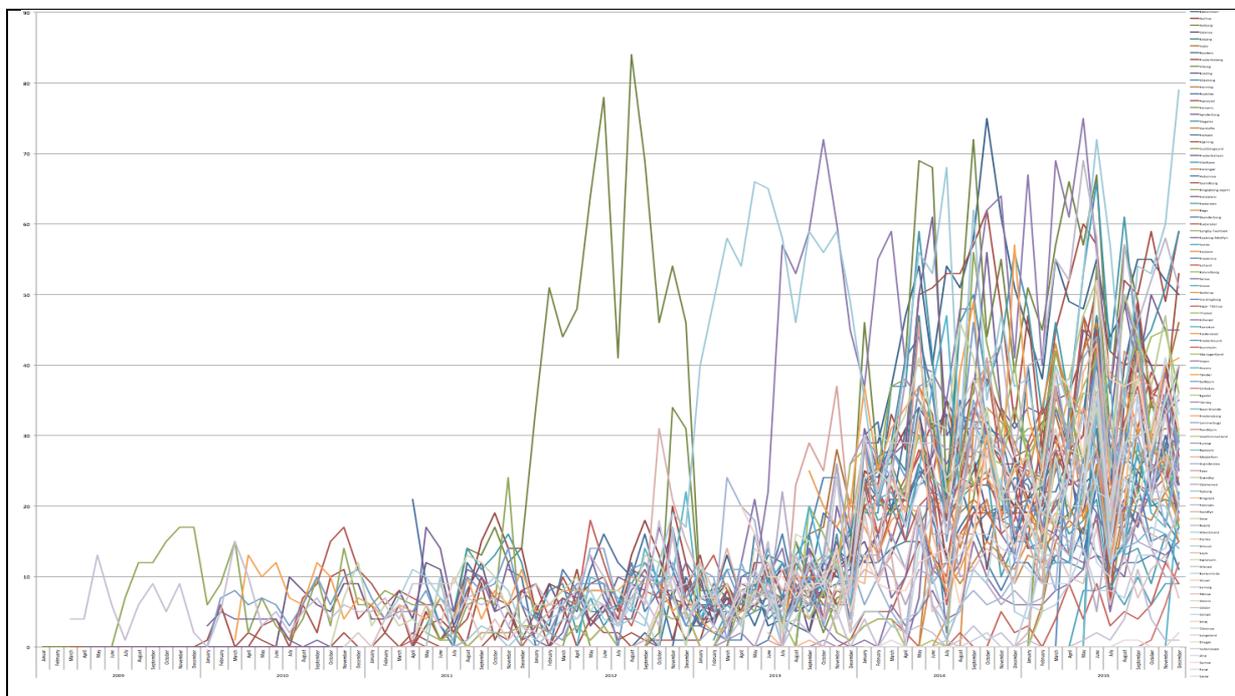


Figure 3. Facebook postings per month by the 98 Danish municipalities 2009-2015

Further, as already mentioned, we found universities which in cooperation with social media consultancies created a social media manager program and a large scale research project. We found indications of researchers who wrote articles about firms’ use of social media in which they are in line with the user community generated and ”communication, not marketing” organizing vision for social media (Agerdal-Hjerminde, 2014; Castello, Etter, & Morsing, 2012). However, it is worth noting that overall we found remarkably few instances of Danish

institutions of higher education offering social media courses, and likewise few indications of research projects and publications on social media in Denmark.

Governmental institutions also entered the social media stage. In the Danish context it is remarkable how several governmental institutions take part in the promotion of social media among formal organizations, for example, the Danish Business Authority that organizes seminars and workshops.

Social media technology vendors enter the social media stage. In the period 2007-2015 the social media sites that have attracted the attention of firms and municipalities undergo several changes. Facebook is illustrative of how social media websites undergo changes in order to establish a stronger position in facilitating formal organizations' use of social media. Behind the frontend of 'Facebook pages', Facebook has added several management functions. Among the most significant management functions is the launch of insights dashboard in 2010, global pages in 2012, and the automated reuse of replies in 2015 (Facebook, 2012).

However, the story of social media innovation in Denmark is not only a story of widespread adoption and successful implementation. The media headlines in the Danish business newspaper Borsen reflect a skeptical approach to social media: Under the headline "Learn leadership from Obama", Borsen in early 2009 reviews a book in which social media is praised as the key to future business, but does so in a distant tone and closes the review by forecasting that cautious leaders probably will hesitate to launch social media. There have also been explicit critical voices. In 2010 a headline in the business newspaper Borsen reads "Corporate Facebook. Illusion or good idea?" Consultancies have also been critical: Social Semantic in 2011 has a blog post entitled "5 myths about social media".

Reflecting this situation, a Copenhagen Business School researcher in a 2013 diagnosis of social media use among Danish firms has the telling headline "Firms hesitate to exploit social media for conversations" (Morsing, 2013). 2013 is also the year when an independent digital expert under the headline "10 reasons why municipalities should hesitate to launch Facebook" characterizes Facebook as a closed commercial platform with undemocratic rules and is further critical of consultancies which make a living from convincing municipalities and others to adopt social media (Tranberg, 2013).

By the end of 2015, 62 of the largest 100 Danish firms and 69 out of the 98 Danish municipalities had an official Facebook page. This picture of adoption, however, needs to be

qualified. Among the seemingly non-adopter organizations, we identified social media action created by local departments, local sales organizations, or individual employees. This action was often characterized by a high degree of engagement and diversity, and thus despite the absence of official representation on Facebook, it indicates an innovative grass root social media activity.

It is worth noting that we identified organizations, for example Maersk and Novo Nordic, which were not only highly active on social media, but also promoted this action on their corporate website, in whitepapers, at conferences, in business media features and interviews. Novo Nordic has dedicated a corporate website space for social media (“Novo Nordisk Social Media Overview,” 2015). These organizations thereby made significant discursive contributions to social media as an organizing vision. However, we also identified organizations that had significant action on Facebook or LinkedIn, but, in contrast to Maersk and Novo Nordic, had a surprisingly taciturn approach. These taciturn approaches were seen in both private firms and public municipalities. In late 2014, top management in BlueTech took steps to conduct an audit of Facebook practices, and LargeMuni in 2015 still had a critical approach to being present on social media.

During the whole period of 2007-2015 there were critical voices, for example a social media strategist who claimed to debunk seven of the most common myths relating to social media, and a business consultant who raised a severe critique of the metrics of Facebook likes (Sabour, 2015). In contrast to such critical voices, municipal employees in late 2015 at a seminar organized by Komfo, very excitedly referred to a *Fast Company* article forecasting trends in 2016 and expressed great expectations to co-creation between municipalities and citizens on social media platforms. 2015 was also the year where a large branding agency, Kunde & Co, proclaimed growth and great expectations as regards social media activities when announcing several open positions. Similar tendencies to growth and strategic investment in social media are seen in other consultancies and corporations. Copenhagen Social Media Week in the fall of 2015 announced that Mark Zuckerberg would appear as keynote in their 2016 event.

In total, the Danish social media stage 2007-2015 has featured actors expressing mixed messages and engaged in complicated relations. In the next section we will draw on institutional perspectives and the organizing vision lens in order to analyze this launch of social media among Danish firms and municipalities.

## 5. Analysis

Next we present the analysis of social media innovation as a form of institutional entrepreneurship facilitated by an organizing vision (DiMaggio, 1988; Wang & Swanson, 2007). We first analyze the distinctive entrepreneurial contributions to the innovation process, then how they contribute to institutionalization as mobilization and legitimation, and finally how social media works as an organizing vision.

### *Social media entrepreneurs*

As reflected in the story just told, multiple institutional actors participated in the promotion of social media among the 100 largest Danish firms and 98 Danish municipalities in the period 2007-2015. Next we analyze *how institutional entrepreneurs participate in social media innovation*. See Table 2.

Firms and municipalities contribute to the innovation process by adopting and implementing social media. Examples of activity include customer service, recruitment, public relations, product promotion, advertising, citizen engagement, and show that social media innovation has been unfolded as functional experiments, and not just a general purpose innovation of the Internet (Dimaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001). In many cases these initiatives have been run as experiments or loosely coupled projects (Avgerou, 2000). We found highly committed social media employees, who not only worked to ensure success in their respective organizations but who were also dedicated to disseminating their social media expertise and value at seminars and conferences (Wang, 2010).

Consultancies have provided firms and municipalities with operational knowledge and service as well as strategic perspectives on social media (Swanson, 2010). Consultancies dedicated to social media took leadership (Wang & Swanson, 2007) in producing whitepapers, workshops, and seminars in order to promote social media. In cooperation with universities they have taken leadership in setting up research projects and educational programs. In contrast, large and established marketing and digital consultancies perceived social media as an additional channel or platform opportunity for servicing their clients (Swanson, 2010). While marketing consultancies have seen social media as an additional channel for campaigns, digital consultancies have promoted social media as an additional platform in the digitalization of customer and citizen processes.

<b>Actor Type</b>	<b>Actor type examples</b>	<b>Action type</b>	<b>Action type examples</b>
Firms and municipalities	100 largest Danish firms 98 Danish municipalities	Dedicated website Adoption and implementation	Novo Nordic website Municipality of Copenhagen
Social media vendors	LinkedIn Facebook	Social media platforms Management platform	LinkedIn Global pages
Consultancies	Seismonaut, Komfo Kunde & Co	Workshops Conference	Webinar on ROI Social media conference
Conference organizers	Copenhagen Social Media Week Municipality of Aarhus	One-week conference One-week conference	Copenhagen Social Media Week Internet Week Denmark
Business media	Borsen Danish Municipalities	Business News Municipality News	Article about LinkedIn Debate about use of Facebook
Universities and academics	Copenhagen Business School Danish School of Journalism	Research project Study program	Networked organization initiative Social media manager
Industry affiliations	Confederation of Danish Industry Local Government Denmark	Information and advice to firms Advice to municipalities	Whitepaper about social media Workshop
Government agencies	Danish Business Authority Statistics Denmark	Conferences and workshops Official national statistics	Seminar about social media Statistics on social media

Table 2 Institutional actors and actions

As in earlier cases of organizing visions, for example customer relationship management (Wang & Swanson, 2008), business media have seen social media as a source of news production targetted a professional audience. This coverage of social media has often been initiated in firms or municipalities and have portrayed employees exploring new business frontiers, or quoted consultants arguing for the necessity of social media in pursuit of innovation. However, the coverage of social media have also included critical voices among journalists and experts describing the development of social media as a closed section of the Internet (Tranberg, 2013), or researchers warning against the perils of social media-facilitated co-creation (Verhoef, Beckers, & van Doorn, 2013). Regardless of approach, the business media have turned social media into a source of news production.

Already at an early stage social media vendors saw formal organizations' interest in social media as a new market opportunity, and as part of their ongoing innovation they have added administrative functions (Van De Ven, Polley, Garud, & Venkataraman, 1999). For example, in 2012 Facebook added 'global pages' (Facebook, 2012) to service formal

organizations in controlling and exploiting their presence on Facebook. Equally important, social media vendors have implemented algorithms aimed at producing more 'traffic' on social media sites. LinkedIn has thus not only introduced 'endorsement' as a function but also an algorithm to motivate a visitor on LinkedIn to endorse connections (LinkedIn, 2012). The promotion of social media sites to varying degrees happens through certified consultancies and via production of news releases to business media.

Apart from business media and social media vendors, also universities, industry affiliations, government agencies, and conferences organizers participated in the social media innovation. Universities have participated in research projects, launched study programs targeted at practitioners, offered PhD scholarships, held conferences and master classes. Industry affiliations have sought to inform and service their member organization in order to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by social media, for instance in the form of whitepapers, workshops and seminars, advisory panels or think tanks, and through participation in education and research projects. Government agencies, for example the Danish Business Authority and Statistics Denmark, have provided services for private and public organizations. The Danish Business Authority has organized seminars, and in the period studied Statistics Denmark started to publish statistics on social media among formal organizations. Conference organizers have readily used the upsurge in social media among formal organizations as a business opportunity. The most prominent example is the 'Copenhagen Social Media Week', which is held by an international conference organizer that also offers social media weeks in London, Paris, Berlin, etc. These conferences feature presentations by consultants and employees from local Danish and renowned international organizations. Participants are employees in public and private organizations with a social media-related function or interest. These conferences are a very visible and intense stage for social media-dedicated consultants and employees, and thereby an important platform for the promotion of social media as IT fashion (Wang, 2010).

Summarizing, these institutional actors each bring distinctive contributions to the social media innovation process, and through these contributions they have formed a community of mutual interests. However, despite most of the entrepreneurial actions referring to social media, there were different stakes in the process and thus tensions. Three of these inherent tensions in the social media community deserve special attention.

The first noteworthy tension is indicated by the heterogeneity in social media practices and discourses among the firms and municipalities. While our study indicates a significant rise in adoption and implementation of social media among firms and municipalities over the last decade, thereby indicating a successful career for social media as organizing vision, we also found a significant heterogeneity in social media practices and discourses among the 100 firms and 98 municipalities. This heterogeneity indicates that the label social media merely works as a sign post over a testing ground, more than a coherent organizing vision leading to institutionalization (Miranda et al., 2015).

The second noteworthy tension relates to the emergence of consultancies that dedicated themselves to social media innovation. As genuine social media entrepreneurs they took the lead in the creation of alliances between government institutions, education and research institutions, and employees between adopting firms and municipalities. However, while these dedicated consultancies incarnated social media entrepreneurs, we also found large marketing and digital consultancies that merely perceived of social media as a vehicle for marketing campaigns or an appendix to digitalization strategies (Kunde & Co, 2014) While recent research on social media has found indication of a new paradigm of interaction (Katona & Sarvary, 2014), our study indicates a presence of established consultancies advocating the use of social media under the species of already institutionalized approaches.

The third noteworthy tension related to how many actors become boundary spanners (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013) when they are travelling within and between organizations with social media as organizing vision. Most visibly, social media employees become staged in social media conferences, in seminars organized by consultancies, and in media features. Consultants in turn visit firms and municipalities, are staged in conferences and seminars, and in several cases are being headhunted to firms and municipalities. Researchers also contribute to this travelling of ideas when they give presentations at conferences, join advisory boards, and give interviews.

However, despite these competing discourses related to social media practices, and despite the heterogeneity in what is actually practiced among the 100 largest Danish firms and 98 Danish municipalities, the label social media appears still to have traction in 2015. In order to investigate this situation further, we next draw on the concepts of mobilization and legitimation.

### *Mobilization and legitimation*

In order to cast further light on institutional entrepreneurs, we next analyze *how mobilization and legitimation are manifested in the promotion of social media* among Danish firms and municipalities. See Table 3.

Mobilization as *development of leadership* (Wang & Swanson, 2007) in facilitating institutional arrangements, was indicated in several ways and by several of the participating actors. First-mover firms and municipalities became role models. When Maersk and LEGO became active on Facebook, it worked as an example for others to follow, not least when the social media managers at Maersk and LEGO publicly presented how they organized social media practices. Consultancies took the lead by starting collaboration with universities and industry affiliations, and by organizing practitioner-targeted research projects and seminars. These arrangements helped facilitate social media activity among firms and municipalities. In a similar fashion, conference organizers demonstrated leadership; for example, the organizers behind the annual Copenhagen Social Media Week helped connect nearly all interested parties, thereby acting as a springboard for social media innovation. Last but not least, leadership was taken by Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest and other technology vendors as they continuously targeted innovation and promotion of activity to formal organizations. Consultancies also take part in this innovation of technological platforms by providing social media management software and by organizing introductory seminars and workshops about how to run a corporate or municipal social media website. We, however, also found indication of counter-direction and deviation in leadership. Most visibly, this counter-direction appeared in a remarkably high variety in the level of action among firms and municipalities, by limited top management participation (Deans, 2011), and by loosely coupled (Berente & Youngjin, 2012; Orton & Weick, 1990) social media projects within the realms of firms and municipalities.

Concerning mobilization as *attention and resource allocation* (Wang & Swanson, 2007) for social media practices, firms' and municipalities' continuous rise in social media action worked as the perhaps strongest indication of mobilization. The continued presence of consultancies providing outsourcing services, practical training, and best practice whitepapers add to the indication of investments by the parties involved. The hiring of social media directors and project leaders in traditional marketing agencies also indicates a continued interest in investment. The organizing of an expert panel by one industry affiliation

included consultants, researchers, and managers, as an example of how expert knowledge or human resources were allocated. Indication of counter-direction in resource allocation was, however, also found. A certain level of activity on, for example, Facebook that can be managed by a part time student assistant also indicates a low level of resource allocation, in particular taken into consideration that the context is a multinational corporation or a municipality with a billion dollar revenue. Such an activity level could indicate that many firms and municipalities are paying lip service (Wang & Swanson, 2007) to the social media hype among young enthusiastic employees in communication departments, and in order to obtain appearance of innovativeness.

	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Counter-direction and deviation</b>
<b>Mobilization</b> Leadership development Resource allocation	First-mover firms and municipalities become role models  Conference organizers create annual social media week	Social media projects lack substantial recognition from top management  Firms and municipalities pay lip service
<b>Legitimation</b> Cognitive coherence Success stories	Management conceptualizes and executes strategy  Employees and consultants report on successful cases	Competing concepts for social media practice  Facebook branding project is criticized

Table 3 Mobilization and Legitimation – directions and counter-directions

Legitimation as *cognitive coherence* (Wang & Swanson, 2007) was most strongly evidenced in university-sponsored activities like research projects and formal study programs. Cognitive coherence was also indicated in documents concerning management training and execution of social media strategies in firms and municipalities. We, however, also found indication of counter-direction as competing concepts for social media practices, for example, among consultancies and among organizational departments. While dedicated social media advocates have used the slogan “It’s communication, not marketing” (Katona & Sarvary, 2014), established marketing agencies have annexed social media into existing marketing campaign concepts. Counter-direction and deviation in cognitive coherence (Miranda et al., 2015) was also indicated by an abundance of competing labels, for example, social business, social enterprise, community co-creation, and employee advocacy.

Legitimation as *social success stories* (Wang & Swanson, 2007) was in large indicated by consultancies, social media gurus, media journalists, and researchers blogging or

publishing articles portraying successful social media case stories. In the Danish context, Maersk's social media adventure is by far the most mentioned case. In addition, we found several examples of social media managers' testimony of successful business cases. As mentioned before, this happened at seminars organized by consultancies. However, we also found indication of counter-direction in success stories: Researchers and specialists criticize social media practice and expectations, and sometimes altogether recommend that organizations abandon social media presence. From investigations in specific organizations, we found an audit process that documented critical points regarding how likes were obtained on a corporate Facebook page. In both 2011 and 2015 we also found consultancies having presentations headlined 'Myths of social media' and experts problematizing the legitimacy of social media.

In summary, the analysis revealed several instances of contradictory processes for each element of mobilization and legitimation. This contradictory state (Robey & Boudreau, 1999) of social media practices indicates a stage of both divergence and convergence (Van De Ven et al., 1999), and perhaps a diffusion without institutionalization (Green, Li, & Nohria, 2009). In order to further investigate this, we now analyze whether social media works as organizing vision or rather function as an airline magazine syndrome (Ramiller, 2001).

### *Organizing vision?*

As the third and final part of the analysis, we present if and how *social media worked as an organizing vision*. Our study indicates that social media persistently has been used as a label for the emerging activities on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and similar social media websites among Danish firms, municipalities, and associated actors during the period studied. As such, the label social media can be claimed to function as an organizing vision. However, our data also indicates that social media as organizing vision are embedded in contradictions, and in many situations undergo a change in wording or are operationalized into more specific visions in order to function as an organizing vision for adoption and implementation. This is illustrated when the label 'business' is used by firms on Facebook, when the label 'employee advocacy' is used for activities on LinkedIn, and when the label 'co-creation' is used by municipalities for activities on Facebook. These additional labels are examples of a change in wording that reflects an effort to specify and operationalize the otherwise all-encompassing and high-flying vision of social media. These supplementary or substituting labels point to

contradiction (Robey & Boudreau, 1999) in the relationship between discursive and practical manifestations of the emerging social media innovation process.

The conflicts, lack of coherence and multiple labels associated with the emerging practices indicate that the label 'social media' perhaps better qualify as an airline magazine syndrome (Ramiller, 2001). The definition of an airline magazine syndrome as a rhetoric of exaggeration (Ramiller, 2006) in large applies to the current use of social media in our study. Going into detail with the rhetorical practice by the constituents investigated is beyond the scope of this study. However, indications of this rhetoric of exaggeration, in particular the rhetorical figures of implementability and accomplishment, are present in our study. The use of these rhetorical figures is most visibly found in technology vendor promotions, employees' presentations at conferences, in consultancies' case presentations. The contrast between these accounts of implementability and accomplishment and the adopting organizations' actual practices (Suddaby, 2006) as these can be observed online, points to an element of exaggeration or discrepancy between discourse and material practice and raises the question of whether social media is an organizing vision or an airline magazine syndrome.

## **6. Discussion**

Due to the significant rise in adoption and implementation of social media among Danish firms and municipalities, we expected social media to work as a robust organizing vision that sustained a process of institutionalization, but our investigation indicates that it was a less straightforward process. In an effort to better understand this process, in this section we discuss the findings in our field study as an ongoing interplay between material and discursive forces that are played out within and between organizations. Instead of seeing such a process as a success or a failure (Currie, 2004; Wang & Swanson, 2007), we propose an institutional analysis that explores the innovation processes as a particular form of how an organizing vision unfolds over time.

Our study indicates that several institutional actors participate as entrepreneurs in the promotion of social media among the Danish firms and municipalities, and thereby confirms former organizing vision lens studies (Currie, 2004; Wang & Swanson, 2007). However, our study also indicates the presence of actors representing already institutionalized practices, and thus shows that a double gaze might help explain the irregular circumstances in the social

media innovations among firms and municipalities. Applying such a double gaze makes our study differ from former organizing vision case studies. In the organizing vision lens case study by Currie, (2004) and Wang and Swanson (2007), there is an exclusive focus on the institutional entrepreneurs who constitute the organizing vision community. By including both entrepreneurs and actors representing already institutionalized practices, sometimes named resistors (Purdy & Gray, 2009), our study points to the presence of both competing visions or discourses, and thereby confirms Barrett et al. (2013), who argue for the likely presence of alternative discourses in an IT innovation process. This points to the importance of the casting of actors in a study, the actors who promote the visions, a point that recently was emphasized in Swanson's (2013) meta article on organizing vision case studies. We therefore suggest future studies to include both entrepreneurs and institutionalized actors to strengthen the organizing vision lens as framework for studying IT innovation processes.

The analysis of *how mobilization and legitimation were manifested in the promotion of social media* among Danish firms and municipalities indicated that the actions of institutional entrepreneurs provided mobilization and legitimation in the social media innovation process, thereby sustaining as process of institutionalization. However, our study also points to elements of counter-direction and deviation in the mobilization and legitimation of social media, and thereby it helps explain the contradictory circumstances we found in the adoption and implementation of social media. These findings resemble the examples accounted for in the study of professional services automation by Wang & Swanson (2007), and the messiness identified in the application provision service study by Currie (2004). Despite the fact that the concepts of mobilization and legitimation were intended to conceptualize the elements constituting a forward working process of institutionalization, the use of these concepts in an empirical case study have revealed interesting tensions between forward moving processes of institutionalization and counter-direction processes also indicated in other studies (Avgerou, 2000). Based on our field study, we suggest that the concepts of mobilization should be perceived of as a framework for conceptualizing not only processes of institutionalization but also processes of de-institutionalization, alternative organizing visions, and possibly the presence of the airline magazine syndrome.

Finally we ask whether social media works as an organizing vision, that is, as a focal community idea for the *application of social media in organizations* (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). Our data indicate that social media is still a buzzword creating attention to new opportunities on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram for firms, municipalities and associated actors. The continued success of Copenhagen Social Media Week is just one example that bears witness to its attention maker quality. Statistics Denmark's use of the 'social media' label (Lundø, 2013) demonstrates its general and 'official' acceptance. Drawing on the sequential concepts of an innovation process (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004), the question is how well social media as organizing vision facilitate ideas and practices to travel from the inter-organizational realms to specific operational practices in organizational contexts. The question is furthermore for how long social media can keep up its promise as organizing vision: while exaggerations and airline magazine syndromes might be tolerated in the beginning, later in an innovation process adopting organizations want evidence (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). While the social media label thus is powerful as an attention maker that creates the necessary element of pathos in early stages of innovation processes (Barrett et al., 2013; Green et al., 2009; Green, 2004), it apparently lacks specificity concerning application in organizational contexts. This lack in specificity when it comes to organizational adoption is, however, not necessarily only a weakness. Lack of cognitive coherence in an organizing vision may exactly be what facilitates innovative flexibility (Harmon, Green, & Goodnight, 2015), and what makes firms and municipalities a testing ground under a high-flying organizing vision.

## **7. Conclusion**

As a study of a specific empirical context of social media innovation within a certain period of time, the current study has some clear limitations. Danish firms' and municipalities' social media innovation process takes place in a unique context, and consequently the analytical findings must be seen as provisional, and application to other contexts should only be made on this premise. Moreover, the narrow time frame, 2007-2015, in combination with the ongoing innovation process, poses a limitation when comparing with studies of completed innovation processes. However, it avoids the potential fallacy of post hoc conclusions (Wang & Swanson, 2007).

Despite its limitations, the current study previews the possibilities of drawing on the organizing vision literature for a field level study of social media innovation. Three analytical findings are worth highlighting. First, the study revealed how a plethora of institutional actors participate as social media entrepreneurs in the context of the 100 largest Danish firms and the 98 Danish municipalities. The identification of cooperation among consultancies, government agencies, and research institutions confirms the creation of a discursive community as argued in organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). Our study, however, also revealed a presence of institutional actors advocating the use of social media under an already institutionalized vision of marketing campaigns and digitalization strategies. This finding of a parallel social media community contrasts former organizing vision literature. In line with Swanson (2013), we thus suggest that future studies be attentive to the casting of institutional actors because this has great impact on the traceability of visions.

Second, the study investigated how institutional entrepreneurs produce mobilization and legitimation for social media as organizing vision. We showed how in particular consultancies create mobilization through development of leadership in institutional arrangements, and how dedicated employees work as an enzyme for resource allocation. Further, the study showed how legitimation as cognitive coherence and social success stories travel between the participating entrepreneurs. Our study, however, also indicates counter-directions in this institutionalization process, and we suggest that future studies be attentive to such counter-directions and deviations; to sustain this, we suggest that counter-directions and deviations become a conceptually integrated part of the organizing vision framework.

Third, the study indicated that the social media discourse manifests elements of both an organizing vision and an airline magazine syndrome. The study indicated that the social media label so far has worked successfully in terms of attention, and to some extent adoption and implementation. Our analysis of the social media discourse indicates a widespread use of hyperbole rhetoric, and the question is therefore if the use of the social media label is better characterized as an airline magazine syndrome.

The paper has implications for managers challenged by the proliferation of social media. A first practical implication concerns the importance of paying attention to the abundance of interested institutional actors participating in the production of social media as an organizing vision, especially the presence of strategic alliances behind the promotion of social media as organizing vision. Guided by the organizing vision literature, our study here

indicates that managers can learn from paying special attention to how consultancies, technology vendors, business media, and social media employees are significant promoters of social media. The paper further points to research and education institutions as significant players in the mobilization and legitimation of social media. Managers can learn from the potentials and pitfalls of social media by scrutinizing the constitutive elements of mobilization and legitimation, that is, the development of leadership, resource allocation, cognitive coherence, and promotion of success stories. Finally, our findings indicate that managers continuously have to evaluate whether social media function as an organizing vision or rather an airline magazine syndrome.

Looking ahead, the present study suggests numerous paths for future research. Future research on social media should include both entrepreneurs and resisters in the casting of actors. This should be done in order to encompass competing discourses, and likewise include cognitive inconsistencies and hyperbole as an inherent part of how private and public organizations respond to social media innovation.

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# Paper 3



# Wrestling with Contradictions in Government Social Media Practices<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Research in government social media practices highlights expectations of co-creation and progression mirrored in maturity models, but research also documents low deployment degree and thereby points to a discrepancy. The paper suggests that we instead of co-creation and progression draw on a dialectical approach and understand the development of government social media practices as a wrestling with contradictions. The case of emerging social media practices in a Danish municipality used to illustrate this framework suggests three main categories of contradictions in emerging social media practices: Contradictions between service administration and community feeling as forms of practice, contradictions in organizing between local engagement and central control, and contradictions in the digital infrastructure between proprietary municipal websites and public social media platforms. The paper discusses if a paradox lens will enhance our understanding of inherent contradictions or the dialectical notion of contradiction serve the purpose. The paper contributes to a dialectical theory of contradictions through an analysis of emerging government social media practices.

**Keywords:** Case Study, Contradiction, Dialectical, Digital Infrastructure, Government, Municipal, Organizing, Paradox, Practice, Social Media

## 1. Introduction

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The growing investment in social media practices by both private corporations and government organizations has led to increasing research interests. A special issue on social media in *Information Systems Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1, March 2013, points to opportunities for organizational innovation but also to unexpected challenges, for example that involvement of communities in design innovation processes can lead to devaluation of the obtained results. The editorial concludes that many questions are not only unanswered, but unaddressed (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). A special issue on social media in *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 2012 includes positive expectations, for example materialized in a typology for citizen co-production (Linders, 2012) and in a maturity model for social media based public engagement (Lee, Kwak, Gwanhoo, & Young Hoon, 2012). However, in the very same issue, empirical data document a low deployment degree of social media in local municipalities in the European Union (Bonsón, Torres, Royo, & Floresc, 2012), and likewise, a low level of activity on a government-run health portal (Andersen, Medaglia, & Henriksen, 2012). The special issue thereby points to a discrepancy between research highlighting expectations and best practices on the one hand, and empirical evidence of low use of social media on the other hand.

The discrepancy between the expectations of co-creation and the low degree of deployment can be explained as an example of what (Andersen et al., 2012) point to in the very same special issue of *Government Information Quarterly*, namely that the first wave of research of emerging phenomena often reflects an enthusiasm for the innovation, while the actual practices lag behind or are never achieved. The fashion aspect of social media (Bergquist, Ljungberg, Zaffar, & Stenmark, 2013) as well as also earlier seen technological determinism (Orlikowski, 1991) is most probably a part of the explanation for the discrepancy.

The paper investigates an alternative route for understanding what is at stake in emerging social media practices by regarding the development of government social media practices less as a matter of progression – for example staged in maturity models – than as a continued wrestling with inherent contradictions. The paper is therefore guided by the research question: *How is contradiction present in government social media practices?*

The paper thereby prolongs the investigation of Andersen et al. (2012) in which the authors point to contradictory effects embedded in social media practices in the healthcare sector. These include among others contradictions between (1) data availability to doctors and

violation of privacy due to open exchange of knowledge, (2) widespread information availability, information exchange, and information overload, and (3) the fact that social media, contrary to expectations, is a cost driver rather than a cost saver (Andersen et al., 2012).

According to the literature and dialectical approach that the present study will draw on, contradictions are understood as one possible ‘motor’ in change processes. To understand how these inherent contradictions are constitutive in the context of emerging government social media practices, the paper traces and analyzes contradictions in a case study of municipal social media practices. The study results in identification of three contradictions: 1. The contradiction between service administration and community feeling as forms of practice. 2. The organizing contradiction between central control and local engagement. 3. The technological infrastructure contradiction between proprietary municipal websites and public social media platforms.

In line with the literature, the paper argues that the future development of government social media practices is dependent on how government organizations wrestle with these contradictions by government organizations.

The study makes two contributions. First, it contributes to research on contradictions as drivers of change by exploring the concept in relation to emerging government social media practices. Because of the elusive nature of the paradox concept, the paper suggests ‘wrestling with contradictions’ as an alternative analytical lens. Second, the study contributes to our understanding of the opportunities and challenges in emerging government social media practices from an organizational perspective.

## **2. Contradiction and Paradox**

Organizational scholars belonging to a dialectical tradition (Benson, 1977) have used contradictions to explain change and development in organizations (Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). The fundamental assumption in this stream of literature is that organizations exist in a world of colliding forces and contradictory values. Therefore organizational effects of for example emerging IT practices can be described and explained as a result of such contradictory elements and relations. Change is regarded as an effect of the contradictory forces, and the organizational wrestling with these contradictions is regarded as the activity

that forms organizational innovation. In the dialectical tradition, the elements and relations in a contradiction are understood as a whole: The contradiction in a change process is inherent or – to use a term more pertinent in the dialectical tradition – immanent. In line with already well-established information systems research that draw on the dialectical tradition and its focus on contradictions (Carlo, Lyytinen, & Boland, 2012; Cho, Mathiassen, & Robey, 2007), this study adopts the dialectical approach in an effort to understand the change processes related to emerging government social media practices.

A stream of organization literature initiated by among others (Poole & van de Ven, 1989) focuses on a special form of inherent contradictions, namely paradoxes. Although not originally conceptualized as a paradox, the conceptual pair of exploitation and exploration (March, 1991) is often regarded as an example of paradox in this stream of literature. This is for example the case in the comprehensive work by Smith & Lewis (2011), where exploitation and exploration is conceived as a paradox within the category of organizational learning. The paradox lens has been applied in a solid stream of organizational studies (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Berlinger & Sitkin, 1990; Eisenhardt, 2000; Luscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Poole & van de Ven, 1989; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003).

In information systems research, the dialectical tradition and the focus on paradoxes are also present today (Carlo et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2007). Noteworthy studies of paradoxes in the field of information systems research include studies of how technological affordances are always already paradoxical (Arnold, 2003), how nomadic technologies have an embedded paradox of empowerment and enslavement (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005) and how the most significant paradox of virtual teamwork is that between physical and virtual presence (Dubé & Robey, 2009).

Relevant for the present study is also an analysis of the emerging digital infrastructures through a dialectical approach (Tilson, Lyytinen, & Sørensen, 2010). The emergence of an all-encompassing digital infrastructure is regarded and named as ‘infrastructure turn’, thereby alluding to ‘linguistic turn’ and ‘literary turn’. The authors hereby imply that it is not merely a matter of a faster and more widespread digital infrastructure, here under the ‘social’ Internet, but also a new infrastructure condition. The authors therefore argue that this emerging or new condition necessitates a rethinking within the information systems research community, and it is to that end the authors employ a

dialectical approach and a paradox lens. Important in relation to the present study are two contradictions or paradoxes as they are named. The first paradox is that of change. The paradox of change exists between the opposing logics of stability and flexibility and plays itself out across the infrastructural layers and elements. The second paradox is that of control. The paradox of control exists between the opposing logics around centralized and distributed control, and it includes the strategic actions of heterogeneous actors and their control preferences in relation to change processes.

Despite the interesting contributions from the stream of literature using the paradox lens, it is relevant to ask whether the trending focus on paradox is pertinent, or the more mundane term contradiction suffices. If the definition of paradox alone is ‘inherent contradiction’ (Smith & Lewis, 2011), then it is difficult to distinguish paradox from contradiction as this concept is used in the dialectical tradition. Often the terms are used interchangeably and as synonyms: “The paradox invites us to adopt a fresh stance on how change in digital infrastructures is driven by the dialectic of stability and flexibility and how it affects uses of IT in corporate environments” (Tilson et al., 2010, p. 754). Furthermore, paradox as a special type of inherent contradiction is elusive because of its linguistic nature. The verbal phrasing is very important for obtaining the paradoxical quality. If what is perceived as a paradox, for example the paradox of centralized and distributed control (Tilson et al., 2010), is explained straight forward, the paradoxical quality melts into air.

The present study will draw on both the fundamental dialectical tradition for focusing on immanent contradictions as drivers of change and innovation, and also include the studies that focus on paradoxes, but only use the term contradiction. The use of the metaphor of wrestling is inspired by Barley & Kunda (1992).

### **3. Research setting, data collection and analysis**

The study followed the principles for interpretive field research (Klein & Myers, 1999) in the investigation of social media practices in one of the five largest municipalities in Denmark. This empirical ground for the analysis was chosen because Denmark, according to (Bonsón et al., 2012), is among the countries in the European Union with the most active municipalities in social media. However, an initial contextualization revealed that there is no dedicated social media department or functions in the municipality, nor is there a special social media

strategy or social media code of conduct. As one of the five largest municipalities in Denmark, one could expect that there was at least a formalized and central function to manage and govern the social media activities. But there was not even one person with the title of social media manager in the municipality. This basic field observation pinpoints the emerging and contradictory practices at stake. Although there was no formalized central organization in place, the directors of the six municipal departments did have social media as a focus area. During the period of the interviews, the directors had also formed a special tasks force, and the directors prioritized networking with other municipalities around social media practices. Historically the municipality has a long tradition for prioritizing citizen dialogue. Already back in the 1990s, it had web-based citizen dialogue initiatives. The city of the municipality has a high percentage of young inhabitants and students and has an innovative IT culture and industry.

Following the principles of interaction between researchers and participants (Klein & Myers, 1999), the empirical material was provided by interviews with directors tasked with social media activities in the municipality and by online observations of the municipality's online social media activity. The interviewees were selected to ensure sensitivity to possible differences in interpretations among the directors of the different municipal departments and followed the principles and guidelines for qualitative interviews (Kvale, 1996; Myers & Newman, 2007). First, to establish a historical perspective and an overview of the practices within the municipality, we interviewed the director of communication in the mayor's office and at the same time made online observations of the municipality's social media practices. Next, to ensure variance and a deeper understanding in prolongation of the insights from the first interview, we interviewed the directors from the six main departments of the municipality. Finally, to test and saturate our analysis, we interviewed the director and manager responsible for one of the most active social media sites within the municipality. The interviews and observations were conducted from February 2013 to April 2013 and took place in the town hall of the municipality. The interviews lasted between forty five minutes and hundred and fifty minutes. The progression of the interviews were designed to facilitate a saturation of the analytical findings in observations and interviews and to clarify unclear issues.

The analysis of the interviews and observations took place as an iterative process of working with the empirical material combined with the focus on contradictions to tease out

analytical insights (Golden-biddle & Locke, 1993; Klein & Myers, 1999) . The analysis followed three steps: First, we listened to the interviews, took notes, and went through the original notes from our online observations. The aim was to establish a general understanding of the case and to identify tentative focus points for the following iteration of interview and observation. Second, after the second and third iteration of interviews and observation, we carefully read through the transcribed interview data and conducted a coding of contradictions. This general coding resulted in a list of unordered contradictions found in the municipal's social media practices. Third, we drew on literature to sharpen our analytical understanding of the empirical material and considered the interdependent meaning of parts and wholes. To finalize the analysis with a parsimonious set of categories and elements, we classified only the most robust and relevant contradictions in our data. This resulted in three categories of contradictions. See Table 1.

#### **4. Findings**

The analysis identified three categories of contradictions in municipal social media practices, each with its specific set of mutual relations and contradictory elements. The identified categories are 'form of practice', 'organization', and 'digital infrastructure'. See Table 1.

*Form of practice.* The first contradiction concerns the modality or form of the social media practices. Online observations indicate the existence of Facebook sites that evolve around a community feeling, for example local municipal schools where participants share photos and personal experiences in relation to specific events and daily life in school. Other Facebook sites, for example 'Clean City', have a municipal administrator who responds to questions and comments and thereby enters a professional administrative service discourse in the midst of the community feeling that also exists on the Facebook-site. See observation #2 in Table 1.

Interviews indicate that the central actors are aware of the local actors being the drivers of community experience, and that the central actors would like to match and integrate this dimension as a part of the municipal service affairs. Interviews indicate this when the director of communication for the mayor's office expresses recognition for local engagement and success, but in the same sentence also says that it would be valuable for the central municipality to exploit this further. See interview quote #2 in Table 1. On the basis of such

contradictory relations of community feeling and service administration, the analysis constructed the category ‘form of practice’.

Category and elements	Description of contradiction	Illustration from interview and observation
<p><b>Form of practice</b> Contradiction between community feeling and service administration.</p>	<p>Social media facilitate personal community feeling, but is intervened and exploited by professional service administration in a process where local social media actors in turn become dependent on municipal service administrators.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 2 ”The Clean-City project has a Facebook site with more than thousand likes. A person here offered a sofa for free and got several hundred likes. Such spontaneous municipal projects occur and function very well due to a professional effort. And the agenda of our task force is to ask: How can the municipality prolong and profit from this activity?”</p> <p>Online observation # 2 Posts and comments by citizens on the Facebook site for ‘Clean City’ is intervened by a municipal moderator who posts news and responds to questions, and direct citizens to municipal service functions on a proprietary municipal website.</p>
<p><b>Organizing</b> Contradiction between local initiatives and central governance.</p>	<p>Local social media actors foster initiatives and engagement and thereby organizational autonomy, but are still subject to central governance and control which in turn depend on the local social media actors.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 1 “If we don’t do something on the municipal level pretty fast, then the traffic department will go solo”</p> <p>Online observation # 1 Indication of many Facebook sites for local or specific activities. No evidence of any social media sites that officially represent the municipality or any of the six main departments. Indication of temporary project sites and municipal campaign sites, for example ‘bicycle city’ and ‘Clean City’.</p>
<p><b>Digital infrastructure</b> Contradiction between public social media and proprietary municipal IT.</p>	<p>Public social media functions as driver of change and challenger of proprietary municipal controlled IT, but are also met with imperatives about business directed IT integration from central municipal actors.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 3 ”It is important that we can build on top of the initiatives of the engaged citizens and dedicated users [of the local social media sites], to the advantage of the whole business of the municipality.”</p> <p>Online observation # 3 Photos, comments and questions by citizens on Facebook site for ‘Bicycle City’. Self-service forms and official public information relevant for ‘Bicycle City’ is only placed on municipal website. Visible traffic from Facebook site to municipal website, but not the reverse.</p>

Table 1. Contradictions in municipal social media practices

*Organizing.* The second finding concerns the organizing of the social media practices in the municipality. There is one striking finding concerning the organizing. On the one hand there is a presence of local initiatives and engagement, but often in unofficial forms. On the other

hand there is a lack of central presence and activity, but large concerns about control and exploitation of social media. Online observations indicate that Facebook facilitates many sites for local or specific educational, cultural and city infrastructure activities. However, we have not found any indication of one single social media site that represents the municipality as an integrated or official whole. Nor does an official website exist for any of the six main departments. See online observation #1 in Table 1.

Interviews confirm that local Facebook-actors are the initiators and are regarded as successful, while central municipal actors express that they are concerned about municipal integration of the diverse local initiatives. For example, a central director expresses that local initiators are proactive and the central administration is lagging behind. Thereby local social media activities gain autonomous or ‘solo’ status within and beyond the organization. See interview quote #1 in Table 1. Grounded in such contradictory and interdependent elements of central control and local engagement, the analysis constructed the category ‘organizing’.

*Digital infrastructure.* Online observations indicate activity of posts, photos, and comments on municipal social media sites, for example the Facebook site for ‘Bicycle City’. However, when it comes to administrative service functions, for example self-service forms and official public information about road repair and bicycle lanes, these functions are under proprietary control from a municipal website. The municipal website is fueled by a Facebook site, but the reverse is not the case. See observation 3 in Table 1.

Interviews indicate a central municipal recognition of the value of engaged participants on local social media sites, but also an imperative to integrate this activity into a proprietary digital infrastructure as a municipal ‘business’ project. See interview quote # 3 in Table 1. Grounded in such contradictory relations of public social media and proprietary municipal information and communication technology, the analysis constructed the category ‘digital infrastructure’.

## **5. Discussion**

The emergent interactions between social media and government administration are an intriguing phenomenon that calls upon theoretically and empirically based investigation. Grounded in a case study, the purpose of this paper was to discuss the pertinence of dialectical theory to understand the contradictions present in municipal social media practices.

The analysis identified three categories of contradictions in municipal social media practices, each with their specific set of mutually related and contradictory elements. Figure 1 has been developed in order to better illustrate how the three categories are related and each one embeds contradictory elements: First, contradictions in forms of practices between service administration and community feeling. Second, contradictions in organizing between local initiatives and central control. Third, contradictions in the digital infrastructure between proprietary municipal IT and public social media. See Figure 1.

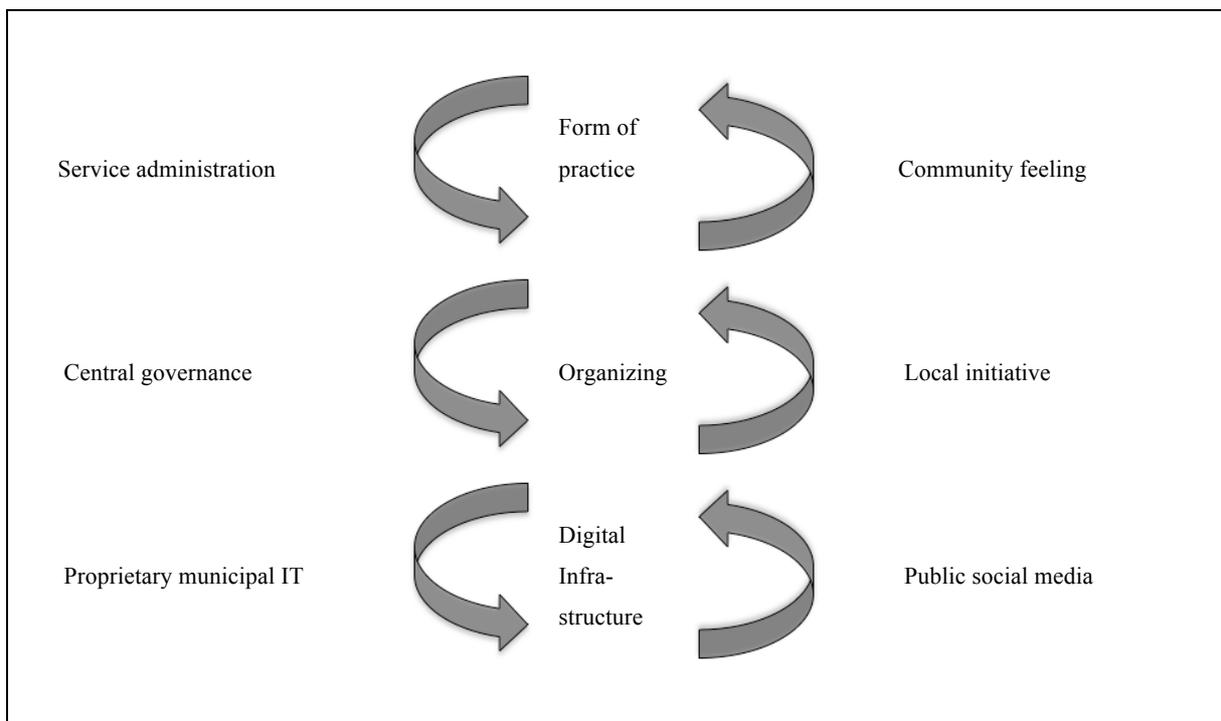


Figure 1. Wrestling with contradictions

Concerning the contradictions inherent in practice forms, the present study detected a significant field of practices evolving around community presence, engagement and feeling. This stream of practices was mainly apparent in very local social media practices, for example in a Facebook group for a local municipal primary school. These social media practices in some aspects resemble “Do It Yourself Government” type in Linders (2012) classification of citizen co-production in the age of social media. Linders (2012) specifies that the “Do It Yourself Government” type of social media practices take place with little or no interference. However, Linders (2012) understands the activity within a service concept, for example when using the term ‘self-service’, and in general also uses the term ‘co-production’. In the present

study, many local activities happened exactly as Linders' "Do It Yourself Government" without interference from central municipal authorities. However, the form of the practices was also in many aspects outside the 'service' or 'co-production' logic, and rather to compare with a conversation for its own sake. We have named this practice form 'community feeling' to stress the difference to any production or service logic.

However, we also observed social media practices that had a professional tone and approach, and therefore named service administration. This stream of social media practices was mostly apparent in relation to municipal institutions that directed their activity to a broader audience and market and were managed by employees who had it as a part of their professional portfolio of activities. Noteworthy about this stream of activity is that it often did not manage to address the citizens as citizens, but only as professional actors in the related industry. By being simply a professional service administration executed on social media platforms by municipal employees, these cases of municipal social media practices go beyond the other end of the scale of Linders' typology for citizen co-production (Linders, 2012). In comparison with Linders' interesting typology, the social media practices indicated in the present case study thereby falls outside both poles of citizen engagement; 'citizen sourcing' as well as 'Do It Yourself Government'. In other words, the current municipal wrestling with contradictions in social media only involves citizen engagement to a very little degree.

The present study has only a few indications of 'citizen engagement'. The most evident examples are incidents related to activity on the 'Clean City' or 'Bicycle City' Facebook sites where spontaneous or 'self-organizing' citizen activity is staged or intervened by professional municipal service administrators. Thereby the present study points to a context of contradictions that differs considerably from the typology by Linders (2012) and the maturity model by Lee et al. (2012).

Concerning the contradictions between the local initiatives and the central control, the study revealed that there exists a diverse landscape of local social media engagement. A part of the local activity is very visible and recognized by the central authorities. In these situations, the central authorities express that it is desirable that the official municipality can benefit from these local activities. Other local activities are almost invisible or not recognized by others than the local community itself. In both situations, a dialectical approach, that focuses on contradiction, demonstrates its analytical pertinence by being attentive to how the municipality is wrestling with its own inherent contradictions, and how this wrestling plays a

central role in the organizational change process (Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). Compared to studies of the deployment degree of government social media practices (Bonsón et al., 2012), the dialectical approach in the present study is capable of observing both the formal and official organizing and the tentative and informal activities of which the latter are not captured by the radar of the municipality itself.

As mentioned before the municipality despite being one of the five largest in Denmark, lacks a formal social media department. Never the less it acts as an organization that in certain ways is very attentive to and active in social media practices. Instead of understanding this situation as a lack of progression within a maturity scheme (Lee et al., 2012), the present paper suggests that it is more adequately understood as an example of municipal wrestling with contradictions. It is outside the scope of the present study to evaluate the wrestling itself, but it could turn out to be an example of resilience (Cho et al., 2007) or collective minding (Carlo et al., 2012).

The present study has also pointed to the fact that the municipality as an organization incorporates a wide variety of social media practices that are not officially recognized or even known. If these social media practices are not included in investigations, we are perhaps in a situation where the deployment degree of social media practices are considerably higher than current research points out (Bonsón, 2012), and may also include a wider variety of practice forms than anticipated so far.

Concerning the contradictions inherent in the digital infrastructure, the dialectical approach in the present study has most importantly implied the inclusion of both proprietary municipal platforms and social media platforms as the adequate object of analysis. In line with Tilson et al. (2010), the present study regards the digital infrastructure as one whole ‘affordance’ that includes contradictory or paradoxical logics. We found indications of contradictions between the proprietary municipal ‘part’ of the digital infrastructure and the public social media ‘part’ of the digital infrastructure. This identification is in line with studies that also identified the relation between an existing organization and an emerging community being central for understanding the change process (Castello, Etter, & Morsing, 2012; Harri, Kalle, & Youngjin, 2010; Paramewaran & Whinston, 2007) . What the present study highlighted is the digital infrastructure per se, for example by pointing to how social media platforms become a natural working environment for municipal administrators in

certain situations and municipal service functions, including integrating questions posted on Facebook via a form on the proprietary municipal website.

## **6. Conclusion**

The paper took its point of departure in the discrepancy between current research in government social media practices that highlights expectations of co-creation and progression mirrored in typologies for citizen co-production (Linders, 2012) and maturity models (Lee et al., 2012) on one hand, and on the other hand research that documents low deployment degree of social media in local municipalities in the European Union (Bonsón et al., 2012). Extant literature on social media practices in both private and public contexts have detected inherent contradictions (Andersen et al., 2012; Aral et al., 2013) and the objective of the paper therefore becomes to prolong this literature. To this end, the paper draws on the dialectical tradition (Benson, 1977; Bjerknes, 1991) and the literature in which contradictions are understood as possible drivers of change and innovation (Poole & van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Tilson et al., 2010) and asks how contradiction is present in government social media practices.

To theorize how contradiction is present in emerging government social media practices, the paper used a case study of social media practices in one of the five largest municipalities in Denmark. As the findings of the case study, the paper analyzes three related categories of contradictions in municipal social media practices, namely ‘form of practice’, ‘organizing’ and ‘digital infrastructure’. In the category ‘form of practice’ the contradiction exists between community feeling and service administration. In the category ‘organizing’ that contradiction exists between local initiatives and central governance. In the category ‘digital infrastructure’ the contradiction exists between public social media and proprietary municipal information and communication technologies. The analytical findings are discussed in relation to extant literature on government social media practices (Bonsón et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Linders, 2012).

The main theoretical contribution of the paper is therefore to theorize how emerging government social media practices are driven via three related categories of contradictions. More specifically the theoretical contribution of the paper is a conceptualization of the inherent contradictions of each category and how the organization in question copes with

these contradictions. The paper hereby contributes to extant literature on contradictions in government social media practices (Andersen et al., 2012) and to theory on contradictions as drivers of change and innovation in organizations (Poole & van de Ven, 1989).

The practical contribution of the paper is the focus on social media practices as constitutively contradictory and organizational practice therefore a matter of coping with these contradictions. The dialectical approach of the paper suggests that practitioners understand this ambidextrous coping (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Smith & Lewis, 2011) less as a matter of progression – for example staged in maturity models – than as a continued wrestling with inherent contradictions.

The study acknowledges its limitations. First, despite single cases can provide a rich understanding of the studied phenomenon (Walsham, 1995), the studied case might have special characteristics. Future case studies can clarify this through comparison. Second, the study is also limited in only interviewing directors from the municipality administration and not citizens or groups of citizens. Future studies that include more relevant participants can establish a more complete material ground and critical context of interpretation (Klein & Myers, 1999). Third, the dialectical lens and the focus on contradictions might have become a part of what it describes and thereby constrained the attention to conflicting aspects in the empirical data (Golden-biddle & Locke, 1993; Klein & Myers, 1999). Future research in the contradictions of social media practices that employ alternative theoretical lenses are therefore desirable.

As a final critical reflection (Klein & Myers, 1999), it is worth noting that on the one hand the study found social media practices that bridge service administration and community feeling and thereby indicate a dawn of an ‘integrated information environment’ (Orlikowski, 1991), but on the other hand observations and interviews also point to social media as a digital infrastructure (Tilson et al., 2010) that can be used to exploit citizen engagement for municipal ‘business’ purposes. It is therefore pertinent to ask if municipal social media practices as part of an all-encompassing digital infrastructure will facilitate citizen co-production (Linders, 2012) or rather will become a ‘matrix of control’. However, drawing on a dialectical tradition and understanding emergent social media practices as constitutively contradictory, the situation is rather to be understood as a both-and: social media practices will result in both citizen co-production and municipal matrix of control. Such a contradictory nature of social media practices can perhaps explain the lack of citizen participation in current

municipal social media practices and perhaps exactly reflects a dialectics of collective mindfulness (Carlo et al., 2012). The paper therefore suggests a collective mindfulness in government social media practices as highly relevant for both researchers and practitioners.

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# Paper 4



# Tracing an Organizing Vision on Social Media in a Multinational Corporation

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## Abstract

- Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to explore how a formal organization responds to social media innovation over time.
- Framework: The paper draws on institutional perspectives on IT innovation, in particular the organizing vision literature.
- Methodology: The paper has an explorative approach, and includes multiple data collection methods – online observations, interviews, documents, and participation.
- Research setting: The field study took place in a multinational corporation headquartered in Denmark.
- Contribution: The paper draws on the organizing vision literature in a study of how a formal organization responds to social media innovation over time. The paper contributes to the first steps in understanding how actors affiliated with the organization respond to social media innovation, how the process unfolds through distinct stages, and how the participants' reactions and sense making efforts indicate an adoption and implementation with little institutionalization.

Keywords: social media, IT innovation, organizing vision, rhetoric, institutionalization.

## 1. Introduction

In the wake of the recent proliferation of social information technologies commonly known as social media, for example Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, formal organizations started to explore and exploit social media for a variety of purposes (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010; Gallagher & Ransbotham, 2010; Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013a). While some early research sought to define social media and to offer practical advice (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), more recent research emphasizes that

how social media impact formal organizations is not entirely clear, and that identifying the theoretical implications of social media is challenging (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014). While many managerial challenges in the use of social media in formal organizations might resemble those already studied by information systems scholars, emergent capabilities and practices in social media might also challenge the assumptions of established theory, demanding a revision or development of new theories (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013b). The use of social media in formal organizations therefore represents an important area for information systems research.

On this backdrop, a review of recent research on social media in major marketing, organization and information systems research journals in the period 2009-2015 surprisingly indicated a paucity of literature on how formal organizations respond to social media in line with a former survey of research on social media (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). Furthermore, the review indicated that the majority of research focuses on interaction in online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments (Haahr, 2014). While studies of interaction in online communities are relevant, an exclusive focus on the most visible manifestation might constrain our understanding of social media. We therefore suggest that future research on social media prioritize the study of how formal organizations respond to social media including the impact of technology vendors, consultancies, business media, and other institutional players. In this paper we aim to study *how formal organizations respond to social media innovation over time*.

The empirical setting of the study is the social media innovation process unfolded in BlueTech, a multinational corporation headquartered in Denmark. The study is explorative and uses multiple data collection methods. While the term social media covers a diversity of emerging platforms, we focus only on some of the most proliferated and commercially driven platforms, that is Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+ and SlideShare. To narrow the possible theoretical implications, we draw on institutional perspectives on organizational IT innovation processes (Avgerou, 2000; Currie & Swanson, 2009; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001), in particular the organizing vision literature (Currie, 2004; Swanson & Ramiller, 1997; Wang & Swanson, 2007).

The paper contributes to the first steps in understanding how actors affiliated with the organization respond to the social media innovation process, how the process unfolds through

distinct stages, and how the participants' reactions and sense making efforts indicate an adoption and implementation with little institutionalization.

The paper is organized as follows: In section two we first account for recent research on social media and then we explain how institutional perspectives and the organizing vision literature will be used as our theoretical framework in the paper. In section three we account for the research setting, how we collected data, and finally how we undertook the data analysis. In section four we present our findings with regards to process, actors, and sense making. In section five we discuss these findings in light of institutional theory, and how the findings indicate implementation without institutionalization. In section six we account for implications, limitations, and conclude the paper.

## **2. Recent Research and Theoretical Framework**

While there has been a recent upsurge in research on social media, only a few studies incorporate the response from formal organizations, and how their adoption and implementation unfold over time. A review of recent information systems research on social media indicates that among the possible research areas, there are few studies that focus on how formal organizations cope with social media. Furthermore, many studies employ a marketing perspective on online communities (Aral et al., 2013; Haahr, 2014). In its effort to explain social media, it seems that recent research has focused on online communities and more or less overlooked formal organizations.

If organizational institutional perspectives is our point of departure, and we start questioning the role of formal organizations in social media innovation, recent studies show that social media represents an interesting area of research (Culnan et al., 2010; Scott & Orlikowski, 2009; Zammuto, Griffith, Majchrzak, Dougherty, & Faraj, 2007). For two decades research has pointed to a gap between what formal organizations know about social media and how these organizations are capable of applying this knowledge (Armstrong and Hagel III, 1996; Paramewaran and Whinston, 2007; Krogh, 2012; Haefliger et al., 2011).

Other recent studies focusing on digitalization of infrastructures indicate that social media differ from acknowledged models of information systems (Tilson, Lyytinen, &

Sørensen, 2010), and that emergent forms of interactivity found in social media produce new forms of generativity (Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen 2013b).

To frame such IT innovations, information systems scholars have argued in favor of using institutional perspectives (Orlikowski and Barley 2001; Currie and Swanson 2009; Nielsen, Mathiassen, and Newell 2014). Recently, information systems scholars studying social media have drawn on institutional perspectives, more precisely the organizing vision literature (Barrett, Heracleous, & Walsham, 2013; Culnan et al., 2010; Miranda, Kim, & Summers, 2015). Motivated by this recent research on social media, we aim to draw on institutional perspectives and in particular the organizing vision literature.

Institutional perspectives still provide overall lenses for understanding the adoption and implementation of social media in formal organizations, for example, how these processes to some extent may follow either prescribed phases or take place as constructive change processes (Van De Ven & Poole, 1995). These different perspectives on change processes are reflected in the organizing vision literature. In some parts of the organizing vision literature, we find a focus on planned aspects of change processes, for example in the process framework consisting of four process components: comprehension, adoption, implementation, and assimilation (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004). Comprehension concerns the effort to understand the innovation, adoption covers the decision to undertake the innovation and making a resource commitment, implementation then brings the innovation to life, and finally assimilation happens when the innovation becomes part of an everyday routine (Swanson, 2003). In combination these four process components form a change sequence that appears rational or planned. There are examples of deviations in the literature, for example how implementation may take place before adoption. The intention of the organizing vision literature is among others to provide a framework that can sustain mindful adoption processes (Ramiller & Swanson, 2009; Swanson, 2012).

In other parts of the organizing vision literature, we find a focus on emergent aspects of change processes, for example in the introduction of the three basic functions that the organizing vision facilitates (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). These three basic functions are interpretation, legitimation, and mobilization. In explaining the function of interpretation, it is stressed that an emergent IT innovation is not necessarily readily grasped or understood, and therefore typically undertaken as an experiment and in sketchy exploratory ways. It is also noted that in its early stages an organizing vision may primarily serve to call attention to the

discontinuity of the innovation, thereby basically helping to address the uncertainties that formal organizations face in emergent IT innovations (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). Discontinuity is, however, not only relevant at the early stages. In a case study of application service provision, Currie (2004) draws on the concepts of interpretation, legitimation and mobilization, and concludes her analysis by characterizing the process as sporadic, contradictory, and imbued with mixed messages (Currie, 2004).

While the four process components prioritize a planned perspective on the nature of IT innovation, the concepts interpretation, legitimation, and mobilization focus on actions and activities in the generative environment and therefore more readily grasp emergent processes (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997; Wang & Swanson, 2007). The organizing vision literature thus illustrates the strength of having a differentiated perspective on change modes found in social media adoption and implementation processes. The case study by Currie (2004) furthermore illustrates that innovation processes rarely adhere to the ideal world of concepts, since they are often rather messy (Van De Ven & Poole, 1990), which should therefore be a point of focus in the investigation of how formal organizations respond to social media.

Recent institutional theory also gives room for agency and focuses on micro-level practices in the organization (Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Scott, 2008). The concept of institutional entrepreneurs emphasizes institutionalization as a process undertaken by actors and through distinctive activities (Wang & Swanson, 2007); it indicates that for social media entrepreneurs, initiatives and the response from individuals and key actors in the organization can turn into an intensely political process (Barrett et al., 2013). Seminal papers point to specific institutional entrepreneurs that might be relevant for the promotion of social media as organizing vision: technology vendors, consultancies, business media, conference organizers, industry affiliations, experts, and adopting organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). While this inventory has its focus on the organizational field level, we aim at investigating the micro-level processes of social media institutionalization, and should thus search for instantiations of the field level actors. Drawing on institutional theory, organizations may respond to change processes in various ways: by acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation (Scott, 2008). In particular, organizational decoupling as an avoidance response strategy has received much attention and is illustrated in recent studies of social media practices as the use of socialization agents as

boundary spanners as well as in reorganizing of customer-facing activities (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013a).

Institutional entrepreneurs who promote social media are most probably challenged by institutional actors who are skeptical towards social media as organizing vision or by those promoting a competing organizing vision (Barrett et al., 2013). We therefore need to take the significance of these actors into account. The organizing vision literature explains an organizing vision as being produced in a process of both cooperation and contention (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997), but it does not concurrently seem to account for the significance of actors representing institutionalized visions or actors promoting competing discourses in the contemporary landscape of IT innovations (Barrett et al., 2013). The simultaneous presence of institutional entrepreneurs that promote social media, and institutional actors that advocate institutionalized practices or a competing discourse points to contradictory processes (Robey & Boudreau, 1999). These contradictory responses are thus important for understanding how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

Especially in the early stages of adoption and implementation, it takes complex arguments with justifications to persuade the actors involved of the pragmatic or moral benefits of a new practice (Green & Li, 2011). To study these processes, emergent rhetorical institutionalism (Alvesson, 1993; Green, Li, & Nohria, 2009; Green & Li, 2011; Green, 2004; Hoefter & Green Jr., 2016), and recent information systems research that employs a rhetorical perspective on IT innovation are relevant (Barrett et al., 2013; Huang, Baptista, & Galliers, 2013; Miranda et al., 2015). By employing such rhetorical perspectives, we can analyze types and sequences of arguments in social media change processes.

Concerning types of arguments, we become able to analyze how actors navigate the inherent ambiguities (Green & Li 2011), or how managers make sense of IT innovation waves (Swanson, 2012). To study in empirical detail how actors navigate, Ramiller (2006) suggests a framework consisting of five knowledge modes: what, why, when, where and how. The framework for example illustrates that the 'how' mode of knowledge has two rhetorical figures, the figure of implementability and the figure of accomplishment (Ramiller, 2006). Concerning sequence, scholars have studied how arguments change from early phases of institutionalization processes to later phases of adoption and implementation, and finally how they may collapse as an indication of taken-for-grantedness (Barrett et al., 2013).

By drawing on the three classical forms of rhetorical appeal: pathos, logos, and ethos, scholars have therefore suggested that we study how these forms change over time, and if possibly they play an active role in institutionalization (Barrett et al., 2013; Green, 2004). The rhetorical analysis is thus central for understanding the micro-foundation of the social media innovation process, and in particular if social media as organizing vision becomes an institutionalized practice.

Summing up, we draw on institutional perspectives to study social media innovation processes in regard to different modes in change processes, contradictions between entrepreneurs and actors representing institutionalized practices, and the rhetorical practices actors employ for sense making purposes.

### **3. Method**

We have used an explorative approach in the investigation and analysis of the empirical material, thereby aiming at extending the approaches taken in two recent information systems studies on social media (Scott & Orlikowski 2009; Germonprez & Hovorka 2013). Corporate social media practices are an emergent field, and we therefore tested relevant theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks simultaneously with our initial analysis of the empirical material. The explorative field study and the analysis were both guided by a focus on the interplay of material and discursive processes (Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011), and on the significance of contradiction in IT innovation processes (Robey & Boudreau, 1999). Different conceptual frameworks that provided insight into our empirical gatherings and analysis of these were tested, and we finally chose the organizing vision lens as framework for the paper (Suddaby, 2006).

*Research setting:* We selected the multinational manufacturing corporation BlueTech as research setting for this study because of its unique circumstances (Yin, 2003). Despite that BlueTech has considerable previous experience with interactive presence on the Internet and in virtual environments, the corporation, however, did not have any official social media presence, or an appointed social media spokesperson. Even though BlueTech had marketing and communication departments, social media innovation took place as distributed and improvised activities by individuals and local sales organizations. We therefore found that

BlueTech represented a unique research setting for investigating how formal organizations respond to social media.

*Data collection:* We first made observations of BlueTech’s activity on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn. We then interviewed actors in BlueTech, participated in meetings, corresponded by email, organized conference participation, and later in the process, we got access to confidential documents in the social media innovation process. See Table 1 for an overview.

In order to study the innovation process over time, the study was conducted in the period 2011-2015. To the extent possible data on pre-2011 activities were accessed through the social media platforms, which were time-indexed, as well as through interviews and documents. Real time online observation has included BlueTech and other relevant organizational actors’ activity on the Internet, and on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, SlideShare, Flickr, YouTube and Instagram. The data collection on certain social media platforms and the “InternetArchive WaybackMachine” gave access to time-indexed historical data. This archival method made it possible to trace social media activities and web presences back in time before the field study started in 2011.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (1)	Observation (50+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (1) Document (2) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (5) Document (3) Participation (10+ hrs)	Observation (50+ hrs) Interview (6) Document (4) Participation (10+ hrs)

Table 1. Methods of data collection over time

We conducted interviews and participated in informal meetings and work sessions with employees at BlueTech in the period from 2011 to 2015. We contacted or asked for access to interviewees who were related to the social media innovation process in BlueTech in various ways: management at different levels: vice president, director, and manager; actors having functional roles directly related to social media activities: project leader, consultant, communication specialist, social media evangelist, and student assistant; BlueTech engineering staff who were involved in social media activities because of their technical knowledge. As the investigation progressed, the selection included elements of snowballing.

Ordered by year, these interactions with BlueTech actors include: 2011: Conversation with HQ and interview with HR employee. 2013: Interview, informal meeting, and seminar with the manager of the employee advocacy project. 2014: Interview with director, project leader, senior engineer, social media specialist involved in their Facebook branding project. 2015: Interview with manager, specialist, engineer, consultants. Informal meeting and participation in work sessions with social media consultants. In several situations, informal telephone conversations and email correspondence have provided surprisingly significant empirical material about the social media innovation process.

Our gathering of documents has focused on documents, which have been produced and used as part of what we identified as critical incidents in the social media innovation process at BlueTech. Examples of such documents include an internal slide presentation of the Facebook branding project (originally produced by its marketing agency and subsequently adopted as the ‘official’ internal document), a roadmap for its social media activities, an audit report, and material from a strategy workshop in 2015.

*Data analysis:* The research question and the theoretical framework have guided the analysis in an iterative process (Suddaby, 2006). The data analysis process has been ongoing since the investigation started in 2011 and was finalized during the writing of this paper in late 2015. In order to sustain a systematic analysis, we among others used the Nvivo software to facilitate the organizing and the coding of the empirical material.

The analysis took place as a coding focusing on three aspects of the innovation process. First, we focused on which actors and activities made up a generative environment, and how contradictions between actors and activities were manifested. For instance, we traced how social media actors were positioned in the organizational landscape, if actors were external or newly insourced, and if actors drew on contradicting visions for the activity. Second, we focused on how these actors and activities worked as an innovation process that unfolded over time. We drew a timeline for events, and through iterative coding procedures finished the analysis by dividing the process into three stages. Third, we focused on how actors navigated in these processes by analyzing the rhetorical unfolding of the innovation process as it was manifested by participants and in documents.

#### 4. Findings

Our study of BlueTech’s response to the social media innovation processes indicates that it unfolded in three stages. The presentation of the analysis will follow these three stages. In an effort to illustrate the core dynamics of the social media innovation process, we in table 2 illustrate the most significant actors by arrows, and the organizing form within a circle. In the presentation of each stage, we first focus on actors’ actions, next on organizational contradictions. The central findings for each stage are summarized in Table 2.

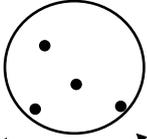
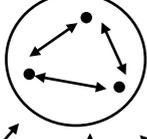
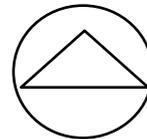
Stage	Stage I: 2009-2012	Stage II: 2013-2014	Stage III: 2015
Within circle: organizing form			
Behind arrows: actors	Individual employees Sales organizations Separate departments	Insourced advocates External consultants Managers	Top management Organizational opinion
Entrepreneurs	Distributed starters	Project makers	Operating management
Contradictions	Emergent versus planned	Engagement versus campaign	Local versus central
Rhetoric	Logos reasoning with elements of pathos	Logos reasoning with elements of pathos	Logos reasoning with elements of ethos

Table 2. Social media innovation in three stages

##### *Stage I: Distributed Starters 2009-2012*

In stage I social media entrepreneurs were diverse and disparate, and we therefore characterize them as distributed starters. They consisted of individuals in local sales organizations and in specific departments at the BlueTech headquarter, for example a manager in India who opened a Twitter profile, a consultant in the Philippines who uploaded a presentation on SlideShare, an employee in BlueTech HQ graduate program who started a LinkedIn group, and an employee in the communications department who started a YouTube channel. This social media innovation process reaches a considerable scope in the period 2009-2012. It is thus registered that in 2011 BlueTech had more than 150 social media presences globally, dominated by Facebook and LinkedIn presences as well as Twitter and

YouTube. Figure 1 shows part of internal document that illustrates the more than 150 social media presences in 2011. Notice the few European presences.



Figure 1. Part of internal document: social media presence at BlueTech in 2011

The social media entrepreneurs created tensions with institutional actors in favor of more controlled and coordinated processes, for example BlueTech professionals in recruitment functions and external marketing consultancies working for BlueTech. Among the latter, a large Danish marketing consultancy in an analysis of the 2011 presence characterized the social media activities in BlueTech as messy and without direction. In the official slide presentation, the activities are characterized with the diplomatic expression “varying quality”. However, in the presenter’s notes invisible to the audience, the wording is more explicit. Here it says the following about the grass root activity at BlueTech anno 2011:

“A decentralized and fragmented approach  
No common goals or social ambitions  
No knowledge sharing  
No integrated communication or marketing approach – push marketing rather than dialogue-driven approach  
Variation in quality and inconsistency in brand appearance  
Lack of engagement across social media presences”  
(From presenter’s note in slide presentation by external marketing consultancy, 2012)

The quite explicit critique of BlueTech's emergent social media activities in the quotation expresses a traditional 'integrated marketing' perspective. It illustrates the most important tension between the social media start up entrepreneurs and the institutional actors representing institutionalized practices.

Our study indicates that BlueTech social media entrepreneurs made sense of their activities and the associated tensions by employing pragmatic approaches. Interviews and documents indicate that actors in BlueTech focused on the practical means-ends aspects of social media. Two examples illustrate this focus. In the first example an interviewee describes how LinkedIn and YouTube are used for recruiting purposes. Asked if the interviewee could tell about the strategy and purpose of using YouTube, she first refuses, but then goes on to account for the practical organizing:

"No, because that's the ... communication department. We are a big company, so we are distributed. We specialize much... But I can say, that we often use it for recruitment, where we put it onto to our ... ads. And we really do think it's ... a cool ... a cool gadget to display, and that it is slightly trendy to have our own YouTube channel". (Interview with human resource consultant in BlueTech, 2011)

The quotation illustrates that the interviewee avoids the loftier why-questions, and instead prefers to focus on the practical implementation and the results of using YouTube. This illustrates how the rhetorical figures of implementability and accomplishment are played out. Concerning the fundamental rhetorical appeals, the quotation expresses a means-end line of thought, in other words a logos appeal, but the consultant also in glimpses expresses pathos, like excitement, when she adds that linking to the YouTube video is cool.

The second example that illustrates the rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment is from a press release related to the launch of a BlueTech US Facebook page in 2010. In a similar way as the consultant, the press release focuses on how the Facebook page can solve practical problems:

"Social networking sites are a great way for BlueTech to keep our partners informed about topics ranging from product launches to trade shows and events. Our goal is to take advantage of communication tools already being used by many of our partners and provide timely, relevant and accurate information". (From press release by local sales organization in BlueTech, 2010)

In the same manner, the press release predominantly expresses a pragmatic means-ends approach, for example in the phrases ‘a great way for BlueTech to keep our partners informed’ and ‘our goal is to take advantage of’. The press release also has a smaller dose of excitement or pathos when using the expression ‘great way’ and by finishing off the release in a stylish way by the enumeration ‘timely, relevant and accurate’. By adding this element of pathos to the otherwise predominant use of a logos appeal, the press release does not only present the social media initiative as serious business but also tries to create excitement about the U.S. BlueTech initiative on Facebook.

Despite the considerable number of social media presences by 2011, BlueTech surprisingly had no official presence on any social media, had not announced anything about its emergent and under the radar activity, and was not interested in giving an interview about social media when we approached the corporation about this in 2011. BlueTech apparently did not have a voice in the discourse community in which social media as organizing vision was produced, and we therefore characterize this approach as taciturn.

#### *Stage II: Pilot Project Makers 2013-2014*

Whereas the innovation process in stage I was facilitated by disparate actors, social media activities in stage II are organized through two pilot projects anchored at BlueTech head quarter, a LinkedIn employee advocacy project and a Facebook branding project.

We find two types of actors behind the two pilot projects: First, there is the young, newly graduated and newly hired employee who advocate the use of social media. The significance of this actor type is especially manifest in the Facebook branding project in which an employee has persistently been advocating the use of social media and thereby been fertilizing the ground for stage II. Further in the stage II process, more young and newly graduated employees are hired into both projects where they become drivers of both development and daily operation of social media activities.

Second, there are external consultancies that in different ways contribute to the development and daily operation of social media activities. For both projects, a meeting with a consultancy takes place related to the start of the project. In both cases, the consultancy is a major player with a high reputation and record of success. For the Facebook branding project, both tactical and operational activities are outsourced to the consultancy. In the other case, the

employee advocacy project, the BlueTech project owner headhunts the consultant from the consultancy as well as a social media specialist from another firm.

In combination with the allocation of considerable financial resources, the birth of both projects is thus conditioned by both outsourcing and insourcing of specialized knowledge functions. Figure 2 shows part of internal document that displays the project roadmap for Facebook branding project.

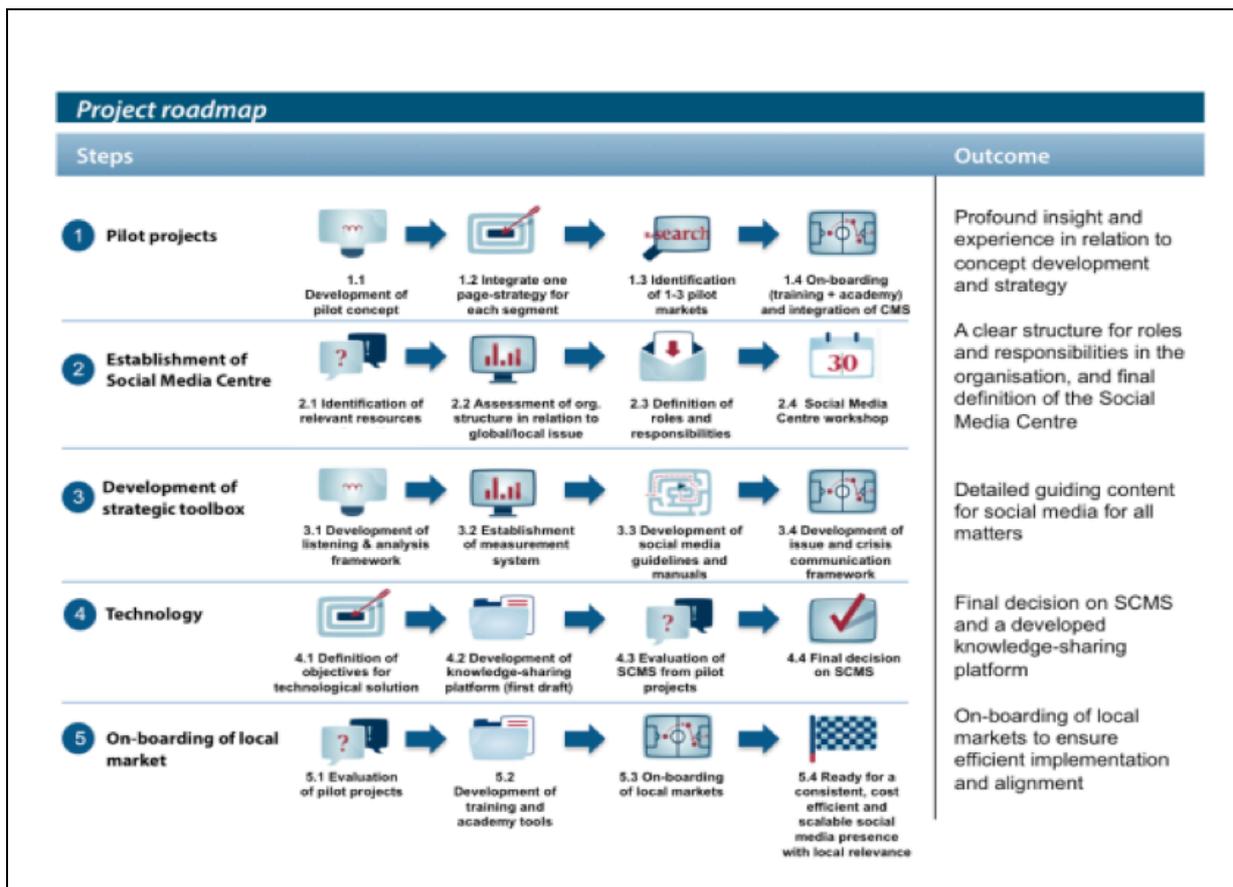


Figure 2. Part of internal document: Project roadmap for Facebook branding project

The contradictions found in stage two are conditioned by a noteworthy shift in organizing related to the projects. Whereas activities in stage I were improvised and of an informal nature, the projects launched in stage II are organized as projects. The Facebook branding project includes a director as project owner, a project leader and a project assistant who along with the consultancy forms the core of the project. In addition the project includes an organizational set up of legal assistance and specialist knowledge, labeled a social media hub. The employee advocacy also include a manager, specialists, and behind them a director as

owner of the project. The voice of the integrated marketing approach is, however, not supreme. It is in turn criticized by one of the newly insourced employees:

“I mean, paying 1 million kroner or whatever to have a Facebook and a Twitter strategy which anyone could think up over a weekend. I’m not saying that what the Brand Agency produced is lousy, because it was a neat PowerPoint presentation, but it must be anchored in the organization, and you cannot do that with a flashy presentation, you do it by actively caring about it. So I believe it is wrong to spend money on a PowerPoint presentation rather than calling a workshop for everybody to get people to become more active and learn what it’s all about.” (Interview with social media specialist, 2013)

This critique resembles the entrepreneurial approach found in stage I, but now it is explicitly articulated in opposition to another direct vision of how social media innovation should be managed. Asked about the different approaches found in BlueTech’s use of social media, the global brand director replies:

“But on the other hand I’m saying that our strategy must drive our actions on the social media, and not the social media that drive our strategy. And this is what worries me – if we just set it free because it’s trendy and we can make all the employees communicate: they have to know what to communicate and how to do it. That worries me – and I believe that our vice president is up for some sleepless nights”. (Interview with branding director, 2013)

The branding director in this quotation expresses an integrated marketing vision of social media practices that is more in favor of command and control than connect and collaborate (Tilson et al., 2010) and thus in opposition to the vision of the employee advocacy project at BlueTech.

The sense making in stage II continues to draw on how-knowledge and the rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment. But a change occurs in terms of rhetoric appeal. The change in use of rhetoric appeal is most significantly illustrated in the PowerPoints used for the presentation of the Facebook branding project:

We looked into the market and target groups in order to identify relevant insights and relevant best practices. This leads us to develop a framework for how we wanted to work with social media. Based on these insights we outline 4 specific hypotheses, which we wanted to test throughout pilots. As a result, we established two social media presences to cater our primary target audience, in order to test, learn and gain insights. (Internal document, 2012)

At a first glance, the quotation from the slide presentation seems solely to draw on the logos appeal. The use of phrases like ‘in order to’, ‘based on these insights’, and ‘as a result’ are

typical verbal techniques to obtain logos-based persuasion. However, the condensed use of management parlance and quasi-scientific vocabulary, as well as the many well turned sentences, altogether result in a rhetoric where logos is infused with pathos. This slide is a specific example of how rhetoric can make a management fashion balloon rise and fly.

The PowerPoints were originally produced by the marketing agency and then used internally by the manager and the director in their presentation of the Facebook branding project. It indicates a travelling of rhetorical framing and naming from the world of consultants to the BlueTech actors who facilitate the organizational adoption and implementation process.

In interviews with the core group of participants in the Facebook branding project, the rhetoric drew less on pathos, but still differed significantly from the expressions employed by the consultant three years earlier in 2011. The director of the Facebook branding project gives an illustrative example:

“My role is to constantly make sure that we communicate the optimal way to our target groups and hit them with what we want to hit them with and in the channels where they are. [...] We measure ourselves clearly against our competitors, because it is all about hitting our customers better than the competitors do.” (Interview with branding director, 2013)

While the quotation fundamentally expresses a logos means-ends appeal, the director also dramatizes her rhetoric by the use of absolute words like ‘constantly’, ‘optimal’, ‘clearly’ and ‘all about’, and by the repeated use of the word ‘hit’. This dramatizing puts a layer of pathos over the expression thereby fuelling the importance of the Facebook branding project. The directors’ selection of words also illustrates the fundamental framing of the Facebook branding project. Especially the words ‘target group’, ‘hit’, and ‘channel’ indicate that the Facebook branding project is framed as an integrated marketing project.

The Facebook branding project and the LinkedIn employee advocacy project differ from stage one by going publicly official, but only so under their specific project labels. For example, the employee advocacy project starts a web blog, and the director of the Facebook branding project participates in a conference. BlueTech as an official corporation at the top management level continues its taciturn approach in stage II.

### *Stage III: Operating Top Management 2015*

In stage three, the actors who fuelled the process were no longer distributed individuals or single departments, or the actors associated with the two projects, but rather top management who represented BlueTech as a formal operating organization.

The characteristics of stage III are most significantly illustrated by how a vice president intervenes in the ongoing social media activities in late 2014 and early 2015. The intervention is triggered by a widespread organizational criticism of the conduct in the Facebook project, even indicated in interviews. The first step of the intervention is an external audit of the Facebook branding project entitled “Health check of BlueTech’s Facebook pages”. The audit made by a new external consultancy focuses on the validity of the Facebook likes, the value of promoting the Facebook posts, and the question of reaching a relevant target group. The audit is interpreted by the Facebook project manager as a situation where the project manager should “sit up and pay attention”. Figure 3 shows part of internal document from audit of the Facebook branding project.

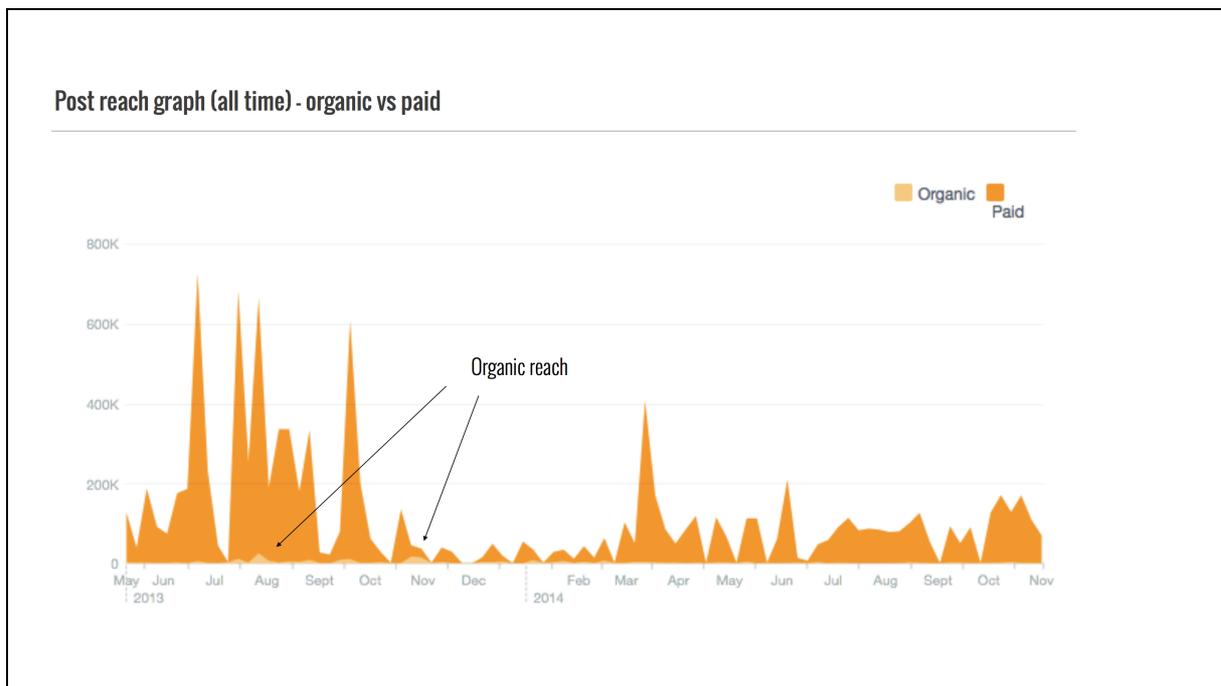


Figure 3. Part of internal document: Audit of Facebook branding project

The second step of the intervention is a workshop with the aim of creating a new strategy for BlueTech's social media activities. The same external consultant leads both the audit and the workshop; they result in comprehensive criticism of the first consultancy that the Facebook

branding project was outsourced to. Finally, as the third step, the vice president's intervention results in reorganization of the social media activities. The two social media projects are dissolved as projects, and staff is allocated to a new organizational unit labeled 'digital media'. The vice president appoints a new manager to the unit, which is labeled as a center of competence; in the future this unit is meant to serve local branches of BlueTech in various social media activities.

Organizational tension in stage III is between local and central approaches. In contrast to earlier stages, challenges and contradictions are now openly discussed and regarded in large as an inevitable part of the social innovation process as indicated in this interview with a social media employee:

“So now I clash with the communication manager and the journalists. The meetings with marketing in 2014, where doors were slammed, these I have now with the communications department. Elliot, the manager of the new digital media unit, has been appointed to operationalize something that is not operationalizable right now.” (Interview with social media employee, 2015)

In an interview with the new digital media manager, unprompted he confirms and emphasizes this rather harsh diagnosis of the organizational situation in BlueTech, which concludes the quotation. Behind the practical challenges of supporting and coordinating activities located in different departments, the quotation more fundamentally illustrates the tension between different approaches to social media, in other words contention not within but between different organizing visions.

Sense making in stage III continues the means-ends approach found in the former stages. The audit report and the strategy workshop documents indicate a continuation of the means-ends rhetorical approach. The title of the audit report alone, ‘Health Check’, signaling a scientific approach, draws on a logos appeal. The means-ends mode of persuasion is manifested in bold forms:

What works – what doesn't work. [...] In order to estimate the value of the Facebook pages, we need to compare costs and income. (Document from strategy workshop, 2015)

This logos persuasion technique is furthermore manifested in the science-like charts accompanying the audit. The many ambiguities that surround the social media practices that consequently lead to the audit are reduced to numbers and names on a straight line and thereby supposedly taken under control.

However, the audit report and the workshop slides, in contrast to the PowerPoints of the Facebook branding project, also introduce a glimpse of ethos appeal. This ethos appeal is introduced from the very beginning in the title of the audit report: The ‘health’ part of the expression literally signals that BlueTech is a responsible actor that wants to take care of its own organizational well-being. The element of ethos is also indicated in the audit report when the author of the report starts the report by introducing himself and his merits, and more directly when the Facebook project is criticized for having a “corporate look” in the sense that it lacks the authenticity associated with postings on social media.

Behind these explicit and materialized indications of ethos, the ethos appeal is also indicated in the intervention of the corporate vice president, and the organizational voice he largely acted on. A contextual circumstance is that this vice president both internally and externally is known for appealing to the well being of corporations and society in general, in other words socially accepted norms.

## **5. Discussion: Implementation without Institutionalization?**

We expected some institutionalization as the social media innovation process unfolded, but it turned out to be a less straightforward process. In comparison to the sequential process model of comprehension, adoption, implementation and assimilation (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004), we found the process components were not only shuffled but they also had an emergent character. Our findings indicate a reshuffling of the planned sequence due to how the disparate starters in BlueTech implemented the use of social media before the organization took any formal decision on adoption. These distributed and improvised innovation processes have affinities to the processes described by Swanson and Ramiller (1997) and Currie (2004). However, the innovation processes at BlueTech also differ from these studies. The analysis indicates that the emergent processes are not limited to an initial phase of the innovation process but seemingly is a permanent state of affairs. In 2015 several new and unsanctioned Instagram accounts were opened in the name of BlueTech. The study thereby indicates an

innovation process that is both cyclical and recurrent, thereby confirming other studies of the divergent and convergent nature of innovation (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006).

In comparison to a Finnair social media study (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013a), which indicated a redesign of customer facing activities, the analysis indicates that social media innovation at BlueTech did not result in such organizational redesign. On the contrary, the analysis indicates that social media are adapted to existing organizational structures and practices. In comparison to research which has pointed to changed organizational fabrics (Zammuto et al., 2007), to transformative business impacts (Aral et al., 2013), and to a paradigmatic shift in accountability (Scott & Orlikowski, 2012), our study at BlueTech indicates that the social media innovation is adapted to existing corporate practices and here works as a loosely coupled (Berente & Youngjin, 2012) or an autonomous innovation process (Avgerou & Mcgrath, 2007).

Concerning *how actors participated* in this social media innovation process, we found three types of actors each related to a distinct stage and each contributing with a specific function in the innovation process. Stage I was inhabited by start-up actors – a diversity of locally situated employees in a diversity of functions – who played the role of initial and organic enzyme in the innovation process. Stage II was inhabited by dedicated social media project actors, who had the function of providing external resources to the innovation process. Top managers who transformed the emergent innovation process into an operating organization inhabited stage III. The institutional perspective on entrepreneurs (Wang & Swanson, 2007) thus revealed a plethora of institutional actors each with their specific significance in the innovation process.

Important for the complete characterization of these actors, we found that their actions created contradictions. In stage I there was tension between emergent and planned approaches for social media activities. In stage II the tension existed between an employee engagement vision and a marketing campaign vision. In stage III, the tension was between the interests of a local and a central governance of the social media innovation processes.

How did *actors make sense* in these social media innovation processes? We found that the BlueTech participants employed a how-knowledge approach manifested through the rhetorical figures of implementability and accomplishment. The analysis further indicated a predominance of logos appeal. By analyzing the rhetoric employed by the actors, we hoped to obtain a deeper understanding of how these actors navigated in the social media innovation

practices at BlueTech. The predominant use of how-knowledge manifested in the rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment indicates the presence of a practice driven by mobilization but without much explicit moral legitimation through use of ethos appeal. This absence indicates that even though BlueTech's social media practices tend to be widespread and seemingly continue to develop, they are not institutionalized as socially accepted practices. The so-called 'Health check' can be read as a significant sign in this perspective: It is an intervention provoked by organizational criticism and executed in order to ensure legitimate practices. The audit is nevertheless much about accountability and little about responsibility (Lindkvist & Llewellyn, 2003) and therefore confirms a situation of implementation with little institutionalization (Green et al., 2009).

The use of multiple labels other than social media such as social business and digital media indicates an ongoing competition about naming and framing of current practices. The manifest contradiction between the employee advocacy project and the Facebook branding project in stage II indicates the existence of competing organizing visions. The BlueTech case thus confirms the importance of establishing an analytical scope beyond one single organizing vision in order to detect tensions between discourses (Barrett et al., 2013).

## **6. Conclusion**

Recent research on social media has largely constrained its focus to online communities. The results of this study challenge this focus on the most obvious manifestation of social media if we are to understand social media as a contextually created IT innovation process. Our findings show that social media as an IT innovation process are brought about through the participation of a diversity of actors in a process marked by contradictions and struggles for sense making.

The paper has limitations due to the explorative and contextual research approach (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Our findings are based on an explorative tracing of the making of an organizing vision in a specific context and have thus been subject to unique incidents and circumstances. The focus of our study means that we have primarily traced actors and activities related to the emergent social media process, and therefore have little empirical material from BlueTech that was not affiliated with the social media activities. A further limitation arises from the time frame of the study and the fact that it is an ongoing innovation process. We only studied the social media innovation process from 2011 to 2015, although

the process started further back in time and is still ongoing. However, while the study is subject to limitations, the analytical findings might contribute to an understanding of how formal organizations respond to social media.

The paper shows how the social media innovation process underwent three stages, how each stage has its own organizational contradiction, and how the unfolding of these stages differed from rational stage models in the organizing vision literature and elsewhere. These three stages showed distinctive characteristics, from emergent activities and pilot projects to the formation of an operating organization. We showed how local implementation happened before central pilot projects were launched, and how divergent activities were present concurrent with convergent activities. We suggest that there is potential in future studies of social media to employ theories of multiple change modes (Nielsen 2008).

The paper further shows how different types of participants are involved in the making of the social media innovation processes, and how the processes were embedded in tensions caused by different organizational approaches among these participants. We showed how actors in the first stage of innovation were local employees in functional roles who improvised social media, how actors in stage II were dedicated social media actors bringing new, external resources to BlueTech, for example newly employed and consultants from marketing agencies, and finally showed how actors in stage III were a BlueTech vice president and an experienced manager who took leadership in formalizing social media activities into an operating organizational unit. These findings suggest that there is potential in future studies to examine the plethora of entrepreneurial actors (Wang & Swanson, 2007) at stake in social media innovation, and not only top management level (Deans, 2011).

The paper finally shows how the participants predominantly use rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment in their sense making efforts. This rhetoric indicates that social media are implemented without institutionalization (Green, 2004), that social media entrepreneurs are driven by an organizing vision of much mobilization and little legitimation (Wang & Swanson, 2007), and a state of jamming or cognitive incoherence that sustains innovative flexibility (Miranda et al., 2015). In light of these findings, we suggest that there is a potential to transfer the recent interest for rhetorical institutionalism (Green & Li, 2011) and organizing vision theory among information systems scholars (Barrett et al., 2013; Currie, 2004; Miranda et al., 2015; Wang & Swanson, 2007) to future studies in social media innovation.

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# Conclusion



## Conclusion

The thesis explores how formal organizations respond to social media innovation through an interpretive field study (Klein & Myers, 1999) of the 100 largest Danish firms, the 98 Danish municipalities and the associated actors in the field of social media. As theoretical framework, the thesis draws on institutional perspectives, in particular the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997).

In the following I first account for the contributions of the individual papers and for limitations, then the overall research contributions, and finally implications for practice, critical reflections and suggestions for future research.

### *Paper contributions*

Paper 1, *Reframing Social Media Research into an Institutional Perspective. A Review*, surveys recent research on social media and suggests to reframe future social media research by drawing on institutional perspectives (Webster & Watson, 2002). The review indicates that while there are many possible approaches to studying social media, the majority of research focuses on online communities, uses predictive theories, and is based on surveys and experiments. Table 1 shows number of journal articles with regard to research area, theory type, and method.

Literature Body	Research Area					Theory Type					Method		
	Online communities	Technology vendors	Formal organizations	Consultancies	Business media	Analyzing	Explaining	Predicting	Explaining and mediation	Design and action	Survey	Case study	Experiment
Information systems studies	65	2	4	0	0	0	13	0	55	3	54	12	5
Organization studies	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	1	0
Marketing studies	24	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	23	0	13	1	10

Table 1. Number of journal articles with regard to research area, theory type, and method.

The exclusive focus on community interaction illustrated in Table 1 may constrain our understanding of social media, leaving out the significance of technology vendors,

consultancies, business media, and other institutional players. In particular, the paper identifies a research gap concerning the role of formal organizations. As the first step in the thesis, Paper 1 therefore suggests an agenda for future research that draws on institutional perspectives in an exploration of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

Paper 2, *Social Media as Organizing Vision? Behind the Facebook Adoption Curve*, addresses the research question by investigating how social media entrepreneurs mobilize and legitimize a social media innovation process among Danish firms and municipalities (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). Figure 1 shows the Facebook adoption by the 100 largest Danish firms and municipalities.

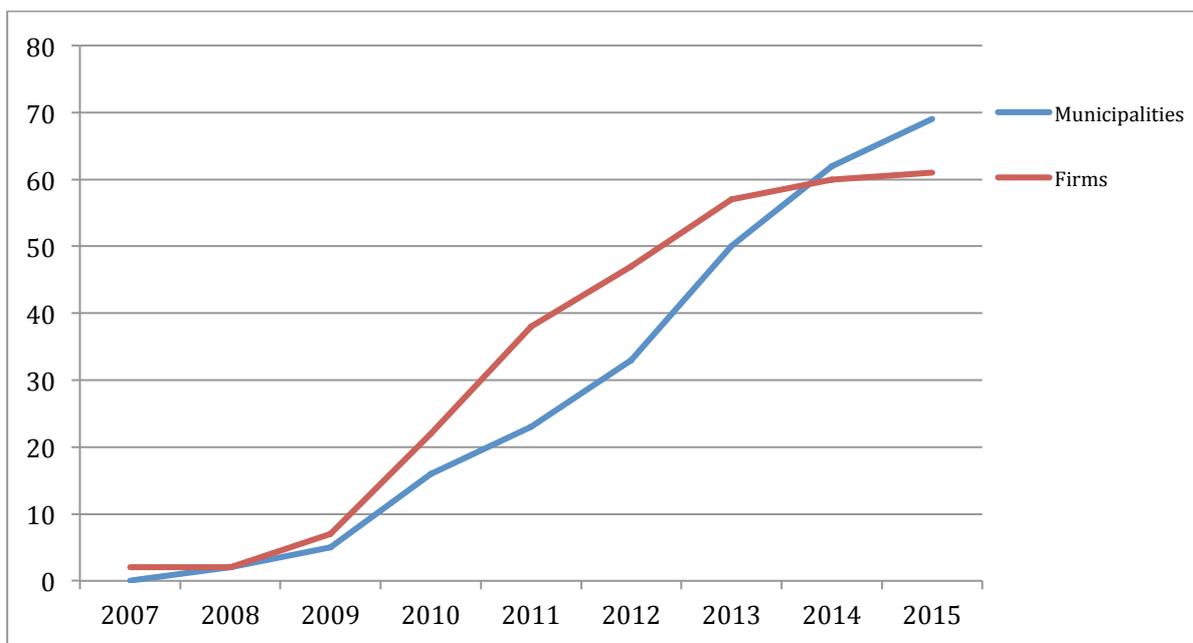


Figure 1. Facebook adoption by the 100 largest Danish firms and municipalities

The adoption of Facebook among firms and municipalities shown in Figure 1 apparently indicates a robust growth over time. However, by moving behind the adoption curve, the paper reveals contradictory social media practices. The analysis thus indicates the presence of institutional actors representing institutionalized practices and alternative discourses on social media, and reveals how these function as counter-direction and deviation processes. The paper finds indication of such contradictions in the high variation of Facebook post per

month, and in the mobilization and legitimation of social media activities among firms and municipalities. Figure 2 shows the Facebook postings per month by the 10 largest Danish firms 2009-2015.

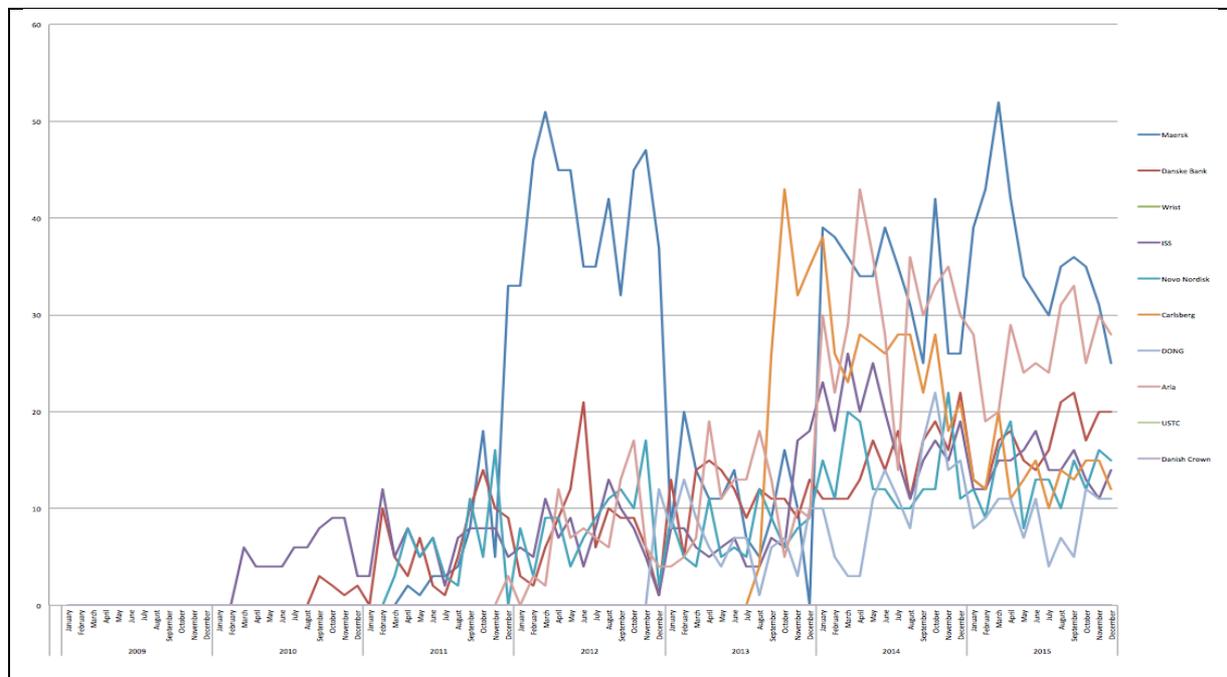


Figure 2. Facebook postings per month by the 10 largest Danish firms 2009-2015

The graphs illustrating the monthly posting activity in Figure 2 are best characterized as a zigzag pattern. In comparison to other professional communication or marketing activities, for example online newsletters, this variation is noteworthy, and indicates an activity that has not undergone routinization.

Therefore, paper 2 analyzes if social media is an organizing vision, or rather manifests an airline magazine syndrome (Ramiller, 2001a). This analysis indicates that dominant discourses on social media in large resemble an airline magazine syndrome, and only to a little degree facilitate an institutionalization process of social media among firms and municipalities.

Paper 3, *Wrestling with Contradictions in Government Social Media Practices*, addresses the research question by analyzing how different contradictions shape the responses to emergent social media practices by a large Danish municipality. The analysis draws on literature on contradictions in IT innovation processes (Carlo, Lyytinen, & Boland, 2012; Robey &

Boudreau, 1999), and indicates contradictions between the use of proprietary municipal IT and public social media, between central governance and locally led initiatives, and between service administration and community feeling. Table 2 accounts for these three principal contradictions in municipal social media practices, and illustrates the contradictions empirically through interview quotes and observations.

Category and elements	Description of contradiction	Illustration from interview and observation
<p><b>Form of practice</b> Contradiction between community feeling and service administration.</p>	<p>Social media facilitate personal community feeling, but is intervened and exploited by professional service administration in a process where local social media actors in turn become dependent on municipal service administrators.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 2 ”The Clean-City project has a Facebook site with more than thousand likes. A person here offered a sofa for free and got several hundred likes. Such spontaneous municipal projects occur and function very well due to a professional effort. And the agenda of our task force is to ask: How can the municipality prolong and profit from this activity?”</p> <p>Online observation # 2 Posts and comments by citizens on the Facebook site for ‘Clean City’ is intervened by a municipal moderator who posts news and responds to questions, and direct citizens to municipal service functions on a proprietary municipal website.</p>
<p><b>Organizing</b> Contradiction between local initiatives and central governance.</p>	<p>Local social media actors foster initiatives and engagement and thereby organizational autonomy, but are still subject to central governance and control which in turn depend on the local social media actors.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 1 “If we don’t do something on the municipal level pretty fast, then the traffic department will go solo”</p> <p>Online observation # 1 Indication of many Facebook sites for local or specific activities. No evidence of any social media sites that officially represent the municipality or any of the six main departments. Indication of temporary project sites and municipal campaign sites, for example ‘bicycle city’ and ‘Clean City’.</p>
<p><b>Digital infrastructure</b> Contradiction between public social media and proprietary municipal IT.</p>	<p>Public social media functions as driver of change and challenger of proprietary municipal controlled IT, but are also met with imperatives about business directed IT integration from central municipal actors.</p>	<p>Interview quote # 3 ”It is important that we can build on top of the initiatives of the engaged citizens and dedicated users [of the local social media sites], to the advantage of the whole business of the municipality.”</p> <p>Online observation # 3 Photos, comments and questions by citizens on Facebook site for ‘Bicycle City’. Self-service forms and official public information relevant for ‘Bicycle City’ is only placed on municipal website. Visible traffic from Facebook site to municipal website, but not the reverse.</p>

Table 2. Contradictions in municipal social media practices

Addressing the research question of this thesis, paper 3 suggests that we understand LargeMuni’s response to social media innovation as an ambidextrous coping (Huang, Baptista, & Newell, 2015; Smith & Lewis, 2011), and less as a matter of progression than as an ongoing wrestling with inherent contradictions (Barley & Kunda, 1992).

Paper 4, *Tracing an Organizing Vision on Social Media in a Multinational Corporation*, contributes to answering the research question by exploring how actors affiliated with a large Danish multinational corporation respond to social media innovation. The analysis shows how employees started the process through improvised social media practices, how dedicated social media entrepreneurs turned these emergent practices into corporate pilot projects, and how top management finally intervened and formalized social media activities into an operating organizational unit. Paper 4 examines how this innovation process unfolds through three stages, how each stage manifests a distinct organizational contradiction, and how the processes included both divergent and convergent elements. Figure 3 shows quotes illustrating contradictory organizing visions on social media in stage II.

<p>“I mean, paying 1 million kroner or whatever to have a Facebook and a Twitter strategy which anyone could think up over a weekend. I’m not saying that what the Brand Agency produced is lousy, because it was a neat PowerPoint presentation, but it must be anchored in the organization, and you cannot do that with a flashy presentation, you do it by actively caring about it. So I believe it is wrong to spend money on a PowerPoint presentation rather than calling a workshop for everybody to get people to become more active and learn what it’s all about.” (Interview with social media specialist, 2013)</p>	<p>“But on the other hand I’m saying that our strategy must drive our actions on the social media, and not the social media that drive our strategy. And this is what worries me – if we just set it free because it’s trendy and we can make all the employees communicate: they have to know what to communicate and how to do it. That worries me – and I believe that our vice president is up for some sleepless nights”. (Interview with branding director, 2013)</p>
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Figure 3. Quotes from stage II illustrating contradictory organizing visions on social media

The analysis further shows that during this change process, the participants continuously use a rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment, and thereby indicate a process dominated by mobilization at the expense of legitimation (Ramiller, 2006; Wang & Swanson, 2007). This logoi dominated rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment is perhaps best illustrated by the roadmap for the Facebook branding project. Figure 4 shows this roadmap,

which initially was produced by an external branding agency and later was taken over by the employees responsible for the Facebook branding project.

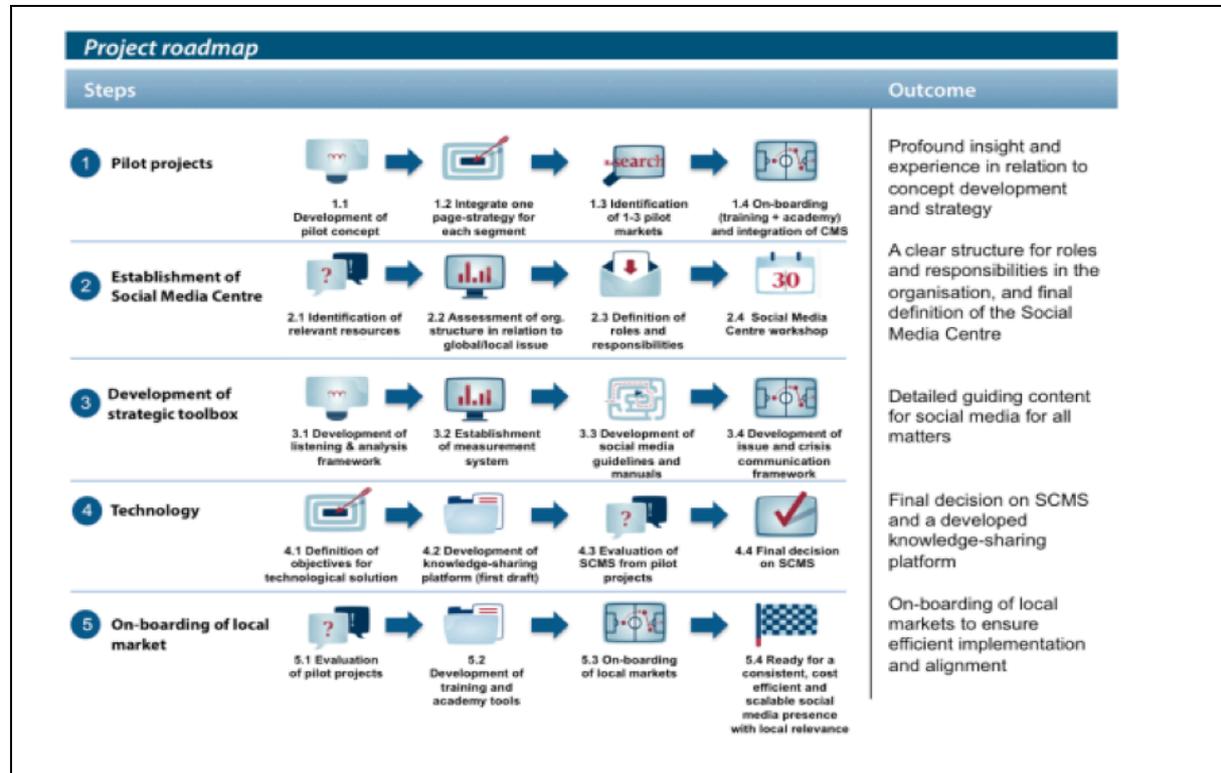


Figure 4. Part of internal document: roadmap for the Facebook branding project.

Paper 4 thus indicates a predominance of rhetoric figures of implementability and accomplishment, and absence of explicit ethos grounded legitimation of the evolving social media practices. The paper therefore concludes that the participants' sensemaking efforts lead to an adoption and implementation with little institutionalization. Paper 4 can especially point to new ideas and future research directions.

### Limitations

Before moving on to the overall contributions of the thesis, I want to point to potential limitations in the empirical material, the theoretical perspectives and the methodologies I have drawn on in my exploration of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. While the field study covers a period of five years, and includes both observations, interviews, documents and participation, the empirical material I have covered is partial, and the study therefore has build-in limitations in terms of inference (Klein & Myers, 1999;

Walsham, 1993). For example, a larger degree of informal participation among relevant actors could have provided a deeper access to the interplay between practice and discourse, and thereby established a more solid empirical ground for theorizing the question of institutionalization. The timeframe of the study likewise has its limitations. Five years is a relatively short period of investigation for understanding both immediate and distal aspects of change processes. A central learning from the thesis is that we should neither overestimate nor underestimate the consequences of ongoing innovation (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001). Further, as a field study that has taken place in the middle of an ongoing change process, it leads us to ask a fundamental question for such process studies: How can we know analytically where we are during a stage of transition? This challenge points in direction of the limitations in the theoretical perspectives employed in the thesis. While institutional perspectives and the organizing vision literature have functioned well as a sensitizing device for understanding how firms and municipalities respond to social media innovation at macro and organizational field level, other conceptual frameworks could have provided stronger insight regarding responses at micro foundational level. While the organizing vision framework proves requisite for conceptualizing the macro setting in paper 2, paper 3 and 4 point to limitations in the framework for coping with organizational and micro foundational levels of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. While rhetorical approaches do seem relevant for studying organizational and micro foundations, other frameworks dedicated to such levels might prove more relevant, for example the theory of decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the theory of management idea travelling and translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) or the theory of institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009). Despite these limitations, the field study has also yielded valuable overall theoretical and empirical contributions.

### *Overall contributions*

The presentation of the overall theoretical contributions will be structured by focusing on the three constitutive dimensions in institutional theory: multi-level interaction, change process and causal agency (Markus & Robey, 1988). The overall theoretical contributions are sought illustrated in Figure 5 and will be explained in the following paragraphs.

First, this thesis theorizes how formal organizations respond to social media innovation by addressing calls for studying multi-level interaction (Currie & Swanson, 2009;

Markus & Robey, 1988; Orlikowski & Barley, 2001). The thesis shows that the responses of formal organizations to social media innovation are the outcome of multi-level interaction. First, all three empirical papers show how societal social media movements are taken up by individual actors and in distributed and improvised forms as micro foundations are brought into the context of formal organizations. Paper 2 for example shows how an individual actor in a global firm anticipate Facebook as a path for future business, and how individuals respond to social media innovation by starting up consultancies dedicated to service social media innovation in formal organizations. Paper 3 illustrates how individual employees in municipal institutions and citizens with special interests create Facebook accounts on their own initiative, and start posting in a language that clearly expresses their personal engagement. Paper 4 demonstrates how distributed and improvised social media practices started by individual employees and local sales organizations grow under the radar of the corporate headquarter of a global manufacturing corporation. Figure 5 illustrates how these distributed and improvised activities constitute a micro foundation in a first stage of social media innovation.

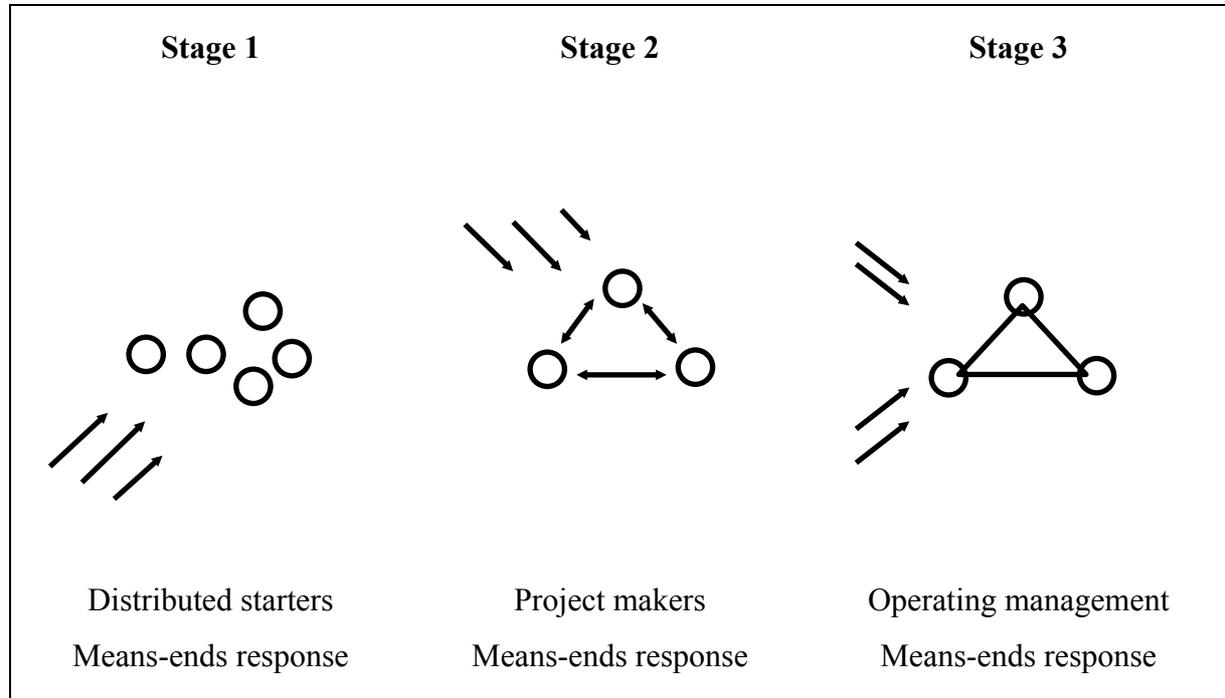


Figure 5. Time, space and actors in formal organizations' response to social media innovation

Next, the thesis in its multi-level approach shows how organizational field players bring projects and visions on social media into the context of formal organizations. Paper 2 most thoroughly illustrates how alliances of entrepreneurs bring about activities that sustain social media innovation, for example news in business media, national conferences on social media, and social media study programs at universities. Paper 4 most directly illustrates how organizational field players enter the corporate arena by showing how an external branding consultancy in many ways directs a Facebook branding project in BlueTech. Figure 5 illustrates how the visions and interests of these institutional project makers in stage 2 are brought into constellation and manifests contradictions in the social media innovation process.

Paper 3 and 4 shows how formal organizations are challenged when they try to cope with these interactions between micro and macro foundations of social media innovation. Paper 3 identifies three lines of contradictions which to a large degree express tensions between micro and macro foundations of social media innovation, for example the contradiction in communication practice between service administration (macro) and community feeling (micro). Rather than conceptualizing these responses by LargeMuni within a scheme of maturity (Lee, Kwak, Gwanhoo, & Young Hoon, 2012), paper 3 suggests we understand them as an ongoing organizational wrestling with contradictions (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Paper 4 provides in-depth empirical examples how such a wrestling is unfolded as specific rhetorical practices. Based on this paper it is therefore pertinent to ask whether this is an illustration of communicational ambidexterity (Huang et al., 2015) or rather the suppression of heterogeneous goals and incongruent interests (Ramiller, 2001b). Figure 5 illustrates how organizational critique and top management intervention in stage 3 transforms the former distributed and contradictory activities into a formalized operating organization.

In paper 2, 3 and 4 the thesis thus points to and specify the presence of both contention and cooperation in the multi-level interactions that characterize the organizational field of social media innovation. By applying a multi-level interaction perspective, the thesis casts light on how social media innovation are brought about as a product of how individuals, organizations, and field level actors interact through cooperation and contention in the field of social media innovation. The thesis further casts light on how formal organizations are challenged in their responses to social media innovation when met as multi-level interactions embedded in contradictions. The seminal paper on organizing vision describes the function of

an organizing vision as a 'key portal' for interaction between organizational field level and organizational level, for example by facilitating legitimation of the innovation as good organizational practice (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The analyses in this thesis however indicate that social media only to a limited extent function as such a 'key portal' facilitating legitimation. Rather, the multi-level interaction in itself appears to be a source of contested legitimacy. In line with recent studies, this thesis thus confirms the importance of addressing discursive foundation at multiple levels in order to account for the diffusion of innovations (Scarborough, Robertson, & Swan, 2015).

Second, the thesis contributes to theorizing how formal organizations respond to social media innovation by reflecting on calls for process studies (Currie & Swanson, 2009; Currie, 2011). The thesis addresses these calls by analyzing how the responses of formal organizations to social media innovation evolve over time. Paper 2 investigates how the largest 100 Danish firms, 98 Danish municipalities and associated field actors responded to Facebook in the period 2007-2015. Paper 4 employs a process perspective by studying how BlueTech responded to social media innovation in the period 2011-2015.

Paper 2 and especially paper 4 empirically illustrate and conceptualize how one stage in a social media innovation process gives way to another, and how actors and discourses are at play in these change processes. Further, paper 4 contributes to process studies by showing that while one stage might give way to another stage, the former may continue its specific change mode. The thesis thus confirms the presence of both cyclical and recurrent elements in innovation processes (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2006). In line with earlier research contributions on change processes in the realms of Internet innovation, the thesis argues for the importance of conceptualizing the simultaneous presence of multiple change modes (Nielsen, 2008). The three stages in Figure 5 should thus be understood as both distinct change modes, and as a sequence of such innovation change modes, in other words as process components (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004)

In paper 2 it is a central finding that formal adoption of Facebook not necessarily leads to implementation of routinized practices. In paper 4 this result is extended in the central finding that even implementation of Facebook practices not necessarily represents an institutionalization of these same practices. Based on these findings, the thesis questions if social media functions as an organizing vision in the sense described by Swanson and

Ramiller in their seminal article (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The thesis therefore asks if social media rather resembles an Airline Magazine Syndrome (Ramiller, 2001a), that is, a vision or discourse of exaggeration that perhaps fuels practice understood as mobilization, but does not facilitate legitimation. In reading Figure 5, it is thus important that stage 3 is not understood as a stage of institutionalization, but only as a stage of formalized organizational practice.

By pointing to the difference between implementation and institutionalization in how formal organizations respond to social media innovation, the thesis intervenes in a longtime conversation in process studies, expressed through the dictum of ‘necessary, but not sufficient’ (Markus & Robey, 1988). More recently, institutional scholars drawing on rhetorical perspectives have cautioned against conflating diffusion of innovations with institutionalization. More precisely, these scholars have cautioned against institutional accounts that conceive legitimation as a result of prior adoption (Green, 2004). In line with such perspectives, the rhetorical analysis in this thesis conceive legitimation and institutionalization not as an effect, but as a process, that is, as an active and ongoing organizational discourse brought about by the participating actors. This leads us to the question of how the thesis contributes to conceive causal agency in the context of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

Third and finally, the thesis theorizes how formal organizations respond to social media innovation by addressing the seminal theoretical issue of causal agency (Boudreau & Robey, 2005; Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007; Markus & Robey, 1988). Drawing on the organizing vision literature, the thesis frames causal agency as an interplay between practice and discursive elements (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997). The thesis contributes to rhetorical institutionalism (Green & Li, 2011), in particular rhetorical perspectives in the organizing vision literature (Ramiller, 2001a, 2001b, 2006) and rhetoric applied to social media innovation (Barrett, Heracleous, & Walsham, 2013; Huang, Baptista, & Galliers, 2013; Miranda, Kim, & Summers, 2015).

Paper 2 investigates the discrepancy between the Facebook hype and the daily realities of posting on Facebook among the 100 largest Danish firms and 98 Danish municipalities by analyzing how mobilization and legitimation (Wang & Swanson, 2007), that is, practice and discourse, are characterized by both direction and counter-direction. Most

strikingly, this study identifies an almost separation of the social media entrepreneur community and institutional actors employing a discourse in favor of already institutionalized practices. In comparison to former contributions on agency and entrepreneurship, for example DiMaggio (1988) and Boudreau and Robey (2005), this thesis not only include the practice dimension, but demonstrate the importance of focusing on the interplay between practice and discourse by analyzing how actors use rhetoric to navigate the inherent contradictions in the context of social media innovation.

Paper 4 focuses on this interplay by analyzing how actors who participate in changes in social media practices continuously strive to make sense of these changes by addressing them through a means-ends discourse. More specifically, paper 4 shows how involved actors unanimously employ rhetoric of implementability and accomplishment throughout these changes. As a consequence, these actors appear not to provide a legitimizing discourse arguing why the corporation's participation in this social media innovation is 'the right thing to do'. In the context of formal organizations, paper 4 in particular indicates that contradictions in the foundation of innovations appear to result in a predominance of means-ends hyperbole rhetoric (Ramiller, 2006). Instead of providing legitimacy and in order to compensate for true rationality (Alvesson, 1993), it seems that the participants through figures of implementability and accomplishment construct a narrative of control as an attempt to overcome inherent contradictions in social media innovation. Figure 5 shows how such a means-ends discourse throughout the change processes function as a predominant response to social media innovation. By applying these rhetorical perspectives on the contrasts between the daily social practices and the discourse about these same practices by the involved actors, the thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of causal agency in the context of how formal organizations respond to social media innovation.

### *Implications for practice*

Similar to an organizing vision, the analytical frameworks in the thesis can facilitate practitioners in how they respond to social media innovation. These frameworks have a built-in conceptual knowledge and can as such contribute to practice, that is, merely by facilitating practice, and not by giving specific advice.

Paper 2 unfolds the concept of institutional entrepreneurs and the concepts of mobilization and legitimation (Wang & Swanson, 2007). For practitioners this can facilitate

an analysis of the players in the organizational field. That is to identify players that constitute an organizational field of social media, and how these players participate in producing social media as organizing vision, alternatively a discourse that may resemble an airline magazine syndrome. Table 2 in paper 2 that shows institutional actors and actions can work as a practical guide and inspiration for such an analysis. The analytical framework of mobilization and legitimation can work to facilitate an analysis of leadership, resource allocation, cognitive coherence and social success stories. It is important to be aware of both elements that point in direction of institutionalization, and elements that indicate counter-direction or deviation. Table 3 in paper 2 that shows elements of mobilization and legitimation can facilitate this analysis.

Paper 3 provides a dialectical concept of contradictory organizational consequences of information technology (Robey & Boudreau, 1999). It can facilitate an analysis of which contradictions that are at play in social media practices within an organization. It points to contradictions between proprietary IT platforms and social media, contradictions between central governance and local initiatives, and contradictions between service administration and community feeling. Figure 1 in paper 3 shows these lines of contradiction and may work as a source of inspiration for an analysis of unique organizational circumstances.

Paper 4 presents the process frameworks from the organizing vision literature (Swanson & Ramiller, 1997, 2004). The process components comprehension, adoption, implementation and assimilation can facilitate an analysis of how social media innovation processes are carried out over time. Furthermore, the concepts of interpretation, legitimation and mobilization can grasp exploratory and experimenting dimensions in change processes. Table 2 in paper 4 furthermore depicts three stages, corresponding actors, and contradictions; all adapted to a social media innovation process within the context of a formal organization. Therefore this may especially be relevant as an analytical framework for managers. Finally, the rhetoric frameworks may help practitioners to analyze how participants make sense of social media innovation, and how this rhetorical navigation is embedded in larger institutional settings. The persuasion modes *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* (Barrett et al., 2013) may in particular facilitate an analysis of whether instrumental practices become institutionalized.

### *Critical reflections and suggestions for future research*

In this thesis I have taken steps to analyze how business media, consultancies, and technology vendor promote social media. A quick search in the broad scholarly database Scopus indicates that in comparison to industry discourse on social media, we as scholars are nearly as prone to chase innovation fads (Ramiller, 2006). While exaggeration, hype and buzz may function as important and necessary drivers in early stages of information systems innovation (Swanson and Ramiller, 1997), the drawback may be suppression of history, context and incongruent interests (Ramiller, 2001). In order to avoid such acculturation (Barley, Gordon, & Gash, 1988) or rhetorical closure (Pinch & Bijker, 1984), we therefore need to give critical attention to our own research discourse on social media innovation. In order to nurture this critical attention and to avoid the pitfalls of industry and media exaggeration, I suggest that future research draws on the insights of rhetorical institutionalism.

Looking forward, the findings in the thesis indicate that we should not conflate widespread functional feasibility with thorough institutionalization processes. Neither should we neglect the potentials of multiple sense making modes in how formal organizations respond to social media innovation. What happens in the process and in the multi-level interactions is thus best understood as emergent actions and events beyond predictability. In the light of the predominance of variance studies based on surveys and experiments in recent research on social media, I suggest future research to prioritize longitudinal process studies that explore how actors, events and meaning change over time. The studies of LargeMuni and BlueTech in paper 3 and 4 suggests further micro foundational studies by drawing on rhetorical perspectives. The study of the 100 largest Danish firms and 98 Danish municipalities in paper 2 however also indicates that alliances between technology vendors, business media and consultancies play a major role in the mobilization and legitimation of social media, and therefore the relevance of conducting macro studies of social media innovation that focus on these institutional players. In combination such micro and macro studies can explore the intricate interplay between diffusion and institutionalization of social media, and thereby further the work conducted in this thesis on how formal organizations respond to social media.

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