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**Facebook at Work – Does It Work?**  
Lessons from Early Adopters of the Enterprise Social Media  
Platform Workplace by Facebook

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Abstract:

Through a qualitative case study, this paper explores how early adopters at the non-governmental organization Save the Children used the enterprise social media (ESM) platform Workplace by Facebook and identifies some challenges and opportunities.

Data was collected through semistructured interviews and analyzed together with platform-generated user data, based on an affordance approach using three metaphors developed by Leonardi et al. (2013) that illustrate the different roles ESM often plays in organizational processes; leaky pipe (communication that everyone can see), echo chamber (communication among likeminded), and social lubricant (smooth and easy communication).

The study concludes that early adopters used Workplace by Facebook to share and learn about program activities around the organization, to maintain and expand their social network, to perform their own work in more efficient ways, and to have fun.

By facilitating learning across the organization, Workplace offers opportunities for program improvement and building social capital. There is a risk however, that these opportunities are never fully realized due to traces of a leader-centered culture which stifles honest communication. Workplace communities of coworkers with similar interests provided excellent opportunities for collaboration, innovation and creating a sense of belonging. However, a leader-centered culture can lead to closed and secret groups, hiding the knowledge for others to see, due to lack of trust. Fun, social-related groups such as Office Twins were highly appreciated among early adopters and helped strengthen relations and build social capital, although the blurred lines between social and work could lead to unwanted behavior such as romantic invitations.

Keywords: Enterprise Social Media, Coworker Communication, Internal Communication, Knowledge Sharing, Social Capital

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# 1. Introduction

Making internal communication and knowledge management information technology (IT) solutions work well can be a challenge for organizations. Excitement for intranet solutions in the mid-1990s was followed by disappointment in the early 2000s when it became clear that adoption among coworkers was often low (Rodgers, 2002). Intranets had many times become disorganized housings of centrally produced, outdated information that carried messages and announcements from management to employees that didn't help anyone do their job (Rodgers, 2002; Bohyun, 2010).

At the same time, social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter grew in popularity and demonstrated their enormous power to connect people across the world. In 2017, 13 years after launching, Facebook reached the milestone of 2 billion monthly active users worldwide (Nowak & Spiller, 2017).

Can social media provide the magic bullet for internal communication that organizations are searching for? It seems many might think so, or at least be willing to give it a try. An increasing number of organizations across different industries are using intraorganizational social media applications, or enterprise social media (ESM), for internal communication (Alimam, Bertin & Crespi, 2017).

ESM applications offer new ways for coworkers to communicate that differ from traditional communication forms in a few important ways. Unlike emails or phone calls, communication via social media platforms is possible for everyone to see, now and in the future. It is informal and interactive, but different from a discussion around the watercooler since anyone can participate regardless of physical location or time zone.

However, just like the first generation of intranets, ESM—or Intranet 2.0—comes with challenges. Suspicion and worry among managers that ESM will “waste” coworkers time, coworkers' unwillingness to share knowledge, and complex applications that are difficult to learn how to use, are just a few (Alimam et al., 2017).

Results from a global intranet survey in 2009 among 561 organizations of varied sizes showed low satisfaction rates (Prescient Digital). Almost a fourth of the organizations rated their intranet functionality as poor or very poor.

The newest ESM applications are trying to tackle some of these challenges by mimicking the familiar interfaces of the social media applications that are so popular for private use. The hope is that these new ESM platforms will not only copy the appearance of for example Facebook, but also their level of success.

One of the latest ESM platforms available is *Workplace by Facebook*. Since it was launched in 2016, more than 30,000 organizations have signed up to use it, including some well-known names within both the corporate and non-profit sectors, such as Walmart, Spotify, Starbucks, and Volkswagen (Workplace by Facebook, 2018a), and Oxfam, UNICEF, World Wildlife Fund, and Norwegian Refugee Council (Workplace by Facebook, 2018b).

The proverbial expression “it’s not *what* you know it’s *whom* you know,” is a way of expressing what the theoretical term *social capital* means. Knowing and trusting someone and having a positive relationship mean that both parties more easily can ask each other for a favor and feel both obligated and willing to return that favor. A friendly, trusting relationship will not only result in returned favors, but a positive environment and productive cooperation (Acedo & Gomila, 2013). Traditionally these connections are created between coworkers in the physical office in the corridor or lunch room. But with remote workers and staff spread over the world, it can be difficult to forge these important bonds.

Maybe social media, when applied intra-organizationally, can help staff in a big, geographically dispersed organization communicate with each other in a way that promotes these relationships.

As a communications professional who has worked on internal communication and many times become frustrated with the barriers to knowledge sharing and skepticism towards new technology within organizations, this topic is of great interest to me. I am also an avid Facebook user in my private life, which makes the intersection of social media, internal communication, and social capital even more interesting in my eyes.

This case study explores the usage of the ESM platform Workplace by Facebook among a group of early adopters in the large international non-governmental organization Save the Children and identifies some of the challenges and opportunities this ESM platform can bring in terms of knowledge sharing, social capital creation, work performance, and more.

## 1.1 Problem Description

Knowledge sharing and learning within organizations constitute the underpinning, interlinked concepts behind this study. In today’s post-bureaucratic society where coworkers’ knowledge is often considered the most valuable asset of an organization, strategies and tools to manage this knowledge and promote learning among coworkers become imperative (Hislop, 2009). No organization, regardless of its *raison d’être*, can afford to be static and non-learning in a constantly changing and highly competitive environment (*ibid.*).

This is especially true for non-governmental organizations (Edwards, 1997). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are experiencing increasing demands from individual and corporate donors as well as government funding agencies to present results, to be accountable and transparent (*ibid.*). To meet these demands, and for program implementation to constantly evolve and improve, learning is critical—from previous successes and from previous failures (*ibid.*).

Hislop (2009) and Edwards (1997) stress the importance of creating an organizational environment conducive of learning that provides both incentives and structures for learning and sharing, that promotes honesty, openness, and trust, and that is permissive of self-criticism and debate. Edwards (1997), claims that this environment rarely exists within NGOs where incentives are often vague and weak, job insecurity and short-term

contracts lead to less invested staff, and failures are many times covered up to avoid reputational damage.

For coworkers to be willing to share knowledge there has to be a level of inter-personal trust (Hislop, 2009). Social capital is an indicator of this kind of trust (ibid.). Coworkers with large social networks, strong relationships and a shared vision with other coworkers will more easily learn and acquire the knowledge they need to perform their job (ibid.).

Promoting social capital creation, knowledge sharing and organizational learning is a challenge for many organizations, and in particular for NGOs that have limited budgets for any expenses outside program implementation (Edwards, 1997). This is where enterprise social media platforms come in. ESM solutions can be implemented at a low cost and offer prospects of improved information dissemination, communication and social networking, collaboration and innovation, knowledge management, expertise finding, and problem solving (Alimam et al., 2017).

Considering the challenges organizations face in regards to knowledge sharing and learning and the opportunities that enterprise social media brings to solve these challenges, this study explores a case where the new ESM tool Workplace by Facebook was implemented. By studying a select group of early adopters within the international non-governmental organization Save the Children, along with available user data for the entire organization, I aim to draw some lessons on both challenges and opportunities. I hope that my findings can contribute new insights to the existing research and assist organizations in their ESM use.

Several researchers express a need for further studies into the use of ESM for internal communication in organizations (Alimam et al., 2017; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). If we understand organizations as products of the sense-making and communication processes of coworkers (Heide & Simonsson, 2011), and observe that these processes are increasingly happening via ESM, it becomes imperative that researchers develop a deeper understanding of these tools and their effects (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Another factor that motivates this study is the particular ESM platform Workplace by Facebook. It is a new tool that has not been the focus of many previous studies (from what I have been able to find) and its design is unique in that applies the familiar interface of Facebook to a tool only designed for internal communication and work processes.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and discuss different aspects of the enterprise social media platform Workplace by Facebook seen through the lens of early adopters of the platform at Save the Children, a large international non-governmental organization. The aim is to contribute to a better understanding of enterprise social media as an internal communication channel and to identify some of the opportunities and challenges it entails.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- How are early adopters using the enterprise social media Workplace by Facebook?
- Based on the answers to the first question, what challenges can be identified with the platform? What opportunities?

These research questions will be answered through a case study of Save the Children, focusing on early adopters and their use of Workplace by Facebook, which was introduced in February 2017 to support internal communication and knowledge sharing among the organization's more than 28,000 employees worldwide.

### 1.4 Definitions

This study uses the following definitions of key terms:

**Enterprise social media (ESM)**, as defined by Leonardi et al. (2013):

*“Web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing.”*

**Social capital**, as defined by Adler and Kwon in their much-cited article from 2002:

*“The goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor.”*

**Non-governmental organization (NGO)**, as defined by Martens (2002):

*“NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level.”*

**Early adopters**, is a term that stems from Everett Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations*, first published in 1962. Rogers (1983) describes how an innovation spreads and becomes widely adopted within a group through the gradual adoption by individuals within the group. Rogers (1983) defines five categories of individual adopters to standardize and simplify diffusion research: (1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority, and (5) laggards. Early adopters are just ahead of the average group member in adopting an innovation and often serve as a role model to others in the group, someone to ask for advice and information about the new service or idea (Ibid.).

### 1.5 Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to a few individuals that are part of a specific user group (early adopters) of a particular application (Workplace by Facebook) within one specific organization (Save the Children), and the results are based on these individuals' subjective experiences of using Workplace by Facebook. While the results are not

generalizable or transferrable to other contexts, they may still contain lessons that could be of value for other, similar organizations that are interested in using ESM for internal communication.

## 2. Background

In order to create a better understanding of the study, this chapter describes the features and characteristics of Workplace by Facebook and the history of Save the Children.

### 2.1 Workplace by Facebook

In October of 2016, Facebook launched Workplace by Facebook (first called *Facebook at Work* but later changed name) hoping to bring its successful social media concept to the world of business. By maintaining the familiar interface of Facebook, the company has created a platform that is easy to use for anyone with a personal Facebook account, requiring minimal training unlike many other software solutions. The platform is in no way connected with regular Facebook and an organization with a premium account has full ownership of all content, creating a secure and ad-free environment. The premium service is completely free for non-governmental organizations regardless of their size or other attributes (Workplace by Facebook, 2017). One year after launching, more than 30,000 companies and non-governmental organizations were already using Workplace, including some well-known names like Spotify, Starbucks, Oxfam, and UNICEF (Workplace by Facebook, 2018a, 2018b)

Save the Children partnered with Facebook months before the official launch of Workplace and helped pilot the tool among a selected group of employees. In February 2017, Save the Children introduced Workplace to the entire 28,000+ staff. It was the first time the organization had one single platform where all staff could communicate with each other.

Organizations such as Save the Children that have a Workplace Premium account legally own the platform and all of its contents even if the data is stored globally across Facebook's data centers (Workplace by Facebook, 2018c). Individuals must possess a Save the Children email address to join and upon leaving the organization, their profile is deleted automatically (Save the Children, 2018b).

While the two applications have the same look and feel, users are met by a personalized 'newsfeed' as they open them both, and most Facebook functions are available to Workplace users (including groups, events, live video, chat, audio/video calls), there are a few differences between Facebook and Workplace that are important to point out:

Followers, not friends – on Workplace you can follow other coworkers but there is no approval process for following someone. When coworkers that you follow post something, this will always show up in your newsfeed. Everyone can see whom you follow and who follows you.

Profile information – While users create individual profiles with a profile photo as well as a cover photo in both applications, the information about each user in Workplace

includes only work-related information such as their job title, position within a hierarchy, and work location, rather than personal information such as birthday and relationship status.

Focus on groups rather than individuals – If you post something to your profile on Facebook, all your friends will see this post. If you do the same on Workplace only coworkers who follow you will see it and posting to your profile is not the main activity on Workplace. It is inside the groups most of the conversations happen. Groups can be open (anyone can find and join the group), closed (anyone can find the group but must request to join), or secret (only invited users can see and join the group).

Organizational settings – Within the Save the Children Workplace, all users have been preset to automatically follow the CEOs of Save the Children member organizations. There are a few groups that include all users where posts are moderated (they must be approved by a moderator before being posted), such as the All Staff Announcement group.

*Appendix II* provides screen shots of the home pages for Facebook and Workplace by Facebook respectively.

## 2.2 Save the Children: An International Non-governmental Organization with Global Presence

The Save the Children Fund was founded in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb in the United Kingdom to feed children at risk of starving after the First World War (Save the Children, 2017). Save the Children Sweden was founded six months later and during the next 50 years, Save the Children organizations were formed in several other countries (Van Vijfeijken, 2013). During the 1970s, the work became focused on international development and child rights, rather than domestic charity (Rädda Barnen, n.d.) and the national organizations started expanding their work and presence into the developing world.

With the expansion the organization grew more complex. A loose alliance of various national Save the Children organizations was formed in 1977, but there was no shared strategy, no shared brand, and no coordination of activities (Taylor, 2015). This led to that at one point in time, there were seven separate Save the Children offices in Ethiopia, each with its own agenda (Taylor, 2015). Similar situations could be found in other developing countries around the world, such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and Guatemala (Van Vijfeijken, 2013). In 2010 this changed. As Taylor (2015) describes, an umbrella organization called Save the Children International was created, to which all the national Save the Children organizations (so called Save the Children members) handed over the management and operation of all their activities taking place outside each member's borders. Members still managed their domestic activities along with fundraising (Taylor, 2015). In the example of Ethiopia, this meant a large restructuring to consolidate seven separate offices into one. Similar changes took place in many other countries.

Currently, Save the Children has approximately 28,500 employees around the world working in 28 member offices, 110 country offices (managed by SCI), 4 regional offices (managed by SCI), and at the Save the Children International headquarters in London (Save the Children, 2017).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on an affordance approach and will use the three enterprise social media metaphors developed by Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield (2013) to analyze its results. In this chapter, the affordance theory is described along with these metaphors. Treem and Leonardi (2012) argue that studying the kinds of behaviors social media often afford can help researchers understand the communicative outcomes of social media use. Therefore, I believe that this theory is well suited to help answer my research questions about the usage of an ESM application.

The second part of this chapter discusses the importance of coworker communication and the meta-theory Communication is Constitutive of Organizing, adopted in this study.

The third part of this chapter discusses the concept of social capital and its different dimensions.

#### 3.1 An Affordance Approach and Three Metaphors

Originally defined by psychologist James Jerome Gibson in his book “The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception” from 1979, and later explained by Greeno (1994), the Theory of Affordances describes how the interaction between an agent and another system depends on the affordances of that system. The affordances of a system refer to the attributes and qualities that guide the agent on how to use it and thus lead to certain interaction (Greeno, 1994). Simultaneously, how the agent interacts with the system will depend on the abilities and perception of the agent (*ibid.*). Greeno (1994) exemplifies this by a window (freely recounted here with some added details): the affordances of the window—that it has a handle and hinges and a transparent pane of glass—guide people on how to interact with it. One person might use the handle to open it for fresh air, another person might look through the window to see how much snow just fell, and yet another person might break the glass and climb inside the house to steal something.

Treem and Leonardi (2012) outline four affordances of enterprise social media: visibility (communication happens where everyone can see), association (coworkers’ connections with content and with each other are possible for everyone to see), persistence (previously posted content is preserved and can be found years later), and editability (content can be edited both before and after making it available for others to see). The authors claim that these affordances will lead to new behaviors among coworkers, and thus change the way organizations manage internal communication and knowledge (Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

In their article from 2013, Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield build on the affordance approach to introduce three metaphors describing the role enterprise social media play

within organizations. They use these metaphors in their review of a number of papers published on ESM and identify potential advantages and disadvantages in relation to common organizational processes.

*ESM as a leaky pipe:* A message that is communicated via ESM can be directed at a specific coworker but will also be visible for everyone else on the platform (Leonardi et al., 2013). By being exposed to communication between others in this way, coworkers can retrieve social information about colleagues which can help them build new relations and maintain relations better over time, i.e. build their social capital (ibid.). ESM as a leaky pipe can also help overcome knowledge boundaries by making it possible for coworkers to see what other departments, countries, and units are working on as well as attending to knowledge and communications from people they wouldn't otherwise communicate with (ibid.). ESM as a leaky pipe can also have negative effects by making people only share more generic insights since they know everyone will see it, and by becoming overwhelmed from the sheer amount of communication to pay attention to (ibid.).

*ESM as an echo chamber:* Through built-in algorithms, social media applications tailor the content that each individual user sees according to the user's interests and previous activities (Leonardi et al., 2013). It also enables topic-specific groups and online communities where coworkers with similar interests and areas of work can gather. While this can strengthen communities and relationships and increase a sense of belonging, it can also lead to a user's limited exposure to new information or people who think differently than themselves, creating an echo chamber where interests and viewpoints are reinforced (ibid.).

*ESM as a social lubricant:* According to Leonardi et al. (2013) the commonly-used metaphor "glue"—as in a glue that holds people together—should be replaced with "lubricant" due to the need to keep conversations and connections running smoothly in the fast-paced and changing online environment. Thanks to its informal nature and ease with which people can connect, ESM can help coworkers to bond and create a sense of belonging through both social-related and work-related communication (ibid.). This can have positive effects by helping forge new relations and build social capital, but too much social information can also become a distraction (ibid.).

## 3.2 Coworker Communication

Considering the critical and multifaceted role coworkers play in many of today's organizations, coworker communication is a topic that Heide and Simonsson (2011) claim is increasingly important to study. They put forward an argument based on the meta-theory *Communication is Constitutive of Organizing (CCO)*, which views organizations not as things existing in the world like objects, but as products of the sense-making and communication processes of coworkers (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). The focus on coworkers is supported by changes in organizational life during the last three decades from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic organizations where coworkers are expected to have new roles and skills such as being socially competent, engaged, service-minded, independent, etc. (ibid.).

The post-bureaucratic employee can be compared with the ‘knowledge worker’ described by Hislop, where the communicative, relation-building skills are emphasized in a similar way (2009). The development from ‘traditional’ organizations to post-modern or post-bureaucratic organizations is also discussed by Falkheimer and Heide (2011). They describe the development of a new communication structure characterized by a culture of participation, collective intelligence and interaction of new and old media (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011). Erikson states that coworkers make up the most valuable asset in knowledge intense firms and that it will be critical for these firms to instill a mental ownership of the firm and its vision in all coworkers (Erikson, 2011).

### 3.3 Social Capital

Based on the definition by Adler and Kwon (2002), social capital is an intangible value or goodwill that stems from the relationships an individual or group has with other individuals or groups. This value or goodwill can ‘be used’ to acquire information, assert influence, provide a sense of solidarity and belonging, or other activities that would not be possible otherwise or would cost money (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) develop a model that explains social capital according to three dimensions: structural, cognitive, and relational. The structural dimension refers to patterns and platforms of connections between actors, or who you reach and how you reach them, considering factors such as connectivity and hierarchy (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The cognitive dimension refers to shared interpretations, visions, and values between individuals (ibid.). Finally, the relational dimension of social capital consists of the value created through relationships, with important aspects being trust and trustworthiness, norms and sanctions, and obligations and expectations. In another study, Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) show that the structural dimension affects both the cognitive and relational dimensions, and the cognitive dimension affects the relational dimension.

Common for all forms of social capital is that, unlike other forms of capital, it can never be owned by one single person, it cannot be easily transferred, and it allows to achieve goals that would not be possible without it or could be reached only at an additional cost (Coleman, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

The new role for coworkers in the post-bureaucratic organization, as described by Heide and Simonsson (2011), is closely related to social capital. In leader-centric, bureaucratic organizations, coworkers mostly needed to follow instructions from their superior without much involvement (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). In today’s post-bureaucratic organizations however, relationships are becoming more complex (ibid.). Now, coworkers need to be able to engage in dialogue, to constructively give and receive feedback, share and learn, with both managers and colleagues (ibid.). What Heide and Simonsson (2011) describes as they discuss how relationships and communication need to change within modern organizations, is basically an increased need for and greater importance of social capital.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Affordances of ESM and Coworker Communication

Falkheimer and Heide describe how social media has provided a new way for both coworkers and external audiences to make their voices heard and create a dialogue (2011). The use of social media makes it possible to communicate with a large number of people at the same time (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011) and with blazing speed (Stakston 2011). Among the consequences are that coworkers more easily can communicate and create strong relations with each other and discussions within a social network can give an idea of what issues are important for employees (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). Stakston emphasizes the possibilities for organizations to share ideas and truly engage audiences in important issues (2011).

Majchrzak, Faraj, Kane and Azad (2013) look at affordances of ESM and how they can lead to different engagement from coworkers, with both positive and negative effects. One example is metavoicing, when coworkers react to online content through a comment, by sharing someone's post, tagging, or reacting via one of the buttons that symbolize like, love, cry, laugh, or being angry (Majchrzak et al., 2013). Through metavoicing, a large number of people can be engaged in a discussion in a short amount of time (ibid.). If a critical mass of people reacts to a post, that will lead others to that post so metavoicing can also help bring attention to certain topics and knowledge which is often a good thing, but not if the content is biased or incorrect (ibid.).

Another affordance discussed by Majchrzak et al. (2013) is triggered attending, or when a coworker engages in an online conversation triggered by a notification. ESM allows users to set personalized notifications and thus be made aware of when there is activity within a group or topic of interest (Majchrzak et al., 2013). This makes it easier and less time consuming to engage in the online conversations but can also have the negative effect that a coworker only is exposed to topics that he or she is already familiar with (ibid.).

Gibbs, Rozaidi and Eisenberg (2013) bring a critical perspective to ESM's affordance of openness, something that is generally viewed as positive and leading to increased knowledge sharing. Their study of ESM use in a small, successful tech start-up company found that users many times had conflicting goals and motivations for how to interact with ESM, which led to both sharing and restricting knowledge (Gibbs et al., 2013). For example, constant notifications and the multitude of ongoing conversations lead some to feel overwhelmed, so they disengaged in order to have time for other tasks (ibid.). Others felt worried to disclose too much knowledge that could potentially shift power within the organization and lead to job loss (ibid.). The authors conclude that a deeper understanding of the motivational factors behind how users interact with social media will be important for future research (ibid.).

Turban, Bolloju, and Liang (2011) explore opportunities that enterprise social networking brings and discuss how organizations can work proactively to achieve high adoption rates among coworkers and overcome common fears of ESM being a waste of time and a security risk. It is critical to have a context-specific adoption strategy in place

and a team that manages that strategy in order to successfully implement a new ESM platform (Turban et al., 2011).

## 4.2 Affordances of ESM and Social Capital

By acting as a social lubricant, enterprise social media helps develop social capital within the organization (Leonardi et al., 2013). It is easier to contact a coworker in an informal way when you know about their work and social activities (ibid.).

Fulk and Yuan (2013) argue that the affordances of ESM systems can address a number of common organizational knowledge sharing challenges better than conventional knowledge management systems. The challenges they discuss are location of expertise, motivation to share knowledge, and building social capital by developing and maintaining social ties with knowledge providers (Fulk & Yuan, 2013). The authors draw on multiple theories to show how ESM, as a “communal knowledge pool”, where everyone can see what is being shared, helps coworkers manage existing relations and make new connections with experts or peers (ibid.). At the same time, the visible connections on ESM support a culture of sharing and motivate coworkers to discuss, share knowledge, and collaborate (ibid.).

Sun and Shang (2014) propose a model for intraorganizational social media use where they divide ESM use into work-related and social-related use. They state that managers often are hesitant to allow intraorganizational social media use due to concerns that productive work time is ‘wasted’ on social activities (Sun & Shang, 2014). However, through their large, quantitative study of a Chinese company, they show a positive correlation between social-related and work-related ESM use through the creation of social capital (ibid.). They further show how the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital, represented by social interaction ties, shared vision, and trust, relate to each other, confirming Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s (1998) model.

Robertson and Kee (2017) claims that the use of Facebook between co-workers can be an organizational strategy to promote job satisfaction at work, further strengthening the argument that Sun and Shang (2014) make regarding the positive relation between social-related and work-related interaction.

A quantitative study by Bharati, Zhang and Chaudhury (2015) explores social media’s impact on organizational knowledge quality through the theoretical lens of social capital and resource exchange. The study results showed a strong, positive link from organizational social media use to organizational emphasis on knowledge management, which suggested that social media can enable organizational knowledge management efforts (Bharati et al., 2015). The links from social media to structural social capital and from social media to cognitive social capital were also significant and positive (ibid.).

## 5. Methodology

This chapter begins with a description of the qualitative case study as methodology approach, followed by an account for how the study has been implemented; from selection of a case, selection of a sample and collection of data to processing the data,

reporting the findings and analyzing the results. The last two sections discuss the study's trustworthiness along with research ethics.

## 5.1 Qualitative Case Study

This study is based on the basic belief system—or paradigm—called constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism sees reality as the product of human intellect, meaning that individuals construct their own reality, often in some level of consensus with others, based on their experiences and level of sophistication (ibid.). This means that different realities can co-exist and also change as individuals become more informed or sophisticated (ibid.). The aim of research according to a constructivist view is the reconstruction and understanding of these realities (including the researcher's own) through interaction between researcher and respondents (ibid.).

With a constructivist perspective on reality and knowledge, I believe a qualitative approach will best help answer this study's research question which focuses on how the study participants are using Workplace by Facebook. Creswell (2009) explains qualitative research as an approach for "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Given (2008) explains qualitative research as a way for researchers to make sense of a phenomenon by studying it in its natural setting and understanding the meanings people bring to it.

This study uses abductive reasoning which is a form of logical inference where the researcher starts with the collection of materials and then goes through a process to identify meaningful patterns by considering all knowledge and clues that are available to him or her (Råholm, 2010). Observations, already proven correlations and established theories, all contribute to the sensemaking and logical guessing that are part of an abductive reasoning (ibid.).

A case study according to Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) is defined as a research study focused on a single case or set of cases and should be considered a research approach rather than a design, since several designs and data collection methods can be included in one case study. To guide a researcher on the aptness of using a case study as research strategy, Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) suggest asking if a) the phenomenon of interest has to be studied in a natural setting; b) the phenomenon of interest focuses on contemporary events; c) the research question aims to answer how and why questions; and d) the phenomenon of interest include a variety of factors and relationships that can be directly observed. Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) also cites Gray who stated in a 2004 publication that "the case study method is ideal when a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has no control."

I believe that the case study approach is appropriate for the purpose of my study. Enterprise social media is a contemporary phenomenon and it includes a variety of factors and relationships that can be directly observed. Furthermore, the first research question aims to answer a 'how' question.

## 5.2 Sample

One reason behind selecting a specific case is that it is revelatory and illuminates previously inaccessible knowledge (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2009). Another reason is that the case is representative or typical (*ibid.*). For this study, I have selected early adopters at the international organization Save the Children of the enterprise social media platform Workplace by Facebook. Although it can seem contradictory, this case is both revelatory and representative. The specific application Workplace was launched Facebook, Inc. in October 2016. Save the Children was one of the very first organizations that adopted the platform and in this sense the case is revelatory in nature. On the other hand, the implementation of an ESM platform in an international non-governmental organization is not a new occurrence and could potentially be seen as a representative case that can provide learnings for other similar organizations.

It is important to note that one of the reasons behind selecting this case is my own personal experience as an employee of Save the Children. This relationship is described in more detail along with its possible implications in section 5.6.

Seven early adopters of Workplace by Facebook at Save the Children were interviewed in this study. Early adopters are a special population selected through a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a way to select people from a population based on their individual characteristics in the belief that these would make the participants knowledgeable about the investigated topic (Choemprayong & Wildemuth, 2009). As described in section 1.4, early adopters are individuals that chose to adopt an innovation just before the majority of the group does so (Rogers, 1983). This means that early adopters have an extensive user experience of the new platform.

There are statistical methods for classifying individuals as early adopters (Rogers, 1983), but due to limited time and resources for this study, I chose not to use such methods. The selection was done in consultation with knowledge management, IT, and social enterprise experts at Save the Children who have profound knowledge of Workplace as well as access to detailed user data for the platform. They were able to identify a number of users with a consistent and high level of activity on Workplace from the very first days after the launch to the time of observation.

While the respondents were all chosen because of their knowledge and early, consistent use of Workplace, I also tried to choose individuals from the list that would provide different perspectives on it by selecting people of different gender, in different locations, and different positions. According to Beitin (2012), considering who can give different views on a topic because of their role can be equally important as deciding how many people are needed to answer the question.

After conducting seven interviews, I considered that I reached what Beitin (2012) claims is becoming the most common approach to sample size in qualitative interview research: theoretical saturation. When the researcher notices that each added interview mostly confirms the findings in the previous ones and considers the research question to be answered, he or she can determine that saturation is reached and stop adding new interviews (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

Of the final seven respondents, two were men and five were women, one worked in North America, three in Europe, one in Africa, one in the Middle East, one in Latin America. Five worked for Save the Children International and two worked for Save the Children member organizations. All respondents except one had worked for Save the Children for the last two to five years and one had been employed for 12 years. They held positions that varied substantially in both hierarchical level and areas of work, which included child protection, humanitarian response, operation management, communications, knowledge management, and information technology. I have chosen to not provide any further information about neither the respondents nor the experts who helped identify them in order to protect their anonymity.

## 5.3 Data Collection

As Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) state, case studies usually involve several methods of data collection in order to produce the richest and most complete picture as possible. For this study, data was collected through interviews and user data produced by the Workplace platform.

### 5.3.1 Interview

This study uses interviews as its main method for data collection. As defined by Cannell and Kahn (1968) and quoted by Luo and Wildemuth (2009, p. 232), the research interview is a “two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives.” Interviews may seem easy to do but are a rather difficult task to perform correctly (Rugg & Petre, 2006). In order to produce valuable information, the interviewer needs to have a clear picture of what the interview tool entails (Rugg & Petre, 2006). I prepared for the interviews by reading Wildemuth’s guidance on interviewing (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

### 5.3.2 Semistructured Interview

A common way to differentiate between ways of doing qualitative research interviews is to define them along a continuum of structured and unstructured interviews (Luo & Wildemuth, 2009). In the middle of this spectrum sits the semistructured interview (ibid.). Semistructured interviews follow an interview guide with predefined questions, but the interviewer can decide in which order to ask them, change the wording of each question depending on the respondent, and decide to pose follow-up questions depending on the answers received (ibid.). The semi-structured interview is a suitable data collection method in this study since the goal is to explore each respondent’s unique user habits, behavior, and opinions in depth. It was also important to leave some space for improvisation to be able to adjust questions to the specific experience of each respondent.

It is advantageous for the interviewer to have a good understanding of the topic before performing the interviews (Kvale, 1997). In my previous role at Save the Children International, I was part of the gradual pre-launch of the platform from September 2016 up until the global launch in February 2017. Since the global launch I have switched

positions within the organization, but I still have access to Workplace in my current job and am very familiar with the platform. I had worked together with some of the respondents, but it was the first time I spoke with others.

The interviews were based on an interview guide with 17 questions (see Annex I). However, in most cases topics in the later questions were discussed within the earlier questions so the latter ones could be skipped. The interview guide included guidelines for how to start a conversation and help respondents discuss the topic of interest related to the purpose of the study in case they could not think of an answer to a question at first. My own familiarity with and extensive knowledge about the platform enabled me to encourage respondents to develop their thoughts and opinions.

All seven interviews were performed via Skype for Business and recorded. While Skype for Business has the option to use video, the interviews were done using only audio. This was due to issues of bad connectivity in some of the cases, which dramatically decreases the quality of the call. All interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

All respondents were informed orally of the purpose of the interview and were granted that all collected data would remain anonymous. They approved that I recorded the conversation.

### 5.3.3 User Data

Workplace generates daily user data, including number of staff members who are actively using the platform, number of posts, number of likes and other reactions, along with other statistics such as how many employees have activated an account and how many have completed a profile. I received access to the Workplace admin panel and was able to retrieve this data. The data was collected in September, nine months after the interviews were completed.

The initial intention was to access more detailed data through a separate application called Grytics (<https://work.grytics.com/>), but that data was eventually deemed to contain too much confidential information for me to get access to it.

## 5.4 Data Processing and Analysis

### 5.4.1 Interviews

The processing of the interviews mostly follows the steps for qualitative content analysis described by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). Depending on the goals and conditions of each study, the process may be more or less flexible (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I chose to follow these steps:

1. Prepare the data, in this case by transforming the recordings into text by transcribing them.
2. Define the unit of analysis, which I chose to be themes. Themes, or expressions of an idea, are the most commonly used unit in qualitative content analyses and

means that the unit can be anything from a word to an entire paragraph (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

3. Develop categories and a coding scheme. I used the approach that Zhang and Wildemuth describes as directed content analysis (2009). It means that I began with some of the categories found in earlier social media affordances research, but then let the actual empirical data define new categories as needed (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).
4. Code all the text. I did this by carefully reading through the transcripts and copy parts of the text that represented categories into a separate document. Those parts that didn't fit one of the predefined categories were put into new categories or in the "other" category.
5. Report methods and findings. It is difficult to present findings from a qualitative content analysis since there are no statistics or numbers to show (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I have included quotes and tables to make the findings more easily understandable and attempted to find a balance between the description of findings and my interpretation of them which represents my personal and theoretical understanding of the topic, a balance that is important in qualitative content analysis according to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). They quote Patton (2002) to explain: "An interesting and readable report provides sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 313). The methods and processes must be reported in detail in order to establish trustworthiness for a study (ibid.). A discussion on trustworthiness, or criteria for evaluating qualitative research work (in quantitative studies often called validity, reliability, and objectivity) can be found in section 5.5.

#### 5.4.2 User Data

The user data has been reported under a separate heading and then analyzed together with the interviews using a qualitative approach. This means that the statistics are used solely for descriptive purposes and no quantitative testing of relationships between variables has been done (Wildemuth, 2009).

### 5.5 Trustworthiness and Methodological Limitations

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the quality of a qualitative study from a constructivist perspective is judged by four criteria, also described by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

*Credibility* is how well the results represent the constructed reality that is being studied (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). It is necessary for researchers to design data collection strategies that adequately capture the representation of reality being studied in combination with ensuring a transparent process for categorization and analysis (ibid.). I believe that the in-depth interviews performed in this study are a suitable way to solicit a credible representation of the reality being studied (early adopters' use of Workplace). As stated by (ibid.), the credibility can be improved by certain activities such as prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation. I could for example have

performed several interviews over time with the same respondents and used more than one method to collect the data, for example through a qualitative survey in addition to interviews, but due to time and resource limitations for this study this was not possible.

*Transferability* refers to the level of richness in the description of data which will makes it possible for other researchers to judge if findings can be applied to other contexts (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I believe this study provides a relatively rich description that should make it possible for other researchers to make this judgement, at least to a certain extent. Transferability can be compared with ‘naturalistic generalization’ which happens when readers spontaneously reflect on the results of a study in relation to their own experiences and consider that they can be generalized (Kvale, 1997). This study does not claim to be generalizable in the sense that results can be transferred and considered valid in any context.

Lastly, *dependability* and *confirmability* refer to how coherent the researcher’s study process has been, how well the researcher accounts for this process along the way, and if it is possible for others to draw the same conclusions as the researcher when reviewing the data and findings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). These criteria are best evaluated through an audit where an external party who reviews the raw data, the findings, the interpretations, and recommendations (ibid.). By clearly describing the various stages and proceedings of this study with as much detail as possible, I have tried to make the process coherent and clear.

Dependability and confirmability can to some extent be compared with what Kvale (1997) calls reliability of the collected data, or if independent researchers would interpret the data in the same way. He claims that the reliability will vary depending on factors such as the quality of the transcription and the occurrence of misleading questions (ibid.). The transcription of recorded interviews for example, will always be the product of some level of interpretation by the transcriber (even if done by the interviewer) of for example pauses and passages that are difficult to hear, reducing the level of reliability (ibid.). I did all the interviews solely via Skype audio, which also meant that information that could have been extracted from body language was lost.

## 5.6 Ethics

Kvale discusses three ethical guidelines for any research involving people: informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences (1997). For this study, each of the interviewees was informed about the purpose of the interview and my role in it as a student (clarifying that I am doing this research in my private time, not as a Save the Children employee). They were also asked to approve that I recorded the interviews. All respondents agreed to be interviewed and recorded. In addition, I made it clear that data would be presented in a way that made it impossible to identify any individual.

Kvale (1997) states that research findings can be affected by a close relationship between the researcher and study participants. If the researcher takes on a role of friend, rather than an independent researcher, her or she may lose the professional distance that is necessary to look at the results from different perspectives (Kvale, 1997). The Swedish Research Council (2017) states that it is critical for a researcher to disclose any

personal connections with the study object. At the time when I started working on this study in September 2017, I was an employee of the member organization Save the Children US. At the time of the launch of Workplace by Facebook in February 2017, I worked for Save the Children International and was among the first employees to actively start using it from the outset. It is thus possible to claim that I myself can count in the category of early adopters within the organization, which poses a risk for the close association with respondents that Kvale (1997) discusses. However, with a constructivist paradigm, it can also be an advantage for a researcher to share experiences with study participants since this will make it easier to understand and accurately represent the reality that the participants are conveying, or even co-constructing in the interaction with the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I recognize that the data I collected as well as my analyses are likely affected by my relationship with Save the Children and my own experiences of using Workplace by Facebook, but I don't necessarily think that the findings are a less credible representation of the respondents' reality because of it. Lastly, I want to clarify that this study was entirely my own idea and has not been initiated or contracted by Save the Children, Facebook, or any other entity.

## 6. Results

In this chapter the results of interviews and the limited user data retrieval are reported.

### 6.1 Interviews

#### 6.1.1 Frequency of Use

All participants were asked how often they visit Workplace and all of them stated that they go on the platform daily, often several times per day. When asked approximately how many hours they spent on the platform per day in total, some had a hard time quantifying this. Rather than paying one or two isolated daily visits to the platform, it had become a tool they used throughout the day and total usage time also depended on their coworkers' activity on it. As one respondent said:

It's impossible to say how many times a day I'm actually physically in there but a lot [...] and it's hard to say how much time I spend on it, it depends, I mean just now for instance I got a notification and I cast an eye on what it was. If it's somebody I work closely with or I know or like, it is something I would go and check out. Otherwise I just see what the notification is so takes me like a few seconds. And sometimes I post big things and there are big discussions and then it takes more time so it's very hard to estimate.

For others it was easier to say. One respondent, who felt it was a good thing to spend a lot of time on Workplace said: "Sometimes daily so at most several times a day and at worst once or twice a week."

Another respondent saw it differently and said: "I've never really calculated it, but I hope it's not more than half an hour per day."

When asked to explain why it would be negative to spend more than an hour, she said:

I mean, obviously from a communications perspective it's just a really useful tool in terms of sharing our content and you know making sure that as many people as possible see the item, the visibility materials that we want to push out, but at the same time you know it does distract you because you end up seeing other things that might not be directly related to your work and then you know that sometimes they're interesting and you might end up reading them, and not to say that that's a complete waste of time because obviously there's always something to learn from other regions and members and everything as well but sometimes it is a bit of a distraction.

Yet another respondent explained that he had taken the time to set his notifications exactly how he wanted them in order to only be notified when there had been a development in one of the groups he prioritized. He did this to not become distracted or overwhelmed with too many notifications.

### 6.1.2 Sharing

All respondents described how they used Workplace for sharing, but what they shared and with what purpose differed between respondents.

a. **Inform coworkers about what is going on in other parts of the organization:**

One respondent mostly shared content that was originally posted in the much larger country group (with 350+ members) or in a global group with her smaller local area group (30+ members), to keep everyone in the local area informed about what was going on at country level, such as the launch of a new project. When asked why the local group members could not simply become part of the larger country office group, the respondent explained that even if they were, it was in the smaller, local group that they felt more comfortable to comment and actively participate. She said; “In the local group it’s just us and we can communicate with each other, encourage and motivate each other within our local office.”

Another respondent was responsible for making communications resources from the various ongoing humanitarian responses that Save the Children is engaged in available for fundraising teams across the organization. At one single time there can be many active responses and photos, stories, blog posts, video clips, etc. are important tools for fundraising activities and other outreach efforts. A video clip from the Rohingya refugee settlement in Bangladesh for example, may be used by member organizations in both Sweden, the United Kingdom and Mexico in order to create awareness and elicit donations. Many times, members themselves produce the materials, but it can also be done by the country offices. It is important that the materials reach fundraising teams in a timely manner to be current and relevant. Before Workplace was introduced, the respondent had to manually collect the materials from members and country offices which meant combing through various email send-outs and emailing individuals. He then

spent hours putting all the content into his own weekly email and sent it out to his list. In his own words:

The way that we did that was manually collecting it and then sending out a weekly email. It takes a lot of time, and it takes time to prepare for that. Then it takes a lot of time to actually put the email together when it goes out, and it was only a weekly thing because you can't, you know, just send out emails every time that there's something new. You don't want to spam, you know, five hundred people around the organization. So, when workplace was launched, it basically eliminated that entire process. It allows users to upload their own content. I mean, I do it as well, it's much more social, much more interactive, and it has basically freed up. I would say one to two days of my five-day week to do, other more strategic communications pieces .... My old email list was about five hundred people and we now have over, I think, eleven hundred joining that group so it's just reaching more people.

- b. **Internal 'promotion' and visibility:** Two of the respondents, both working in country offices in developing regions, used Workplace to raise visibility at a global level for the programming activities in their country. As one of them said: "Most of all I upload materials, photos, links, videos about our program implementation activities in the country to global groups in the organization."
- c. **Engage coworkers in discussion:** Two of the respondents in particular, used Workplace to engage coworkers in discussion. One was mostly active within humanitarian assistance and posted external content like news articles, blogs, and reports to that community on a regular basis. The other respondent had as a job responsibility to manage a few Workplace groups, one being an open forum on emerging, innovative technologies. He saw it as his mission to use Workplace to build a knowledge base on innovative and interesting topics. One of the topics discussed in this group around a specific application used to collect data became so big that they had to start a separate group only on that topic. It had lots of active members asking and answering questions and advancing their work with this application.
- d. **For team work:** Several respondents described how they shared information with their team members that they likely would have shared via email or at a meeting before Workplace existed, such as reporting back from an external event they attended or just notes from a recent team meeting.
- e. **Answer questions:** One respondent answered a lot of questions coming from coworkers in the same country. That country represented a special situation since the leadership there decided to replace the somewhat chaotic mix of email requests and coworkers simply walking over to the IT department to ask for help, to Workplace. This meant that the only way for coworkers to receive help from the IT department was to post the question on Workplace. This gave the support staff time to delegate the question among the team and to contemplate

the best solution, in addition to avoiding the disruption of a person showing up unannounced at their desk.

### 6.1.3 Maintaining and Expanding Social Relations

The most rewarding part of using Workplace expressed by most respondents was the expanded social network, the increased contact with colleagues across the organization and ease with which they could communicate with each other via Workplace. One respondent said:

What I really like is the informality of it in a way that it is less formal and stiff than emails and it goes a lot quicker and you get a response a lot quicker, so I like that. I feel that people are people there and I feel I get to know people more and that's the bit I actually enjoy.

The same respondent later in the interview:

I find it a very useful tool to staying in touch with people based in different countries that are working with the same things as me. So I've met for instance the 'me' in another country. I never met her face-to-face but I've met her on Workplace because we were in all the same groups and obviously working on the same things. There's a lot of people that I have actually discovered through workplace and that I now want to work closer with and I think that wouldn't have been possible without Workplace because then I wouldn't have known that those people existed. I wouldn't know where to start or who to send an email to.

Another respondent said:

I think being linked to colleagues and that previously you might have had a more formal approach or a formal way of approaching them and I think that it in a way it's made people easier to approach in the organization because you know, even though we're not seeing them face-to-face or talking to them, in a way we do have more contact with them on a daily basis just by seeing them in our newsfeeds.

A third respondent:

And you become less inhibited about asking for advice from people you don't necessarily know, people you haven't worked with before because you see their experience and connections or you know something that they've done that you know you might have been thinking of implementing in your own region and it's so easy to drop them a line or add a comment.

The way Workplace looks like Facebook and how you see everyone's photo and title and what they posted, you can get a sense of who somebody is. So I think you can get the less formal and more constructive collaborative communication a lot quicker on workplace than any other communications method we have. And also, you know, the way that it happens—comments on a thread—it's just a lot easier for someone to just throw in an idea that comes into their mind without thinking too hard. In a large email where you don't know who everyone is, immediately you become more conservative with your language and a bit more formal in your approach. We've all done that with

emails where you start writing, you think you've got a point, and then you start thinking, is it really worth replying all on this, no, scrap it.

A fourth respondent: “You’re so boxed in and blind when you’re sending emails. At Workplace you have all of the organization at your fingertips. It’s powerful.”

#### 6.1.4 Honesty

Related to social relations is the issue of honesty. While not a usage area per se, I think it is relevant to present the results related to being honest in this section.

All respondents felt that they could be honest on Workplace. One respondent however, said something that indicated a different feeling: “You know the country group is so big and even the bosses are there, so you don't want to share sometimes because they would have the email notification.”

Others contemplated the question about how honest coworkers were on Workplace and they mostly came to the conclusion that in offices with a strong hierarchical culture, coworkers may have somewhat more hesitation to post openly and honestly on Workplace than in offices with a ‘flat’ organizational culture.

As one respondent expressed it:

You still see different cultural elements creep up on Workplace that you would in person as well, so I think maybe in the north and in the west if you will, we’re not as bound by office hierarchies as other countries and I do think that we see a lot more interaction of that sort of level you know, if you want to be honest with your CEO, I see people responding back to senior leader team members all the time on different things. I also think that doesn't happen in country offices .... I've also been on deployments to countries where people would never write back to their country director for example, they didn't feel it to be their position. What we call honesty, well honesty is not valued there.

#### 6.1.5 Finding Information

All respondents said they used Workplace to find information. They did this through for example posting a question in a specific group, such as asking a technical question about SharePoint in the SharePoint User Group or asking for useful resources within a specific programmatic area such as child protection by asking the Global Child Protection Community for help. Using the search function was also a common method for finding information and this included finding people, so Workplace also functioned as a global directory. When searching for keywords in previous post one respondent pointed out that the search function does not cover the comments to posts which means that some information may be missed in searches.

When asked how they would convince a coworker who was hesitant towards using Workplace, almost all respondents said they would tell them that it is a great tool for finding information and answers to questions. As one respondent expressed it:

I always tell them there are people in workplace who have answers for almost everything that you have questions about. Just go there and ask your question, ask for information, post your questions, and then you will have answers.

Another respondent said that he enjoyed seeing the “raw” humanitarian content posted in the humanitarian resources group. He does not use that for any work-related tasks but described how those images and clips from the field really gave him a sense of the work Save the Children was doing on the ground. As someone working at a higher level in the organization and being somewhat removed from actual programming activities, that was very valuable for him.

#### 6.1.6 Have Fun

All of the respondents expressed how much they liked the social-related groups on Workplace. Three groups were mentioned by most: *Office Twins*, where coworkers who happened to wear similar clothes to work one day post a photo of themselves; *My Journey to Work*, where coworkers post photos of their commute to work that day; and *Mountain Discovery*, where coworkers who share a fascination for mountains share photos of recent hikes, etc.

None of the respondents saw the social-related groups as a waste of time or distractions from work. As one respondent said:

... like Office Twins, it's fun to go there like it's super fun and how you build relationships and build culture, I spend maybe like half an hour in Office Twins in two years or something like that, you know, and it's one that I love and remember because it's so ridiculous, right?

Another respondent talked about how people in a country office he went to visit for the first time had recognized him from the Office Twins group and how that had made it much easier to getting to know each other and start working together.

#### 6.1.7 Frustrations

Quite a few areas of frustration came up in the interviews and I have chosen to report the results related to these here.

The main frustration expressed by the respondents was the perceived **lack of engagement** in Workplace among coworkers. The lack of engagement can be divided into two sub-areas: coworkers who are not using Workplace overall and coworkers who are using the platform but not engaging in specific topics.

As an example of the latter, one respondent described how she had first posted a ‘cute’ poem about helping people as humanitarian workers. In other words, an emotional and positive post without any real content or controversy. The post received over 400 likes and loves. A day later, in the same group, she posted an article about sexual harassment among humanitarian aid workers. The post did not get one single reaction. The respondent found this really frustrating and wondered why coworkers seemed hesitant to engage in a serious topic.

Another respondent said: “When no one comments on your post. Not even a laugh or like. Sometimes I remove it because I feel so embarrassed. Maybe it’s because they are busy, or the question was not interesting enough.”

But most respondents expressed frustration with the other category of non-engagement, coworkers not using the platform at all.

I am part of a policy discussion email list and when all the members and offices start discussing and developing a policy, it can quickly turn into dozens and dozens of emails. If that particular topic is not relevant for my work, I just keep deleting emails. We have a platform that can replace these emails and still they are not using it.

Another respondent said:

It's like pulling teeth to get people to use it [a small, closed team group] and I was like ‘come on guys, we get so many emails! This is engagement and interaction, it's not just bilateral emails.’ It's frustrating.

One of the respondents even received critique from coworkers that she used Workplace too much: “They tell me: you are always on your social media, what do you do all day?”

Another common frustration was the **lack of management of the platform**. There was no designated staff person within the organization who provided maintenance of Workplace, such as cleaning up in groups that are no longer active, ensuring there is minimal duplication of groups, etc. One staff member was temporarily in charge of rolling out the platform, but was never replaced with a permanent staff person once the temporary assignment had ended.

I do think it needs a stronger hand. I think it needs a curator or something like, you know, a community manager, because we are big and sprawling and we've got close to thirty fundraising members and a hundred country offices working in one hundred and twenty countries and it's very difficult to get a social network up and running for work across such a vast expanse without some sort of like team behind it.

Related to the governance of Workplace was the issue of **closed and secret groups**. Everyone could see what closed groups existed but as one respondent said: “Another interesting thing is that there are groups that are housing a lot of knowledge, but they're closed or secret, I wonder if there is a way to get that knowledge out in the open.”

A frustration only mentioned by one respondent was that she had received an **unwanted romantic advance** from a colleague in another country.

Lastly a couple of frustrations were related to **platform design**. One in that the respondent felt that his newsfeed was mostly irrelevant and not related to his groups, the coworkers he followed or his interests. Another that comments to posts were not searchable so if a key term was mentioned in a comment but not included in the main post, the entire discussion would not show up in a search. And a third that the standard settings when activating a profile are set to send an email every time there is a notification available. Save the Children quickly put together a video and other support

materials to teach coworkers how to change that setting, but that did not help for everyone. One of the respondent's managers has still not changed this setting and since the respondent is very active the manager keeps getting email notifications about her activities which is not necessarily a positive thing in his eyes.

## 6.2 User Data

Date of data retrieval: September 10, 2018. *Active* is defined as a minimum of one comment, post or reaction during the defined time period (last day, week, or month from the date of data retrieval).

### Number of Groups

Total number of groups .....	2,400
Number of monthly active groups .....	581 (24%)
Number of weekly active groups .....	374 (16%)
Number of daily active groups .....	194 (8%)

### Group Privacy Settings *(Percentages are out of the total number of groups)*

Open.....	971 (40%)
Closed.....	1,151 (47%)
Secret .....	308 (13%)

### Group Types *(Percentages are out of the total number of groups)*

Teams & Projects.....	1,870 (77%)
Open Discussions .....	344 (14%)
Social & More .....	132 (5%)
Announcements .....	73 (3%)

### Number of Users

Total number of registered users .....	28,500 (100%)
Number of monthly active users .....	5,800 (20%)
Number of weekly active users .....	3,700 (13%)
Number of daily active users .....	1,600 (6%)

### Other Information

Number added profile pictures (total number since the launch) .....	7,200
Number added manager names (total number since the launch).....	4,400
Number of reactions (average daily number in the week before data retrieval) .....	992
Number of comments (average daily number in the week before data retrieval) .....	207
Number of posts (average daily number in the week before data retrieval).....	209
Number of messages (average daily number in the week before data retrieval).....	316

## 7. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, the results are analyzed according to the three metaphors for the role ESM plays in organizations, defined by Leonardi et al. (2013), and related to previous research. Lastly, some limitations of the study are discussed.

## 7.1 Workplace by Facebook as a Leaky Pipe

Based on the respondents' descriptions of how they used Workplace for **finding information** and **sharing**, it is clear that they enjoyed positive aspects of Workplace being a leaky pipe for communication. The email distribution list that was transformed into a Workplace group is an excellent example of communication moving from a pipe without any holes to a leaky pipe, where content became available and easy to find, not only for people on the mailing list but for anyone using the Workplace platform. When Workplace is used like this, I believe it presents an opportunity for coworkers to learn from each other, not only about *what* other programs and countries are working on, but also *how* they are doing it which can lead to improved programming around the world.

A couple of respondents shared information to improve the country's visibility within the larger organization. I see a link between this behavior and the structure of Save the Children where smaller (budget-wise) countries are dependent on resources from the larger member organizations with the power to fundraise. The kind of sharing that seeks visibility becomes similar to the ESM use that Turban et al. (2011) categorize as *information dissemination and sharing* under which they identify activities such as marketing and advertisement, which are often one-way communication from sender to receiver. In a way, the smaller countries are actually 'marketing' themselves towards the bigger members. To a certain degree it is positive to learn what others do, as respondents testified to. But if this kind of sharing become dominant, I can also see a risk for Workplace being used as a megaphone for broadcasting information, or 'pushing out materials' as one respondent said, which is not engaging the receiver and thus can lead to disengagement.

Workplace enabled respondents to **maintain and expand their social network**. This confirms the positive effects on social capital that ESM have according to Fulk and Yuan (2013). Workplace's role as a leaky pipe for communication is supported by the affordance of association that make coworkers' relations to content and to other coworkers visible (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Respondents talked about how seeing colleagues' profile, experience, connections, and activities made it easier to reach out, stay in touch, and ask questions and favors, independent of where in the organization the colleague worked. This confirms several previous studies showing how ESM helps strengthen coworker relations and build social capital (Fulk & Yuan, 2013; Gibbs et al., 2013; Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Sun & Shang, 2014; Turban et al., 2011). I believe that this is a key opportunity that Workplace brings—especially for large, globally distributed organizations like Save the Children—to connect tens of thousands of staff and create meaningful social relations on one single platform.

Trust is a core element of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Through the respondents' thoughts about honesty on Workplace, it is possible to gauge that in some cultural contexts there is a lack of trust between coworkers and managers which hinders honest communication. One respondent also said "even the bosses are there" to explain why some coworkers didn't feel comfortable in the larger country group. I believe this represents a challenge that goes much deeper than only the Workplace by Facebook platform. From the respondents' comments, I draw the conclusion that the Save the Children only partially has been transformed into a post-bureaucratic, flat, non-

hierarchical organization as described by Falkheimer and Heide (2011) among others, where coworkers, not leaders, are the most important asset (Erikson, 2011). In a culture where leaders still play the main role and evoke some level of fear among coworkers for expressing their opinions, I think it will be difficult to create the positive and open communications climate that Heide and Simonsson (2011) say is necessary for favorable communications conditions. Another sign of this could be the relatively large number of closed and secret groups. Those groups, the secret ones in particular, provide a space where some people are excluded.

## 7.2 Workplace by Facebook as an Echo Chamber

One of the advantages of ESM becoming an echo chamber according to Leonardi et al. (2013), is the immediate feedback from similar others that strengthens communities and establishes common ground. Respondents experienced this in several instances like the local area group of only 30+ people that everyone felt was a strong and secure community. Another example is the technology innovation group mentioned by one respondent. The mere number of groups also speaks to this (2,400 groups in all with close to 600 monthly active groups).

Another advantage with the echo chamber illustrated by one of the respondents was how she found a colleague with the same role as she in another country since they were part of the same interest groups. I believe there is a great role for Workplace to play as echo chamber that really promotes the positive communications conditions for coworkers mentioned earlier. Especially in the smaller, more focused groups where all members share a specific interest. It was in those groups respondents had the positive experiences of finding colleagues, active and collaborative discussions, team work, and finding answers to questions.

While the opportunity to become an effective platform for this kind of topic-specific, collaborative communication, several respondents still expressed frustration over colleagues who refused to use it in that way. The colleagues preferred to continue using emails which resulted in long chains of emails involving many people, some which were only peripheral to the ongoing discussion. A possible explanation lies in coworkers' reluctance to start using a new system and thereby changing their ways of performing their job (Alimam et al., 2017). Even though that is an explanation found in several studies reviewed by Alimam et al. (2017), this study lacks data to support such explanation. There may be other motivational factors behind the refusal to use Workplace, such as fear of losing a power position in the organization by disclosing unique knowledge, as those described by Gibbs et al. (2013).

When analyzing the frustrations expressed by respondents there are some signs that Workplace as an echo chamber also involves some risks or challenges. Again, the closed and secret groups come in. If there are too many closed and secret groups, it could lead to coworkers mostly being exposed to the familiar rather than new ideas, one of the disadvantages of the echo chamber role described by Leonardi et al. (2013). I also see a risk that knowledge becomes hidden. Investigating the 1,151 closed and 308 secret groups in more depth would be interesting here to find out why they are closed or

secret, how they are used, how they differ from the open groups, their level of activity, etc.

One respondent had set his notifications so that he was only notified when there were news in specific groups. Others talked about always checking their notifications and then decide whether to act or not. A last category talked about how her managers received a notification every time she posted something since they didn't know how to change the setting. All of these are examples of what Majchrzak et al. (2013) call triggered attending and I can see opportunities to use the notifications to avoid becoming overwhelmed but also a need to educate users in how to change these settings or change the design of the platform.

Another frustration is relevant to mention here, namely the lack of management of the platform. The fact that only about eight per cent of all groups are active on a daily basis and only about 600 of all 2,400 groups, or a quarter, are active on a monthly basis indicates that some level of management is needed. A management team could reach out to coworkers who started the now inactive groups and see why activity stopped. Some groups could be joined with other more active ones and some could possibly be closed. The need for governance and continual management of an ESM platform for the deployment to be successful is one of the main conclusions of Turban et al. (2011), also confirmed in the literature study by Alimam et al. (2017) as one of the key elements of successful operation of ESM after launch.

### 7.3 Workplace by Facebook as a Social Lubricant

This metaphor refers to ESM being the lubricant that keeps communication and relation-building working smoothly in an organization, thanks to its informal nature and ease with which people can connect (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Only five per cent of all Workplace groups are purely social-related, and from the limited data available for this study, it is impossible to get any more detailed knowledge about these groups such as how active they are, etc. But from all the respondents' enthusiastic responses in relation to these groups, it was evident that they provide spaces where people feel safe and comfortable, as stated by Leonardi et al. (2013). The groups My Journey to Work, Office Twins, and Mountain Discovery all offer coworkers a chance to peek into a more social-related part of one another's lives, have fun on the platform, and create fodder for future conversations, as one of the respondents had experienced. Being informed about coworkers' interactions, both work-related and social-related, makes it easier to informally reach out to new contacts simply by offering topics for that initial conversation (Leonardi et al., 2013). These processes also contribute to the creation of social capital, as described by Sun and Shang (2014) who show that social-related ESM use helps establish a shared vision and increases levels of trust among coworkers leading to more work-related ESM use (Sun & Shang, 2014). I can see an opportunity for Workplace here that I think is important for management to acknowledge. Workplace should not be seen as a waste of time, as one respondent had experienced when receiving judgmental comments from colleagues but can be a boost for productive coworker communication.

Leonardi et al. (2013) states that it can be difficult to know which ‘self’ to present in what situation due to the mix of contexts (social/work) and informal nature of Workplace. I think this can be a reason behind the unwanted romantic or sexual invitation that one respondent had received from a colleague. However, no more details about this incident were revealed in the interview and I felt a responsibility to not probe deeper into a potentially uncomfortable situation. The balance between probing to find out more details about a phenomenon and stepping into private and uneasy topics is something Kvale discusses in relation to research ethics (1997). That this incident occurred at all shows that sexual harassment can be a problem for organizations not only in the physical workplace but also in the online environment. I have not found any studies related to sexual harassment and enterprise social media, but I do think this represents a challenge.

Another negative aspect identified in the empirical data was the frustration and sometimes embarrassment when a post received no comment or reaction. My interpretation is that there are high expectations of social interaction on Workplace among early adopters who generally have a very positive image of the platform. I think the lack of reactions from coworkers highlights the need for further understanding of other user groups than early adopters and their reasons for not engaging in Workplace.

**Table 1: Summary of Opportunities and Challenges identified in the Analysis and Discussion**

	<b>Leaky Pipe</b>	<b>Echo Chamber</b>	<b>Social Lubricant</b>
<b>Oppor- tunities</b>	<p>Learning what others are doing</p> <p>Finding new ways to do things, leading to improved programming</p> <p>Strengthening relations, creating social capital</p>	<p>Immediate feedback strengthens communities of likeminded where collaboration flourishes</p> <p>Small, topic-specific groups provide ‘safe’ spaces where people are honest</p>	<p>Social-related groups provide arena for fun relationship building that creates sense of belonging and eases contact between coworkers</p>
<b>Challen- ges</b>	<p>Too much ‘megaphone marketing’ can lead to information overload and disengagement</p> <p>Remains of a bureaucratic, leader-centered culture can prevent an open communications climate</p>	<p>If there is a lack of trust, groups can become closed or secret, and knowledge becomes hidden</p> <p>Lack of governance can lead to too many groups that have become inactive</p>	<p>Blurred lines between work-related and social-related interaction can lead to confusion and pose risk for unwanted behavior</p> <p>Mismatched expectations can lead to discouragement when nobody comments or reacts to post</p>

*The design of the table is inspired by the table in Leonardi et al. (2013)*

## 7.4 Study Limitations

At the outset of this project, I had the intention to combine semistructured interviews with detailed statistics generated through the Grytics application. However, my access to this data was limited due to confidentiality restrictions. The lack of detailed data constitutes a weakness of the study.

The long time it took me to finish this study can also be viewed as a weakness, since the results may not be as relevant now (September 2018) as they were when the interviews were completed (December 2017). The delay also had the effect that interviews were done before the data was retrieved which makes the data somewhat misleading in relation to the interview materials although there have not been any drastic developments in the number of users and groups for the last month (data is available as far back as one month) so this negative effect can be deemed as small.

The choice to focus on early adopters was probably affected by my contacts with the IT management at Save the Children who were very helpful in this study. There are other groups that would have been interesting to investigate as well but as a student it is not always easy to get access to people. Initially I wanted to do a large survey via the platform, but the IT management did not want this due to the many recent organizational surveys and fear of my survey getting mixed up with an organizational survey. Since I am also an employee, it would have been confusing for staff.

Lastly, face-to-face interviews would probably have led to a richer and more complete understanding of respondents' realities, but this was not possible due to both my own geographic location and all the respondents living in different parts of the world.

## 8. Conclusion and Prospects for Future Studies

The aim of this study was to explore how early adopters were using the enterprise social media (ESM) platform Workplace by Facebook and what challenges and opportunities could be identified based on their usage. The study was implemented as a qualitative case study of the non-governmental organization Save the Children. Data was collected through semistructured interviews with seven early adopters based in different locations across the world and platform-generated user data was retrieved from the admin panel of Workplace. Interviews were performed via Skype for Business, using only audio.

Results were analyzed based on an affordance approach using three metaphors developed by Leonardi et al. (2013) that illustrate the different roles ESM often play in organizational processes; leaky pipe (communication that everyone can see), echo chamber (communication among likeminded), and social lubricant (smooth and easy communication). Results were also related to previous research.

The study concludes that early adopters used Workplace by Facebook to share and learn about program activities around the organization, to maintain and expand their social network, to perform their own work in more efficient ways, and to have fun.

By facilitating learning across the organization, Workplace offers opportunities for program improvement through the adoption of other's successful approaches and solutions. It also offers opportunities for strengthening relations and building social capital within the organization. There is a risk however, that these opportunities are never fully realized if the organization has components of a bureaucratic, leader-centered culture that stifles open, honest communication among coworkers. Another risk is that too much communication on Workplace in the form of one-directional promotion-type activities can lead information overload and fatigue among users.

Communities of coworkers interested in the same topics provided excellent opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and creating a sense of belonging. However, a leader-centered culture can lead to closed and secret groups that hide the knowledge to people outside the group, due to lack of trust. There is also a risk for an excessive number of groups remaining on Workplace despite being inactive, unless there is a dedicated platform management team in place.

Lastly, fun, social-related groups such as Office Twins and My Journey to Work are highly appreciated among early adopters and never considered a distraction. They help strengthen relations and build social capital.

The study shows one case of unwanted behavior in the form of a romantic invitation, which could potentially have stemmed from the blurred lines between work-related and social-related interaction on Workplace. The gray area between work life and private life that enterprise social media can contribute to by being so informal, is an area I suggest for future studies.

Another interesting prospect for studies would be to probe deeper into the issue of non-engagement in enterprise social media, a frustration expressed by the respondents in this study.

This study uses a qualitative approach, but it would also be interesting to see a quantitative approach to get a picture of how a large group of different kinds of users are experiencing Workplace.

These were only a few ideas that sprung out of this study for prospects for future studies about enterprise social media. As a tool with the potential to successfully overcoming barriers to knowledge management and communication within organizations, I am convinced that we will see research in this field for many years to come.

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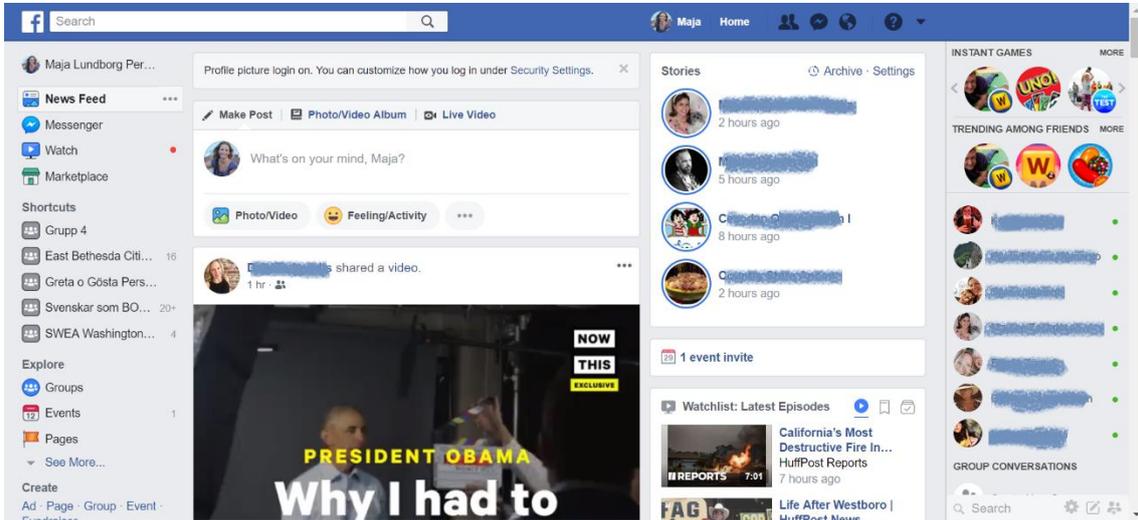
## Appendix I: Interview Guide

1. Some personal information:
  - What is your role at Save the Children? (Title, Function, Country)
  - How many years have you worked in this role?
2. How often do you visit Workplace?
3. How much time would you say you spend there on an average day?
4. What do you spend most time on doing on Workplace?
  - Discuss different activities and how much time respondent spends on them - reading other's posts, posting yourself, actively looking for information, the chat function, etc.
  - Also ask *why* they spend most time on a particular activity. What about that activity is so rewarding?
5. What motivates you to use Workplace in general?
  - Discuss different motivational factors—sense of belonging, finding important information to do their jobs faster/better, telling others about own accomplishments, finding inspiration from others, finding new coworkers, etc.
6. What is the most rewarding part of Workplace?  
(how do you feel about the more social groups—time consuming or fun?)
7. Do you feel that your coworkers are being honest on Workplace?
  - Why? Why not?
8. Do you feel that you can be honest on Workplace?
  - Why? Why not?
9. Can you give an example of a concrete and specific positive outcome or learning or result that came from your own Workplace usage?
  - If respondent does not have an example, try to prompt by giving a few examples, such as:
    - finding a colleague who could help with a task
    - finding a specific piece of information
    - receiving input on a specific idea from colleagues
    - finding the answer to a technical question
    - being inspired by an example that someone else shared resulting in own accomplishment
    - cooperating with others on a specific task
    - using the chat function to quickly communicate with specific colleagues
10. Would you say that your network of coworkers whom you are in regular contact with has become stronger or weaker? In what way?

11. Are you in contact with more colleagues now than before using Workplace?
12. Do you ever feel negative towards using Workplace? Why?
  - Discuss different obstacles:
    - information overload
    - sense of being watched by management
    - manager's negative view on Workplace
    - unwillingness to share 'special' information
    - unsecure about what role to play/how to assert oneself towards others on the platform, etc.
13. Can you give a specific example of a negative experience of Workplace?
  - If difficult—prompt with some examples:
    - posted a question without getting a reply
    - posted something which was not liked by many
    - spending time looking for information without finding it
    - spending too much time on the 'fun' groups
14. How do you think Workplace could be improved?
15. What would be your best advice to anyone within Save the Children who feels hesitant towards using Workplace?
16. Lastly, is there anything else that you would like to add about Workplace?

# Appendix II: Screen Shots of Facebook and Workplace Landing Pages

## Screen shot of the author's landing page for Facebook



## Screen shot of the author's landing page for Workplace by Facebook

