Workplace Democracy and the Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Corporate Workplace

By

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DECLARATION

Name of candidate: Alexander Danne

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled "**Workplace Democracy and the Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Corporate Workplace**" is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of **Master of International Communication**

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;

- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: **2014-1089**

Candidate Signature: ....Date: **15 April 2015**

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Abstract

This study presents qualitative research that investigates the impact of social media in the corporate environment by examining two case studies located in the corporate economic sector in Auckland, New Zealand. While recognising the challenges of democracy in the workplace, this research focuses on how social media can enable workplace democracy as well as participation within organisations.

In order for this research to investigate the role of contemporary networked communication tools and their possible impact on enabling workplace democracy, the study reflects on policy documents, such as codes of conduct and social media guidelines, and their involvement towards a democratic workplace. Further, this research examines how networked communication tools are being incorporated into the workplace and analyses what aspects of the workplace internal communication practices can be understood as democratising.

This study uses methodological triangulation within methods by employing content analysis, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Two case studies in the corporate economic sector were selected in order to collect relevant data and answer the research questions.

The findings of this study indicate that both organisations have a hierarchical internal makeup, which is heavily based on policies, guidelines and top-down communication structures. Internal communication tools are deeply embedded in the communication culture of the organisations and it seems that employers use such tools with a different perspective and understanding than employees. Further, the research reveals an ambiguity in dealing with new networked communication tools and outlines difficulties within the implementation process. Generational gaps, ineffectiveness and lack of integration of new workplace communication tools for employees make implementation difficult.

The findings from this research suggest that although internal social media has great potential in creating a democratic environment, it can be considered as a supportive tool for democratic participation at best. It can be concluded that internal social media cannot create a democratic culture, but it can help an already established democratic work environment to flourish by facilitating knowledge bases and connecting employees to a professional network.

Dedication

To my loving parents;

for their never ending trust, faith and love

To Catherine Mitchell;

for her astonishing pool of knowledge, kindness and patience

To Maxine Brayshaw;

for her voice of reason and endurance

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"Philosophers of democracy such as John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century and John Dewey in the twentieth century have emphasized that the implications of democracy for human development are immensely increased if it is practiced 'for the greater part of the waking hours of the day,' that is, in the workplace, and not only in a vote cast every few years."

(Ellerman, 2010, p. 348)

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This study explores the role of internal communication tools, in particular, internal social media, and its potential impact on employee engagement and workplace democracy in an organisational context. Workplace democracy is understood as a connection between the employee and the workplace. In order to achieve democracy, the workplace needs to provide opportunities for staff to engage with it beyond the actual work. Furthermore, the employee needs to participate throughout the working environment and claim responsibility. In light of this, this research aims to better understand the relationship between social media and the workplace in order to have a positive impact on the workplace itself.

This study has three objectives: firstly, to identify ways in which contemporary communication technology is being incorporated into corporate practice and explore the effects of these changes on the workplace; secondly, to provide useful insights into how both managers and corporate workforces can incorporate new communication technology into their work; and thirdly, to put forward a well-developed concept of employee participation, motivation, and workplace communication.

1.1 Rationale and Purpose

In the 1990s, the internet became available for the public and revolutionised the way in which society communicated. It enabled individual members of the public to have conversations with large groups of people; audiences gained the opportunity to become producers. Although traditional media specifically distinguishes between sender (journalist) and receiver (society) in a one-to-many communication structure, social media and the internet change that pattern to a many-to-many structure which enables the receiver to become the producer in a unique network (Shirky, 2009).

Change in communication in the public sphere triggers change in other areas, such as democracy, on a greater scale. The understanding of democracy is shifting with technological development and there is a growing need to talk about democracy and, in particular, workplace democracy (Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy, 2013; Ellerman, 2010). The corporate workplace has become more and more important as a place in which to practice democratic values, because society spends more than 50 percent of its collective waking hours there, and because practicing democracy there supports the overall ideal of democracy itself (Center for Workplace Democracy, 2013). The literature identifies a gap in the understanding about social media and contemporary workplace democracy, so this study therefore focuses on that area.

This study concentrates on two case studies in Auckland, New Zealand. Both case studies are of multi-national corporate organisations in the economic sector. The organisations were chosen because they are large, international workplaces in the corporate environment which have both recently engaged in using social media for internal communication. Internal social media is a platform, exclusively available for an organisation, which performs communication functions, such as forming groups or communities, creating feedback circles, and starting individual networks. These functions are modelled after those of existing external social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn*. One of the organisations introduced internal social media in 2014 (six months prior to the study) and the other will implement it in early

2015. For the sake of confidentiality, both organisations are anonymous throughout this study.

1.2 Background

Democracy is the foundation for the majority of governments in the Western world (United Nations, 2013). Democratic values, such as the practice of human rights and free speech, are exercised within the public sphere (Habermas, 1990; Steininger, 2007), a space for the public to interact in. Due to technological developments, including media, social media and communication networks, the way in which democracy is practiced and understood in the public sphere has been significantly changing (Habermas, 1989; Hoskins, 2013). The pace of that change has increased exponentially with technological progress and it has become ever more difficult to maintain democratic values – at least, in the ways that those values have been traditionally understood (Auger, 2013; Ellerman, 2000a). In the context of such significant change, it is important to reflect on how democratic values are to be translated and practiced in the contemporary public sphere so that they are protected even as change continues. The workplace is affected by changes in the public sphere and technology. Moreover, through globalisation and capital power, global corporations influence some workplaces. Therefore, the reflection on how democratic values are practiced needs to include the workplace, and this study will focus on it.

The concept of democracy is bound up with those of globalisation, capitalism, and the development of technology. Scholars argue that Marshall McLuhan's metaphorical "global village" has arrived with the emergence of technologies such as the internet (Ess, 2001; McLuhan & Powers, 1989). However, the supposedly global electronic village where everyone is connected through multimedia networks in fact excludes a significant part of the world (Ess, 2001). Furthermore, through the use of one shared tool, the internet, such a village can override different cultures, different understandings, and the generally different approaches to an economic, socially-constructed world. This tool can be used to distribute knowledge, but, at the same

time, might override the deliberate choice to remain silent. For example, a recent issue (17 January 2015) of *The Economist* contained an article about the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*, a French caricature magazine, which dealt with Islam. *The Economist* is an internationally-distributed magazine and has editorial offices throughout the world. The office in Singapore decided not to print the whole article, and *The Economist* replaced one page with this note: "*Missing page – in most of our editions, this page included a picture showing the current cover of* Charlie Hebdo. *Our Singapore printers declined to print it. If you want to see the page online, please go to: Economist.com/missingpage*" (The Economist Briefing, 2015). Despite the Singapore office's decision not to publish the whole article, anyone with internet access could access it anyway. This example demonstrates what Ess and Sudweeks (2001) mean when they argue that globalisation, in actual fact, means an economically shared market ruled by dominant powers. In this case, the dominant headquarters in London, Great Britain distributes the magazine throughout the world and overrides the decisions of the Singapore office by providing a copy of the whole article online.

This example demonstrates the power of multinational corporates to influence the workplace. In this case, the Singaporean editorial office of *The Economist* was overruled by European ideals and policies. Another reason for the discussion on democratic values in contemporary capitalistic society to include the workplace is because, as mentioned above, large amounts of time and energy are spent there under the rule of its peculiar authorities (Osawa, 2011).

Also, as previously mentioned, globalisation has a deep impact on the concept of democracy and the workplace. The effect of globalisation can be described as the creation of a wider public space in which public opinions can be formed, discussed, and developed (McKee, 2005). Habermas (1989) describes the notion of a global coffee house in which society can come together regardless of the rank or status of its members to discuss politics, economics, and general change. Although the idea of a global coffee house is rather idealistic, globalisation does expand people's

opportunities to come together in a global space. In particular, social media has enormous potential to unite communities and facilitate their acknowledgment of basic human rights. On the other hand, globalisation shifts power from the nation-state to capitalist corporations. *Google* is already worth more than the entire Russian stock exchange (*Google*: US$340 billion, Russia: US$325 billion) (Griffin, 2014), and technology firms such as *Apple*, *Amazon*, *Facebook*, *Google*, and *Twitter* made investments worth US$66 billion in 2014 (The Economist Business, 2014), indicating that they are still growing. Concerningly, international corporations are not known for their democratic approach to conducting business. The debate over the positive and negative effects of globalisation is ongoing. However, the discussion itself is evidence of social change and, therefore, it is necessary to rethink familiar ways of practicing democracy while still applying its core values. The immense capital power of international corporations demonstrates the importance of an emphasis on the workplace while discussing concepts such as democracy. Therefore, this research focuses on workplace democracy.

There has been keen academic interest in the relationship between globalisation, democracy, and the workplace. Scholte (2014) focuses on the term "global democracy", which espouses the value of democracy practiced across physical borders. He argues that "*global democracy is best achieved through multilateral collaboration among democratic nation-states*" (Scholte, 2014, p. 4). Although multilateral collaboration might facilitate democracy, Wilson (2011) argues that corporate businesses are incapable of being responsible to people in a long-term, sustainable way. He claims that the protection of workers' rights depends on the labour movement (Wilson, 2011). Such movements, mostly represented by labour unions, understand democracy as a collective right. Eschenbach-Barker (2011) argues that this purely collective understanding of democracy is outdated. She claims individual rights in relation to democracy are as important as any collective understanding. She connects the practice of these individual democratic rights to the workplace and argues that corporates have been unable to address either collective or individual democracy in the past (1970). Even if corporations become more

capable of addressing workplace democracy over time, they may not necessarily do so. After all, democracy remains a Western concept, which keeps power among transnational corporations and can exclude, for example, citizens affected by the digital divide [1] and therefore not technologically savvy (Rodríguez, 2004). Consequently, it becomes more and more important to analyse how global corporations address workplace democracy.

1.3 Research Questions

This study explores the role of networked communication tools in the processes of organisational internal communication. The fast changes in technology and communication networks have been impacting the practice and understanding of workplace democracy. Furthermore, globalisation has been shifting power from the nation-state to the corporate workplace, which has also been changing some of the familiar ways of practicing democracy. Taking into account these changes, the following research question and sub-questions are formulated:

What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?

Sub-questions:

1. *How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*

2. *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

3. *What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*

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[1] Digital Divide = "*A term that describes the division of the world into two camps, those who have access to the internet and other advanced information technologies and those who don't. The term highlights the issue that those who do not have access to such technology are potentially destined to futures where they will be at an economic disadvantage*" (The American Heritage, 2015a).

1.4 Research Design

This study applies a qualitative research methodology. It takes two organisations operating in the economic sector as case studies in order to investigate democracy in the workplace and analyse the impact of social media there in order to answer the research questions.

This research project employs three data collection methods for both case studies. Firstly, content analysis is used to examine official documents, such as the codes of conduct and ethics. Secondly, in-depth interviews are used to investigate internal communication, social media, and workplace democracy within the organisations from a management perspective. Thirdly, focus groups are used to investigate these three topics from an employee perspective. The method used to analyse and interpret the findings is qualitative content analysis after Schreier's (2014) and Mayring's (2010) models.

1.5 Case Studies

This research constitutes two case studies in the economic sector. Both organisations were chosen because of their scale of internal communication, availability for the research, and interest in social media. For the sake of confidentiality, both organisations will remain anonymous.

The New Zealand headquarters of both organisations are in Auckland. This study concentrates on the headquarters in order to interview management and find employees to participate in the focus group. Employees in other offices and service centre staff are not included in the research. The interviews, with three managers from each organisation (four single interviews and one double interview), were arranged in the interviewees' offices in December 2014. The focus groups were held for each participating organisation in January 2015. Organisation One had four focus group participants and Organisation Two, five. At the time of the field research, Organisation One had not yet launched internal social media, but had sophisticated

plans to do so in early 2015. Organisation Two had launched internal social media, including community groups, six months prior to the study.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into six chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Design, Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion. A short summary of each chapter follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

The introduction overviews the research project and outlines the structure of the thesis. The introduction covers rationale and purpose, research questions, operational definitions, methodological approach, research locations, and this thesis structure summary.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review explores the concept of workplace democracy under the conditions of globalisation with the focus on employee participation and social media. The review is organised around three themes: firstly, a short historical analysis of democracy, secondly, an exploration of the term "workplace democracy" within the organisational environment, and, thirdly, an analysis of participation, social media, and the potential of both to facilitate workplace democracy.

Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter describes the research design, including the research tradition and paradigm to which it belongs. It also addresses the issue of credibility. Furthermore, the methodological approach is explained, including data collection methods, sampling, and data analysis. This chapter contains additional sections on limitations and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Findings

The findings section presents the outcomes of five interviews and two focus groups. The results are structured according to the themes developed in the literature review, the categories which emerged through the content analysis, by organisation, and, lastly, by method used. Main findings are summarised for the subsequent discussion.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The discussion chapter organises the arguments by emergent themes, followed by a comparison of the two case studies. The discussion ends with insights into workplace democracy and social media in the contemporary workplace in regards to relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the entire research project and highlights outstanding outcomes. Chapter Six also includes sections on the limitations of the research, some suggestions for further research, and a comment from the researcher.

In summary, this research project explores the role of internal social media tools in an organisational context with a focus on workplace democracy and employee participation. It is a qualitative study and employs content analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus groups in both of its case studies in order to answer its research questions. The main question, '*What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?*', is supplemented by three sub-questions focusing on policy documents, networked communication tools, general communication practices, and the impact of each on workplace democracy. The findings of this research are presented in a thematically structured way and the outcomes are discussed according to emerging themes.

"We are twenty-first century citizens doing our very, very best to interact with

nineteenth century designed institutions that are

based on information technology of the fifteenth century."

(Mancini, 2014, 0:36)

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The literature review focuses on processes of workplace democratisation. Primarily the review is concerned with workplace democracy, social media and participation in the working environment. The review has four main themes, which elaborate on the topic, beginning with a short historical analysis of workplace democracy and its impact on today's society. In the second part, the term 'workplace democracy' is explored. In the third part, participation and social media are analysed and their potential to foster workplace democracy discussed. In the final part, workplace democracy is examined from an organisational perspective.

2.1 Workplace Democracy – A Historical Review

Workplace democracy is a concept based on the history and understanding of democracy itself. In this section the historical development of workplace democratic concepts is briefly outlined by examining the liberal tradition (18th century), the socialist tradition (19th and 20th centuries), and modern political theory (21st century).

In the liberal tradition, democracy is understood as decision-making by majority rule with a link to the liberation and emancipation of the individual, which entails the idea that all human beings are equal and free (Pausch, 2013). John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated this ideal in the 18th century, speaking of the *social contract*, with the understanding that democracy is much more than equal political rights. It implies that "*no citizen shall ever be wealthy enough to buy another, and none poor enough to be forced to sell* [herself or] *himself*" (Rousseau, 1988, p. 55). The principle that every human being is equal and free is central to liberal philosophy.

The liberal tradition understands democratic participation as a general attribute throughout social relations that is not limited to the political sphere (Pausch, 2013). This means that, in its acknowledgment of the individual, democracy reaches beyond the political arena, including the workplace. Therefore, "*a first argument for workplace democracy can thus be taken from liberal democratic thinkers. In their view, democracy is more than just a method of governing. It includes and promotes individual freedom and self-government and is closely linked to education and empowerment in all social fields*" (Pausch, 2013, p. 5). However, the liberal tradition might enable individual freedom and self-governance, but Ellerman (2000a) argues that the liberal perspective on democracy in modern times is easily misunderstood. He claims that some members of society understand consent decision-making as sufficient enough to enable a system to be democratic.

The socialist tradition, originating in the 19th Century and represented by thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, includes workplace democracy as a direct part of work. While the liberal tradition referred to workplace democracy indirectly by focusing on individual emancipation and self-governance, the socialistic line of argument addresses a capitalistic society which undermines democratic principles by exploiting the working class (Pausch, 2013). Marx and Engels especially focused on class conflict and how to overcome class differences. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, also a social theorist, "*criticized liberal democratic theories for ignoring the conflict between the right of property of the rich and the desire for property of the poor*" (Proudhon as cited in Pausch, 2013, p. 5). However, Ellerman (2000b) argues that competitive capitalism requires efficiency for future markets, including the labour market, which defines a worker as an entity measurable in monetary terms and without human needs. Therefore, it can be said that the socialist tradition misses what Rousseau outlined as democracy is more than equal political rights. Proudhon's efforts resulted, in the 19th century, in the formation of the first trade and labour unions. In terms of workplace democracy, unions represented workers' legal voice and promoted their rights through collective bargaining. Such methods became a

common approach to the relationship between employers and employees especially in the 20th century following the Second World War.

The 21st century, the third time period outlined by Pausch (2013), influenced workplace democracy significantly. Industrialisation gave worker unions room to fight for workers' rights and lead to further critiquing of capitalism in the 1960s. Over the last 60 years, the concept of workplace democracy has developed significantly (Kester, 2007). However, with the development of supra-national institutions such as the European Union and the World Trade Organisation in the 1990s and with globalisation starting to encroach on national business and societal relations, groups such as worker unions or concepts like workplace democracy became much more difficult to implement into the working environment (Pausch, 2013). Furthermore, the fast-paced development of technology, especially in the field of communication, has had a major impact on the practice of workplace democracy (Remtulla, 2007).

The 21st century is a time of technology and globalisation, and this is changing the understanding of the workplace on a large scale once again (Kent, 2014). Although communication technological developments might not be understood as a revolution like that of the 18th century, the development of media has changed enough to revolutionise (Shirky, 2009), beginning with the printing press in the 14th century, followed by the telegraph (two way communication over distance) 200 years ago. Recorded media, such as photographs 150 years ago and the radio and television (electromagnetic spectrum) 100 years ago demonstrate the innovative character and fast- paced nature of the technological development (Shirky, 2009). By the time new concepts of technology and workplace democracy are ready to be implemented into the working environment, they are out of date. (Green & South, 2006). Simultaneously to the development of supra-national institutions, unions began to lose their impact on workers' rights and failed to organise supra-national resistance (Pausch, 2013).

In summary, the liberal tradition of the 18th century, represented by philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau, promotes individual freedom and self-governance, understanding humans to be equal and free, and democratic participation as a holistic attitude. Workplace democracy is not specifically conceptualised, but indirectly included in the overall concept of democracy. The socialist tradition, represented by theorists such as Marx and Engels, puts the concept in the context of capitalism. In the general market, workers are defined as a measurable entity, which seems contradictory to Rousseau's initial idea of the social contract. Workplace democracy is sometimes practiced through worker and labour unions, which begun to develop within the socialist tradition in the 19th and 20th centuries. Over the course of industrialisation, worker and labour unions flourished. However, in the next phase of history, the advent of globalisation and supra-national organisations, unions lost their power. Communication technology has had a major impact on workplace democracy and develops with such speed that is difficult for the working environment to adapt in time. However, this study needs to be built on an understanding of workplace democracy in the contemporary workplace in order to be credible and relevant. Therefore, the following section will describe the concept of workplace democracy as it is understood in this project.

2.2 Workplace Democracy – A Definition

The scholarly literature on communication provides a variety of contested definitions that describe workplace democracy, but no single definition that fully encompasses the complexity of the term. However, academics in the fields of communication, workplace democracy, economics, and general social science (Cheney, 1995; Consolini, 2013; Ellerman, 2000a, 2000b; Fenton, 2012) have done significant work and found themes of workplace democracy that illuminate its key conceptual foundation, which is outlined in the following paragraphs.

In this research, workplace democracy is understood as a connection between the employee and the workplace (Fenton, 2013). In order to achieve democracy, the business needs to provide opportunities for staff to engage with the workplace

beyond the actual work (Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy, 2013). Furthermore, the employee needs to participate throughout the working environment and claim responsibility (Ellerman, 2000a). Autonomy is also a part of workplace democracy, as it has a significant effect on overall job satisfaction (Gallie, 2013). From the employers' perspective, productivity is important as well as efficiency. Lansbury (2009) argues that workplace democracy involves sharing influence and that power strengthens the motivation of those involved, thus enhancing productivity. Although an employee might not agree with the management's every decision, if s/he is consulted in the process, s/he is more likely to accept them (Lansbury, 2009), and workplace democracy means to include the employee in the decision making process (Fenton, 2014).

This research understands workplace democracy as having the following five key elements: firstly, the empowerment of workers to have meaningful input into the conditions and strategic direction of their work and of the organisation itself (Williamson, 2004); secondly, ongoing participation by all workers (Rolfsen, 2011); thirdly, the opportunity for employees to stake out a more independent field of work and claim responsibility for it (Ellerman, 2000a; Fenton, 2014); fourthly, the opportunity for workers to contribute towards the organisation beyond the scope of direct work, perhaps through cooperatives (Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy, 2013), employee stock ownership (Consolini, 2013), or another kind of direct participation (not that it is necessary for the employees to be shareholders in order for a workplace to be democratic) (Williamson, 2004); and, fifthly, network orientation, which is an essential tool for organising workers and directing their power towards specific goals (Kokkinidis, 2012; Peetz & Pocock, 2009) and towards equality (Consolini, 2013). Similarly, Fenton (2013) argues that democratic leadership focuses on creating meaningful work, engaging in dialogues and network bases, and emphasising leadership rather than management. Nevertheless, since such a list of elements of workplace democracy describes an ideal situation, it neglects the often highly divergent nature of employees' and employers' interests.

In summary, this study understands workplace democracy as connection between the employee and her/his work. Participation, motivation, and autonomy are essential factors for both employer and employee establishing a democratic working environment. In addition, the following five key elements for workplace democracy are identified: empowerment of employees, ongoing participation, claim over responsibility, contribution towards the workplace, and network orientation. In all the definitions of workplace democracy, the theme of participation also emerged. Therefore, the following paragraphs discuss participation in the workplace.

2.3 Participation

The literature identifies a variety of forms of participation in workplace democracy. It can be defined as joint decision-making processes (Consolini, 2013) or as employees' stock ownership (Williamson, 2004). However, in many definitions of democracy, participation is essential for its initial establishment and maintenance (Fenton, 2013). Moore (1998) describes participation as one of four conditions besides deliberation, political equality, and non-tyranny, all necessary for democracy to exist in the first place. Regardless of the form of participation, participation is absolutely necessary in order for workplace democracy to prosper and for organisations to thereby garner the benefits of increased motivation and productivity (Holtzhausen, 2002). Rolfsen (2011) puts forward the idea that workplace democracy in terms of co-construction of management can be initiated by dialogue and participation. She states that a lack of enthusiasm and problem-solving in the workplace is directly connected to a lack of co-construction of management concepts. Co-construction of management means a leadership concept based on dialogue and participation itself (ibid).

In addition, other studies point to the importance of communication to benefit organisations and work environments and motivate workers (Cheney, 1995; Guowei & Jeffres, 2008). Teamwork can be one way of initiating changes at the management level and encouraging participation. Through dialogue between groups and surroundings (the organisation itself), co-construction can be carried out and the management process influenced (Rolfsen, 2011).

In democratic environments, communication is the common element of participation, democracy, decision-making, and the organisation (Holtzhausen, 2002). Cheney (1995) argues that democracy and participation are special forms of communication, which can enhance workplace democracy. However, communication and participation are not enough to engage people in a democratic work environment. The overall rules and structures need to change and lower levels of workers need to be empowered by the organisation itself. Communication structures can facilitate the change (Deetz, 1992), and the connection between communication and participation is the power of knowledge. Once employees learn about the workplace, they are able to participate towards the overall goal of the organisation (Holtzhausen, 2002). Hierarchical systems have a centralised information structure and are considered undemocratic (Deetz, 1992). A communication structure that allows a decentralised information pattern can be considered as one way of enabling participation and being democratic. The more information an organisation provides, the greater the likelihood of better-informed employees taking more opportunities for power=sharing and participation. This may increase job satisfaction and motivation, in turn increasing productivity (Holtzhausen, 2002).

In summary, participation can be understood as important for democracy, especially workplace democracy. This study defines participation as joint decision-making processes and/or employee stock ownership, either of which enables the worker to influence the workplace. Co-construction is one form of management which allows participation and communication and can reinforce workplace democracy. Between communication and participation, the literature identifies general knowledge about the workplace as the link. Therefore, it can be said that the distribution of knowledge can lead to participation and, hence, to co-construction of management, which may, in turn, result in workplace democracy. This process is glued together by communication. The next section will look at social media as a specific form of communication in the workplace.

2.4 Social Media

Alongside connection and participation, the literature on workplace democracy pays attention to communication tools facilitated through online platforms, such as social media (Hoskins, 2013) (see also (Auger, 2013; Mellado & Lagos, 2013; Remtulla, 2007)). Hoskins (2013) describes social media, including networking, as a new public sphere with additional opportunities for participation. The following paragraphs will explore these ideas.

Hoskins (2013) and Habermas (1989) apply the concept of the public sphere so as to marry democracy with society in order to create a space to form public opinion and democratic action. The public itself is a constructed frame that holds society together (Steininger, 2007). In theory every member of society has the option of participating within the public sphere, but the public remains technically separated into different communication platforms (channels) or networks. Habermas' concept of the public sphere refers to a contained place where public opinions can be discussed and formed. It is supposed to be an environment free of hierarchy and power, accessible to every citizen (Habermas, 1990). This metaphor is an idealistic, normative way of thinking about a society and its reflection on its issues and community (McKee, 2005). Discussion within a sphere can form a realm of influence (Cox, 2006), which Habermas (1989) describes as a *coffee house* setting. In this understanding, the term 'public' refers to society as a whole (Roberts, 2009) and is, therefore, tied to changes in that society. This study focuses on the change brought by the development of communications technology (social media) as it affects the perception of workplace democracy.

Auger (2013) argues that social media is an important tool for giving people a voice so that they can contribute to the democratic environment. Auger argues that social media is a unique tool because it allows two-way communication and is, therefore, more advanced than traditional media. Remtulla (2007) continues and argues that new technologies including social media create a knowledge-based economy and

because of this in combination with globalisation, both democracy and the workplace need to be redefined and nurtured.

Social media in the workplace, as a technically advanced communication tool (through establishing an individual network and connecting with many different people at once), enables employees to talk and think more freely (Ley, 2013). However, academics are not yet certain whether it is beneficial or disadvantageous for democracy in the workplace (Kent, 2013). Lee (2013) argues that motivation and interest are more important for democracy than the availability of digital technology, and that social media only engages already motivated people. Lack of understanding of new technologies including social media on the part of users and the adoption of these tools by marketing experts may lead to less democratic awareness (Kent, 2013). The significant effect of social media on democracy is led by the varied interest of a few users (Gazali, 2014). This means that, although social media may help employees to organise themselves, it is simply another tool that can be used either for or against a democratic environment. There is a significant danger when employees think that social media is democratic, while in fact it simply echoes already-existing opinions. A benefiting factor for workplace democracy is, as previously mentioned, participation (Fenton, 2013) and the internet, in particular social media, might help to engage employees and support participation. However, social media remains as a tool that may or may not aid democracy.

The role of social media in the workplace is, as mentioned, not certain. However, social media does change the media industry and, thus, media-related workplaces (Storr, 2014). Scholars (Gazali, 2014; Laskowska, 2014; Storr, 2014) identify two major concerns about social media and democracy in the Western world. Firstly, the profit-driven background of social media and, secondly, the homogenisation of its content. In other words, while social media has great potential to support workers in the workplace, it does not necessarily bring about democracy right away. Thus, there is danger in oversimplifying freedom of speech as practiced through social media, as if it were a direct indicator of democracy. Participation is indeed a key factor for

democracy in the workplace, and social media might allow employees to engage in dialogue and participate, but change still requires time and motivation (Gillespie, 2013).

In summary, networked communication tools such as social media can function as a new 'public sphere' for employees. On the one hand, social media gives users a voice, a two-way communication platform, and a network that can be used to connect with others and exchange knowledge. On the other hand, use of social media is often lead by only a few people; though it might help to maintain participation, it rarely initiates it, and it is dangerous to understand it as a tool of immediate democratisation. It might be used to facilitate democracy, but academics are still not certain whether or not it is beneficial for workplace democracy. Motivation and interest are the key factors for democracy, and social media can echo already-existing options or mirror the established workplace. In order to understand workplace democracy as a full concept, the next section illuminates workplace democracy from an organisational perspective.

2.5 Workplace Democracy from an Organisational Perspective

Scholars have a variety of interests in exploring the concept of workplace democracy in organisations. Some are: González-Ricoy (2014) distinguishes workplace democracy from workplace constitutionalism, which is a part of workplace democracy but excludes active participation; Osawa (2011) concentrates on the conflict between liberal and capitalistic environments and between individual freedom and workplace hierarchy; Hazarika (2013) argues that taking Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) might be a way to achieve workplace democracy in organisations; Jian and Jeffers (2008) research political involvement in association with workplace participation, while Shapre and Mir (2009) analyse the tensions between organisational productivity and worker authority in connection with both workplace democracy and efficiency.

All this research understands workplace democracy in organisations primarily in two ways. Firstly, it is seen as a conflict between employers and employees (Hazarika, 2013) which manifests itself in an argument over efficiency and productivity; this argument is pursued by identifying employees as merely an input into business operations, and not seeing employees' needs beyond remuneration. While employers typically focus on the performance of their businesses, mainly in terms of creating more profit, employees might focus on, for example, individual development, interest, and overall happiness (Fenton, 2014). Conflict arises based on the assumption that the interests of employers and employees are opposed to each other (Hazarika, 2013). Lansbury (2009), on the other hand, argues that workplace democracy (recognising employees' needs) can be very efficient if it is practised well. He argues that participatory processes might be even more efficient because, through the involvement of a wider range of workers, more information can be shared and the best decision possible can be made. Furthermore, as mentioned, participatory processes include workers in the decision-making process such that greater acceptance is won for those decisions (Lansbury, 2009).

Secondly, other scholars (see Consolini, 2013; Davies, 2012; Kokkinidis, 2012) understand workplace democracy as the implementation of horizontal as opposed to hierarchical working structures in order to distribute power. This approach sees democracy in the original sense of the Greek term: a concept of "*rule by the people*" (Fenton, 2013), and describes the understanding of workplace democracy as a shared decision-making process (Kokkinidis, 2012). However, the literature, on management especially, is filled with major works that cover various terms and aspects of democracy, but many merely refer to the same concept, that of shared decision-making (Kokkinidis, 2012). Although the management literature uses words such as democracy, shared decision-making, and equality, management theorists understand these concepts uncritically. Arguably, these words are mainly used by employers for rhetorical reasons to control organisational behaviour and predict employees' decision-making processes (Willmott, 1993; Yates, Lewchuk, & Stewart, 2001).

A number of scholars from the management literature have come to the conclusion that the keys to workplace democracy are participation and active engagement in the decision-making process (Abrams, 2005; Tapscott, 2009; Wolff, 2012). Some scholars label the process of participatory decision-making "impracticable" and point instead to representative, rather than participatory forms of democracy (Kokkinidis, 2012). On the other hand Kokkinidis (2012) argues that these representative forms are just another type of hierarchical work structure, since employers cannot influence such structures easily and continue to exert their managerial control. Lansbury (2009) suggests a horizontal working structure, which is open to decentralisation of power, participation, and diversity and changes in general, and can be highly efficient and profitable by engaging workers with the workplace, which increases productivity. Therefore, a horizontal work structure might be a realistic alternative to the current practice, in which direct and active participation is understood as impractical and where employers and managers use the argument of efficiency to divide power and establish hierarchical relationships. While the concern about productivity is an employer-focused perspective, thinking about participation is an employee-orientated approach to workplace democracy.

In summary, the organisational perspective on workplace democracy can be understood in two ways: as a conflict between employers and employees or as the implementation of a horizontal working structure. In theory, the conflict between employers and employees peaks in the argument over efficiency and productivity, with the underlying assumption that employers' and employees' interests are opposed to each other. The implementation of a horizontal working structure can serve to distribute power, engage with change, and, possibly, increase productivity. Although management literature engages with concepts such as workplace democracy, engagement, and horizontal management, it seems this very literature does not use these terms reflectively. However, despite this, in the literature, the idea of participation was helpfully identified as workplace democracy-enabling, which supports the point from the previous section that participation is a key element of workplace democracy. In order to investigate how organisations may

implement democratic principles in their structure, the next paragraphs focus on modern organisations and their internal structures.

2.6 Democratic Principles in Modern Organisations

When the focus is shifted further towards corporate organisations, the concept of democracy remains similar to that mentioned above, but the depth of understanding and the strategies of implementing democracy in the workplace change. Ringen (2004) suggests that other types of democracy, unlike political democracy, have different implementation mechanisms. However, the basic concept of democracy is similar in both contexts: "*democracy means that members of an organization or society participate in processes of organizing and governance*" (Harrison & Freeman, 2004, p. 49). Among others, Harrison and Freeman (2004) illuminate employee participation as the key that enables democracy in the workplace, which was already outlined above. Although participation and engagement seem to be a consistent workplace democracy enabling theme, compared to political democracy the rules of implementation are different. Yazdani (2010) argues that, for the implementation of democracy in an organisation, three particular factors – structure, leadership type, and environment – are fundamental for successful implementation or improvement. The following paragraphs highlight these three factors.

Firstly, structure: The organisational structure can be defined through an analysis of the organisation's purpose and its environment (Yazdani, 2010). The internal structure of an organisation is influenced by its external, environmental parameters. Stable parameters that are well defined and predictable tend to lead to hierarchical, sharply-defined management with a clear set of rules and procedures. Complex and dynamic parameters, on the other hand, favour a flat hierarchy, vague rules, and changing procedures, because they are flexible and hard to predict (Daft, 2013). Daft (2013) differentiates two major kinds of organisational structure: mechanistic and organic. Mechanistic structures relate to stable parameters and are characterised by sharply-defined tasks broken down into separate parts. Such structures form a very

hierarchical environment with numerous rules and a vertical communication flow. Organic structures on the other hand relate to complex and dynamic parameters and have adjustable tasks. Organic structures utilise a non-hierarchical environment and a horizontal communication flow (Daft, 2013).

There is a growing body of literature on organisational leadership, which outlines the complexity of the topic. Yazdani (2010) puts forward the view that, in regards to workplace democracy, transactional and transformational leadership styles are especially relevant. Transactional leadership is task-oriented and employs a reward strategy to motivate employees. Managers with transactional leadership styles are goal-oriented, work in a well-developed feedback culture, and use arrangements to structure working relationships. Transformational leaders focus on employees and value loyalty as well as trust. A manager in this tradition motivates her/his staff through shared visions and participatory decision-making processes. According to (Daft, 2013) and (Yazdani, 2010) each of these leadership styles favours a particular organisational structure. Transactional leadership favours a mechanistic structure and transformational leadership an organic one.

According to Yazdani (2010), the relationship between an organisation and its operating environment is the third factor that influences the implementation process of democracy in organisations. This specific relationship determines the nature of strategies and processes within an organisation. While task-related effects have specific and direct impacts on an organisation's products, general environmental circumstances such as social trends, political situations and societal norms also have an impact on organisational structure and leadership style. A well-defined environment favours a mechanistic organisational structure and transactional leadership. A more organic structure can address complex and uncertain environments through transformational leadership (Yazdani, 2010).

In summary, corporate organisations have a similar understanding of workplace democracy as is identified above. However, their implementation process for the

concept tends to be different. Three factors important for the implementation process in corporate organisations emerge: organisational structure, leadership, and environment. The structure of organisations can be divided into mechanistic and organic structures. The leadership styles can be transactional or transformational. The third factor, the environment, can be categorised into complex and predictable environments. This characterisation contributes to understanding of those parts and aspects of organisations, such as leadership style, which are central to workplace democracy.

2.7 Summary

In conclusion this literature review has presented a historical analysis of workplace democracy, explored the term "workplace democracy", examined participation and social media in relation to workplace democracy, and discussed the concept from an organisational perspective.

The historical analysis revealed that workplace democracy has roots in the 18th century within a liberal understanding of democracy, which stands for individual freedom and self-governance. The socialist tradition of the 19th and 20th centuries brought the capitalistic spectrum to bear on the concept, which lead to the foundation of worker and labour unions. The 21st century saw the advent of supra-national organisations and technological advancement, which interfered in the power balance between labour unions and organisations. Communication technologies have a major impact on workplace democracy, and this is the underpinning reason for this research.

Workplace democracy is defined as connection between the employee and his/her work, and the following five key elements of workplace democracy were identified: empowerment of employees, ongoing participation, claim over responsibility, contribution towards the workplace, and network orientation.

Throughout the literature review, participation emerged as an essential element for workplace democracy; it is defined as joint decision-making processes and/or employee stock ownership. In this regard, the distribution of general knowledge around the workspace can help employees to participate and, thus, support the co-construction of management. It was discovered that communication, especially by social media, has the capacity to support participation and distribution of knowledge. Therefore, this study investigates how workplace democracy is manifested within organisations' structures.

Social media or networked communication tools provide users with a voice, a two-way communication platform, and a professional network. Although social media supports networking and participation, it is a mistake to understand it simply as a democratising tool. It might be used to maintain a democratic culture, but networked communication tools themselves cannot create democracy. Academics are not certain whether social media is beneficial for workplace democracy or not, which gives this study a raison d'être, to investigate how networked communication tools are being incorporated into the contemporary workplace.

Workplace democracy was also analysed from an organisational perspective, which lead to the understanding of democracy in the workplace as a conflict between employers and employees or as the implementation of horizontal working structures. The conflict peaks in the assumption that employers' and employees' interests are opposed to each other. However, the literature also outlined that this does not need to be the case. Furthermore, the literature review revealed that structure, leadership style, and the environment each have a significant impact on workplace democracy. Therefore, this study investigates whether internal communications practices can be understood as democratising, and what influence the structure of an organisation has on workplace democracy.

The following research question and sub-questions emerged from the literature review:

What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?

Sub-questions:

1. *How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*

2. *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

3. *What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*

"I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?"

(Spradley, n.d.)

Chapter 3 – Research Design

This chapter outlines the main methodological approach and specific methods used to collect data for this study, and identifies its key sources and sampling framework. This research is qualitative in nature and draws on an interpretative paradigm to create meaning from the research findings. It applies methodological triangulation between methods, employing content analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus groups.

The key sources for data collection are two case studies of organisations, which can be described as international corporates within the economic sector. For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, they are referred to as Organisations One and Two. The sample contains six interviewees, four single interviews and one double interview, and nine focus group participants (four from Organisation One and five from Organisation Two). The data collected serves to answer the main research question and sub-questions, which are about the implementation of workplace democracy and the role of social media in the contemporary corporate workplace.

3.1 Research Tradition

This study takes a qualitative approach, which is known for leading to an epistemologically sound and in-depth perspective on phenomena. The study employs inductive logic, which leads from reflection on the findings and observations to development of theory (Bryman, 2012).

Communication studies are special when it comes to choosing a research tradition. While fields like natural science lean towards a quantitative approach (Bryman, 2012), communication studies do not lean to either the qualitative or the quantitative tradition. Reinhard, for instance, understands communication research as focused on "message-related behaviour" (Reinhard, 2008, p. 4). Lasswell defines the areas of communication as "Who? Says what? In which channel? To whom? With what effect?" (as cited in Berger, 2006, p. 31). These definitions are broad and indicate the interdisciplinary nature of the field. In order to understand a phenomenon in-depth, it seems reasonable to choose a qualitative approach (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999).

Communication studies, in comparison to other disciplines, is rather young (Reinhard, 2008) and a standardised paradigmatic view or methodology has not yet been developed for it. Kraus and Brtitzelmaier (2012) compared 165 empirical studies in the field of communication and corporate social responsibility (CSR). They concluded that there is no common paradigm or research tradition in the discipline of communication. 81 of the 165 studies examined were qualitative, 76 were quantitative, and eight used a mixed-methods approach.

3.2 Paradigm

A paradigm is the underlying understanding and foundation for any research project. It provides a framework for the study and an understanding of the social world to which it refers (Tadajewski, Maclarn, Parsons, & Parker, 2011). This study understands the social world within an interpretative paradigm. While many epistemological positions distinguish acceptable from unacceptable knowledge within a discipline (Bryman, 2012), interpretivism, as opposed to positivism, acknowledges the subjective meaning of social action and recognises the difference between people and objects. The interpretive paradigm concentrates on the participant's actions and his/her explanation of them. The researcher acts as the interpreter (Grant & Giddings, 2002).

<u>3.3 Data Collection Methods and Sampling</u>

The following section describes the methods planned and used throughout the study: content analysis, interviews, and focus groups.

3.3.1 Content Analysis

This method involves analysis of texts (any written source) through coding. Usually, content analysis is used to investigate a theme or important trend, for example, the newsworthiness of a particular topic. This method is designed for interpreting meaning in written or spoken sources (O'Leary, 2010). Academics in the fields of the communication and democracy (Auger, 2013; Haigh & Brubaker, 2013; Schwarz, 2012; Valtysson, 2014) often use content analysis to research their topics and set a direction for their investigation. This study uses content analysis as a way of identifying signs of workplace democracy in official documents such as codes of conduct and ethics. This method is used, firstly, to analyse what the organisations (corporate management) understand by workplace democracy and, secondly, to compare the findings from the focus groups with the interviews and between each other; this helps to answer sub-question one: '*How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*' (see data analysis in this chapter).

This study takes a qualitative approach to systematic description of the documents. Categories based on similar meanings are to be identified through an inductive analysis (Cho & Lee, 2014). Along similar lines, Bryman (2012) presents a seven-step coding system: (1) code documents as soon as possible and develop themes, (2) read through the initial set of documents, (3) redo the coding and theme development, (4) review the codes, (5) develop more general theoretical ideas in relation to codes and data, (6) be sure to code data more than once, and (7) set coding in perspective (Bryman, 2008).

The organisations agreed to provide their 'code of ethics', 'communication guidelines' and 'social media policy'. These documents were asked for in order to both prepare for the interviews and to directly answer the first research sub-question: '*How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*' Both organisations provided the documents, which were analysed as outlined above. At this stage of the study, the documents were mainly used to prepare the interviews.

3.3.2 In-depth Interviews

O'Leary (2010) describes in-depth interviews as informal, unstructured interviews in a one-on-one setting. This kind of interview is characterised by its open lines of communication and its dependence on a causal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Such an interview is for gaining information, opinions, or themes surrounding a particular subject without predetermined questions (O'Leary, 2010). In-depth interviews are used in this instance to gain understanding of how the organisations' managers use social media to engage with their employees and how they implement their social media policy. The interviews are also used to identify other aspects of the internal communication practices that might be missed from the document analysis and thus help formulate better questions for the focus groups. Data collected from the interviews helps to answer sub-question two, '*How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*', and the main research question, '*What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?*'

Three interviews were planned in each organisation: one with each communication manager and two with internal communication staff. The interviews with the managers were arranged first and the other interviewees were then identified through volunteer sampling, which means that their participation depended on their willingness to participate and work with an already-selected group (O'Leary, 2010).

The interviewee candidates were suggested and then approached by the internal communications manager. In Organisation One, the interview participants were identified as described above. All interviews were structured in a similar manner (see Appendix C). However, in-depth interviews, by nature, circle a theme rather than follow a pre-set structure (O'Leary, 2010). Therefore, each interview is different. In Organisation Two, two participants showed up at the same time for the first interview without communicating their intention to do so beforehand. Organisation Two made it clear that the interview would continue in this format or not at all and, therefore, it was decided to interview them at the same time. However, all interviews were similarly structured for both organisations (see Appendix D). The difference between the interview structures for the respective organisations stems from the different level of implementation of internal social media. While Organisation One was about to launch internal social media, Organisation Two had launched it in 2014, six months prior to the research. Interviewees in both organisations need to stay anonymous and the research was explained to all interviewees before the interviews started (see Appendix E for the Interviewee Information Sheet and Appendix F for the Interviewee Consent Form).

3.3.3 Focus Group

Focus groups are a kind of interview with approximately 4-12 people. They have a very loose question-answer schedule and can be considered a discussion. However, the interviewer needs to facilitate the discussion, keep the conversation alive, and direct it towards a valuable goal (O'Leary, 2010). The participants of the focus groups were employees. The desired outcome was to enable the researcher to build a more complex understanding of workplace democracy and social media in an organisation and to indicate causes and effects of the understanding and emplacement of workplace democracy. The findings are also compared with, and used to build on the outcome of the content analysis and interviews in order to better understand the full impact of social media in the workplace and to answer sub-question three: '*What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*'

It was planned to have one focus group (4-6 participants) for each organisation. The sampling methods for the interviews were snowball and volunteer sampling. Snowball sampling is a technique that assumes initial contact with a relevant group and continues through referrals (Bryman, 2008). In this case, the initial group was at the headquarters of each organisation. Volunteer sampling depends, as mentioned above, on the willingness of interviewees to participate and works with an already-selected group (O'Leary, 2010). It was planned to send a message through the internal communication system asking staff from the headquarters to participate in the study. The first message was sent with the help of the internal communications manager of Organisation One. There was very little response to it, so it was decided that the internal communications manager would assist with finding participants. Organisation Two initially agreed to find the focus group participants through the internal communication system. By the time the message was ready to be sent, the contact person at Organisation Two had changed. With the previous experience in Organisation One and the pressing time schedule in mind, it was decided that this new manager would assist with finding focus group participants as in Organisation One.

Both focus groups were organised in their respective head offices. Organisation One sent four participants and Organisation Two, five. The questions asked in the groups were initially the same, but differed in some aspects, because of the different stages of the process the different organisations were at with their internal social media rollout? (See Appendix G for Organisation One's initial question structure and Appendix H for Organisation Two's). The research objectives and issues of anonymity and confidentiality were explained to the participants before the discussion started (see Appendix I for the Focus Group Information Sheet and Appendix J for the Focus Group Consent Form).

3.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered through the study was analysed by means of analytic induction. Bryman (2008) argues that, especially in qualitative research, analytic induction is a useful technique for examining data, because it allows researchers to redefine the research focus and theoretical paradigm. Along these lines, it might be argued that an inductive analysis "simply let[s] the data tell the story" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 271). The underlying structure that favours inductive analysis is initial research questions followed by hypothetical exploration, then a case study examination, then a discussion of the accuracy of the research questions (Bryman, 2008). This study will employ a qualitative content analysis following Schreier's (2014) and Mayring's (2010) models, which will be described in the following paragraphs.

Qualitative content analysis is chosen for this study in order to systematically distil the data by categorising and coding the findings and then gather and describe their meaning (Schreier, 2014). To this end, eight steps were followed: deciding on a research question, selecting the material, building a coding frame, segmentation, trial coding, evaluation, main analysis, and, finally, presentation and interpretation of the findings.

3.4.1 Deciding on a Research Question

As previously mentioned, the following main research question is the main focus of the research: What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy? Three sub-questions were formulated that focused on particular aspects of the main question:

1. *How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*

2. *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

3. *What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*

The sub-questions serve to answer the main question. Consequently, the data analysis followed that structure and addressed each sub-question in order to answer the main research question. Three themes corresponding respectively to the three sub-questions were established. First was the theme of workplace rules in order to investigate workplace democracy in policy documents. Second was the theme of communication tools to clarify how such tools in a network are used in the workplace. Third was workplace democracy and its synonyms to critically evaluate internal communication practices and their capacity to democratise.

3.4.2 Selecting the Material

Each interview and focus group session was audio recorded and transcribed, following a model developed by Kvale (2007) supplemented by the coding techniques of Roulston (2014). Each interview transcript was analysed in accordance with the structure mentioned above with the perspective of management/employers in mind. The focus group transcripts were analysed, in turn, with the same structure but with an employee point of view in mind. Each interview was analysed several times to ensure that each category would be represented correctly.

3.4.3 Building a Coding Frame

The coding frame was built after a theoretical example from Schreier (2014). The main categories, previously mentioned as themes, which emerged from the literature research were used to bring the sub-research questions to bear and thus structure the findings. These concept-driven themes function as the main categories of the coding frame. As Schreier (2014) suggests, sub-categories were derived from data, and the following sub-categories emerged:

1. Workplace Rules (*main category (or theme); concept-driven*)
    1.1. Structure (*sub-category; data-driven*)
    1.2. Policies

2. Communication Tools

    2.1. General Tools (excluding Social Media)

    2.2. Social Media

3. Workplace Democracy

    3.1. Workplace Practices and Values Supportive of Democracy

    3.2. Workplace Practices and Values Unsupportive of Democracy

The following table outlines each sub-category with a brief description, an example of the sub-category, and the criteria for belonging to it:

Table 1: Data Analysis Coding Frame

Sub-category	Description	Example	Decision criteria
Structure	This includes direct or indirect description of the workplace, highlighting the internal communication structure with explanations. There may be explanations of what employees are expected to do in the workplace. It is not a description of what staff actually do or an interpretation of the rules.	"*Internal comms has a team of about twenty, and that includes the knowledge management team as well, and we sit as part of the people … communications function sit … [with the] leadership team*" (IM2).	• The description of the structure needs to be clear and identifiable. • Interpretation from staff is excluded. • There must be clear differentiation between what employees are doing and what they are supposed to do.
Policies	This includes description of rules, policies, and guidelines set throughout the workplace. It also includes actual policy content (if revealed) and evidence of how the organisation handles policies.	"*There is a social media policy and it is part of the code of conduct. So you do get trained on these things regularly…*" (IM2).	• Policies need to be mentioned, whether directly or indirectly. • Operational communication is excluded.

General Tools	This includes every description of a communication tool used for internal communication. Social media is excluded.	"*I use emails a huge amount. My second biggest thing after email is [Office] Communicator*" (FG8). "*I still like to meet people face-to-face the first time; after that I can email them*" (FG2).	• Everything that describes the way in which staff use internal communication tools is included. • Descriptions of the tools are included. • Staff interpretation is included. • Everything related to internal social media is excluded. • All reference to external communication tools is excluded.
Social Media	In this category is described the organisations' internal social media. It can be general experience with the tool or general knowledge about the current state of implementation.	"[The] *internal collaboration tool is referring to what's going to be internally hosted, and then social media would be used externally*" (IC3).	• Everything related to internal social media or the internal collaboration tool is included. • Staff experiences with and knowledge about the tool are included. • Speculation or guessing is excluded. • External social media is excluded.
Democracy-supportive	Examples are collected which are supportive of democracy	"*It* [internal social media] *is self-regulated; it doesn't need somebody to say, 'That's wrong,' and if somebody puts up something that is a bit wrong, it generates a conversation*	• Synonyms of democracy as defined in the literature review are included. • Examples and narratives about the enablement of democracy are included.

		rather than a shut-down, and everyone learns that way as well" (FG5).	• Examples which merely use democratic language are excluded.
Democracy-unsupportive	In this category is collected examples that are hierarchy-supportive.	*"We're all about having opinions so, hopefully, we get lots of that, but if anyone starts to cross the line, that's where our community managers start to step in"* (IC3).	• Examples of democracy unsupportive elements • Examples that misunderstand democracy and fail to uphold their meaning are included.

3.4.4. Segmentation

Segmentation means the division of the findings into units that fit the categories of the coding frame. The findings of this thesis did not easily fit into the coding frame. Each interview or focus group discussion touched on more than one category and people jumped from topic to topic. Therefore, perfect segmentation was not possible. However, certain directions that provide indications of category are noticeable. The interviews with the management leant more towards the categories of structure and policies, while the focus group discussions leant towards those of structure and communication tools. Neither interviewees nor focus group participants favoured or opposed the categories democracy-supportive or hierarchy-supportive. Organisation Two leant towards the topic of social media, probably because they had introduced their internal social media tool in 2014.

3.4.5 Trial Coding

The coding frame, at first only existent as three concept-driven themes, was trialled in interview two with participant IC3 (see participation key following) from Organisation One on 10 December 2014. The trial confirmed the themes and revealed the sub-categories mentioned above. In addition, the trial coding suggested two more categories and one more theme. The sub-categories were

"reasons for workplace democracy" and "challenges to workplace democracy". The additional theme was called "emerging trends" and had no sub-categories.

3.4.6 Evaluation

During evaluation, the coding frame was changed so that it included the themes and sub-categories mentioned above. The two additional sub-categories were merged with the existing ones. "Reasons for workplace democracy" was merged with "Workplace – supportive practices and values of democracy", and the sub-category "Workplace – democracy challenges" was merged with "Workplace – practices and values unsupportive of democracy". The revised coding frame was trialled in interview five with IC2 (see participation key following) from Organisation Two on 19 December 2014. The coding frame was then approved as outlined above with the additional theme "emerging trends".

3.4.7 Main Analysis

The coding frame was used to analyse all five interviews and both focus groups. The outcome of this analysis can be found in Chapter Four: Findings.

Participation Key

The following table describes each interviewee and focus group participant and provides an identification code used throughout the study.

Table 2: Participation Key

Gender	Organisation	Position	Contribution Type	Interview Date	Identification Code
Female	One	Manager	Interview	03/12/2014	IM1
Female	Two	Manager	Interview (with IC1)	11/12/2014	IM2
Female	Two	Communication Manager	Interview (with IM2)	11/12/2014	IC1
Male	Two	Communication Manager	Interview	19/12/2014	IC2
Male	One	Communication Manager	Interview	10/12/2014	IC3

Female	One	Communication Manager	Interview	17/12/2014	IC4
Female	Two	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	19/01/2015	FG1
Female	Two	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	19/01/2015	FG2
Female	Two	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	19/01/2015	FG3
Female	Two	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	19/01/2015	FG4
Male	Two	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	19/01/2015	FG5
Female	One	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	30/01/2015	FG6
Male	One	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	30/01/2015	FG7
Female	One	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	30/01/2015	FG8
Female	One	Head Office Employee	Focus Group	30/01/2015	FG9

3.4.8 Presenting and Interpreting the Findings

Chapter Four of this thesis presents the findings and Chapter Five provides interpretation and discussion of them.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in this research were addressed in the following two steps: firstly, the study was approved by the Department of Communication Studies Research Proposals Committee on 16 September 2014 (see appendix A), and, secondly, it was approved by Unitec's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) on 20 November 2014 for the time period between 5 November 2014 and 5 November 2015 with the approval number 2014-1089 (see appendix B).

Both participant organisations were promised anonymity and confidentiality. This research refers to them as Organisations One and Two. For the sake of transparency about how they became a part of the research and how the data was collected, the next paragraphs outline the process of communication followed in establishing

contact with them and securing their participation and articulate some challenges faced along the way.

Organisation One was approached in August 2014. They were keen to participate and recommended also talking with Organisation Two, which was approached the same month. Both organisations were introduced to Unitec through the supervisors of the study. Shortly after the approval of the proposal, both organisations were asked to put their informal commitment in writing. They were sent Unitec's general consent form (see appendix K) which outlines the research as "… discussed with the researcher." In order to refresh the organisations' memory and prevent any misunderstandings, both also received a synopsis of the study (see appendix L). Three weeks later, Organisation One expressed concerns about confidentiality and anonymity, citing sensitivity about their branding. Their concerns were directly addressed to the supervisors. This resulted in Organisation One sending an edited version of the consent form (see appendix M), which restricted the use of the internal documents such as codes of ethics and conduct for interview preparation purposes only. Organisation Two sent their similarly-edited version by the end of October.

During the ethics application process, both organisations were very cooperative and helped to find participants for the interview and focus group. It was agreed to send a message through the internal communication systems with the researcher's contact details for the participants to contact. Unfortunately, very few participants replied. Therefore, the sampling method was changed by necessity to volunteer sampling only. The interviewees were selected according to their experience and the focus group participants were selected from different departments within the headquarters.

The first interview with Organisation One was set for the beginning of December and, in preparation for it, the interviewee received the participation consent form (appendix F) and information sheet (appendix E). Before the first interview, the interviewee refused to sign the participation form and wanted to change the

confidentiality agreement so as to have a chance to edit content relating their organisation in the final text of the thesis if necessary. This proposal was not accepted and resulted in another discussion about confidentiality and disclosure. It was eventually agreed that the final draft would not be read by the organisation or censored in any way. However, the interviewees and focus group participants would have the opportunity to read their respective transcripts and alter statements if they were not represented correctly in their sight. Furthermore, anything about policy and guideline documents needed to stay absolutely confidential, which meant that the researcher could not quote parts of them as evidence for this research.

After each interview, the transcript was sent to each participant, and, in one case, a participant made significant changes by erasing sections and whole answers related to specific details about the internal communication structure and, in particular, the use of language. Further changes related to questions about employee engagement, internal responsibilities, and a newspaper article about worker unions.

3.6 Limitations

This research has some unavoidable limitations. This section outlines limitations regarding the research methods, case studies, and the researcher's objectivity.

Qualitative research deals with the meanings, concepts, and character of a subjective matter (Berg & Lune, 2012). Therefore, it is not possible to synthesise general meaning from the gathered data. Furthermore, qualitative methods rely on the researcher's professionalism and are subjective for this reason, also (Koopman-Boyden & Richardson, 2013). Because of the subjectivity of the researcher, the gathered data might be influenced by their gender, judgement, and level of professionalism (O'Leary, 2010).

The data gathered from the focus groups is exploratory and has no representative strength. Therefore, this method can only be applied to a limited research area (Bagdonienė & Zemblytė, 2005). Furthermore, because of time limitations of focus

group sessions and the desire to include all the voices from the group, this method may reduce the richness and depth of the data (Koopman-Boyden & Richardson, 2013). In addition, opinionated members can dominate the whole discussion and minority views might be drowned out (ibid). The extent of these limitations is tied to the researcher's professionalism and facilitation skills; again, this is a mark of the subjectivity of qualitative research.

This research functioned with two case studies in tandem, both within the international finance sector. Both corporates had strict confidentiality rules, which limited this research in terms of document analysis and further comparison. Although both organisations were very supportive and helped to implement a correct, ethical approach towards finding participants for the study, the response of participants was marginal. This led to a change in the sampling method from snowball and volunteer sampling to only volunteer sampling.

3.7 Credibility

The qualitative tradition has been criticised over time. Perhaps the natural criticism (from the point of view of the opposite tradition) is that of subjectivity. The findings of studies may be too researcher-related and too reliant on their intuition about the problem. Since the procedures for qualitative studies are not standardised, replication is difficult; participants may respond differently to researchers of different ages and genders. These circumstances prevent generalisation of the findings about the studies' populations and call into question the studies' overall credibility (Bryman, 2012).

Interdisciplinarity is a useful tool for understanding an occurrence in its entirety, that is, across disciplinary borders. It becomes problematic, however, when the disciplines belong to different paradigms and, therefore, to different research traditions. Researchers may use triangulation in order to address this challenge. Triangulation allows the researcher to use methods from different paradigms and gain fresh perspectives on the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

However, terminology used is not consistent throughout the literature on triangulation. Terms must, therefore, be defined here. This study understands "multi-method" as that methodological triangulation which Denscombe (2010) describes as remaining within a methodological circle. Multi-method studies stay within one tradition (qualitative or quantitative) and are mainly used to improve the accuracy of findings through the use of similar methods. The 'mixed-method' approach, or methodological triangulation between methods (Denscombe, 2010), is the technique of using alternative methods to compare findings across different traditions (Plowright, 2010). Through the use of this practice, validity and reliability may be improved (Arnold, 2008). At the same time, methodological design for mixed-method studies needs to be elaborate in order for studies to transcend the stereotypical qualitative/quantitative mindsets and operate on a level of meta-consideration; it all needs to serve the best interests of the study. This research takes a mixed-method approach by using qualitative content analysis alongside interviews and focus groups.

3.8 Summary

This study takes a qualitative approach with inductive logic. Furthermore, it takes a consciously epistemological approach and understands the social world within an interpretative paradigm.

It was planned that this research would use content analysis on the organisation's internal documents, such as codes of ethics and conduct and social media guidelines. However, the organisations did not allow any use of the internal documents except for the purpose of interview and focus group preparation. Within each organisation, three managers were interviewed and two focus groups discussed social media in the workplace.

The data was analysed through qualitative content analysis and followed a model constructed by Schreier (2014) and Mayring (2010); a coding frame was developed and six categories emerged: structure, policies, general tools, social media, workplace – practices and values supportive of democracy, workplace – practices and values unsupportive of democracy. The anonymity of both organisations was important and, therefore, any reference to their specific identify was removed. Throughout the research project, the researcher had to accept some unavoidable limitations. The planned snowball sampling for participants was abandoned, because only one participant replied to the message sent through the internal communication system of Organisation One.

"… cast aside all preconceived notions and

simply let the data tell the story"

(O'Leary, 2010, p. 271)

Chapter 4 – Findings

The findings have been organised under the following emerging themes: Workplace Rules (Structures and Policies); Communication Tools (General Tools and Social Media); Workplace Democracy (Workplace supportive practices and values of democracy and Workplace unsupportive practices and values of democracy). Further, under those themes, data is organised under the two different organisations (divided into interviews and focus groups) so that a comparison can be more clearly drawn.

4.1 The Contemporary Workplace Rules

This theme further explores the contemporary workplace. Scholars such as Daft (2013) and Yazdani (2010) demonstrated that organisational structure is a key factor in an organisation's ability to implement workplace democracy. The categories that emerged from the content analysis support the theme of workplace rules (policies and structure) developed from the literature. The category 'Policies' is used to address the research sub-question one '*How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*' The category 'Structure' is used to describe the contemporary workplace in order to understand how workplace democracy might be implemented.

4.1.1 Structure

This section provides a description of organisational workplaces, focusing on the structure of internal communications as described by the interviewees and focus group participants. This sub-category 'Structure' demonstrates what the organisations expect from their employees in the workplace. It also aims to present a

clear impression about the organisations' internal structures and how employees act within the workplace.

Organisation One:

The communications manager and interviewees explained that the internal communication team was linked to each business unit. "*Each of us … in internal communications are … paired up to the main business units, and that means that we sit on the leadership team for that business unit we look after*" (IC3). Each communications manager is part of the leadership team within their unit and might have an additional area of expertise. Manager IM1 explained that she manages issues with technology and operations as well as with communication in her business unit. She also communicates strategies to the staff and supports the CEO in her/his communication. The interviewees further explained that, besides the internal communications team, another team deals with the external side. Although Organisation One has distinct internal and external communication teams, the line between them is not always clear. Interviewee IC3 said: *"The line is a bit blurry with some of us. If the COO is speaking externally, I will write his speaking notes and I will put together his presentation, because I know the content better. If he was going to do a media interview … I might go along and supervise. If it is a big, contentious issue I would probably leave it with our external communications team."*

Additionally, Interviewee IC3 is responsible for the internal social media project in New Zealand. He explains that the project concerns the implementation of social media tools for internal communications. The project is led by the Australian parent organisation and Interviewee IC3 is leading the New Zealand part of it. He represents Organisation One New Zealand in that project and takes care of all communication from Australia to New Zealand and vice versa. Furthermore, Interviewee IC3 is part of the steering committee and governance group which collectively represents Organisation One New Zealand in the project. In addition, two change managers support Interviewee IC3 in rolling the project out. Interviewee IC3 said of the project

that *"It's being led from Australia, so while I am a part of the working group I am not leading it. I am leading, sort of, the New Zealand communication side of it."*

Throughout the interviews, an impression of a generally logical communication system was formed. Questions and answers from the online chats, for example, are saved and linked to the intranet for all staff to download. *"Staff can ask a question online and they* [the management team] *will respond to that question. We are moderated so that we keep the questions and answers together"* (IM1). The external communication team is moderated, too, to ensure that the organisation communicates uniformly with its stakeholders. *"[There are a] few key people working on social media here for the whole* [organisation]… *to make sure it's the right thing to say, it's signed off, it is moderated"* (IC3). Although moderation mechanisms are established in Organisation One, the managers say that not every employee is monitored. Manager IM1 stated: *"We have got* [a number of] *staff around the world; you can't monitor them* [all] *(sic)"* (IM1). The organisation regulates its communication through policies, which are tested every one to three years through learning modules and testing (further explanations later in this chapter).

Organisation Two:

The interviewees describe the internal communication structure as follows: The internal communication manager oversees every communication to staff and advises the executive team on internal communication. The internal communication team has 20 members, including an intranet manager, a knowledge manager, and a channel manager. Three other members are responsible for internal social media and moderating profiles. *"We moderate it* [the intranet] *in terms that we make sure that there is nothing aggressive, rude, or outlandish. We always tell all our users and* [employees] *to comply to our code of conduct"* (IC1). Although the interviewees spoke of looking through the intranet to spot errors and minimise risk, the impact of a breach would probably be minimal and would normally result in nothing more than a discussion about the issue. One focus group participant summarised it best: *"The likelihood* [of posting false information] *is quite high, but the impact is low"* (FG5).

The interviewees describe the intranet as a knowledge base that can be used to gather information and as a way for front-line staff to inform themselves on operational working structures, by using the intranet for everyday work. Knowledge bases are units of information, just like an encyclopaedia, collected on a central platform for everyone to use and contribute to. Wikipedia, for example, is a public knowledge base, and follows the same principles as Organisation Two's knowledge base. The interviewees explained that they use this base to find knowledge (such as documented best practice) within the organisation and to educate fellow employees at the same time.

In summary, Organisation One's internal communication team structure consists of four internal communication managers linked respectively to the organisation's four main units. Each communication manager has an area of expertise, such as business strategy or technology change. The internal social media project is handled alongside the general work of one of these managers. This project is organised by the Australian head office, and the New Zealand manager in charge of it reports back to them. Besides its internal communication team, Organisation One has an external communication team, however, the line between the two is blurry at times.

The scope of Organisation Two's internal communication team includes all internal communication and advising of the executive team. The internal communication team has 20 members, who are responsible for the intranet, knowledge management, and other internal communication channels. They moderate internal communications lightly and welcome staff to speak out and freely comment on projects. In general, policies undergird the understanding and rules of internal communication.

The structure of both organisations can be described as hierarchical. They both have top-down communication throughout. Every project and use of communication tools is regulated and probably monitored. Although interviewees point out that they do not monitor staff systematically, they do monitor them occasionally. It became

obvious that each role in the organisations has a clearly defined scope with measurable targets, which, once again, bespeaks their hierarchical structure.

4.1.2 Policies

In this research policies are understood as rules or guidelines and the study examined the 'code of ethics', 'code of conduct' and social media guidelines for each organisation in order to gain a deeper understanding of the workplace. As previously mentioned this study was not able to analyse the outlined policies, however, the following section represents what the interviewees and focus group participants mentioned about policies and guidelines.

Organisation One - Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:

Interviewees from Organisation One refer to their code of conduct as a part of an information pack that every employee has to understand and sign. According to the interviewees, both employees and managers need to demonstrate their understanding of policies through e-learning: online tests and modules. Organisation One has "*very strict guidelines around that* [policies]" (IM1). Every employee, including the management, needs to achieve 80-100 percent in order to pass the policy test, and all employees must retake the test at pre-set intervals (annually or every two to three years). The online tests are designed to make sure in an interactive way that the employees understand the content of each policy (IM1). If an employee "*does something that is very serious, then there is no, 'Oh, I didn't know about that'. 'How can you not know about it? You have done the training, and you have ticked the box; you knew about it'*" (IM1). Furthermore, there are other ways to stay up-to-date with the policies and learn about new communication tools. Interviewee IC3 names videos, information kiosks, and flyers as additional ways to learn about policies, which will be used to introduce the new internal social media tool.

In addition to policies, values are very important for Organisation One. Manager IM1 explained that every employee and manager has to work in line with the core values of the organisation, codified in a values acronym. The values acronym cannot be published, but it covers values including work ownership and honesty, among others. Management and leadership outline behaviour that does not accord with the values and policies. Manager IM1 described the organisation as mature, saying that everyone wants to perform naturally well for the company and, therefore, wants to help each other. *"We are all here to do our jobs and to do our jobs well"* (IM1).

Organisation One - Focus Group with employees:

The focus group did not discuss policies and values much. Every time the topic came up, the group became uneasy and steered away from it and discussed a related topic. However, Participant FG8 mentioned that, even within the organisation, different departments or business units have different policies, rules and interests, and it is therefore challenging to find a project for more than one department for which the new social media tool could be used. Participant FG8 said that the new social media tool has the capacity to allow collaboration throughout the whole organisation: *"What would we work on? What is a project that* [both departments] *benefit from? … You say projects, let's say, how do we get more customers on board – it is so ridiculously different. What customers we target, what we do, what we offer them, what rules we govern them by, and policies."*

Organisation Two – Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:

The managers referred to policies such as their code of ethics, code of conduct, all mandatory elements that employees have to sign. They stated that the policies are communicated in written form and through learning modules and online training, *"which tend to be quite interactive and interesting for what they are"* (IM2). The social media policy is part of the code of conduct, and social media is moderated by the organisation. *"There is a social media policy and it is part of the code of conduct. So you do get trained on these things regularly. … That sort of stuff is monitored, and if it gets picked up, a conversation happens"* (IM2). In the experience of the

managers participating in this study, a few times, the management had to step in and indicate to someone that *"what you said was not appropriate"* (IM2) and the comment was removed.

Organisation Two, Focus Group with employees:

This focus group mentioned policies twice. Once was when Participant FG2 talked about the difficulty of finding social media guidelines on the intranet. They had to change that in order for staff to be able to find the social media policy. *"It turned out it was actually really hard, on* [our intranet], *to find our social media guidelines. That is fixed now with a link. If you search it, you will find it"* (FG2). The second occasion was when the group discussed general changes to improve use of communications technology in the workplace. Participant FG5 referred to a video which was produced and uploaded to YouTube and which displeased the organisation. The focus group argued that the speech in the video was not confidential and would not have stirred up attention if it had been delivered in person or through a different, more familiar, communication channel. The video, however, caused tension amongst the management about the organisation's security and confidentiality in relation to the communication channels they are familiar with. The group explained that the uncertainty was mainly caused by the newness of the distribution channel and not its content. *"The challenge is that our risk and technology management hasn't caught up to the digital age"* (FG5). During the discussion, the group raised the question of whether the organisation's technology and risk profile would ever catch up. Participant FG5 answered that the attitude towards new communication technology would only change through "human change," meaning a new generation of employees. Participant FG5 said in agreement with the group that, *"To be honest, I think we need some personality changes, human changes, for that to happen* [changing the technology and risk profile]. *It's more that we got people that are stuck in some of those roles for quite a while and they haven't been elsewhere in other organisations and haven't seen it evolve."*

In summary, Organisation One has clear rules about how its policies are to be applied. Essential guidelines, such as its code of ethics, need to be signed by every employee, including the management, upon their employment. The organisation provides online learning modules and annual or two- to three-yearly tests to ensure that employees are up-to-date about all relevant policies. This is to ensure that, in the case of a policy breach, management can act accordingly. Alongside the policies, values are mentioned and outlined as important as policies.

Organisation Two describes adherence to policies as a mandatory criterion of working in the organisation. They provide e-learning and online training for employees and support staff in accordance with official guidelines. However, in the past, employees have had difficulty in finding guidelines, and the focus group participants referred to some policies (those on risk and technology) as outdated. Besides this, staff are monitored and held responsible for their actions. The interviewees nevertheless describe a fairly open work culture in which everyone is free to speak their minds.

Both organisations have a similar understanding of policies. They use them as a bottom line in conflict situations and a means of outlining workplace rules. Employees have to sign them on employment and they are taught online. Employees are tested in small exams on a regular basis. In Organisation One, policies differ among departments and Organisation Two had trouble with making social media guidelines available on its intranet.

4.2 Communication Tools

The following categories explore internal communication tools separated between general tools such as email, face-to-face communication and conference calls and internal social media. This theme aims to answer the second sub-question: '*How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*' and describes communication tools from the perspective of employer and employee.

4.2.1 General Tools

Every description of a communication tool used for internal communication is outlined below in order to gain an impression of how communication tools are used in each organisation. For a better understanding each tool is summarised at the end of this section, highlighting functions, use and contribution towards or against workplace democracy.

Organisation One – Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:

In the interviews with the communications management of Organisation One, the following communication tools were identified: email, face-to-face communication, road shows, teleconferences, live-chats, videos, newsletters and webinars (web-seminars). In this section the use of these tools by each organisation is explored and the management's understanding of them is presented. **Emails** were mentioned as the main tool used to *"keep people informed"* (IC4). The management uses emails to communicate with colleagues and send messages from leaders to a number of employees in a pre-set top-down structure. Some managers use email as a carrier for a different medium, such as video or newsletter. The managers explained that emails are embedded in the 'technology policy', which implies that employees are aware of management expectations as to what is appropriate and inappropriate to be communicated by email, and how this communication should be achieved. Correspondence via email is considered as the main form of communication, and the number of emails is high. However, some managers indicated that the detailed content of many emails might not reach the recipients and that they are therefore trying to steer away from emails towards other tools, such as videos. About providing information through video instead of email, Interviewee IC4 said: *"It is not another email to read."*

While email is managers' main tool, they consider **face-to-face communication** to be the most valuable form of communication. Interviewee IC4 said: "*I don't think it's about having new and fancy tools. I think it is about doing the basics really well … I think face-to-face is always the most important.*" Manager IM1 said: "*I think that*

[face-to-face communication] *is really valuable. Nothing beats people being in the same room and meeting them in person. You establish better relationships … and in my communication plans I make sure that there is a physical component."* The interviewees explained that the leadership practices face-to-face communication in 'floor-walks', which is a walk around the office including 'catch ups' rather than a general meeting. They further explain that the ideal situation from managers' perspective is two-way-communication with staff in order to encourage them and share ideas. However, because of the high number of employees, the interviewees explained, actual face-to-face conversation is not always possible. Other tools, such as video and road shows, are used to reach a bigger audience with as much face-to-face communication as possible.

The **road show** is another tool specified by the interviewees. The managers of Organisation One value them. During a road show, the senior leadership will travel throughout the country to meet staff in a town-hall forum. The leadership will brief the staff and provide a forum in which to receive feedback on current strategy, achievements, future direction, organisational values, and areas that are not doing well. In general, a road show is accompanied by a slideshow, video, and small-scale get-together after the presentation. The interviewees clarify that the road show is designed for employees to ask questions and engage with the leadership team. Manager IM1 called it a *"way that people can actually get involved."*

Another tool used to brief employees on business strategy, achievements, and future directions is that of **teleconference**. The interviewees explain that, from time to time, managers come together to conference-call their staff. They brief them, and employees have the opportunity to question or talk with the management. The interviewees say that it is an effective way of getting people together, but that technical issues can interfere. They add that **live chats** are similar to teleconferences. The CEO or leadership team will answer questions from the staff in an online forum. In 2013, Organisation One held four online chat sessions with the CEO. All were moderated, and questions and answers were kept on record for digital storage for

other employees with similar questions. *"Staff can ask a question online and they* [the leadership] *will respond to that question. We are moderated, so that we keep the questions and answers together"* (IM1).

Interviewee IC4 mentioned that some managers of Organisation One use **video** as a way to send employees a fortnightly **newsletter**. Such videos are hosted on the intranet and a link sent via email connects the recipients. In general, this link is sent a week in advance. That leaves staff enough time to get together to watch it or to make room in their schedules to watch it individually. The video is also used as background material for road shows, providing additional information or reaching out to the employees in general.

Interviewees also pointed to **webinars** (web-seminars), interactive information sessions in which people can call in and ask questions. One manager uses webinars four times a year. Other than that, *"they are used extensively for training"* (IC3). In addition to the moderation process mentioned above, webinars can run polls to bring feedback instantly and present statistics on the webinar itself.

Organisation One - Focus Group with employees:

Participants from Organisation One use **emails** as a carrier for other communication tools, such as newsletters or videos, and as a method to document their work: *"98% of what we do needs to be documented, so, often, what you find yourself doing is having a phone call and saying, 'Okay, I will write that up in an email and send it to you' "* (FG8). All participants use emails frequently, to the point where each team or department has developed standardised ways of dealing with this medium. One participant, FG7, said that they have weekly information emails in order to decrease the overall number of emails. Another participant (FG8) mentioned that their department has templates and internal engagement/submission forms for sending emails to the front-line staff. This form will be signed off by a manager and might be changed by the communication team if the message is unclear. Participant FG8 described the process as follows: *"We have Excel sheets (basically submission forms)*

and that is how you communicate. If you want to send a message to the front-line, to our staff, you have to submit an internal engagement form, with purpose etc., and then you have to complete what you actually have to communicate, because it is a big process if we want to send out something to [a big number of] people. ... The communication team will look at it and will let you know if that is appropriate … that is how they communicate down to us."

Although the participants of the focus group valued **face-to-face** communication, email is often the most practicable way of communicating. All focus group participants work in different departments which have developed different communication strategies. Participant FG7's department, for example, outsourced all back-office communication to counterparts in India with whom email is the only channel of communication. Participant FG7 said: "*… but, in our department, our back-office stuff is outsourced to India, and all that communication regarding their work is done through email."*

Videos were used more frequently throughout 2013 (the year before the research). In general, the director would give an update on the business or comment on special projects. The focus group participants sent a video on behalf of a director through an email link. The focus group favoured the video channel, because, as a recipient said, *"You don't have to screen through a lot of words, and it is much more interesting looking or listening to someone, rather than reading through the body of an email"* (FG6). Some participants especially like the video channel because it is an easy way to distribute a message across geographical borders.

Other tools mentioned by the interviewees, such as road shows, teleconferences, live-chats, and webinars were not discussed in the focus group. However, one participant mentioned **Office Communicator** as a chat tool with which to communicate brief messages with a colleague. "[My favourite communication tool] *would be Office Communicator, because I need to be in such constant contact* [with my colleague]. *It would be annoying to pick up the phone all the time. She is in*

Wellington, so I can't see her. Email gets frustrating if you email back and forth little communications" (FG8).

<u>Organisation Two – Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:</u>
The interviewees said that they use **emails** as a "standard channel" (IM2) for communication between employees and management. Although this is the standard tool, the management has asked the staff to decrease the number of internal mass emails. Organisation Two tries to prefer other channels to organise daily business. One project group, the green team[2], started to use internal social media fully and replaced emails altogether. They organised their work exclusively through social media. Besides this, some of the interviewees described emails as "traditional communication" (IC1), just like posters and flyers, and understood email communication as an efficient, strategic channel from the past which is still used today.

Next to emails, **face-to-face** communication is described as the standard communication channel. It is used between employees and leaders to communicate the organisation's strategy. Manager IM2 argues that through face-to-face communication leaders and employees have the opportunity to engage with each other: *"Leaders who lead in those situations tend to be very real and honest and, therefore, our people really love hearing from them and talking to them. More than probably they would if they read an email – you get real connection"* (IM2). However, Manager IM2 acknowledged that this avenue of communication is rather resource-intensive and that some employees might find it difficult to pose questions in front of others: *"I suppose, with teleconference or road show … you really taking quite a leap if you ask a questions in front of people"* (IM2).

In order to practice face-to-face communication, Organisation Two uses **road shows** to connect leaders and employees. The interviewees explained that the CEO and

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[2] green-team = a group of employees who are concerned about the organisation's environmental impact in terms of recycling, energy efficiency etc.

business unit directors each go on one road show a year. They travel the country and visit around a number of offices. Manager IM2 describes it in detail: *"I would say my favourite channel is the road shows, because it's the time when people stand up and they can be very open and very honest and transparent and provide a connection. That is not achieved, sometimes, in written communication."*

Teleconferences are mainly used to communicate with a large group of people (500-600). The interviewees describe the teleconferences as designed for two-way conversation, which means that participants have the chance to ask questions. *"Teleconferences … are often more two-way"* (IM2). However, Manager IM2 admits that it takes courage to ask a question in such a forum, and that, because of that, not everyone has the same opportunity to be heard because (see above).

Last year, Organisation Two ran ten to twelve **live chats** to communicate with employees in a manner similar to that of the teleconferences. According to the interviewees, live-chats are understood as a social media support channel. **Videos, Office Communicator, and webinars** were not specifically mentioned by the interviewees, while **newsletters** were considered a standard tool of communication.

Organisation Two - Focus Group with employees:
Focus group participants used **emails** very frequently, especially managers, who used emails to reach front-line staff for operational communication. The participants explained that, usually, a communication manager would send the email using a special programme. Access to this is limited to a few managers, and Participant FG3 mentioned that its use is difficult, because the address list is rarely updated and not many colleagues know how to use it properly. The group explained that emails are not a good way to engage with colleagues insofar as "*there is definitely the ability to upset people when you put something in writing*" (FG2). In general, the participants of the focus group try to meet in person first and use email as a follow-up.

Face-to-face communication is indeed favoured by the focus group. One participant (FG2) said that, as a general rule, she tried to establish face-to-face communication first before she followed up with an email, because "[colleagues] *are more likely to respond that way*" (FG2). Another participant, FG3, valued face-to-face communication for its potential to engage people, and argued that the choice of the communication tool mainly depends on what kind of outcome is desired. Participant FG3 meets every month with her team to discuss current projects.

While talking about different channels of communication, the group briefly mentioned **teleconferences**. They know about the tool but do not use it on a regular basis, partly because of the complex setup it requires (as do videoconferences), and partly because not every employee still has a physical phone; Participant FG3 said: "*I use my online phone. I got rid of my desk phone, because I never use it.*" Some staff members choose to only have an online phone, which complicates the conference setup. However, the group agrees that video- or teleconferencing is a good alternative to face-to-face meetings. Some use other programmes provided by their phone, such as *Apple's FaceTime*, to connect with their colleagues, but they are exceptions and are limited by the phone they use.

Very briefly, the group mentioned **videos** and videoconferences. They are rarely used, and digital videos especially are still new to the organisation. A few in the focus group used **Office Communicator**. It is a fairly old chat tool, but the group liked it, because of its instant communication function. Furthermore, Office Communicator monitors who is and is not in the office, and users can enable a video-chat function in addition to the regular one. Participant FG2 said: "*I like Office Communicator if I want an instant response – I can't wait and I can see you, you are on green, why don't you answer me? – I stalk them. I don't use the camera one though, because I think they are probably busy and you know how it's, like, 'Look at me!' – it's a bit creepy.*"

In addition to those tools, the focus group mentioned customised TV for the lunchrooms in the organisations, which were used at some period in the past.

Participant FG3 would like to use smartphones better to record videos, but the editing and the transfer from the phone to the organisation's system seemed problematic. The focus group did not discuss road shows, live chats, or webinars, without mentioning a reason.

In summary, Organisation One uses a range of communication tools to reach employees. Email is considered to be main one and is also used to document work. The organisation has implemented strategies to deal with the high frequency of emails such as supervised email templates for communication with frontline staff and weekly meetings to summarise important emails. Face-to-face communication is considered the most valuable channel of connection. Managers use floor-walks and road shows for face-to-face interaction with staff. Sometimes, face-to-face communication is not possible, because parts of the business are outsourced (to India) or because of time constraints. Other channels mentioned by the interviewees and focus group were teleconferences, live chats, video, webinars, and Office-Communicator.

Organisation Two uses emails as the standard communication tool. Emails are the main channel for reaching front line staff, and interviewees and focus group participants agreed on the need to decrease the number of emails. Face-to-face communication is favoured and is ideally the first line of contact. Face-to-face is also considered a standard communication channel, being practiced through general meetings and road shows. Management especially favours road shows because of the honest and open connection they allow with employees. Live-chats and teleconferences are used too, although the technical setup seems to be difficult. Office Communicator is mainly used for its instant chat function, but it can also be used to monitor colleagues.

Tools Summary

Table 3: Organisation One Tool Summary

Tool	Explanation	Organisational use and understanding of the tool	Democracy-enabling elements	Democracy-hindering elements
Emails	Electronic messages sent from one person or group to another	• An information system to keep employees up-to-date • Used to carry other media such as videos and newsletters • Used extremely frequently • Used to document work • Used weekly for department updates • Filtered by submission forms in the case of emails to the whole organisation		• Submission forms for organisation-wide emails
Face-to-face communication	Physical face-to-face encounters	• Considered the most important way of communicating • A way to establish work relationships • Practiced by management in the case of 'floor walks' • Preferred way of communication, though not always possible (some departments' back office functions are carried out in India)	• Building up of personal relationships and networks	• Danger that floor walks can be misunderstood
Roadshows	Senior leadership travelling through the country and visiting offices to engage and to give and receive feedback	• An organisational way of practicing face-to-face communication • Executives' method of engaging with frontline staff	• Engagement with and feedback to leadership	• The limitation that not every employee is able to participate (to speak in front of a group)

Teleconferences, live chats	Meetings via phone or computer with an unlimited number of participants	• Used to brief staff and answer questions		• Moderation of questions and answers
Videos	Messages for employees recorded on video	• Used by executive team to present general updates and inform staff • Understood as an alternative to emails	• Greater chance that staff will gather information since a range of channels are used to distribute it	• Lack of familiarity with these tools on the part of some employees (digital divide)
Webinars	(Short for web-seminars) Virtual classrooms in which a presenter uses slides and a recorded audio track to interact with participants	• Mainly used for training purposes	• Staff throughout the country can participate	• (In comparison to seminars) tendency to isolate and therefore disengage staff
Office Communicator	Internal chat programme	• Used to exchange instant messages	• Direct conversation without much organisation	

Table 4: Organisation Two Tool Summary

Tool	Explanation	Organisational use and understanding of the tool	Democracy-enabling elements	Democracy-hindering elements
Emails	Electronic messages sent from one person or group to another	• Understood as the traditional, standard way of communication • Used extremely frequently; in general, management and staff try to decrease the number of emails • No longer used at all by some teams; internal social media used instead • Used especially for operational communication and to communicate with frontline staff • Access to send emails to the whole organisation is limited to a few		• Limited access to recipient groups
Face-to-face communication	Physical face-to-face encounters	• Standard communication channel • Most valued way of communication • Most likely to elicit responses from colleagues • Good way to engage (depending on the desired outcome)	• Better engagement with staff and colleagues	• Inequality among employees of opportunities to connect with the rest of the organisation
Roadshows	Senior leadership travelling through the country and visiting offices in order to engage and to give and receive feedback	• Used by CEO and business directors, who go on one roadshow a year • One roadshow includes 29 different locations • Favoured by some staff members because they like the interaction between employees	• Opportunity to engage with the workplace beyond the actual work	• Discomfort of some employees with speaking up in front of a group

Teleconferences, live chats	Meetings via phone or computer with an unlimited number of participants	• Used for big groups (500-600 individuals) • Designed to allow two-way conversation • Complex and difficult to set up and use • (Live-chats) used ten to twelve times in 2013	• Two-way communication (if it can be achieved)	• Not all staff have the same opportunity to participate (some have no desk phone) • Difficulty in being involved if 500 employees have the same opportunity to contribute
Office Communicator	Internal chat programme	• Used for instant messaging (one-on-one) • Allows the exchange of instant messages and provides information on whether employees are in the office or not	• Direct communication	• Questionable nature of the 'monitor' function

4.2.2 Social Media

Both organisations use the same internal social media tool. Organisation One referred to the tool as internal collaboration tool, which was not launched at the time of the study. Organisation Two launched internal social media fully six months prior to the research. However, the original setup is the same for both organisations. The following table demonstrates the functions and usability of the newly introduced communication tool.

Table 5: Internal Communication Tool Functions

Function	Description	Use
Individual profiles	Staff can create own profiles including a picture, position in the organisation, some personal information and a list of expertise. The individual profiles are similar to *Facebook* profiles.	While engaging in a conversation staff can see who is participating.
Following people or communities	The 'follow 'option enables staff to stay informed about a particular topic (community) or to listen to selected colleague. If staff follow a community or a person then every post of that community or of that person will appear in the individual Newsfeed.	Reduces the number of emails and minimises double-handling of information.
Newsfeed	Every profile has a Newsfeed where all information from followed people and communities are collected.	Newsfeeds is an alert mechanism that is used as an overview of current communication streams.
Communities	Interests groups, which have different purposes (project work, feedback groups or brainstorming collectives). This feature is used to unite interest and group users around a topic.	Organisation Two has the green-team which organises their projects through communities, and cultural groups who share cultural heritage. Organisation One had not yet launched their internal social media at the time of the study.

Organisation One – Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:

Managers in Organisation One referred to the upcoming introduction of social media into their internal communication system as a positive event. Interviewee IC3 remembered *Yammer* as a social media tool once used in Organisation One that was subsequently abandoned due to a lack of structure and knowledge about its use. At the time of research, Organisation One was in the process of introducing a social media tool for internal communication, which they referred to as an *'internal collaboration tool'* (IC4). This tool incorporated all typical social media functions from known social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn*: individual profiles including lists of expertise and newsfeeds, creation and joining of groups or communities, feedback and idea walls, and facilitated discussions. The managers described this new communication tool as a *'game changer'* (IC4) that delivers messages in a range of ways. According to the managers, the new tool may consume more time at first, but, according to all the interviewees, social media and the workplace are merging together. Manager IM1 explained: "*I have created a Twitter account and I have said that I work for* [Organisation One] *… For me, Twitter is probably more a work channel – a professional channel – but, to represent me as a person, I need to have some personal things up there as well, because I am not* [Organisation One]; *I am* [IM1]. *It is kind of, just, having a mixture* [of information]." Furthermore, users of external social media platforms such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* are approaching the organisation already, and managers are using these platforms for internal use to connect with their employees.

Throughout the interviews, it became obvious that the success of the adoption of the new communication tool depends on how it is introduced to the organisation. Especially vital for its success are regional managers, who need to introduce their teams to it, but also to step back and let the social platform develop so that employees can engage with it and with communities (or groups) on it. Interviewee IC4 explained: "[We are] *taking a very proactive approach to* [introducing social media to the organisation]. [The success of the introduction process] *will depend on that person* [community manager] *and then stepping back a step*." The interviewees

plan on introducing the internal communication tool through videos, information kiosks, leaflets, and regional managers (group leaders for front-line staff), who will need to engage their staff, while stepping back at the same time.

Overall, the management will introduce this tool into the employees' working lives by creating a business need for it. IC3 explains that "*The best practice, what* [the software developer] *advises … is that you have a strong business use for needing it, and that will make sure that it's adopted much faster and becomes more a part of people's working days,* [rather] *than just this other thing that we can offer.*" That means that the employees should have to use the new tool in order to complete their work. However, at the same time, people can and should use the tool to connect on a social level in order for it to reach its full potential. Another strategy mentioned by the interviewees is demonstration of the use of the tool by the leading management.

As an internal collaboration tool, internal social media will mimic the functions of existing well-known social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn*. To demonstrate it, managers can send messages and encourage people to participate. They will be able to engage with staff in real time, and staff can connect with each other instantly in turn. This is supposed to free up the workflow, decrease the number of emails, and, eventually, fully function as a complete internal communication. "[The social media tool] *allows you to create communities, and community means that you can have … feedback walls, … [and] idea walls … [and] use it to generate ideas and facilitate discussions … Leaders can push out a message to their teams through it and, in general, it just gives staff the opportunity to go in and create a profile to add a photo, list areas of expertise*" (IC3). However, a challenge expressed by the managers will be a lack of engagement: "*The biggest risk with bringing this in is that people don't use it, so we are doing everything to make sure that people have a motivation to get involved*" (IC3).

According to the interviewees, Organisation One realised that businesses and their workplaces are becoming more social media-oriented when the executive team visited Silicon Valley[3]. The leadership team already uses external social media (*Twitter*, *LinkedIn*) to engage internally with staff. The interviewees explained that internal social media is the next step to make people feel included. Furthermore, the interviewees acknowledge that the organisation comprises of people with personal interests and ideas. Social media can facilitate those interests and needs, even if that risks loss of control. About this risk, Interviewee IC4 said that: "*Obviously* [social media] *has some risks, but I think that is just the changing world we are living in, and we have to deal with those risks rather than shy away from them and miss the opportunity that it opens.*" In general, Organisation One is keen to educate and upskill its employees to enable them to do a better job. The interviewees clarified that social media can provide people with a voice and remove the hierarchy of the system. "*The social collaboration tool is an opportunity …* [for] *people actually collaborating across the business, up and down the hierarchical structure. You have got a lot more engagement from staff, because they feel they have got a voice*" (IM1).

Organisation One - Focus Group employees:

Organisation One's focus group did express reservations over the benefits and challenges of the new communication tool. At the time of the discussion, the tool had not yet been launched, and the group mainly expressed ideas about what they thought the new internal communication tool was about and how they could implement it in their work. As for benefits, throughout the discussion, they identified several, such as the option to better communicate with frontline staff. "*I definitely can see benefit there, because* [frontline staff] *are separate; they are almost siloed*

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[3] Silicon Valley = "A region on the San Francisco Peninsula in California where the miniaturized electronics industry is centered, so called because most of the devices built there are made of semiconductors such as silicon … The term is often used as a catchword to describe the development of high-tech industry." (The American Heritage, 2015b)

from the [head office staff], *even though they are our front people. … While* [different departments] *can be siloed, we never should be siloed from the frontline*" (FG8). Other members of the group saw benefits in the new tool as a filter to use to receive and look for specific information. (The group would probably not use the new way of communicating to organise social events, but only for work-related matters.)

Although the group understands that the tool is an addition to the intranet and will probably be used to share stories and connect with people in an interactive way, the group was concerned about increase in workload due to having to deal with an additional "*thing*" (FG8). The same participant said that stories through the new platform are either social-media related – and "*I don't need to know that*" – or work-related – and "*it will come through a different channel*". Furthermore, two out of the four participants had a very strong opinion about social media as a tool for communication across borders throughout the whole organisation. In their eyes, there was not much additional benefit in the ability to talk to the whole organisation. The general objectives and policies of the different business units within the organisation were too different. "*What would we work on? What is a project that we both benefit from?*" (FG8).

Some participants were concerned that the new tool might be just a different way of communicating and, therefore, an additional layer of work (FG8). Ideally, the new system would altogether reduce the workload by reducing the number of emails, prioritising communication, and connecting them to frontline staff: "*We should never be siloed from the frontline*" (FG8).

Organisation Two – Interviews with internal communications manager and staff:
Interviewees from Organisation Two described their use of social media tools as a stream of communication in which staff can comment, discuss, and engage. "[Social media allows employees to] *actually have conversations within the business – a two-way conversation rather than … pushing information out. Now there is this way where you push and people can collaborate back and post ideas, and you can*

crowd-source feedback. All these endless possibilities came out" (IC2). The platform sits within the intranet and connects users through newsfeeds and communities, that is, groups based on common interests similar to *Facebook* groups. Through the stream of communication rather than through a one-way email conversation, staff can start and join discussions. While the intranet just hosts information, internal social media can provide staff with a two-way communication stream. According to the interviewees, employees can thus collaborate and give feedback regardless of their physical location. "[Through social media, we] *move away from the traditional ways like email and actually have conversations within the business, a two-way conversation.*" (IC2). That means that staff have the option of sharing their thoughts and reacting immediately to management. How realistic these ideas are is unclear at this stage of the study.

The interviewees describe communities as groups on social media platforms that unite people with the same interest. Communities were introduced in July 2014 after a short pilot period and started to grow organically. In order to create a community, staff need to submit a purpose statement to the communication team, who decide whether it should be launched. One interviewee said, "*We don't want to police them too much, but … governance is key*" (IC2). The interviewees explained that the communication team has the full picture of all the communities and, therefore, wants to govern the whole process. At the same time, the communication management described the internal culture as open (IM2). This basic contradiction highlights the different perspectives employers and employees have.

In 2011, Organisation Two introduced a comment function permitting feedback on intranet articles. Although these comments were moderated, the interviewees explained that this created a culture of openness, which lead to self-moderation and a mature environment. Manager IM2 explained: "*I think we've always had an open culture, able to communicate, so, three years ago* [2011], *we opened up comments on the intranet so you could comment freely on any story – at a time when people were still moderating comments. So I knew that other communication teams …*

would get the comments and they would decide whether it should appear public or not. We just put it up. I think that created a culture of openness." Everything on the intranet is visible to the staff, and anyone can follow any community.

In addition, communities are growing in popularity and the management of them is becoming more difficult: *"We're getting a lot of requests for them* [communities], *and that has become a bit of a trouble"* (IC2). Another interviewee said that there is really no moderation, although interviewee IC1 had to talk to a staff member about an inappropriate profile picture. Interviewee IC1 said: *"Good governance actually translates into great content practice or great content management … You have a team of people to moderate or create whatever they might need to do to be the governors, but not the heavy-handed ones, to guide and advise, 'This is what we will do, this is what we won't do, this is what a community is, this is what a community isn't, this is the fact sheet – you should read before you set it up, we need three moderators and we need you to be engaged with it. It is not something that you can leave too long by itself.' Once we got those ground rules in place, there really haven't been any problems."*

According to the interviewees, it seems that many employees are engaging in social media and newsfeeds, but there are groups that do not use the new communication tools. Some employees, who have been with the organisation for 25 or more years, do not use them, which seems fine to the interviewees. Interviewee IC1 clarifies the point: *"Then you got the social media stuff, which is still new to a lot of generations; we've got people, they've worked here for twenty-five years plus … so we don't rely on it as being the source of the truth."* Besides, newsfeeds and communities are, as mentioned, embedded in the intranet, which requires a personal login. Frontline staff usually do not own a personal work computer, nor do they have the time to engage in back-office communication. Interviewee IC2 explains that *"People in the corporate building have, probably, more time to view that stuff* [communities] *than a* [frontline worker]; *they are too busy serving customers and they all share a computer, and this* [intranet] *relates to the personal login."* The interviewees said that they want to

include frontline staff, but that it is difficult and that they might not be able to reach everyone in the organisation.

The interviewees explain that the CEO is engaged in newsfeeds and shares stories about his child. This engagement is supposed to forge a connection between him and the employees. At first, the management was concerned about the time the new tools might consume, and how it would affect the company's culture. Such concerns were addressed with the new system, which includes a profile connected to the employee's name so that any activity can be linked to a specific employee. Although the new tool might consume time, it also saves time in the long run, and managers are responsible for their staff as always. IM2 clarifies this point: *"It's not different for somebody sitting at the desk and putting their feet up and reading the paper. It's a manager's responsibility to make sure you do your work. If you happen to be on social media for a certain percentage of time, then that is up to the manager to manage. It's not for us to block out that part of the world just because we think people won't work hard enough."*

Staff use the communities function in a range of ways. The interviewees specify that some regional managers use communities as a forum to honour their staff, for example, posting an 'Employee of the Week'. Others, such as the green team, unite people throughout the organisation for their projects. They have stopped using email altogether and are focusing on using the new tool for their projects in the business context. The interviewees explain that other communities or interest-based groups formed themselves around cultural topics (such as Diwali[4]), in which regard, although the pure business focus is lacking, a good working environment is created. Interviewee IC1 said that social groups with no business purpose are not implemented yet. The call centre provides an example of the successful use of communities. Their newsfeed community is working well. IC1 explains that *"We also*

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[4] Diwali = "a major Hindu religious festival, honouring Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Held over the New Year according to the Vikrama calendar, it is marked by feasting, gifts, and the lighting of lamps" (Collins English Dictionary, 2015).

have a recently-formed one for our direct call centre, and they have taken it up like gang busters; it is amazing; it has literally taken over." The call centre is busy, and team members cannot meet often, in part because they are so busy and in part because they are in different locations. The call-centre uses the communities, for example, to stay in touch and share Christmas pictures. It is also a place for the call centre to come together, discuss customer feedback, and honour good employees. The interviewees explain that, at the time of the study, 550 employees (ten per cent of the organisation's population) were following a community. Interviewee IC1 specifies that "*Our external social media expert … likes this great stat, which is, … 90 percent look, nine percent comment and/or may take some form of action, and one per cent actually do the majority of commenting activity; and, roughly, anecdotally, we have seen the same.*"

The interviewees explained that the social media tool is used with a business purpose. That means, for example, that all communities need to be related to the organisation's business. However, the management uses this channel for non-business-related messages in order to connect with their staff better (according to the management). Furthermore, social media can be used for quick feedback (polls) and accomplishing tasks. The green team integrated the new channel into their work completely and stopped using emails for their work. Internal social media is also used to praise good work and find intellectual capital within the organisation by searching the users' profiles. According to the management, the CEO uses social media to connect with employees over stories about his children, which makes him more approachable. The next step would be to create some kind of app for the employees' phones and tablets in order to send push notifications.

Organisation Two - Focus Group with employees:

The focus group explained that staff use the intranet for both private and business purposes. Participants use the tool to communicate about various projects. One participant explained that she uses the newsfeed often, keeping it on a second screen in the background. Depending on the conversation, she posts comments

once or twice a week from her own account and a few times on behalf of her manager. The focus group outlines that the communities are an excellent way for staff to connect with each other. The communication team sets up the communities, but it is then up to the participants in those communities to engage and invite others. As part of communication, the communities are a useful way to organise projects. The number of communities and participants is growing fast and the understanding of them is growing and changing too.

In addition, the group liked the community structure for its filter function. It is easy to filter information and subscribe to topics rather than to people. The focus group especially noticed the difference between 'pulling' your own information and somebody else (probably the management) 'pushing' it (usually by email) to everyone they think should get it. With communities, the employees are able to select a number of people who are connecting over one topic.

When describing the social media tool and internal communication, the participants explained the "unwritten rules" they follow. These rules have developed through using the tool and can be considered as guidelines rather than rules:

- Users need to be active within the group
- Communities need a clear purpose and framework
- Every participant needs to understand how communities work
- Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined
- The objective for the user needs to be clear
- Use of communities cannot be just another layer of work

The focus group clarified that expectations of the group needed to be managed beforehand; the newsfeed can then be a useful tool for receiving and reacting to instant feedback. One participant explained that the internal social media tool prevents issues from developing in the background and suddenly becoming urgent. The newsfeed can also reduce, if not replace, email chains, especially when communities record conversations for everyone to follow. That prevents staff from

repeating similar comments about one issue, and the whole discussion can move forward faster. In addition, the focus group explained that internal social media can capture employees' voices, which can develop throughout a discussion. Employees do not have to play the role of experts to make a valuable contribution towards a project or conversation. Someone in the group will know the answer, and the community will learn together. Furthermore, according to the focus group, an answer from a peer can be received as more credible than from a lesser known superior, because trust and a relationship are already established.

Although the focus group had a positive outlook on the new communication tool, there were a few points of criticism. Some participants found it hard to follow communities in the way they were used to on similar platforms such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*. They kept comparing the system to these other social media platforms. Furthermore, some participants experienced a generation gap. Some did not agree with the new way of communication, and preferred a more traditional approach towards information distribution. Participant FG2 said: "*She wants white pages with black ink on it. She does not want all this noise, all this colour, anything that attracts everyone else.*"

Some focus group members outlined ways to improve the internal communication structure. One mentioned smartphones for all employees in order for push notifications and messages to be sent. Others mentioned the need to become more pro-active with the new system, for example if the service desk becomes aware of a problem, they could send out a message that they are working on it before they receive a number of messages about the same issue.

In summary, at the time of the research, social media was not implemented in Organisation One's internal communication structure, but the organisation was about to launch it internally. Specifically, they planned to launch an internal collaboration tool allowing the typical activities of social media, such as creating an individual profile, creating and joining groups (in this case communities) of interest,

having some form of feedback system that enables a two-way communication flow, and following people or interests groups. The internal collaboration tool will be embedded within the intranet and replace *Yammer* as the social media tool. Risks were outlined as lack of engagement by the employees and an increase in workload for users. While awareness of these risks was shown, Organisation One had decided to take them in order to provide improved collaboration and to avoid missing an opportunity.

Organisation Two had introduced its internal social media tool fully six months prior to the research. The tool enables staff to discuss, comment, and give feedback on current projects. Especially important is that within the context of communities on this platform, employees and the management can carry on two-way communication about any given topic. Benefits listed included noticing problems before they become issues and giving every user the opportunity to speak up or demonstrate their expertise in any conversation. Although most employees have the technical capability to join the internal social media network, not all do. Both interviewees and focus group participants described employees who either did not want to use the new tool or were unable to in terms of general knowledge about social media (a digital divide).

The focus group participants described unwritten rules for the use of social media, for example: users need to be active, communities need to have a clear purpose, responsibilities need to be clearly defined, and communication using the social media tool cannot result in additional work (double-handling communication). At the moment, communities' topics need to be business-related, although the CEO does use social topics to engage with staff. Some focus group participants discussed further development of the tool and suggested a smart phone application to push short messages through to the users.

<u>4.3 Workplace Democracy</u>

This section focuses on workplace democracy supportive and unsupportive practices. It illuminates examples provided by the interviewees and focus group participants that show typical organisational behaviour, which can be workplace democracy supportive or threatening. The discussion draws on indicators of workplace democracy enabling practices outlined in the literature review above. This section aims to answer sub-question three of this research: '*What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*'

4.3.1 Workplace Supportive Practices and Values of Democracy
This category presents evidence for democracy supportive behaviour and highlights some examples that illustrate how workplace democracy can be practiced in each organisation.

<u>Organisation One:</u>
Engagement and participation is a central theme for workplace democracy. Organisation One's interviewees define engagement as trust between employee and employer or manager, ideally involving open, two-way, face-to-face conversations. When there is trust, people are encouraged by the management to share ideas. They are considered a part of the organisation. In order to investigate whether the employee-employer relationship exhibits these qualities, an engagement survey is run once a year by an external organisation. The interviewees explain that senior leaders take the survey outcome into account and build their leadership strategies around the engagement score. The survey includes questions like, "*Do you feel you can speak without fear of reprise? Do you trust the direction of this company? Do you trust the leadership? Do you feel like someone has your best interest at heart? Do you feel like there is enough training and development?*" (IM1). The leadership team also looks at verbatim comments if the score is low. Sometimes, people need a little guidance in how to talk to their teams, and the overall engagement score can reveal this need.

The interviewees said that senior leaders understand road shows and webinars with instant feedback circles as being supportive of engagement. Manager IM1 indicated that the organisation has a strong tradition of communicating messages top-down, but is not so good at bottom-up communication. The interviewees explained that this was one of the reasons why the management introduced social media internally: to change that dynamic and establish a network across the hierarchical organisation structure. *"You get people actually collaborating across the business, up and down the hierarchical structure, so you have got a lot more engagement from staff, because they feel they have got a voice"* (IM1). As well as improving collaboration, the management wants to save staff time and encourage them to share knowledge across the whole organisation, increasing engagement and validating the tool for staff.

The internal social media tool was introduced to Organisation One for a number of reasons. The interviewees listed as another reason its feedback function, through which a project can be reviewed and evaluated. At the time of the study, the internal social media tool was appointed for business use and work-related tasks only.

Regional managers are asked to look after their employees and will facilitate their community on the new social platform. If guidance is needed, regional managers can receive help and be upskilled in leading their teams. The interviewees clarify that connection through social media is supposed to create pride in the organisation and connection between employees. The risk that employees might damage the organisation's brand by acting inappropriately, thus reflecting back on the organisation or complicating internal working structure, is described by manager IM1 in the following terms: *"We have to deal with those risks rather than shy away from them and miss the opportunity that it* [social media] *opens"* (IM1).

<u>Organisation Two:</u>

Engagement for the interviewees in Organisation Two is connection. They define it further as culture around a single unifying brand that brings employees together and creates a sense of belonging (IM2). The interviewees explained that Organisation Two tries to support engagement through face-to-face communication and the way in which the leadership delivers messages. Furthermore, the organisation tries to empower employees by creating knowledge bases, that is, by sharing knowledge with the whole organisation; in doing this, business can be carried on in a smarter manner and intellectual capital within the organisation can be unlocked by identifying employees skills that are not directly related to their primary work.

The focus group participants said that engagement was already an established theme before the advent of social media in Organisation Two. The CEO would write personalised letters to each employee. Later, he would send personal emails to staff. Although the emails were not well received, the participants explained, the intention was clear: staff engagement. Through social media, the CEO intends the same and becomes more approachable by sharing personal stories. Furthermore, it becomes easier to include people from the front line (FG4), even though they are busy and hard to approach. Another way in which social media supports engagement and personal responsibility is through the power of personal connections. Comments, suggestions and solutions proposed by peers are more likely to strike a chord with employees due to a sense of connection and trust through personal relationship. The focus group explained that, in order for this to happen, the social media platform needs to be built on clear rules and structure. Furthermore, the focus group discusses the risk that comes along with employees using social media. "*All it takes, doesn't matter how secure, how private you make everything, is one person to accidently copy and paste the wrong thing in the wrong place*" (FG5). The group discusses further, though, that while the likelihood of error might be high, the impact is low, and that, therefore, Organisation Two should embrace social media.

The focus group highlighted the fact that social media especially supports engagement. Managers of Organisation Two are visible on newsfeeds as they directly engage with staff over questions. Through communities, employees can share content across and throughout the organisation and can collaborate on similar topics. Furthermore, social media allows staff to receive easy feedback and make shared decisions. "*You can give people what they want, rather than saying this is what we think people want*" (FG4). Another benefit the focus group described is that communities do not need moderation. If a mistake is made, the community generates a conversation about it, rather than management imposing a correction or shut-down.

The interviewees add that the introduction of social media to the organisation has helped employees to engage with the business over long distances. Although the tool has a strong business focus, some communities relate it to multinational interactions and ethnic heritage. According to the interviewees, these groups share their culture and can relate to each other through that cultural heritage; some learn from a different culture. Another example of the use of social media in Organisation Two is that made by the CEO. He engages with his employees on a social level by sharing stories of his children, which gives staff the opportunity to relate to and connect with him.

The interviewees described the internal social media tool as having a big impact on engagement. The CEO's involvement within the same channels that staff use and his encouragement to staff to use social media instead of emails has made a difference for the interviewees. They went on to say that another improvement in staff engagement is live-chats between senior leaders and groups of employees. This level of interaction is the closest thing to face-to-face communication that Organisation Two can manage on a regular basis. The interviewees said that social media simplifies the connection by enabling every employee to talk and participate with the rest of the organisation. As mentioned above, the social media tool can

serve as a platform for garnering feedback, running polls, and giving everyone the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge or expertise.

In summary, Organisation One defines engagement as trust between employer and employee, with open, two-way, and face-to-face conversations. In an engaged organisation, managers encourage employees to share their ideas and both parties consider themselves part of the organisation. To this end, Organisation One conducts an annual survey, which measures engagement and records employees' comments verbatim about whether they feel engaged with the workplace. Management stated that they already used communication tools such as webinars with instant feedback circles and emphasised the soon-to-be-introduced internal collaboration tool intended to support engagement, encourage bottom-up conversations, and enable staff to form networks across hierarchical borders. In addition, the tool is intended to enable employees to build up a knowledge base and gain an understanding of the big picture. The interviewees mention some risks of the new tool, and the organisation is willing to accept these in order to embrace the above-mentioned opportunities that come along them.

Engagement is defined by Organisation Two as connection. The interviewees explained that connection, to them, is achieved when staff feel that they belong to the organisation and when management is able to foster a working environment. They went on to define engagement as a culture around a single unifying brand that brings people together. They try to achieve this by communicating face-to-face as much as they can, by building up a knowledge base to empower staff, and by using the new social media tool to accept feedback and take it into account in their decisions. In addition, Organisation Two tries to embrace on open-comment culture and to understand risks (such as that of difficult or inappropriate comments on internal social media) as conversation starters rather than problems.

4.3.2 Workplace Unsupportive Practices and Values of Democracy

This section demonstrates evidence of practices and values in the workplace that hinder the development of workplace democracy. For example the topic 'content moderation' is understood differently throughout the interviews and focus groups and this section will demonstrate the different perspectives on the topic in regards to workplace democracy.

Organisation One:

While talking about the benefits of social media, the interviewees of Organisation One emphasised that no moderation was necessary and that many different opinions can be shared. "*We're all about having opinions, so, hopefully, we'll get lots of that…*" (IC3). However, later in the conversation, the same interviewee mentioned that it is the duty of the community manager to step in if somebody crosses the line. "*…But if anyone starts to cross the line, that is where our community managers start to step in*" (IC3). Other interviewees described online chats as a bottom-up conversation and a way to have different opinions. "*We are very good at doing push-down [messages], top-down communication, because that is the channels we have, but what we don't have the ability to do so much of is bottom-up communication. So we also use online chat*" (IM1). Proof that online chats support bottom-up conversations and different opinions was not offered. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that questions and answers in online chats were moderated to keep them together for further use. "*Staff can ask a question online and they will respond to that question. We are moderated so that we keep the questions and answers together*" (IM1).

The engagement survey records comments verbatim which are then used to detect flaws in leadership. The management will then provide help and guidance to community managers so that they can lead people well. "*If there is an issue, you might have a high engagement score, but one particular region might be a bit low, so you look into the staff comments … and some of it might be as simple as you having a weekly sales meeting, but you just telling your staff things – you are not*

actually asking them for feedback. And sometimes people just need a little bit of guidance that way" (IM1). In addition, some interviewees understand engagement as something measured (through the survey) and expressed in a score. *"Engagement, for us, is something that is measured"* (IC3).

It seems that the interviewees make the assumption that all employees want to succeed in their work, meaning they want to increase the value of the business. *"We want to succeed; we want the business to succeed; we want to make sure that we do our best job for our leaders. We do what we can to help each other"* (IM1). Organisation One supports this attitude with annual awards designed to honour employees who have increased business value directly or through living the values. *"Staff nominate colleagues who are particularly good at living the values – you know, doing the right thing for customers and adding real value to the business"* (IM1).

Interviewee IC4 explained that, when using internal social media, and, indeed, when using external social media for internal purposes, employees become agents for the organisation, which will reflect inadvertently on both the organisation and themselves. It seems that the organisation is fine with employees publicly sharing general events, but that, when it comes to more critical issues, the organisation refers to restrictions in its code of conduct. *"If you are doing some really good stuff in the community with work – […], you might be donating money to a charity, you might be doing a bake-off and selling sausages outside your* [office] *– that stuff you can absolutely share on Facebook or Twitter or LinkedIn, like, 'Great to be at work today. We were giving away sausages at lunch time to everybody that comes past our* [office],*' you know, that is fine. But, if you go and say* [unnamed organisation] *thinks such and such, that would be wrong, because you would not be a spokesperson"* (IM1).

Organisation Two:

While social media was implemented for the sake of connection, "[The call-centre] *is forming this connection* [through communities] *without leaving their workstation*" (IM2). One interviewee pointed out that communities could also be used to organise longer and more flexible working hours and locations. "[The call-centre employees] *work various hours and they are on phones and they are looking forward to have people working from home (so they can work longer hours and it is more flexible and stuff) but to keep them engaged. They want them to be a part of the community. The online social community means that while working from home, you still can be in touch with people who are in the actual contact centre and keep that cultural engagement up as well, so they don't feel isolated and by themselves. And that is another benefit of social media: it brings culture and people together*" (IC2). This allows the cost saving and flexibility of having people at home, instead of in the office.

Interviewees referred to the social media guidelines about how to use the tool. However, the guidelines were not easy to find until recently. "*There is a question in risk awareness that is a gremlin and asks about our social media guidelines. … It turned out it was actually really hard on* [our intranet] *to find our social media guidelines. That is fixed now with a link*" (FG2).

Although interviewees from Organisation Two insist that they are not monitoring their staff, there are examples that suggest otherwise:

> IC1: "*The only person who I had to moderate was a person, whose avatar was I don't think appropriate he had a horse's head and a gun … we are working in a [unnamed organisation] …*"
> Researcher: "*Great, so you talked a little bit about moderating,* you [directed to IC1] *talked about this profile, which was inappropriate. How did you pick that up?*"
> IC1: "*I saw it*"

Researcher: *"You just saw it? So you weren't looking?"*

IC1: *"Yeah, it was early days, really early days. In fact, it was probably in the first three days of Newsfeed being to our homepage. I think he was super eager and I saw it and was able to contact him … but to be honest … we just don't have it* [moderation]*"* (IC1).

Moreover, the internal communication team has a sub-team of three people that monitor the internal social media space. They have only encountered very few incidents in which they had to step in and remind people of the code of conduct. *"He was more than happy and completely understood. We moderate* [internal social media] *in terms that we make sure that there is nothing aggressive, rude, or outlandish – we always tell all our users and* [employees] *to comply to our code of conduct"* (IC1). The interviewees clarified that the reason the number of incidents they had to moderate was so small was the positive organisational culture and the free and open way in which employees can talk within the organisation. Manager IM2 explained that, in 2011, they started to let employees comment on articles. Although this was moderated at the time, according to the interviewees, it created an open culture which is now self-moderated by the employees. The organisation grows along with communication tools, and can deal with this latest addition as well.

Furthermore, the organisation has planned to evaluate all communication tools used in the organisation and add moderation so that they can unite and organise all communication. *"People talk in many different ways … all the tools that our* [employees] *use to talk to their clients,* [we are] *trying to bring them in and bring a ring around* [them] *and say, 'What is it? Let's talk about this! What do you think it means, and can we put some loose governance around it from a [unnamed organisation]'s perspective"* (IC1).

The focus group explained that the CEO tries to connect with his employees through letters, emails, and now social media. The CEO shares stories and personal suggestions such as restaurant recommendations. The focus group mentions that

this restaurant review was nice, but not related to them because they have a different budget and simply cannot afford it. The focus group argued that this recommendation did not help engagement but, rather, drove them further apart. "*A few years back, the CEO would send a weekly email to* [us] *and he would talk about what he is doing. He came from* [a city] *… and would talk about, 'Last weekend I popped back to* [my city] *and spent some time on the farm,' and then, in the end of it, he would do a restaurant review. He tried to be personal, but the restaurant review would be* [an expensive restaurant] *or somewhere up there, and everyone is looking and going, 'we don't have a farm in* [this city] *and we don't eat out there. This man earns a lot more than me. Why don't you give us a review on McDonalds?'*" (FG5).

In summary, while talking to interviewees and participants from Organisation One, it became clear that they monitor their communication tools. They have strict policies and refer to them every time the conversation turns to the topic of risk awareness. The conversations all suggested that Organisation One has a rather narrow understanding of some topics. While they acknowledge a broad definition of engagement, it became obvious that they act on a single engagement score (the outcome of the engagement survey) and that behaviour can be summarily labelled "right" and "wrong". Furthermore, it became clear that increasing business value was the most important goal. The organisation's rewards are structured so as to favour employees who increase the value, and organisational value is measured in terms of business success. While talking about social media and the organisation's reputation, Organisation One paid attention to the risks posed by staff engaging with social media, but failed to reflect on the employees' side of the issue.

Organisation Two refers to its guidelines for the correct use of communication tools, including the new internal social media tool, but, until recently, those guidelines were hard to find. In addition, Organisation Two lists among the benefits of the new tool "longer working hours" and the option to "work from home," which indicates that the best interests catered for by the implementation of the new tool might not be those of employees, even though it was outlined that way. Furthermore, though

interviewees argued that they do not monitor their staff, some interview and focus group stories suggest otherwise. In general, it seems that there is a gap between management and staff as well as between head office employees and frontline staff. The CEO, for example, wrote letters and emails and now posts on social media about his social life in order to engage and connect with his employees, yet this fails due to a lack of empathy, and the well-intentioned communications feed cynicism.

4.4 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter presents the findings from this study categorised by themes developed through the literature and subcategories emerging from the study itself. The following paragraphs outline the study's key findings.

Organisation One's internal communication **structure** is team-based and has a typical hierarchical outlook. The Australian head office oversees some projects. Although the internal structure is strong, sometimes the line between teams is blurry. Organisation Two's internal communication team has 20 members whose roles include intranet and knowledge management. The management does lightly moderate internal communication, but, overall, encourages comments on projects and intranet articles.

Policies in Organisation One are signed to at the start of employment and introduced to staff through online learning. Alongside policies, values are represented by the values acronym. Furthermore, Organisation One understands policies as the legal bottom line for employees, and the focus group pointed out that policies change from business unit to business unit. Organisation Two understands policies in a similar way to Organisation One. They provide e-learning and test employees' knowledge of policies regularly. However, some guidelines were difficult for staff to find in the past, and focus group participants identified the policy on risk and technology as outdated. Furthermore, some focus group participants suggest that staff changes are necessary before the new technological environment is truly adapted to.

 A variety of **communication tools** were used similarly in the two organisations, as shown in the outline above (Tables 3 and 4). Both organisations understand emails as a standard communication tool that is also a carrier for other communication methods, such as newsletters or videos. However, the avenues for sending a message to all staff are limited. Organisation One has submission forms and Organisation Two uses a special tool for it licensed to only a few employees. Both organisations like to use roadshows in order to engage with the staff, although it is arguable whether every employee has an appreciably equal opportunity to connect with the management. However, both organisations valued face-to-face communication as a very important way to build relationships with the employees, while pointing out that such communication was not possible or resource-efficient at times.

At the time of the study, **internal social media** was about to be introduced to Organisation One. Organisation Two had implemented internal social media six months prior to the study. The leadership team of Organisation One learned about internal social media while travelling in the Silicon Valley, and plans were made to introduce internal social media to decrease the number of emails, create a feedback culture, and share knowledge through employees' expertise. The risk that staff would not use the tool was mentioned, and will be addressed through structured introduction of the tool and creation of a business need for employees to use it. Employees are concerned that the new tool might cause them additional work and are unsure about its overall benefit.

Organisation Two understands **internal social media** as a two-way communication platform that initiates collaboration and crowd-sourced feedback. Especially through the introduction of communities, staff can unite over a topic of interest across great geographical distances and share their experiences. The communication team limits the establishment of communities and, at the moment, Organisation Two prescribes a business focus for the tool. However, a few communities which connect on a

cultural level have been established and employees started to engage with them and to establish unwritten rules to make communities successful.

Organisation One defines **engagement** as trust between employer and employee, with open, two-way, and face-to-face conversations. They conduct an engagement survey each year and apply the outcome in the management strategy. Internal social media can help to facilitate engagement and encourage employees to participate in the workplace. Organisation Two defines engagement as connection and creating a culture around a single unifying brand. That is achieved when employees feel that they belong to the organisation. Face-to-face communication, knowledge bases, and feedback circles can empower staff to engage more, and social media can be a new platform that facilitates engagement and participation.

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, it became obvious that Organisation One monitored its communication tools and had clear rules for them. Although the management values engagement, that ideal is understood as a single score from a survey. It seems that Organisation One is happy for its employees to share general activities on social media, but, when it comes to their business, the interviewees point to the code of conduct.

Organisation Two monitors their communication as well – to an unknown extent. Their social media policies were hard to find, even though they are the foundation of the tool. The interviewees pointed out that the new tool might be useful for connecting employees in such a way as to extend their working hours and enable home offices. The focus group mentioned that the good-willed attempt at engagement from the CEO had failed due to a lack of empathy.

"If internet is the new printing press

then what is democracy for the internet era?"

(Mancini, 2014, 6:05)

Chapter 5 – Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from the previous chapter within the context of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The literature review outlined a brief definition and history of workplace democracy, illuminated supporting concepts such as participation and social media and outlined workplace democracy from an organisational perspective. The concept of workplace democracy developed over time and with the advent of supra-national organisations and technological advancement, the concept had to be readjusted. This study understands workplace democracy as connection between employees and their workplaces and defines five key elements: empowerment; participation; responsibility; contribution and network orientation. Participation and the distribution of general knowledge are particularly essential for workplace democracy. Social media was identified as useful tool to enable the above, but remains as merely a tool, which can be used in a beneficial or disadvantageous manner. Organisational literature understands workplace democracy as either a conflict between employers and employees or as the implementation of a horizontal working structure. The conflict peaks in the assumption that employers' and employees' interests are opposed to each other.

The literature review identified a knowledge gap which is addressed with this study's research question: '*What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?*' And sub-questions: '*How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace? How are networked communication tools being*

incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?' 'What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?' The discussion is structured around themes identified from the literature and the emerged categories from the findings: The Contemporary Workplace, Communication Tools and Workplace Democracy. Each section developed emerging subcategories, which are explained throughout the discussion.

5.1 The Contemporary Workplace

This section discusses issues around organisational structure and focuses on 'Moderation and Ambiguity' while it demonstrates workplace democratic supportive and hindering arguments. This discussion tries to illuminate themes around the first sub-question of this research: '*How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*'

5.1.1 Organisational Structure

Throughout the study, evidence indicates that Organisation One operates a mechanistic organisation structure and engages in a hierarchical working environment. Daft (2013) explains that this structure operates with many rules and tasks broken into sub-tasks. This type of structure is opposite to what Davies (2012) and Kokkinidis (2012) call a horizontal working environment that is more conducive for distributing power throughout an organisation. Organisation One has a CEO directing four business units, each led by its own director. Directors are assigned an internal communications manager, who supports them with any communication to staff and may also supervise the external communication team for the assigned director. In addition, Organisation One has a number of policies and a very structured categorisation of them, for example, a staff code of conduct. Employees have to complete learning modules and online tests to demonstrate their understanding of these policies. The findings indicate that external communications and some aspects of internal communication are moderated. There is no doubt that Organisation One operates with a clear top-down communications structure,

although some managers would like to see this changed. '*We are very good at doing push-down* [messages]*, top-down communication, because that is the channels we have, but what we don't have the ability to do so much of is bottom-up communication*' (IM1). Therefore, Organisation One can be described as a mechanistic organisation (see: Pausch, 2013).

Although Organisation One shows no evidence of a horizontal structure, this does not necessarily mean that power cannot be shared. Interviewee IC3, for example, demonstrated this by indicating that although the implementation project is led by the parent organisation in Australia, he is responsible for implementing the internal social media tool in the New Zealand arm of Organisation One, and is empowered to make decisions within the regulated organisation structure outlined above.

The 'floor-walks' that Organisation One managers practice as a form of face-to-face communication are characteristic of what Yazdani (2010) understands as transactional leadership and imply a goal-oriented, systemised, and well-structured environment. However, although 'floor-walks' seem to be engaging from a management perspective, employees may find the idea of having the CEO looking over their shoulders intimidating. Either way, it seems that the management did not reflect on techniques such as floor walks.

The organisational structure of Organisation Two can be described as hierarchical as well. Policies that regulate employees' behaviour and the use of internal communication tools are at the organisation's core. Its internal communication manager and her/his team oversee all communication to staff. The team has 20 members who are in charge of the intranet, knowledge management, and channel administration. Although the team does not search their internal communication for content that does not conform to their code of conduct, they do moderate communication and point out anything 'aggressive, rude, or outlandish' (see following section). Therefore, Organisation Two can be described as a mechanistic

organisation (See: Daft, 2013), which can also be described as a hierarchical working environment with clear rules or, in this case, policies.

With their internal social media tool and guidelines around its use, Organisation Two seems to actively respond to the new digital environment. As Daft (2013) says, the environment has a deep impact on the stability and structure of an organisation. The focus group supported this with their comments on a YouTube video of the CEO encouraging staff, which caused much discussion over confidentiality and the communication tool. While the same content in a different format would have caused no concern, this new distribution method did. The focus group outlined that the risk and technology management policy has not changed with the environment, and a generational shift is probably need in order for the new technologies to be fully adopted and supported by policy. This development is an example of what Kent (2014) understands as the technological impact that has the ability to change the understanding of the workplace. The technological development is further ahead and the workplace needs more time to adapt. Organisation Two explained the process of adaption to the new communication tools as generational struggle by describing difficulties about the internal YouTube video mentioned above and most likely by the time employees and policies have adjusted to the new environment, it will have changed again.

In summary, it is evident that both organisations have a very similar structure, which is not surprising, since both are in the same market. Both have a mechanistic, organisational structure with a hierarchical makeup. In addition, both manage their employees with a transactional leadership style and struggle with a changing environment. In this regard, evidence contributing to an answer to the first sub-question was found. Policies are the centre of the hierarchical, top-down communication structure that regulates employees' behaviour in the workplace. Interview questions and comments around areas of risk for the organisations were especially likely to be answered with reference to policies. Furthermore, the analysis

demonstrated that some communication tools were moderated, which leaves little room for central democratic themes, such as embracing responsibility or autonomy.

5.1.2 Moderation and Ambiguity

Both organisations communicate their policies such as the code of conduct or media policy through learning modules and online training. Yet the guidelines for the use of social media in Organisation Two for example were almost unavailable for staff until recently. Policies are a mandatory element of the working environment of Organisation One and Two, but they are slow in adapting these policies to change. The focus group of Organisation Two argued that the risk and technology policy is outdated and that staff throughout the organisation need to adapt to the social media environment better. Some participants suggested that the organisation could only grow by a generational shift, meaning replacement of employees.

It seems that the organisations are not fully equipped to deal with technological changes. Kent (2014) argues that such changes have a big influence on the workplace, but it takes time to implement them. Both organisations can be described as mechanistic, and the complex, deep-imbedded structure of policies causes an inability to react quickly or be flexible in the face of environmental changes (see: Daft, 2013 and previous section). The inability to react quickly to the new forms of communication in the organisation is a scaled down example of what Holtzhausen (2002) explains for workplace democracy in general. The challenge faced by employers and employees in the workplace is to implement workplace democracy in the face of continuous development in society and the continuous change of democratic practice. The meaning of workplace democracy needs to be continuously contested and modified according to the current societal development (see: Yazdani, 2010). The challenge posed by the rapidly moving society and slow changing understanding of workplace democracy is especially demanding at a micro level. The nature of day-to-day participation changes the overall picture of workplace democracy, and it takes time for the bigger picture to reflect these changes (Holtzhausen, 2002).

Throughout the interviews and focus groups it became obvious that the term 'moderation' was understood differently. While Organisation One interviewees explained that their staff's communications are not moderated (*"We have got* [a number of] *staff around the world; you can't monitor them* [all] *(sic)"* (SM1)), evidence from the focus group suggests otherwise. As participant FG8 explains, they fill out a submission form in order to send a message to front-line staff. *"... The communication team will look at it and will let you know if that is appropriate ... that is how they communicate down to us."* (FG8).

Another example from Organisation Two: the channel manager explained that there is no moderation in general, but isolated incidents, where they had to step in: IC1: *"The only person who I had to moderate was a person ... but to be honest ... we just don't have it* [moderation]" (IC1). It seems that the management of both organisations understand 'moderation' differently than the employees. While both organisations deny the general notion of moderation, they both seem to practice it in a direct or indirect form. Organisation Two: *"We moderate it* [the intranet] *in terms that we make sure that there is nothing aggressive, rude, or outlandish. We always tell all our users and* [employees] *to comply to our code of conduct"* (IC1); and Organisation One: *"Staff can ask a question online and they* [the management team] *will respond to that question. We are moderated so that we keep the questions and answers together"* (IM1).

It seems that both organisations understand themselves as non-moderating in the big picture, yet evidence was found that certain areas are moderated. This ambiguity of moderation resembles the change of workplace democracy by the advent of supra-national institutions. Until the appearance of supra-national institutions, workplace democracy was a concept with a local focus, which was practiced for example by labour unions. Consequently, the scale of required democracy changed from the local workplace to a global environment, with some workplaces spanning several countries. This leaves a power gap which can be filled by big corporations much faster and easier than by labour unions (see: Deetz, 1992). In relation to the

moderation of the workplace by the two organisations mentioned above a similar gap appears. While the overall idea of moderation is rejected, on a smaller scale moderation takes place.

In summary, both organisations have policies to regulate the workplace. In addition, both deny taking the general approach of moderating the workplace as a whole, but evidence was found that communication tools were moderated and that an eye was kept on them. The discussions suggested that the general tendency towards mass moderation was low, but that, because of tradition and deeply-embedded policies, moderation takes place as a part of general business. Nevertheless, the ascendancy of the management is reinforced in this environment.

In conclusion, in terms of this theme, the contemporary workplace was analysed in two sections: first, organisational structure and, second, moderation and ambiguity. The organisations are similar to each other in both sections, which is not very surprising, given that they have a similar outlook and compete in the same market. Both have a hierarchical structure based on policy. Both are slow to respond to environmental change, such as new communication tools, and both are moderate in some areas of the business. The second part of this section focused on workplace moderation. While both organisations denied taking the general approach of moderating their employees, evidence was found that parts of the working environment were moderated.

5.2 Communication Tools

This section focuses on general internal communication tools, internal social media and knowledge bases. This part of the discussion seeks evidence for sub-question two: '*How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*'

5.2.1 Ambiguity of General Communication Tools

All participants used emails very frequently and some had developed coping mechanisms to limit them, such as weekly meetings to discuss the most important messages. Others developed templates and submission forms for communication with the whole organisation. However, it is obvious that interviewees and focus group participants considered email as the main communication tool, which is deeply embedded in the organisations' communication practices. In addition, employers and employees have a different perspective on emails. While employers use the tool to instruct employees and share information they regard as worth sharing; employees use emails mainly to organise and document their work.

Organisation Two has an understanding of emails similar to One's. The interviewees understand emails to be the standard channel, which enable employees and management to communicate. However, in general, both employer and employee try to decrease the number of internal emails and move away from traditional communication (including email) towards other channels, such as social media. The focus group participants certainly use emails on a broad scale. Their capability to send emails to the whole organisation is limited and, in general, they try to meet in person first and use emails as follow-ups. This is especially the case for new work-related relationships.

Face-to-face communication is considered the most valuable kind by both management and staff. Williamson (2004) argues that empowerment and a meaningful input into work conditions is key for a democratic working environment. Whether face-to-face communication in Organisation Two actually provides a fair chance for the employees to speak up remains uncertain though. However, if employer and employee are able to have meaningful conversations, such face-to-face communications can be the forum needed to empower staff. Lansbury (2009) argues that just letting employees speak makes them feel valid and needed. Rolfsen (2009) argues that a dialogue can be the beginning, alongside participation, of re-shaping structure and management. Face-to-face communication doesn't always

result in a dialogue and not every employee feels comfortable speaking up in front of an audience as it is outlined by manager (IM2): "*I suppose, with teleconference or road show … you're really taking quite a leap if you* ask questions *in front of people*". Although, face-to-face communication can be helpful to establish dialogue and empower staff, the findings suggest that if face-to-face communication is practiced through road shows or videoconferences, an expectation that this leads to better empowerment is possibly unrealistic.

As mentioned above, road shows are another example of face-to-face communication. Organisations One and Two designed them for employees to be able to ask questions and engage with the leadership team. Specifically, according to the interviewees, this is an opportunity for employees to contribute towards the organisation; they can speak up and share their perspectives on it. As stated in chapter two, such inclusion and engagement are key factors of a democratic workplace. However, in order for an employee to speak up s/he needs to be confident enough to do so and the right forum needs to ensure, that 'speaking up' is not accompanied by sanctions, which is impossible to guarantee.

Another area where communication tools are obviously used with different perspectives is social media (see also Chapter 5.2.2). Organisation One uses external social media (such as *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*) to connect with employees internally. By doing so employees become externally associated with the organisation and vice versa, and social media inadvertently reflects on both employees and the organisation. Although managers acknowledge that employees' actions on external social media can reflect positively or negatively on the organisation's brand, they state that they are willing to take this risk in order to seize an opportunity to promote their brand on social media. However, this postulates the assumption that employees are happy with being externally associated with the organisation and have the best interests of the business at heart. The concern that employees may take the same risk vice versa is not mentioned. The interviewees explain that employees can share

official events, but for other topics the interviewees refer to the policies and that only the official spokesperson can make a statement about the organisation.

In summary, a number of communication tools are used by both organisations. Email is the standard tool and is used in several ways. Both organisations have developed coping mechanisms to deal with the high volume of emails, and clearance to write emails to the whole organisation is limited. Face-to-face communication has the capacity to facilitate dialogue and empower employees. However, it became evident that the ways in which the organisations practice face-to-face communication (road shows, video conferences, etc.) are not necessary free of sanction, and it is questionable what degree of dialogue and empowerment can coexist with such control. External social media, known for its two-way communication function, is used in a one-way direction. Employees are allowed to share some content, but the organisations point to their policies for "correct" use.

5.2.2 Social Media

Organisation One will introduce a new internal communication tool in early 2015. It is being introduced to better connect staff and includes all typical social media functions from platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*. With this tool, employees and managers will be able to create profiles, join communities, provide feedback, and gather ideas together. Auger (2013), in line with the interviewees, argues that these functions enable participants to have two-way conversations. Furthermore, networks can be built through social media, and in them, staff have the space to unite over their interests. The success of this tool will be determined by the users' willingness to participate. Kent (2013) argues that motivation and interest are especially important for the success of social media. Evidence for this can be found in Organisation One's history with social media. Organisation One initially rolled out the internal communication tool *Yammer* with little support, structure or publicity surrounding its implementation. This time, the management will ensure widespread usage of the new tool, firstly, by creating a serious business use for it so that staff will get used to it. Secondly, managers will use it themselves and demonstrate leadership

in its use. Some managers and employees are already familiar with the use of external social media for internal communication: they share articles on *LinkedIn* or connect with employees on *Twitter*.

The internal communication tool also has a feedback function, which enables employees to evaluate their projects and read evaluations of other projects. The feedback function can trigger increase participation and lead to discussions and dialogue. Rolfsen (2011) argues that the dialogue between groups that deals with their surroundings can impact the management process and even the workplace. Williamson (2004) argues that the empowerment of workers to contribute meaningful input to work conditions is a sign of workplace democracy. These benefits are an ideal outcome and this thesis investigates whether this outcome is a realistic expectation of internal workplace social media.

The internal social media tool will be introduced through a number of communication channels. However, a major criterion for successful implementation is an attitude of inclusion from team leaders, who need to simultaneously encourage its use and also step back to let the platform develop, allowing staff to engage with and facilitate it themselves. Rolfsen (2011) argues that ongoing participation is vital for the success of a good working environment. Furthermore, this tool provides employees with a platform where they can contribute towards the organisation and beyond. Although the management is investing much time and effort into connecting with staff with the new tool, some interviewees question its benefit. They see the advantage in communication with front-line staff, but don't see the new tool being much additional help in their daily work.

With the new collaboration tool, Organisation One has stated its intent to 'create' an internal communication sphere that might bring staff and management closer together. Hoskins (2013) argues that a public sphere, in this case an internal sphere, mediates between the public (employees) and authority (management) and gives both parties space to come together. Steininger (2007) demonstrates that the public

itself constructs a frame that holds society together. That means that employees themselves build the framework for the organisation and that social media might change that framework. Habermas' (1989) concept of the coffee house points out that the sphere is a place to meet regardless of rank or social status. It is questionable whether Organisation One's sphere can facilitate this ideal; nevertheless, it postulates that practically all members are willing to participate and join the sphere. However, the above-mentioned reluctance to use the tool in the first place challenges this assumption.

Organisation Two has already introduced a social media tool to their staff for internal use. It seems that communities are growing naturally around business interests and some cultural interests. Managers use the tool to highlight excellent performance. Ethnic minorities form communities and share their cultural values with the whole workplace. Such cultural groups are a good opportunity to contribute towards the organisation beyond the scope of the daily job. Employees can actively participate by joining conversations and claim responsibility over different topics. Furthermore, users can learn from each other and save that knowledge for other users. This is an excellent example of Kokkinidis (2012) and Peetz & Pocock's (2009) description of network orientation as an essential tool for organising workers and uniting their power for specific goals. On the other hand employees can only share and participate as much as the policies allow them to. In order for the users to build a network and participate beyond their regular workload, they need to be free of possible sanctions. Fenton (2013) argues that social media simply echoes the already existing culture. Therefore it can be said that internal social media might help to maintain a democratic environment, but it does not initiate it.

The concept of social media is to provide a platform for everyone to use and engage in any topic with equal societal status. This concept is difficult to implement in the organisations. While technically everyone has access to the tool, frontline staff don't have individualised workspaces and therefore no unique computer. Further, through the established hierarchical working structure it is difficult to equalise power

differences simply by using social media. Organisation Two describes their culture as open because this has developed over the years since employees first had the option of commenting on articles on the intranet. From that point on, they developed a more open communication structure, and staff have learned the organisational norms and limits for discussion. Auger (2013) argues that social media can enable a two-way communication structure, but Lee (2013), on the other hand, says that motivation and interest are more important than any digital technology. The practice in Organisation Two suggests that both elements are important for a good outcome. While it is important that the new tool enabled staff to engage at a fast pace, it was also important that staff had already established the culture and practice of engagement.

The social media tool hosts communities, which are interest-based groups, which staff establish and join. McLuhan's metaphor of an electronic global village describes communities well. The idea behind the global village is the total connection of its members. Communities can function as such a connection, because staff can subscribe to any community and join any conversation, thus engaging in the network. However, Ess (2001) argues that the electronic global village excludes a significant part of the world. He refers to people who either have no access to or no knowledge of how to join the electronic network. In the case of Organisation Two, a significant part is likewise excluded. Although each employee technically has access to the network, frontline staff do not have the time nor, in most cases, an individual computer to logon to the platform. Furthermore, some employees are from an older generation, separated by the digital divide, and not ready to adapt to the new environment.

Organisation Two established rules around the use of internal social media to capture the full potential of the tool. One such rule is that internal social media is used for business purpose only. Although Organisation Two has created cultural communities, which have a mixed business/cultural purpose and the management is considering allowing other groups such as 'Auckland Marathon Fundraiser' the

general rule is 'business only'. Contrastingly, senior management engage with their staff through internal social media, partly to promote the new tool, partly to form connection, by talking about personal matters such as weekend activities with their children or posting questions about good *iPhone* apps, while staff are not allowed to talk about personal matters on internal social media (unless in response to questions from management). This practice is contradictory to the general idea of social media and democratic practice. One of social media's greatest benefits is the social connection that frames the network and Organisation Two limits this ability by not allowing other groups that have no direct business purpose. Furthermore, the horizontal structure of social media, which is the reason why scholars describe social media as democracy enabling and as the realisation of Habermas' public sphere, is reduced by the management imposed rules of use. While the CEO is allowed to share social stories about her/his private life or *iPhone* apps, the employees can only reply to such messages, but not create a social community on their own. This inequality in internal communication practices introduces hierarchical structures into the new social media tool.

Organisation Two, in introducing their internal social media tool, established a platform for staff to share and discuss their ideas. The description of this given by the interviewees sounds much like the sphere that Habermas describes for his coffee house concept. However, the access to this sphere is limited to back-office staff. While the front-line employees do have the option to log in, the reality is that a high customer flow does not allow them to participate on a regular basis. Furthermore, not all employees are familiar with the new tools. A generational difference in understanding social media is obvious. In addition to introduction of hierarchical structures to internal social media mentioned above, everyone, including management, can see the comments made by staff which may not create a free environment after all.

In summary, this section analysed internal social media in the workplace. While Organisation One was in the process (at the time of the study) of implementing

internal social media, Organisation Two had implemented its new tool six months prior. The following benefits emerged from the discussion. Internal social media serves as a platform for two-way communication which may result in dialogue. Ethnic communities can share their cultural heritage and contribute to general organisational culture. Furthermore, internal social media can provide a space where employers and employees meet, share feedback, connect with each other, and exchange ideas. Therefore, this new tool can be used as method to contribute to the organisation in a way that goes beyond the actual workload.

Internal social media has the potential to provide an organisation with a sphere like that outlined by Habermas (1989). However, such a sphere has to be open to everyone regardless of heritage, societal standard, or power – in this case, position in the organisation. The discussion above demonstrates that internal social media has the capacity to furnish the workplace with such a sphere, but the employer and employees, not the tool itself, need to create it. It was demonstrated that Organisation Two has a great foundation for allowing social media to be a tool that can be used to cultivate a democratic sphere. Yet it became evident that, because of limits set for establishing communities and the various rules for management and employee participation, a hierarchical communication structure was introduced to the internal social media tool. Therefore, the practice of general communication turns out to be central to the idea of workplace democracy. While internal social media might be used to implement a democratic structure, it remains a tool that can be used either way.

5.2.3 Knowledge Base

The findings indicate that a knowledge base can be used to gather information and is a way for front-line staff to inform themselves on operational working structures. Knowledge bases are units of information collected on a central platform for every employee to use and contribute to. Wikipedia, for example, is a public knowledge base, and follows the same principles as the organisations' knowledge bases.

Newsletters and the intranet are supporting tools for combining knowledge and enabling employees to contribute together towards the organisation's overall goals. Holtzhausen (2002) describes knowledge bases as being necessary for staff to take responsibility and participate in greater outcomes. Furthermore, knowledge bases are essential for Habermas' (1989) public sphere, in which society (in this case, employees) can meet and discuss matters. Habermas' public sphere, however, is centred around the idea that everyone who joins is granted equal status by their fellows and grants them equal status in turn. This idea seems difficult to translate into the organisational world. Road shows for example might be excellent for getting employees together, but, in order to speak up, staff need to be confident, extroverted, and reassured that their comments will not be sanctioned.

Organisation One singles out two-way communication as its explicit goal in introducing social media internally. They want to create a space for employees to share personal interests. Although the management want a business focus using internal social media, the tool can be used for both purposes. A space like this created with the new internal social media tool could also be used to create a knowledge base, which is shaped by employees for employees. It is suggested that this may allow employees to see the big picture of the organisation and enable them to provide more meaningful input. Knowledge bases can help employees to collaborate and gain independence by learning about the workplace.

A growing knowledge base can also be used to spread power and responsibility. Remtulla (2007) argues that such bases redefine the approach to democracy and need to be nurtured. From an organisational perspective, knowledge bases are designed to save money in the long run. The question then emerges whether a single knowledge base can serve two purposes, reducing costs and empowering employees. This discussion leads back to Hazarika's (2013) work – the understanding of workplace democracy as a conflict between employer and employees. Organisation Two has a great example of the uniting of employers' and employees' interests over social media.

"… a conversation last week around 'what to do with old IT equipment?' and the communities help surface some of what we already do and remind people what they should do when they don't need their computer anymore. It is been group led rather than you having to drive it all and other people can come in and add five sentences." (FG5)

This example illustrates the benefit that social media and knowledge bases can have in the workplace. In this case employees solved a problem (what do to with old IT equipment) by collaboration. The internal social media platform, which enables employees to speak up if they have something to contribute simultaneously saving the organisation time and therefore money, because all staff can see answers online and they do not have to ask, in this case, the IT department for advice.

In summary, knowledge bases are collections of information from different sources that can empower staff to better understand the workplace and gain an overall picture of the organisation. Knowledge bases are good arenas in which employees can take responsibility and participate in a way that goes beyond their general responsibilities. Organisation Two provided an example of the use of this method, but, at the time of the study, the shared knowledge focuses solely on administrative tasks. Nevertheless, this demonstrates the potential that knowledge bases have, a potential that can be developed further with the development of networked communication tools within the workplace.

In conclusion, this section discussed general communication tools, internal social media, and knowledge bases. General communication tools such as email and face-to-face communication are used to manage the workplace. Both organisations have developed coping mechanisms, such as email templates, in order to deal with the high volume of emails. Such mechanisms were identified as not supportive for a democratic environment. Furthermore, while face-to-face communication provides an opportunity for staff to engage, employees need to be free of consequences if

they are to truly do so. Internal social media was described as a two-way communication tool which may encourage dialogue. However, it is merely a tool and mimics the underpinning organisational culture. Hence, internal social media can be used to change the corporate environment into a more democratic space or to mimic the already-existing hierarchical order. As for the third topic, knowledge bases, they are online libraries written by staff for the purpose of sharing knowledge. They provide an element of empowerment and contribute some of the prerequisites of workplace democracy. They can be facilitated on social platforms.

5.3 Workplace Democracy

This section applies the elements of workplace democracy, which are identified in the literature review, to both organisations. The second part discusses the general understanding of democracy that emerged through the study. This section focuses on the second and third research sub-questions: '*How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*' and '*What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*'

5.3.1 Author's Five Elements of Workplace Democracy

As previously mentioned the five elements of workplace democracy that emerged from the literature review are: empowerment of workers to have a meaningful input into work conditions and strategic directions; ongoing participation by all workers; independent work field and responsibility; contribution towards the organisation beyond the direct work; network orientation.

1. Empowerment

Employee empowerment is not likely to be achieved through the hierarchical communication structure in addition to the increasing number of regulations employees have to deal with in the participating organisations. Although there might be room for independent decision-making within a project or task, it is unlikely that these actions can take place on a scale that impacts the entire workplace. Even if

employees can impact the organisations' structure, the extent that impact could have is questionable.

Williamson (2004) argues that workers need to have enough power to have a meaningful input into work conditions and strategic direction. However, although employees of Organisation Two might empower each other through knowledge bases, they do not mobilise them to have an impact on work conditions or strategic directions.

2. Ongoing participation

Organisation One defines engagement as trust between employee and employer or manager, ideally involving open, two-way, face-to-face interactions. With trust, people are encouraged by the management to share ideas. They are considered a part of the organisation. In order to investigate whether the employee-employer relationship exhibits these qualities, an engagement survey is run once a year by an external organisation, which reports to the management. Organisation Two defines engagement as connection. They explain that connection is a product of engagement, which includes staff having a sense of belonging to the organisation. The management can support engagement by being willing to solve problems in the workplace and support staff. According to the focus group, engagement is a culture of a single unifying brand (the organisation) and brings people together in their work.

Both definitions are well meant, but it seems that the employees' perspective is missing. Although Organisation One for example uses an external engagement survey, which is embedded in the management it seems that this survey is used to check on the leadership of the management rather than the employee. Further evidence was found when the management explained the reason for introducing social media to the organisation. The leadership team travelled to the US and was inspired by the technical development in *Silicon Valley*, which lead to the introduction of internal social media. It seems questionable, that the organisation

pays more attention to the core of American capitalism rather than to the organisation's own New Zealand culture and further their own employees, who are first-hand experts on their work environment.

In Organisation Two a similar irritation between employees and managers can be witnessed. Although the focus group likes the new social media tool, it seems that there is a lack of empathy between employees and employer. While the management tries to engage with the employees through letters or emails and now social media, the messages sent have almost a reverse effect. As one participant explained:

> "*I mean the contrast with that is a few years back, the CEO would send a weekly email to* [us] *and he would talk about what he is doing. He came from* [a city] *… and would talk about, 'Last weekend I popped back to* [my city] *and spent some time on the farm,' and then, in the end of it, he would do a restaurant review. He tried to be personal, but the restaurant review would be* [an expensive restaurant] *or somewhere up there, and everyone is looking and going, 'we don't have a farm in* [this city] *and we don't eat out there. This man earns a lot more than me. Why don't you give us a review on McDonalds?' Most people miss the content of his emails, because he was trying to be personal, but he was aiming* [up] *here, when he really should have been like 'I went home and spent some time with my family.' We don't need to know about his farm*" (FG5).

3. Independent work field and responsibility

As well as policies, Organisation One is keen on presenting its values acronym. These values provide the necessary grounds on which employees are to engage with the organisation and contribute beyond their assigned work. Although the focus group said that the different departments of the organisation are very separate from each other and have different policies to follow, these values provide the connection necessary to unify them as one organisation. Although the values are supposed to be

the underlying theme for any behaviour in the organisation, it is questionable whether all staff actually live by them. Even the interviewee had trouble remembering them.

4. Contribute beyond the direct work

The internal social media tool has a 'community' function, which allows users to engage towards a chosen topic. At the time of the study, this function had a strong business focus and Organisation Two did not create any communities without a business objective. However, the internal social media tool has the capacity to create any group and can be used to contribute beyond the direct work. Organisation Two created cultural groups, which are loosely business related. Employees use this group to share cultural events and to engage in each other's culture.

5. Network orientation

Through the internal network in Organisation Two, employees can discuss ideas and share knowledge. As they do so, they build a knowledge base, which enables all staff to learn from the whole organisation. Employees are more likely to grasp the whole picture of the workplace and contribute to an information pool through what their colleagues write than what their managers write. Peetz and Pocock (2009) argue that network orientation for an organisation is especially useful to combine power, in this case, knowledge, and then distribute it freely. The network can empower workers throughout the organisation.

The introduced social media tool helps to drive engagement and enables a two-way-communication stream like those Auger (2013) speaks of so that employees have the opportunity to share ideas and exchange feedback; it provides employees with a platform to use to contribute towards the workplace itself. Thus, the social media tool can be used to create a better working environment. On the other hand, it can also be used to moderate the employees further. The underlying factor specified by Fenton (2013) for democratic leadership is the implementation of universal ideas along with the creation of meaningful work built on conversations across networks.

Organisation Two implemented an internal social network for staff to communicate and collaborate. The leadership encourages its use by participating themselves and initiating conversations. Whether this leads to meaningful work remains uncertain at this point. The internal social media tool does simplify connections and enables employees to talk to the whole organisation. However, as outlined by Kent (2013), participation and responsibility cannot be forced upon staff. Although Organisation Two provides tools that facilitate engagement and participation, it is up to the employees to do so.

In summary, this section outlined five factors of workplace democracy identified in the literature. Empowerment would be difficult to establish in the sophisticated hierarchical working structure of either organisation. Engagement is understood as trust, empathy, and commitment in Organisation One. Organisation Two defines it as connection, encompassing a sense of belonging to the organisation. However, both organisations struggle to elicit engagement from their own employees: Organisation One sought advice about new internal communication tools from overseas rather than from its own employees, and Organisation Two in one instance failed to engage with employees through a failure of empathy. However, both organisations utilise (or are about to) internal social media, which enables staff to network and build knowledge bases. This tool can be used either to enable workplace democracy or to stifle it.

5.3.2 Misconception of Liberalism

A key concept for taking responsibility in the workplace, specified by Ellerman (2000a) earlier, is that responsibility of each employee is not transferable and needs to be claimed by individuals. Policies such as the code of ethics along these lines include holding employees responsible and making them aware of their duties. However, the resultant kind of responsibility seems to be somewhat passive, because employees are simply given a framework of their duties, which can also be understood as bottom line. Furthermore, policies are used as a legal foundation to apportion liability if the organisation is held responsible for their actions. Ellerman

(2000a) had a different kind of responsibility in mind when he argued that employees need to actively claim responsibility for their work. A general policy about the workplace that every employee has to commit to at the start of employment is obviously not tailored to individual positions and seems to be disabling rather than encouraging. It supports a culture of blame rather than accountability and may have a counterproductive effect on the experience of a democratic workplace.

Organisation One is keenly alert to its employees' engagement status as measured by the annual engagement survey. Organisation One wants its employees to engage with each other and with the workplace and the internal social media tool may be a way of achieving this. However, the management also understand engagement as a single score that is measured in an annual survey and it seems that actual value of engagement and participation is getting lost on the way.

In the same spirit, one interviewee said that one of their strongest reasons for planning to introduce the internal communication tool was to modify the current top-down dynamic at Organisation One. With social media in place internally, bottom-up communication will be easier to accomplish, as such a platform will allow two-way communication and give every employee the chance to speak up. While road shows and other communication tools might accomplish the same (according to the interviewees), the internal social media tool does not require such a leap in skills as does speaking in front of a group or being confident to start a conversation with the management. However, although social media can be used to implement a two-way communication stream, it is only a tool that might or might not be used. Social media does not implement a space (or as Habermas calls it a sphere), people do. Social media certainly can help to facilitate it, but people, in this case, employees and employers need to create the space first.

Organisation Two provides an example for the above outlined ambiguity of social media use. One interviewee described that social media can be used to have staff work from home and increase the working hours: "*I was talking to the contact centre,*

where you talk about [our service], *they work various hours and they are on phones and they are looking forward to have people working from home, so they can work longer hours and it is more flexible and stuff, but to keep them engaged they want them to be a part of the community. The online social community means that while working from home you still can be in touch with people who are in the actual contact centre and keep that cultural engagement up as well, so they don't feel isolated and not by themselves and that is another benefit of social* [media], *it brings culture and people together.*"

As previously mentioned, although the management tries to engage with the staff it sometimes is not received well. It seems that there is misunderstanding between employer and employee regarding empathy and a general perspective on work and socio-economic standards. While Ellerman (2000a) refers to a misconception of liberalism, meaning an oversimplification of liberalism on a bigger scale, the organisations do the same with engagement on a smaller scale.

In summary, this section pointed out that taking responsibility is more complex than appointing tasks in line with general policies. Engagement was viewed by one organisation as score that a business unit may or may not achieve. Actual engagement is more difficult to establish; it is a reciprocal process. The newly-introduced social media tool does not automatically enable a better working environment, but employers and employees could use it to do so.

In conclusion, this section discussed five elements of workplace democracy and employers' and employees' different understandings of them. The five elements all relate to empowerment, which is difficult to establish in a hierarchal workplace. Engagement is understood by the organisations as connection and trust while unified under a single brand. With the advent of the new internal communication tools, those in the organisations are able to participate in a network if they choose to. However, the second section demonstrates that, in order for workplace democracy to be achieved, employers and employees need to take responsibility

beyond their usual duties. Furthermore, the internal social media tool does not implement workplace democracy right away. It may help the users to do so, but it is the choice of the management whether to use it to connect with others or to increase working hours.

5.4 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter discussed findings on three themes: the contemporary workplace, communication tools, and workplace democracy. The first theme concerned the **organisational structure** of both organisations, and it was found that both had a hierarchical structure and transactional leadership style. Both struggled with change, and their policies take a long time to adapt. Furthermore, it was discovered that some communication tools are moderated, although both organisations stated they generally are not for moderating.

Both used a range of different **communication tools**. Emails are used extremely frequently, and coping mechanisms are established for that high volume. From the employers' perspective, face-to-face communication is cited as a way to create dialogue with staff and empower them. At the same time, staff do not necessarily feel the same about these tools. **Internal social media** is a new tool that has potential to allow the workplace to become more democratic. However, it is merely a tool and can be used either way; it simply facilitates the practice of the underpinning organisational structure. **Knowledge bases** are facilitated through internal social media and enable staff to contribute their knowledge to the community. They enable employees to understand the bigger picture of the organisation; through them, employees have chances to earn responsibility and gain expertise.

The last section, workplace democracy, discussed the author's **five elements of workplace democracy** and the different perspectives on them of employers and employees. It became evident that empowerment was difficult to establish in a hierarchical working structure in either organisation. While both understood engagement similarly, they failed to fully practice it towards their own staff.

"It seems like we need to have a conversation about democracy in our day and age"

(Mancini, 2014, 0:31)

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this research project is to explore ways in which contemporary communication technology, in particular social media, is being incorporated into internal corporate practice and to explore the effects of this in regards to workplace democracy and employee participation. The study focused on two case studies within the economic sector in Auckland, New Zealand. In order to analyse them, the following research question and sub-questions were formed:

What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?

Sub-questions:

1. *How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?*

2. *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

3. *What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?*

This is a qualitative study within an interpretative paradigm. Content analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus groups were used in order to collect data to answer the research questions. The objects of focus were two case studies from the international corporate economic sector which were either just about to launch internal social media into their workplace or had recently done so.

6.2 Overall Brief Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that both organisations have a hierarchical structure. Policies, such as codes of ethics and conduct and social media guidelines, are at the organisations' cores and provide a framework for their communication structure. Moderation of communication tools is a part of both organisations' identity. Even though managers said that they do not actively moderate their staff, evidence was found that some communication tools were moderated.

Both organisations make extensive use of a variety of communication tools. Emails are especially ubiquitous, and both organisations have developed coping mechanisms, which limit how easily a message can be promulgated to the whole organisation. Organisation One has developed mandatory email templates for organisation-wide messages and Organisation Two has a licensed tool for such mass emails that regulates the communication flow. Face-to-face communication, for example road shows and videoconferences, is valued by both organisations. They describe it as dialogue-enabling and empowering, which may be unrealistic or at least idealistic, because it is unclear if employees face sanctions if they speak up.

For Organisation Two, the internal social media tool provides a platform for a culture of two-way communication and feedback, which may lead to engagement. Users are able meet in a virtual space and discuss their interests, particularly through the communities function. Internal social media can be used as a trigger for engagement as it creates opportunities for staff and management to meet.

Organisation One defines engagement as trust between employer and employee with open two-way communication. Organisation Two defines it as creation of and connection with a culture around a single unifying brand. Its new social media tool helps in this regard, facilitating engagement and participation.

This research presented five key elements of workplace democracy (empowerment of employees, ongoing participation, claim over responsibility, contribution towards

the workplace, and network orientation) and it became evident that it was difficult to establish the key elements in a hierarchical working structure in either organisation. Knowledge bases and network orientated work places enable employees to connect with each other. Internal social media can facilitate such connections, but it remains as a tool witch can be used in either direction.

6.3 Answers to Research Questions

6.3.1 How is workplace democracy manifested through policy documents, such as codes of conduct, internal communication policies and codes of ethics within the contemporary workplace?

Policies, guidelines, and values are deeply embedded in the organisational cultures; they are the foundation for the organisations' general makeup. Both organisations have a hierarchical internal structure, with a top-down communication culture.

> "*There is a social media policy and it is part of the code of conduct. So you do get trained on these things regularly. … That sort of stuff is monitored, and if it gets picked up, a conversation happens*" (IM2).

Policies are influential, since the documents in which they are set out structure the workplace. Throughout the research, it became evident that the policy documents were treated as firm mandates to be universally read and signed. E-learning and policy testing were in place in order to make sure that employees understood what they were about. Although policies seem important for the general development of the organisation, development was not promoted as the purpose of the policies.

> "*The challenge is that our risk and technology management hasn't caught up to the digital age*" (FG5).

Policies are at the core of the organisation's development, distribution of power and accountability. The organisation itself has a responsibility towards the shareholders, which is related to good business outcomes in terms of profit. This responsibility is reflected in the policies, which are used to regulate the workplace for the shareholders' best interest. The contrasting perspectives of employer and employee over work environment, productivity and business outcomes do not necessarily have to be a conflict. The policies are the place to change the current distribution of power and engage change, such as technological developments like social media, which could benefit both employers and employees. This would mean that employers need to distribute a part of their controlling power and employees need to claim responsibility.

> "*Obviously* [social media] *has some risks, but I think that is just the changing world we are living in, and we have to deal with those risks rather than shy away from them and miss the opportunity that it opens*" (IC4).

Although policies have the power to change the distribution of power, they were originally written as a legal foundation to appoint liability. They are not individually tailored to the employee, which can provoke a culture of blame rather than trust. The difficulty for the organisation is to enable the employee to take as much responsibility as they can handle, while at the same time answering to the shareholders and keeping the business productive.

6.3.2 How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?

The new internal social media tools offer a number of benefits that can be used to create a more democratic workplace. Through the network bases, all staff have the option of connecting with each other. In communities, employees can discuss any topic they like, following discussions in the background or even offering expertise.

Internal social media can also be used to facilitate knowledge bases, which can empower staff through the sharing of insights across the organisation.

> "[The social media tool] *allows you to create communities, and community means that you can have … feedback walls, … [and] idea walls … [and] use it to generate ideas and facilitate discussions … Leaders can push out a message to their teams through it and, in general, it just gives staff the opportunity to go in and create a profile to add a photo, list areas of expertise*" (IC3).

Knowledge bases in particular have the potential to create a more democratic workplace by sharing and collating information throughout the organisation. Individuals have the opportunity to speak up and show their expertise, while at the same time all members can learn about the workplace. This can lead to the spreading of power and responsibility, and has the potential to save the organisation money in the long run as staff self-educate or learn from their peers. The concept of a knowledge base postulates that the organisation is willing to trust and enable their employees to gain more knowledge and provide them with more responsibility and power. Likewise the employees need to develop a mutual interest and claim liability. No policy can force the employee to participate within the workplace and should not be able to, because the core of the democratic workplace is caring and responsible employees as well as employers.

In sum, this tool has the potential to create an organisational public sphere as outlined by Habermas (1989) in which everyone in the organisation can meet, discuss, and share thoughts. However, a key element in Habermas' theory is the idea that all those in the sphere are equal. In this study, it became evident that the hierarchical structure is strongly incorporated into both organisations. These structures are applied to the social media tool and hinder dialogue, empowerment, and the very existence of a democratic sphere. However, the orientation towards a networked work environment still has great potential for a democratic workplace.

Although strong communication policies might hinder the development of a purely non-hierarchical sphere, Habermas' theory describes an ideal to aim for. While organisations need to decrease the habit of control, employees need to start to earn responsibility beyond their own scope of duties in order to establish an arena with a two-way-communication flow and the potential for dialogue. Nevertheless, central to the idea of a sphere besides the approach from employer and employee is the technical condition that all staff are able to join the sphere and that nobody needs to fear exclusion or sanction.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the social media tool can be used either to create a democratic environment or to maintain a hierarchical structure. The employer and employees create the underpinning culture, and communication tools can help, but no tool has the ability to create a democratic workplace; only people do.

> "*I think we've always had an open culture, able to communicate, so, three years ago* [2011], *we opened up comments on the intranet so you could comment freely on any story – at a time when people were still moderating comments. So I knew that other communication teams … would get the comments and they would decide whether it should appear public or not. We just put it up. I think that created a culture of openness*" (IM2).

6.3.3 What aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practices can be understood as democratising?

This research found that both organisations monitor internal communications. While interviewees said that they were not monitoring their staff in general, it became evident that some communication tools are monitored. Though it was not possible to analyse the frequency of the monitoring process, it became certain that monitoring of staff is enabled through the communications technologies themselves.

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IC1: *"The only person who I had to moderate was a person whose avatar was – I don't think it was appropriate; he had a horse's head and a gun … we are working in a [unnamed organisation] …"*

Researcher: *"Great, so you talked a little bit about moderating, you* [directed to IC1] *talked about this profile, which was inappropriate. How did you pick that up?"*

IC1: *"I saw it."*

Researcher: *"You just saw it? So you weren't looking?"*

IC1: *"Yeah, it was early days, really early days. In fact, it was probably in the first three days of the newsfeed being linked to our homepage. I think he was super eager and I saw it and was able to contact him … but to be honest … we just don't have* [moderation]*"* (IC1).

And:

"We have Excel sheets (basically submission forms) and that is how you communicate. If you want to send a message to the frontline, to our staff, you have to submit an internal engagement form, with purpose etc., and then you have to complete what you actually have to communicate, because it is a big process if we want to send out something to [a big number of] *people. … The communication team will look at it and will let you know if that is appropriate … that is how they communicate down to us"* (FG8).

On the other hand, social media has the potential to connect employees, build knowledge bases and facilitate two-way communication, if the underpinning organisational culture already has these attributes beforehand. Social media cannot create a democratic workplace but it can help democracy to grow.

Considering the author's five elements of workplace democracy, this research shows that such factors are a good indicator for democracy at the workplace, but they don't enable it. Empowerment, the first element, addresses the opportunity for employees

to step up. The organisation needs to provide fair opportunities and on the other hand employees need to seek chances to engage. Examples of events for employees to step up were road shows and the online communities. While for road shows employees need to be strong-willed to speak up, online communities provide a different kind of engagement.

The second element, ongoing participation, focuses on the employee and her/his willingness to engage and participate in the workplace. While the organisation might provide opportunities for the staff to engage, the employee needs to take part and participate in order to connect with the workplace and contribute to a democratic environment. One Organisation uses an external engagement survey in order to understand the employees' needs, which can be a great way to connect with the staff and understand their needs. However, in order to gain an accurate outcome the employees need to answer the survey truthfully and without pressure, which this study cannot comment on.

The third element, independent work field and responsibility, and the fourth element, contribute beyond the direct work, refer to the employee and her/his ability to be in charge of the direct (maybe assigned) work. The case studies have organisational values, which help the staff to engage with the work and the organisation itself. In combination with the new social media tool, communities can be formed and collaboration can progress. Just like as mentioned before, both employer and employee need to be willing to engage and contribute. While employers need to provide the free space, employees need to demonstrate engagement.

Network orientation, the fifth element, is especially important for the distortion of power. Through the social media tool, a network can be established, particularly through communities and knowledge base. Participants can learn about the organisation independently and contribute knowledge beyond their specific

expertise. The organisation benefits from this, by decreasing the workload in some areas (such as IT-support) and including ideas from staff nation-wide.

6.3.4 What role can contemporary networked workplace communication tools play in enabling workplace democracy?

The importance of workplace democracy has developed over time. Due to technological development, known ways of communication changed for society, which influenced the public sphere and the understanding and practice of democracy itself. Through such changes it becomes important to reflect on how democratic values are translated in the contemporary public sphere. Some of these changes can be explained by as globalisation and the increasing capital power by global corporations, which puts them and the workplace into focus.

The globalised capitalistic workplace, technological change and democracy themselves are well entangled with each other, and some scholars (Ess, 2001) argue that the *global village,* developed by McLuhan, has already arrived with multimedia networks and the internet. These forces of globalisation and technological power enable multinational corporations to enhance their capital power and rule the economically shared markets. The power of corporations influences the public and the workplace immensely and therefore it is important to include the corporate workplace in the reflection on democratic values and their practice.

The aforementioned social change forces society to rethink familiar ways of practicing democracy. The understanding shifts from a collective approach towards individual rights in relation to democracy, which is linked to the workplace. Therefore it is necessary to address workplace democracy in multinational corporations. The argument that the business world has only to answer their shareholders is outdated and an analysis of the corporate environment with a democratic perspective is overdue.

Throughout the research it became evident that both organisations have a number of policies which are embedded in a hierarchical structure. Policies are understood as the legal foundation that apportions liability. Although employers have the power to change policies (and therefore change hierarchical structures) and provide employees with the opportunity to gain responsibility; this means taking a risk. It was discovered that responsibility is essential for workplace democracy. It was also discovered that the corporate environment has a controlling nature, which hinders the practice of workplace democracy to a certain extent.

Network enabling tools, such as internal social media, have great potential to establish a sphere that can have the power to change the hierarchical structure and enable democracy in the workplace. Through online communities and knowledge bases, employees can engage with each other and gain knowledge about the workplace beyond the scope of duty and earn responsibility. The tool of internal social media cannot itself make a workplace democratic, but it can provide options for staff to use; that is, the tool can be used either way.

> *"You get people actually collaborating across the business, up and down the hierarchical structure, so you have got a lot more engagement from staff, because they feel they have got a voice"* (IM1).

This research presented five key elements of workplace democracy (empowerment of employees, ongoing participation, claim over responsibility, contribution towards the workplace, and network orientation) and it became evident that the corporate work environment did not succeed in fulfilling these elements. However, the perspective of democracy in the corporate work environment is a new development that has come with globalisation, technological evolution and a change of the public sphere itself. In addition both organisations made a great effort to incorporate dialogue, engagement and other workplace democratic practices into their work environment, which was their reason for implementing the new internal social media tool in the first place. It became evident that such a tool cannot implement

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workplace democracy, but it can help or hinder an already excising democratic culture and if the organisations already value dialogue, engagement and a two-way communication flow, an internal social media tool can certainly help.

6.4 Limitations

In addition to the already-outlined limitations in the research design chapter, this research is limited in three main ways. Firstly, it did not include frontline staff. While the management was interviewed and head office employees represented through focus groups, frontline staff were not a part of the project due to limitations to the resources of the thesis.

Secondly, because of the strict confidentiality requirements of both organisations, this research could not draw on analysis of the policy documents, and some interview material was restricted as well. It is quite understandable that the organisations need to protect their business from harm. However, it seems that the line between protection and control is easily crossed, and that limited this research.

Thirdly, the sampling method for the study participants had to be changed from volunteer *and* snowball sampling to volunteer sampling only, due to a lack of participation. The research could not have gone ahead if the sampling method had not been changed. The communications manager in each organisation helped to find participants for the research, which meant that their anonymity was compromised, because the communications manager, having asked them to participate, knew their identities. This may have limited participants' openness about the topic. However, the communication managers only knew who participated in the study, not what each one said. The only reference the communications managers have is this written thesis in which every participant is quoted anonymously.

6.5 Recommendations

This research explored the respective roles of workplace democracy and internal social media in the contemporary corporate workplace. It can be concluded that internal social media can support the cause of workplace democracy if the existing culture is inclined to take that direction. Social media in the workplace can be a great tool for two-way conversation if the employees and employers are ready for it.

To shed more light on this, future studies could explore how older generations cope with the fast changing workplace and deal with growing digital age. Further it would be interesting to repeat this study with different workplaces from other organisations. Also, conducting the same study on a larger scale facilitating a quantitative methodology and including front line employees would further illuminate workplace democracy and social media.

6.6 Outlook

"Ideation" and "gamification" are the next steps after the implementation of social media. Ideation is achieved by brainstorming ideas and crowd-sourcing projects. Gamification is a reward programme, which, like computer games, rewards the user (in this case the employee) when they achieve certain milestones. Gamification in the workplace could motivate employees to engage with the social media by honouring the employee of the month for example or by presenting little awards for being a supportive colleague or similar. Along these lines, the two organisations are looking for ways to include frontline staff more in the social media sphere. Since their systems work on individual logins, and frontline staff share computers, they are considering using *iPads* or other tools to individualise their workplaces. Other possible technological trends are sending push notifications to phones, and moving the intranet to a cloud for easy end-device access. American and Australian governments now work with cloud computing, and the interviewees point to this as the next step. Even if traditional forms of communication such as face-to-face and email are the standard forms of communication for organisations, risk management still needs to catch up with current technology in order to be relevant and applicable.

Social media in the workplace brings the technical capability to connect employers and employees. It can be used for organisational motivation and participation if employers provide the room for this, and if employees are willing to contribute to the organisation beyond the required workload. With the advent of supra-national organisations in a globalised, capitalist and technologically driven environment, it is more and more important to focus on democracy, especially in the workplace. This study has shown that social media has the power to motivate and engage employees, while supporting the organisational business at the same time. This study also showed that both corporate multinational organisations are willing to create dialogue, two-way communication and connection. In short they are willing to create room for workplace democracy - and internal social media could help the process. It is exciting to see that organisations are looking beyond the sole motivation of profit to support engagement, motivation and network orientation within their work environment. It is still a long road until a corporate workplace can be called democratic, but the direction the organisations are headed is good, and with more emphasis and embracement of change, workplace democracy can be established in corporate organisations as well as in others.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Approval

16 September 2014

Alexander Danne
34 Royal Terrace
Mt Eden
Auckland 1024

Student ID: 1410272

Dear Alexander

Thank you for submitting your research proposal 'Workplace Democracy and the Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Workplace'.

The Department of Communication Studies Postgraduate Student Research Proposals Committee has considered and approved your proposal following on the consultation of the Supervisors and feedback from the Committee:

- Include literature on organisational communication and internal communication, and develop the themes on these.
- Refer to the Human Resources policies and Code of Ethics, and contextualise it to more internal communication context.
- Consult with Dr Jocelyn Williams and Deborah Rolland for refining the questionnaires.

Please consult with your supervisors for your Ethics application as soon as possible. Your principal supervisor is Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki and your associate supervisor is Dr Giles Dodson.

Please contact us if you have any questions, or if we can assist you in your research. My extension number is 8827 and my email address is ekolesova@unitec.ac.nz.

We wish you every success in completing your research project.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elena Kolesova
Chair, Department of Communication Studies Student Research Proposal Committee
cc:
Principal Supervisor: Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki
Associate Supervisor: Dr Giles Dodson
Head of Department: Dr Jocelyn Williams
Programme Leader: Dr Elena Kolesova
Programme Administrator: Hiroko Hodge
Research Administrator: Katherine Bridges

Appendix B: UREC Approval

Alexander Danne
34 Royal Tce
Mt. Eden
Auckland 1024

20.11.14

Dear Alexander,

Your file number for this application: **2014-1089**

Title: **Workplace Democaracy and the Role of Social Media in the Contemporary Workplace.**

Your application for ethics approval has been reviewed by the Unitec Research Ethics
Committee (UREC) and has been approved for the following period:

Start date: 5.11.14
Finish date: 5.11.15

Please note that:

1. The above dates must be referred to on the information AND consent forms given to all
   participants.

2. You must inform UREC, in advance, of any ethically-relevant deviation in the project.
   This may require additional approval.

You may now commence your research according to the protocols approved by UREC.

We wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Sara Donaghey
Acting Deputy Chair, UREC

cc: Evangelia Papoutsaki
Cynthia Almeida

Appendix C: Interview Structure Organisation One

Goal: Discover how managers understand employee participation, employee engagement and social media including the use of it

Lead research question: *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

Internal Communication
1. How do you communicate with your staff? How is your internal communication organized?
2. Thinking about a special project: What communication tools did you use to interact with organisation's employees?
3. Organisation One plans to implement the use of social media for internal communication. How do you plan to use social media?

Employee engagement and participation leading to workplace democracy
4. What does an engaged employee mean to you as a manager in terms of participation in workplace communication practices?
5. How do you encourage employee motivation, participation and involvement?
6. The communication plan after [a specific event] aimed for stable employee participation. Evidence you have provided indicates that employee participation increased by 1% to 76%. Why do you think that was? What communication tool(s) helped most?
7. How do employees practice participation in the workplace?

Internal social media
8. What do you expect to happen when you launch your social media network?
9. Have you discovered any problems with media use (internal) so far?
10. Social media guidelines for employees describe "blend purposes" meaning a combination of personal and professional intentions.
    10.1. What is the purpose of social media in the workplace?
    10.2. Do you see problems when employees mix private and business use of social media?
    10.3. Do you think your employees are going to read the guidelines?
    10.4. The 'to do's' mention not overstepping the employees role and to have Organisation One's Values, Code of Conduct and Ethics in mind when using social media. This seems to be a complex task. What do you expect will happen when you launch social media internally?
    10.5. The guidelines use language such as: 'don't over-share', 'remember Organisation One's Values', 'have Organisation One's reputation in mind'. This seems like a complex task. Do you think that is likely to happen?

From your Code of Conduct & Ethics

11. The Code of Conduct & Ethics says: 'Remember, you are accountable for the decisions you make and the actions you take.' and 'Honesty and integrity are essential'

    11.1. In your mind, what does that mean? How do your employees practice this?

12. The Code also says: 'Organisation One believes the safety, security and physical and mental health of Organisation One people lie at the heart of each person's ability to contribute to our success. Organisation One respects the right of all individuals to work in a safe environment that promotes wellbeing.' and 'Contribute to promoting a safe working environment by taking responsibility for health and safety and reporting any issues as soon as possible.'

    12.1. How do you translate that into the everyday working environment?

    12.2. Do you think this is regarded with your stuff?

    12.3. What if my moral compass contradicts with the Organisation One standards?

13. The code says: 'As someone working with Organisation One, you are required to comply with this Code and report any conduct that may be in breach of the law, this Code, the underlying Policy Framework or any other Organisation One policies or procedures as soon as you can.' and 'Remember that at any time you are able to report conduct under the Organisation One Whistleblower Protection Policy where the conduct is dishonest, corrupt, fraudulent, illegal, unethical or any other type of reportable conduct.'

    13.1. Do you have any examples?

    13.2. Would you feel confident to rely on the Whistleblower Protection Policy if you had to use it?

<u>Appendix D: Interview Structure Organisation Two</u>

Goal: Discover how managers understand employee participation, employee engagement and social media including the use of it

Lead research question: *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices?*

Internal Communication

1. What is internal communication to you?
2. How do you communicate with your staff? How is your internal communication organized?
3. What communication do you use to connect with the organisation's employees?
4. How are decisions made?
5. Is bottom-up communication possible?
6. How would you describe the communication culture here at Organisation Two?
7. Organisation Two implemented social media for internal communication. Why did you decide to do so? Were there any issues with the implementation process? How are employees responding to the new way of communication?

Employee engagement and participation leading to workplace democracy

8. What does an engaged employee mean to you as a manager in terms of participation in workplace communication practices?
9. How do you encourage employee motivation, participation and involvement?
10. How do employees practice participation in the workplace?
11. How do you know that your employees are satisfied with their working conditions?
12. How can employees complain?

Internal social media

13. Organisation Two launched social media for internal communication a few months ago.
    13.1. What type of social media did you choose to employ?
    13.2. Why did you decide on social media?
    13.3. Where there any challenges during the planning and launching?
    13.4. How is it working so far?
        13.4.1. What is the employees' rate of use and how are they used?
14. Do you find the use of social media as an internal communication tool useful? Why, how?
15. What are the benefits from using social media in the workplace?
16. What (if any) has changed since you introduced social media?
17. What are some of the challenges of using social media as a workplace communication tool (internal)?

From your Employee Code of Conduct

18. How is the Code of Conduct etc. communicated?
19. According to your Code of Conduct it is an employee's responsibility to speak up.
    19.1. Do you have any examples?
    19.2. Is there any protection for the employee who is doing so?
20. The Code talks about a diverse workforce.
    20.1. What does that mean?
    20.2. How do you achieve that?
21. How can Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Guidelines prevent such behaviour?
22. The code says that Organisation Two respects privacy and refers to the Privacy Act from 1993. Is that enough?
23. Conflicts of interest – you act in the best interest of Organisation Two at all times
    23.1. What if the employee has a conflict of interest between Organisation Two and own values?
24. The code says: 'Organisation Two logs and monitors employee email (including instant messaging) and internet activity including time spent accessing the internet, web sites visited, and the content of communications including any information or attachments being sent internally or outside the organisation. Organisation Two also monitors the content of communications for offensive or objectionable material and/or unapproved content.'
    24.1. What do you think about this in relation to employees earning responsibility?
25. The Code of Conduct has the title 'Doing what's right', but the Code lists a number of activities that employees should not do. How are employees reacting to this Code of Conduct?

Appendix E: Interviewee Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Workplace Democracy and the role of Social Media in the Contemporary Corporate Workplace

Synopsis of project: The aim of my project is to explore the role of online technologies/media in internal communication processes in an organizational context and their potential impact on workplace democracy. This research aims to understand the relationship between social media and the workplace better in order to have a positive impact on the workplace itself. The results of this master thesis will be shared with the participating Organisations. A copy will be made available to the Unitec library and a conference and/or article publication are also to be considered as likely outcomes of this research.

I request your participation in the following way: participating in an interview (up to one hour). This interview shall be audio recorded for the purpose of a transcription which will be used in the research, including the master thesis, conference, international journal publishing.

A transcript from the interview will be sent to you for two reasons:
1. For you to double check that your identity is not revealed through comments you made
2. For you to double check whether the transcript is reflecting your comments correctly

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. However, because of our schedule, any withdrawals must be done within two weeks after I have interviewed you.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password-protected file and only the researcher and the supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact me or my supervisors:

My contact details:
Alexander Danne
Phone: 021 08448308, Email: alexander.danne@hotmail.com

My supervisors are:
A/Prof Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki
Phone 09 815 4321 ext. 8746, Email: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

Dr Giles Dodson
Phone 815-4321 ext. 8798, Email: gdodson@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1089
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from November 2014 to November 2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix F: Interviewee Consent Form

Research Project Title: Workplace Democracy and the role of Social Media in the Contemporary Workplace

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this if I don't want to and I may withdraw within two weeks after the interview.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researcher and his supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 5 years.

I understand that I have the chance to read the transcript of the interview before it is processed further.

I understand that the results of this master thesis will be shared with the participating Organisations. A copy will be made available to the Unitec library and a conference and/or article publication are also to be considered as likely outcomes of this research.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Signature: ………………………….. Date: ………………………………

Project Researcher: ……………………………… Date: ………………………………

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1089
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from November 2014 to November 2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

<u>Appendix G: Focus Group Questions for Organisation One</u>

Goal: Discover how employees understand participation, engagement and social media including the use of it

Lead research question: *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices? And what aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practise can be understood as democratising?*

Internal Communication
1. How do you communicate in the workplace?
2. What do you think about social media in the workplace?
3. What would you change to make your workplace better in terms of communication practices?

Employee engagement and participation leading to workplace democracy
4. What is an engaged and engaging employee to you as an employee in terms of participation in workplace communication practices?
5. Do you know your management?
    5.1. What does participation mean to you in your daily workplace practices?
    5.2. How do you participate in your daily workplace?
    5.3. Are you involved in decision-making on matters affecting your daily working practices? How? Is it effective?
    5.4. What communication tool(s) helps you in this process?
6. Do you think that the management acknowledges your personal interests and rights?
    6.1. E.g. personal work objectives, salary …
7. Do you participate in any activity in the workplace that is not directly related to the actual work? How do you find about such activities?

Code of Conduct and Ethics
1. Have you read the Code of Conduct and Ethics?
2. What does it say?
3. Do you feel protected by it?

Appendix H: Focus Group Questions for Organisation Two

Goal: Discover how employees understand participation, engagement and social media including the use of it.

Lead research question: *How are networked communication tools being incorporated into contemporary workplace practices? And what aspects of contemporary workplaces' internal communications practise can be understood as democractising?*

Social media in Internal Communication
1. How do you communicate? What tools do you use?
2. What do you think about social media in the workplace? How do you use it?

Employee engagement and participation leading to workplace democracy
3. Do you engage/participate in the workplace?
    3.1. What does participation mean to you in your daily workplace practices?
    3.2. How do you participate in your daily workplace?
    3.3. Are you involved in decision-making on matters affecting your daily working practices? How? Is it effective?
    3.4. What communication tool(s) helps you in this process?
4. Do you think that the management acknowledges your personal interests and rights?
    4.1. E.g. personal work objectives, salary …
    4.2. Do you participate in any activity in the workplace that is not directly related to the actual work? How do you find about such activities?

Code of Conduct and Ethics
5. Have you read the Code of Conduct and Ethics?
6. What does it say?
7. Do you feel protected by it?
8. Does the harassment, bulling policy work?
9. Do employees speak up?

From the interview
10. Gamification / ideation?
11. Knowledge management (kaisem)?
12. CEO – have to follow
13. Newsfeed on the phone?
14. Organization through social media?
15. Set up communities? Asking process?
16. Communities = connection = engagement?
17. Avatar regulation?
18. Social media outside the organisation?

<u>Appendix I: Focus Group Information Sheet</u>

Research Project Title: Workplace Democracy and the role of Social Media in the Contemporary Corporate Workplace

Synopsis of project: The aim of my project is to explore the role of online technologies/media in internal communication processes in an organizational context and their potential impact on workplace democracy. This research aims to understand the relationship between social media and the workplace better in order to have a positive impact on the workplace itself. The results of this master thesis will be shared with the participating Organisations. A copy will be made available to the Unitec library and a conference and/or article publication are also to be considered as likely outcomes of this research.

I request your participation in the following way: participating in a focus group (up to one hour). This focus group shall be audio recorded for the purpose of a transcription which will be used in the research, including the master thesis, conference, international journal publishing. If you wish you can see a copy of the transcript, please indicate that on the consent form.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. However, because of our schedule, any withdrawals must be done within two weeks after I have interviewed you.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password-protected file and only the researcher and the supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact me or my supervisors:

<u>My contact details:</u>
Alexander Danne
Phone: 021 08448308, Email: alexander.danne@hotmail.com

<u>My supervisors are:</u>
A/Prof Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki
Phone 09 815 4321 ext. 8746, Email: epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz

Dr Giles Dodson
Phone 815 4321 ext. 8798, Email: gdodson@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1089
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from November 2014 to November 2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix J: Focus Group Consent Form

Research Project Title: Workplace Democracy and the role of Social Media in the Contemporary Corporate Workplace

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this if I don't want to and I may withdraw within two weeks after the focus group.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researcher and his supervisors. However, the other participants of the focus group will naturally know that I participated and what I have shared. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 5 years.

I understand that all matters discussed within the focus group need to stay confidential and that all discussion need to remain 'in house'.

I understand that the results of this master thesis will be shared with the participating Organisations. A copy will be made available to the Unitec library and a conference and/or article publication are also to be considered as likely outcomes of this research.

I understand that the discussion within the focus group will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Signature: ………………………….. Date: …………………………

Project Researcher: ……………………………. Date: ……………………………

☐   Please tick this box if you would like to read the transcript.

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1089
This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from November 2014 to November 2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix K: Provided Organisational Consent Form

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Organisational Consent

I … , *Communications Manager* of *[Organisation One]* give consent for *Alexander Danne* to undertake research in this organisation as discussed with the researcher.

The consent is subject to approval of research ethics application by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee and a copy of the approval letter being forwarded to the organisation as soon as possible.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix L: Research Synopsis for Organisational Consent

Synopsis

My study explores the role of online technologies/media in internal communication processes in an organisational context and their potential impact on employee engagement and workplace democracy. It has the following objectives: firstly, to identify ways in which contemporary communication technologies are being incorporated in to corporate practices and explore the effects of these changes on the workplace; secondly, to provide useful insights into how both managers and corporate workforces can incorporate new communications technologies into their work; thirdly, to contribute a well-developed concept of employee participation, motivation and workplace communication. The results of this master thesis will be shared with the participating Organisations. A copy will be made available to the Unitec library and a conference and/or article publication are also to be considered as likely outcomes of this research.

Methods

This research will use content analysis in order to study the organisation's policy documents such as human resource policies, internal communication policies and codes of ethics in regards to understanding the organisation's communication structures. In addition the study will conduct in-depth interviews with key communication personnel from two organisations in order to explore how internal communication is practiced within the organisations. Finally focus groups will explore employees' perspectives on the internal communication structure and workplace democracy.

Summary of key steps:

Analyse with a **content analysis** the organisation's policy documents such as human resource policies, internal communication policies and code of ethics in order to understand the organisation's communication structures

In-depth interviews with key communication personnel from both organisations in order to answer the question how internal communication is practiced within the organisations.

Focus groups will explore the employee's perspective on the internal communication structure and workplace democracy

Content analysis

This method involves analysing texts through coding. Usually content analysis is used by researchers to investigate a theme or important trend. This method aims to interpret meaning in written or spoken sources (O'Leary, 2010). Academics in the field of the communication (Auger, 2013; Haigh & Brubaker, 2013; Schwarz, 2012; Valtysson, 2014) use content analysis to narrow their research to a specific area. This study will use content analysis as a way to focus on the communication structures of the organisations as identified in official documents such as codes of conduct and code of ethics.

In-depth Interviews

An interview attempts to gain information, opinions or themes around a particular subject without predetermined questions. O'Leary (2010) describes in-depth interviews as Informal, unstructured interviews in a one-on-one setting. This kind of interview is characterised by open lines of communication and by a causal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The in-depth interviews are used to understand how the organisation managers implemented social media, how they use social media to engage with their employees and to get an impression about what to ask in the focus groups.

Focus group

The focus group is a shared interview with a number of people. This research aims for a minimum of five to six participants. It has a very loose question-answer schedule and can be considered as a discussion. However, the interviewer needs to moderate the discussion and keep the conversation alive and in the same time direct the discussion towards a valuable goal (O'Leary, 2010). Employees will form the participants of the focus group. The outcome should enable the researcher to build a more complex understanding of the workplace and social media in an organisation. The findings will be used to contrast and build upon the outcomes of the content analysis as well as the interviews in order to understand the full impact of social media in the workplace.

Next steps

Ethics committee application (September 2014)
Finalise agreement with organisations (Beginning-October 2014)
Start research (Mid-October 2014)

Appendix M: Received Organisational Consent Form

I, … Communications manager at *Organisation Two*, agree to *Alexander Danne* Undertaking research in Organisation Two as discussed with the researcher and myself.

This consent is subject to Alexander's research ethics application being approved by the Untiec Research Ethics Committee and a copy of the approval letter being emailed to me at Organisation Two as soon as possible.

Please note Alexander may have access to Information we wouldn't want disclosed externally, such as Human Resource policies. The purpose of letting him review such material would simply be to help him structure questions relevant to the audience and his subject. As a condition of our consent, we may from time to time designate certain information provided by us to Alexander as confidential to Organisation Two not to be disclosed without our prior written consent.

Signature:

Date: