‘Learning the Ropes’ - Organisational Socialisation from the Perspective of Organisational Knowledge Communication:

An Empirical Investigation in Danish IT Startups

Mia Rasmussen, PhD Fellow

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Peter Kastberg (main supervisor)

Associate Professor Trine Susanne Johansen (co-supervisor)

Aarhus University, BSS

Department of Management

Corporate Communication Section

PhD Programme in Business Communication

Contents

List of figures and tables

1. Introduction

We have all been there: Going through the unsettling business of settling-in in a new workplace. But when it comes to the field that is devoted to researching this phenomenon, namely Organisational Socialisation (henceforth also OS), there has been a lack of focus on what happens when the term 'new'[1] applies not only to the employee, but also to the employing organisation. Typically, OS is studied in organisations that seem to be regarded as having reached some level of maturity (and often are also of a considerable size). But what is it like to be a newcomer in a startup, and what does the OS process look like in startups?

In my project, I aim to study how newcomers in Danish IT startups experience and account for the process of settling in to companies that are not themselves quite 'settled' (if organisations really ever are). Thus, in this project, not only is the person a newcomer, but the organisation is also in earlier phases of development and of a smaller size than the organisations that are typically studied in the OS literature (cf. e.g. Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012, p. 19). Throughout this paper, I will also argue for a novel way to approach the study of OS in combining it with aspects of other disciplines and drawing on specific qualitative methods (see especially sections 2.2. and 3.).

1.1. Framing the problem

Organisational Socialisation in startups should be studied for a number of reasons. The first reason is that, in a Danish context, most companies are SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises[2]), but most OS literature seems to focus on larger organisations (notably the seminal chapter by Van Maanen & Schein [1979] which has been the starting point for most of the following OS research; but also newer literature such as e.g. Cooper-Thomas & Anderson [2006]). Compared with the amount of research on OS in large and mature companies, little attention has been given to small and entrepreneurial companies, which (at least when applied to a Danish context) is paradoxical as there are far more SMEs than large companies. Thus, I find it beneficial to focus on the small entrepreneurial companies as the setting for my investigation, as they are comparatively under-researched, at least within OS.

The second reason is that, in a Danish context, demand for IT specialists has far outgrown the supply (see e.g. Hvilshøj, 2016, p. 26). It might not be a problem for well renowned companies

[1] See section 3.3.3. for how I have defined a 'startup' for the purposes of my project.

[2] In 2014 99.34% of all Danish companies were SMEs (defined as a company that has 0-99 employees) (Schlichter, 2016, p. 160-161).

with the required finances to attract people with these valued skills. But for new organisations who have yet to become known, it is potentially more difficult to attract skilled people, and when newcomers do enter these organisations, it is often of vital importance that they can quickly be integrated into the company. Quite often, the owners' own money are on the line, and getting newcomers off to a good start is not only beneficial for both newcomer and company, it is also vital for the company's chances of surviving. In an economy where these professionals can easily get a job in another company, getting newcomers on board well is even more important.

Thus, my project is partly motivated by actual challenges in the IT industry, specifically among startups. I have settled specifically on IT startups, as the IT sector is often considered as a knowledge intensive industry par excellence (cf. Alvesson, 2001, p. 863-864). In addition to this, it is an industry with unique challenges in terms of the labour force[3]. It is expensive for all companies to go through the recruitment process and potentially mis-hire, and it is even more problematic when there is a shortage of people with the necessary skills.

However, there is not only a 'practical' side to the issues sketched above. My project will make empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions (see section 1.3.) by using an approach to the study of Organisational Socialisation that is novel in its own right. Specifically, this new way of addressing and studying OS is through the lens of Organisational Knowledge Communication (cf. Kastberg, 2014) (henceforth also OKC). In the literature on Organisational Socialisation, the word 'knowledge' is mentioned in a number of articles (e.g. Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) and also in specific definitions of OS (e.g. Wanberg, 2012), but few of the authors define what they mean by 'knowledge', and it seems that there is often an implicit assumption or definition of *knowledge* which is close to that of *information*. Thus 'knowledge' seems to have a 'deus ex machina' presence in the OS literature (I return to this in section 2.2.). Suddenly it is there in the articles, or even mentioned right from the beginning, but with no further elaboration or problematisation of what it actually is. Hence, I find it valuable to link aspects of OKC and OS (see especially section 2.)

Thus, IT is an interesting industry for coupling Organisational Socialisation and Organisational Knowledge Communication. How do newcomers become knowledgeable of their new job and organisational context? What do their managers think about 'communicating knowledge'? Which measures are relied on for communicating with newcomers? And how does knowledge

[3] An example: Because of large demand for specialists, the company KMD has a policy of giving employees 10,000 DKK if they suggest a potential new employee who is eventually hired (Juel, 2017).

communication affect newcomer perceptions of the OS process? These questions are the starting points in my project.

1.2. Research agenda and research questions

The starting point of my research is mainly explorative with elements that also have a more descriptive quality, as I aim to investigate the relationship between Organisational Socialisation and Organisational Knowledge Communication, in terms of how this affects new employees when they are settling-in. Specifically, my research agenda is to investigate and compare how managers and newcomers in IT startups talk about issues of organisational entry and task specific and organisational knowledge when accounting for their opinions of and experiences with Organisational Socialisation. Based on my starting point and agenda and on the practical challenges and academic deliberations (in terms of theory and literature) sketched out above, I have developed the following research question with two subquestions:

Research question: How does communication of task specific and organisational knowledge during organisational entry in Danish IT startups affect newcomers' perception of the processes?

Subquestion 1: What do the IT startup managers consider the role of organisational knowledge communication to be in the context of organisational entry processes?

Subquestion 2: Which measures are relied on for communicating knowledge with new employees in IT startups?

The wording of the main question is more open than the wording of the subquestions. This is because the questions serve different purposes in relation to the overall aim/problem. However, all three questions are coherent and related to my overall aim or purpose in the sense that they are all important in addressing the relationship between OS and OKC from a perspective that views both managers and new employees as important actors in these processes, because I see OS processes as co-constructed. Thus, I will investigate how the newcomers and managers discursively construct the topics of knowledge and settling-in and whether there are any patterns in their ways of talking about these topics in the context of each other. By 'task specific' and 'organisational' knowledge I mean knowledge related to the specific tasks that a newcomer will have, but also the more contextual organisational knowledge concerning e.g. social relationships and business models. That is, I see task specific and organisational knowledge as interdependent.

In my research, I focus not on the outcome of socialisation, but on how the process of organisational entry itself is characterised. This is related to Ashforth, Sluss and Saks' (2007) finding that "[…] *how* newcomers are socialized has substantive and symbolic value over and above *what* they actually learn." (p. 447, italics in original). In the context of my project this suggests that the measures that companies rely on for OKC when welcoming newcomers might actually be more important than the content of the communication. This again means that we should work towards getting a better understanding of the process itself. In my project, this is done through the use of a qualitative methodology, focusing on how managers and newcomers talk about the how and what of settling-in in a startup (see chapter 3 for details of the research design). I.e., following my comparative agenda, in order to explore what OS and knowledge communication 'looks like' we must investigate how the newcomers and managers discursively construct these topics, and whether they draw on the same resources in accounting for their opinions on and experiences with them.

1.3. Contributions

The project should lead to empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions. Taken together, these individual contributions, through a close empirical focus, can also contribute to and inform professional practice.

1.3.1. Empirical contributions

My first empirical contribution has to do with interactionism. In the OS literature, there has long been calls for interactionist studies (e.g. Griffin, Colella & Goparaju, 2000), as socialisation is a co-productive process between different parties (e.g. newcomers, managers, colleagues). However, interactionist studies are still few and far between (Kowtha, 2009, p. 1; Zou, Tian & Liu, 2015, p. 172). My primary focus is on the new employees, but I interview both them and managers, in adherence to the position that socialisation is not just done to new employees, both new employees and other organisational actors play important parts in the process. Thus, both perspectives will be presented in one study.

The second empirical contribution comes from studying OS in a type of organisation that has not typically been the focus of studies in this field. In 2012, Ashford and Nurmohamed wrote: “However, the prominent theorizing on the organizational side, the now oft-mentioned Van Maanen and Schein (1979), has a decidedly “large organization” feel to it. […] What does organizational socialization look like in small start-ups?” (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012, p. 19). It is this question that I will contribute to answering through empirical material, by analysing how socialisation and knowledge is communicatively constructed by managers and newcomers in IT startups.

1.3.2. Methodological contributions

Traditionally, studies in Organisational Socialisation have primarily been quantitative, but Ashford and Nurmohamed (2012) state that “[…] qualitative methods can portray the diverse range of emotions and feelings that newcomers have by examining the narratives that newcomers provide.” (p. 18). Thus, as I will be drawing on a qualitative methodology, and, in relation to this, narrative interviewing techniques and discourse analysis, I will also make a methodological contribution. Furthermore, this methodology will also play a role in being able to make the empirical and possibly also theoretical contributions.

There are few examples of the use of a narrative approach in OS studies, with the notable exceptions of Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) who study narratives in relation to identity and work role transition, and Shipp and Jansen (2011) who study narratives in relation to fit. When OS studies mention ‘discourse’ it is usually on a general level rather than as a (methodological) perspective (however, Barge and Schlueter [2004] go some way towards employing a discursive lens in investigating the relationship between the organisation and the individual in terms of communicative practice).

1.3.3. Theoretical contributions

Depending on my findings, I expect to be able to do some analytical/theoretical generalisation about Organisational Socialisation in IT startups, and in that sense also perhaps to nuance previous theory, e.g. in relation to OS practice in new companies where certain elements of the previous large and mature company theorizing might not apply.

1.4. Preamble for philosophical positioning

It is not a ’true representation’ of the research process that I do not address my philosophical positioning in detail until section 3.2., as the research questions are also affected by that position. However, for the sake of overview, I address it together with other aspects of the research design in chapter 3. But I will briefly introduce my philosophical stance here, as the theoretical framework should be read in the light of this position.

I adhere to a social constructivist position, both ontologically and epistemologically (i.e. I view social constructivism as a paradigm). It is not just knowledge of social reality that is socially constructed, social reality is in itself socially constructed (cf. Rasborg, 2013, p. 406). This position is part of the reason that I adhere to the interactionist view of OS (cf. Griffin et al., 2000), as I view the process of settling in as something that newcomers and managers (and also other organisational actors, but here I focus only on the two) negotiate and achieve in collaboration, i.e. it is constructed in and of a social environment (and not something that one party just does to the other). I explain the position further in section 3.2., but for now, this means that my review of earlier research and my own theoretical framework should be read in the light of my positioning as a social constructivist.

2. Literature and theoretical framework

This literature review ends with a section establishing my theoretical framework. The review is more a narrative than a systematic review, as, in line with Blaikie (2010) “The aim of the literature review is to indicate what the state of knowledge is with respect to each research question, or group of questions.” (p. 56). As I draw on two large literatures, I present only the aspects that are immediately relevant to my project (for instance, as my research questions focus on organisational entry, here I will not go into the OS literature on anticipatory socialisation [the socialisation that takes place before entry] but focus on the literature concerning what happens at the point of and after entry).

2.1. Overview of previous research

In this exposition, I will present previous research in terms of Organisational Socialisation and Organisational Knowledge Communication, to set the scene for what I draw on and where my study is different from earlier perspectives.

2.1.1. Research on Organisational Socialisation

Research on Organisational Socialisation is considered to have been performed "[…] since the mid-1960s." (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012, p. 9). Its roots and interests stem from a number of disciplinary areas, e.g. Organisational Behaviour (Feldman, 1981, p. 309) and psychology, sociology and social psychology (Hart, 1993, p. 89).

In its infancy, scholarly interest in OS was focused on the organisation, i.e. what organisations did to socialise newcomers and which outcomes they hoped to achieve. Later followed a period of increased interest in the perspective of the newcomers: "Signaling a shift from a focus on organizational actions during OS [sic, Organisational Socialisation] to also consider the newcomer, researchers in the 1980s began to hypothesize a role for individual differences […]" (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006, p. 495). Thus, this was the beginning of a more specific focus on the (individual) newcomers. Finally, the lack of integration between the two perspectives was criticized, and a call for interactionist studies emerged, acknowledging that socialisation is something that both organisations and newcomers actively engage in, and they affect each other, i.e. the two parties interact (Griffin et al., 2000).

Ashford and Nurmohamed (2012) characterise the development as three 'waves' (p. 10) in OS research (i.e. the organisation focus as first wave, individual focus as second, and interactionist as third (however, they do not label it interactionist, but 'integrated perspective')). Within these waves, there can then be a more explicit focus on e.g. process dimensions (such as the many stage models of OS), or other factors. Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein and Gardner (1994) write that there are two strands of research within the literature on OS; the first strand has to do with the different elements of the *process* of becoming an organisational member (p. 730), while the second strand focuses on the *content* dimension: "[…] what is actually learned during socializa-tion." (p. 730).

In the empirical and theoretical literature, there is a number of definitions and characterisations of OS. Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) seminal definition of OS as "[…] the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role." (p. 211), focuses on OS as the process of how newcomers learn about their organisational role, and is the most cited, according to Ashford and Nurmohamed (2012, p. 9).

Because of the waves mentioned above, much of the previous OS research is occupied with the tactics that either the organisation (socialisation tactics) or the newcomers (newcomer proactive behaviour) use, and which outcomes they lead to. The most studied proactive socialisation behaviours are: Information seeking, feedback seeking, general socializing, networking, relationship building, boss-relationship building and job change negotiation (Saks, Gruman & Cooper-Thomas, 2011, p. 37). Here I focus specifically on information seeking, because it relates to a discussion of the differences between information and knowledge that I will return to in section 2.1.2.2. Information seeking as newcomer proactive behaviour is defined as "[…] a key behavior for new employees that may help them adjust. New employees ask questions about different aspects of their jobs, company procedures, and pri-orities [sic] and take an active role in making sense of their environment." (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011, p. 53). However, Saks, Gruman and Cooper-Thomas (2011) criticise the literature on newcomer information seeking for being too occupied with information seeking tactics and paying too little attention to the outcomes of the use of the tactics.

As mentioned, there has been calls for interactionist studies, but few studies adhere to this perspective. In 2000, Griffin et al. wrote that "[…] researchers have examined the theoretical underpinnings of socialization – both in content and process, and empirical studies have moved this work forward, but have examined them either primarily from the individual's or the organization's perspective. The interactionist perspective would seek to integrate these two areas by examining how newcomer's attempts at self-socialization work in tandem with the organization's attempts at socialization to influence socialization outcomes." (p. 454). In 2009, Kowtha then wrote: "However, there are very few studies of this interactionist model, and there is a need for further research on the subject [...]" (p. 1). In the few studies where interactionism as a perspective does seem to be present, the studies are typically quantitative. E.g. Zou, Tian and Liu (2015) mentioned the "[…] dearth of socialization literature from an interactionist perspective […]" (p. 172), and Bauer and Green (1998) collected data from both newcomers, coworkers and managers, but both studies are quantitative.

The OS literature is fragmented (cf. Batistič & Kaše, 2015). Indeed, it is so fragmented that some (e.g. Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006) state that there is a relative lack of OS theory (p. 493), while others (e.g. Batistič & Kaše, 2015) state that OS literature is more theoretical than empirical. However, the lack of theory and/or empirical studies are not separate, but rather go together. The field seems fragmented because it is rather large, and there are thus a large number of variables that can come into play. I am not in my research trying to fragment the field even more. Instead, I am picking up on some of the variables that are underexplored and linking them (i.e. OS in small organisations and knowledge in relation to OS), creating a project relevant synthesis (see section 2.2.).

In terms of 'indicating the state of knowledge' (cf. Blaikie, 2010, on literature reviews, above) about OS in startups, in general, few OS studies have focused on small organisations and new ventures/ startups, with some notable exceptions (e.g. Bargues [2013] on small organisations in France, and Cardon & Stevens [2004] on the important differences between size (small) and age (new)) of which I will present those most relevant to my project.

Rollag (2004; 2007) explores the concept of relative tenure with a point of departure in startups. He could have explored this concept in larger or more mature companies, but he has a number of arguments about why the 'relative' is important in terms of companies where growth is faster or where employee turnover is greater. Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) also state that: "The evidence to date suggests that OS occurs more rapidly in fast-paced environments such as IT, and where there is a higher rate of new joiners […]" (p. 509).

Cardon and Stevens (2004) discuss the importance of distinguishing between new ventures and small organisations, as small organisations can still be mature in a way that new ventures are not. Thus, the dimensions of age and size are important, however:

> "In both cases, the distinct liabilities presented in size and age make the study of human resources in entrepreneurial firms different than the study of them in large and established firms […]" (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, p. 297-298).

Field and Coetzer (2008) suggest that research comparing OS in small and large organisations is missing and that interactionist research is missing. Actually, Rollag and Cardon (n.d.) have worked on comparing the experiences of newcomers in startups with those of newcomers in large organisations using qualitative methods. The difference between their work and mine is that I focus on IT startups in a Danish context (and not on comparing startups with data from other types of companies), and on the role of knowledge.

Finally, Keating and Olivares (2007) write about Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in the context of Irish high-tech startups, stating that "[…] human resource management (HRM) research within an entrepreneurial context is an emerging area of academic research." (p. 171; see also Katz, Aldrich, Welbourne & Williams, 2000). Thus, this is where the literature is currently at, however, I will not venture further into the vast specific literature on entrepreneurship here. As mentioned in the introduction, I see IT startups as a relevant setting for pursuing my research agenda.

2.1.2. OKC and aspects of research on organisations, knowledge and communication

In this section, I will present the project relevant research from the area of Organisational Knowledge Communication (OKC). OKC is an emerging disciplinarity, based on the tendency to link aspects of Organisational Communication and Knowledge Management, and is made up of aspects from three fields; namely Organisation Studies, Knowledge Management and Communication Theory (cf. Kastberg, 2014, p. 83), and is as the crossroads of certain perspectives within these fields. Here, I will go through the project relevant aspects from OKC's three 'legs', namely how OKC views communication, the concept of sensemaking and a discussion of knowledge and the differences between knowledge and information. In the theoretical framework in section 2.2., I discuss how these OKC aspects are to be linked with the aspects of OS that were reviewed above.

2.1.2.1. Communication and sensemaking

Organisational Knowledge Communication draws on the general discussion in Organisation Studies about how to approach the study of organisations (cf. Kastberg, 2014). In an attempt to discuss the role of communication in organisation theory Tompkins (1987) wrote that: "Communication is a polysemic word, a concept of multiple meanings." (p. 71), which thus complicated his endeavour. Communication Theory and more broadly communication studies have come a long way, and in Organisational Knowledge Communication, following the trend in Organisational Communication, communication is thought of in a transaction view as opposed to a transmission view (Kastberg, 2014, p. 87-88), i.e. communication involves multiple agents orienting to each other, not just one person transmitting a message to a receiver.

In the context of my study, Weick's (1995; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005) theory of sensemaking (and the related concept of sensegiving [Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991]) are important concepts. During the entry process, newcomers are likely to try and make sense of the situation. Here, it is important to note what I label as the proactive practice of sense-seeking. Sense-seeking gives a further aspect of agency to people in relation to sensemaking (i.e. people are also proactive, they are not just reactively making sense of events that have already happened, but are also active in trying to make sense of the future). This view is also more in line with seeing newcomers as proactive. When I interview the parties afterwards, this will be retrospective sensemaking (cf. Weick, 1995, p. 24-26). So sensemaking comes into play in various ways in the study and its topics. Specifically, I see a link between sensemaking and an analytical focus on interpretative repertoires (see section 3.4.3.), as my discourse analysis of the interviews with newcomers will concern which interpretative repertoires they draw on when retrospectively talking about and making sense of their encounter experiences. This has some resemblance to what Petersen (2016) in his study of knowledge communication in semi-dispersed teams characterised as 'discursive sensemaking': "While providing accounts of specific working life practices in the research interviews conducted, employees engage in a form of *discursive sensemaking* about their experiences […]" (p. 26, italics in original). Thus, this also reveals a lot about my view of language, i.e. language does not plainly represent or mirror reality, it constructs it, and this is one of the points that is important to show (and understand) the coherence between my philosophical position, my theoretical framework and the methods I employ.

2.1.2.2. Knowledge and Knowledge Management

Discussions of knowledge have different starting points, depending on whether one finds oneself on an epistemological, theoretical or everyday practice level. My aim here is to review select project relevant literature, in order to be able to sketch a theoretical framework (in section 2.2.) that can be applied on a theoretical level, but which is also meaningful in a more practical sense in relation to how my cases approach the concepts of knowledge and knowing, while also being consistent with my epistemological standpoint.

'Knowledge' has been treated extensively in research from a number of perspectives (cf. e.g. McIver, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall & Ramachandran, 2012, on knowledge in organisational literature). McIver et al. (2012) comment that there are two schools of thought on knowledge in organisations; the *commodity* school and the *community* school (p. 87). The commodity school has a possession perspective that "[…] have focused on understanding "knowledge" *as an artifact* […]" (McIver et al., 2012, p. 87, italics in original), whereas the community perspective focuses on *knowing* and approaches knowledge as a "dynamic phenomenon" (McIver et al., 2012, p. 87-88).

In the past decades, there has been much critique of earlier works on knowledge, because it tends to treat it simplistically as an object that can be transferred. Here, I will focus on the more critical perspectives (often associated with the community perspective mentioned above), especially concerning the difference between information and knowledge. A number of articles touch upon the conceptual confusion in relation to information and knowledge (e.g. Savolainen, 2009). Also, Davenport and Prusak (1998/2000) present a typology of the hierarchy from data over information to knowledge, and potentially (eventually) wisdom. Their way of distinguishing and presenting the hierarchy can be criticised because they do still seem to talk of knowledge in rather functionalistic terms (i.e. as a ’thing’ that is manageable and should be controlled), but the heuristic value of their and other like typologies is that it draws attention to the necessity of distinguishing between information and knowledge, because they are not one and the same. Knowledge is more applied and reflexive, it has an inherent experiential, relational and active aspect that is not part of information (see discussion in the next paragraph). As indicated in the introduction, I think the OS literature needs to pay more attention to this, and I will return to it in the theoretical framework section.

An important way to distinguish between information and knowledge is in the work that they facilitate. Here, it is necessary to go back to Ryle’s (1949) notions of *knowing that* and *knowing how*, and Polanyi’s (1967) concept of tacit knowing. A seminal work in the Knowledge Management literature is Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and their SECI model, which explains how one mode of knowledge is converted into another. However, this has been heavily critiqued in recent years, and Duguid (2005, p. 116) states that Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have misread Ryle’s original work (1949). Duguid (2005) relates Ryle’s (1949) notions of knowing that and knowing how to Polanyi’s (1967) concepts of explicit and tacit knowledge, in the sense that knowing that cannot be put into action without knowing how. Information could be thought of as knowing that (i.e. you are told a piece of information) that we then relate to other pieces of information that we already have, but you need knowing how in terms of context/tacit dimensions to use that information. I.e. knowing that cannot be put to use without knowing how: “Ryle, like Polanyi, argues that the two aspects of knowing are complementary, knowing *how* helping to make knowing *that* actionable. They are not, however, substitutable: Accumulation of know *that* does not lead to knowing *how*. Know *that*, we acquire in the form of explicit, codified information. By contrast, “we learn *how*,” Ryle argues, “by practice” (1949, p. 41).” (Duguid, 2005, p. 111, italics in original). I.e., knowing *that* does not automatically imply that one knows *how* to act on it. This is important because it is this nuance of difference between the notions of information and knowledge that is missing in the OS literature, specifically in the literature on newcomer information seeking. I return to this in section 2.2.

One of the most radical contributions to rethinking knowledge in organisations is Stacey’s (2001) work on knowledge from the point of complexity theory and complex responsive processes. Stacey (2001), like others, criticises much of the early literature on knowledge, but he goes a step further as he also criticises the critics for not being radical enough, as they seem to still be influenced by the same underlying idea as the works they criticise, namely that there is a dialectic between the individual and the social as two distinct levels (p. 38). Stacey (2001) positions himself against this dualism, and states that we must see the social and the individual as integrated parts. The situatedness inherent in this also means that knowledge is contextual.

2.2. Theoretical framework

My theoretical framework is an attempt at synthesising aspects of Organisational Knowledge Communication and Organisational Socialisation. This synthesis should not be understood as a move toward total convergence, rather, I seek to create project relevant links between the two streams of literature by reading Organisational Socialisation in the light of Organisational Knowledge Communication, which also has to do with my social constructivist position. As mentioned, I find it meaningful to pursue this endeavour of approaching Organisational Socialisation from the perspective of Organisational Knowledge Communication, because of what it can allow us to see that we could not see before. Thus, my frame of reference for understanding OS goes through theories that focus on a certain view of individuals, the social, the relational, what knowledge is and what communication is. This is a meaningful contribution to interactionist studies in OS, because the relational aspects of interactionism can better be appreciated through theories where the relational aspects are key. In the following, I will outline the elements that I work with, and how, in the context of this project, the two areas are thought to relate.

Given that I study OS in the context of startups and from the perspective of OKC, I adhere to Cooper-Thomas and Anderson's (2006) definition of OS: "Organizational socialization (OS) is the process through which a new organizational employee adapts from outsider to integrated and effective insider." (p. 492). I adhere to this definition, because a large number of other definitions, going back to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), focus on how newcomers learn a role. But in startups titles can be arbitrary and roles not formally or informally given. Thus, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson's (2006) definition is more suited to socialisation in startups, as it does not specifically focus on how individuals learn a role, but puts more emphasis on the process of adapting from outsider to insider. Thus, I prefer this definition as it is broader and focuses more generally on becoming part of the organisation. Of course, becoming part of an organisation often happens in terms of a role, but in startups, as mentioned, roles are sometimes less defined and more emergent.

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) original OS definition focuses on the newcomer, but the text is mostly concerned with the tactics that organisations use to 'integrate' the individual. As mentioned, I do not see OS as a process that is only about what organisations 'do' to their newcomers, but as something co-constructed. Even though the definition I adhere to speaks of individuals as ‘new organisational employee’, I read process here as integrative, i.e. something where multiple parties play a role, and I understand process not as something that is necessarily very planned, but more as a happening of a series of (minor or major) events. In the literature, OS seems to be often conceived of as a planned process, but it is not always in practice (at least not in the detail that some of the literature would suggest, and also not in a number of the startup companies that I know of). OS practice may be planned, or it might be ad hoc and emerging.

What I am doing is not just adding to the stream of OS literature about newcomer information seeking (NIS). The reason that I have specifically mentioned this area of OS study is that, if any area within OS could be expected to be explicit about the relationship between knowledge and information, it would be NIS. That is, in OS aspects of knowledge and information are already mentioned, but my argument is that we need to be more nuanced in how we approach those topics, their interdependencies and differences. At least theoretically, there is a difference between information and knowledge. And the literature on information seeking has been criticised for not concerning itself with the outcomes of information seeking attempts (Saks, Gruman & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). The literature on newcomer information seeking seems to make a leap of faith from information seeking to knowledge, and not really address the process in between. As I see it, the literature on newcomer information seeking has some unfinished business with respect to the relationship between information and knowledge (as indicated in section 2.1.2.2., they are not the same). In all fairness, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) seem to differentiate between the two concepts in the beginning of their article (p. 853), but they offer no definitions, and later in their article they state that their study focused on “[…] determining whether changes in informa-tion acquisition or knowledge were related to changes in the outcome variables.” (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, p. 865), thus, suddenly it seems that they are equaling information and knowledge. At any rate not specifically defining the differences makes it difficult to determine whether you have ‘measured’ one or the other, which may then be why they seem to collapse them.

In my project, I take a critical stance to the differences between information and knowledge, arguing that when it comes to OS (but also in other organisational realms) it is important to understand these differences between the two. The way I see it, information can be input for knowledge, but obtaining information does not automatically mean that one is then knowledgeable/knowing. Going back to McIver et al.s (2012) two schools, I lean towards the ‘knowing’ perspective, because it is a school that emphasizes actions and relations. The interactionist approach to OS links nicely with a relational/contextual view of knowledge, as it emphasises the agency of both newcomers and other parties in the socialisation process, and thus also ties in with the transaction view of communication. Drawing on a knowledge perspective which views knowledge as a relational phenomenon OS becomes more a relational process relying on a transaction view of communication, instead of the transmission view of communication. For instance, Rollag, Parise and Cross (2005) discuss two different approaches to OS and orienting newcomers; what they label the ‘informational’ and the ‘relational’ approach (p. 36), the difference being whether the focus is on supplying information or helping newcomers build networks. Even though they speak of building relations to ‘tap information’ from others, which again is not the same as knowledge (as knowledge is certainly not something that one can just ‘tap’), the focus on relations is interesting, and goes some way toward the approach that I am arguing for here.

Thus, I aim to study OS processes through the perspective of knowledge that emphasises practices, communication and context (instead of knowledge as something that is just there and needs to be distributed), and this is to be done through focusing on how the newcomers and managers talk about and construct aspects of knowledge and socialisation in the topical context of each other.

3. Research design

In this chapter, I address the various aspects of my research design, how they go together, and how they help me in endeavouring to answer my research questions.

3.1. Visualisation of research design

In the next section on philosophical positioning, I will argue for my philosophical stance and present thoughts on the implications for theory, methodology and methods. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the specifics of my methodological approach and my use of different methods. But before I outline my philosophical stance, I will present an overview of my overall research design. The table below shows the different elements of the design, and I return to the specific elements in the indicated sections. For clarity, I have divided methods into two rows instead of one, as methods concern both the strategies for generating empirical material, and the strategies for analysing that material. The blue dotted lines between the elements show that, although a research design consists of a number of elements, these are interdependent layers.

Figure 1: Research design in overview

Philosophical positioning (section 3.2.):
Social constructivism

Methodology (section 3.3.):
Qualitative, explorative, case based

Methods for generating empirical material (section 3.4.2.):
Semi-structured interviews and narrative semi-structured interviews

Methods for analysis (section 3.4.3.):
Line-by-line coding, categorisation, discourse analysis focusing on interpretative repertoires

3.2. Philosophical positioning

As mentioned in section 1.4., I label myself as a social constructivist. Some do not distinguish between social constructivism and social constructionism, and in my view, they are rather alike, in that there is more that unites them than separates them when comparing them to other philosophies of science, except in their unit of analysis and approach to the relationship between the individual and the social, where social constructivism looks more at the individual as part of social constructions (with a certain view of what an individual then is) and social constructionism has as its unit of analysis social construction per se (cf. Young & Collin, 2004, p. 376).

In this sense, the difference between social constructionism and social constructivism is primarily a question of epistemological interests, as to a large degree, they do share the underlying ideas about reality as social construction and the importance of language in both creating and studying these social constructions. For the purposes of my study I spell it as social constructivism, which is in line with my focus (when using Young and Collin's [2004] way of distinguishing). The overall focus here is not on the social construction as such (constructionism), but on the individuals as actors in a world that is socially constructed, i.e. the social construction affects the individual, and the individual plays a part in affecting the social construction (constructivism). This is a philosophical stance where agency is given to both individuals and the social in tandem, because the two cannot be separated, but coexist and facilitate each other. This also has some relation to Stacey's (2001) view of removing the dialectic/dualism between the individual and the social, although Stacey (2001) would probably say that social constructivists then focus too much on the individual, just as he criticises Gergen's social constructionism for focusing too much on the social (p. 59).

Thus, in terms of ontology, I see reality as socially constructed. Individuals are embedded in social webs (that is what constitutes them as specific individuals), and act in a social context. This ontology has implications for epistemology, in the sense that 'knowledge' and what counts as 'knowledge' is also socially constructed; what counts as knowledge is something that people in cooperation has constructed agreement on (e.g. Gergen, 2015, p. 148), i.e. it is conditioned by relations, with the qualification that social constructions can change and are not independent of history, context, time and place. This Gergen (2015) quote about social constructivism illustrates this point well: "[…] *social constructivism*, holding that we understand the world through mental categories, but we acquire those categories through social relationships." (p. 30, italics in original).

3.2.1. Implications for theory and methods

I have already addressed some of the implications that a social constructivist stance has for working with knowledge. In terms of Organisational Socialisation, my philosophical position is the reason that I adhere to the interactionist perspective. This also means that my reading of the OS literature is somewhat different from or challenging earlier uses of the OS concepts.

In the section on methods for analysis (3.4.3), I will more specifically address how I will draw on the notion of interpretative repertoires and which strategy for analysis I will use in relation to that notion. The connection between my philosophical position and the focus on how the managers and newcomers talk about the topics in question goes through social constructivism's important focus on language use, which emphasises that social constructions are often accomplished through discourse (e.g. Gergen, 2015, p. 72; Burr, 1995, p. 5). Importantly, discourse is both constructed and constructive (cf. Potter, 1996, p. 97-98; Potter, 2004, p. 610), meaning that it is constructed as we speak, and it constructs "versions of the world" (Potter, 1996, p. 97). This means that, as an epistemological consequence, in order to answer my research questions, I must pay attention to how the topics of socialisation and knowledge are talked into being in the interviews, in which ways, and what forms the accounts have, i.e., how do the newcomers and managers construct socialisation and knowledge in their accounts. The phenomena are constructed as they speak, and the language use is then constructive in terms of how they then orient to those topics. It is then interesting whether there are shared aspects, i.e., whether their versions overlap or not.

3.3. Methodology

Grix (2002) states that:

> "Methodology is concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry; in particular with investigating the potentialities and limitations of particular techniques or procedures. The term pertains to the science and study of methods and the assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced." (p. 179).

Thus, in the following, I will present my methodology, including type of methodology, approach and case study specifications.

3.3.1. Qualitative methodology

In order to answer my research questions, I rely on a qualitative methodology (Silverman, 2013). Indeed, I am drawing on a number of methods within the qualitative repertoire (see table 1, p. 22), both for data collection and data analysis, as for data collection I rely on both semi-structured and narrative interviews, and for data analysis I rely on a form of discourse analysis. Thus, my inquiry draws on different methods within the same overall methodology. I do this to address the different aspects of my overall purpose and research questions, and I have thus opted for an approach that can facilitate exploration and understanding.

3.3.2. Inductive and abductive approach and reflexivity

In terms of the guiding logic and approach to the study, my approach is primarily inductive but with elements of abduction (and I am open for a discussion about how to more specifically characterise and label this approach).

Orienting to a reflexive methodology (working reflectively on several levels, cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 8) I do not claim to be a pure inductivist as I move through collecting and analysing my material. My research has an element of abduction, because the different elements of my research are in constant check and conversation with each other. In my project, it is especially some of the work with the theoretical framework and the collection of empirical material that takes place at the same time, and is thus continuously influencing each other. For example, as OS is a vast field, different subareas may prove to be more relevant than others as I work my way through the empirical material. And as I conduct interviews, I may be inspired by an interviewee's account to add a question along the lines of a specific theory, to see whether it could be of relevance.

I see this as a way of showing how, even though research is often not linear, it still has movement forwards, despite continuous oscillation back and forth (e.g. between theory and empirical material). There is a continuous (re)production, but the starting point can never be quite the same.

Abduction is thought to originate in pragmatist philosophy of science (cf. Reichertz, 2009, n.p.), but it can be combined with a social constructivist position, as social constructivists would agree with this oscillation. Indeed, Brænder, Kølvraa and Laustsen (2014) state that "[…] analyses within a social constructivist paradigm in particular – often will make use of inductive (or rather abductive) strategies for analysis (that is developing the theoretical framework for the answering of the problem in interplay with the specific empirical analyses) […]" (p. 253, my translation from Danish[4]).

3.3.3. Case study approach

I label my study as a 'case' study because I view my different companies, newcomers and managers as instances of cases at two different levels (overall companies and a more specific people level), because it is important to acknowledge these cases as different 'settings', on the basis of which I can then make comparisons across settings (e.g. comparing individual newcomers, comparing newcomers and managers, see table 1, p. 22). Drawing on Maaløe (2002, p. 69, who draws on Yin's work on case studies) I characterise my study as an explorative embedded multi design case study. The explorative part is related to my inductive/abductive approach discussed above and the overall research purpose. The reason I see it as an embedded multi design is because I have multiple overall cases (different startups) and the embedded cases are the managers and newcomers in the different startups.

My selection of cases is an example of a purposive sampling strategy as the sampling is directly related to the purpose of the study (cf. Neergaard, 2007, p. 11), which means that I have

[4] Original: "[…] analyser inden for et socialkonstruktivistisk paradigme i særdeleshed – ofte vil benytte sig af induktive (eller snarere abduktive) analysestrategier (altså udvikle den teoretiske ramme for besvarelsen af problemstillingen i samspil med de konkrete empiriske analyser) […]" (Brænder, Kølvraa & Laustsen, 2014, p. 253).

sampled cases that are relevant to my study. The term ‘selection’ is more appropriate here than ‘sampling’, as I have specifically identified and selected cases based on a set of criteria for relevance (cf. Maaløe, 2002, p. 123), derived from my research questions, i.e. I did not create a population of cases to choose from but sought out the specific cases.

My criteria of relevance were defined from the term ‘IT startups’. Thus, I first had to define how a company in the IT sector is to be characterised, next I had to define a startup, and finally to define what then makes for an IT startup. I rely on Lievegoed’s (1993/1997a) description of business development as a stepwise process (p. 79) to define a startup as a business that is in the pioneering phase (which means that the ‘pioneers’ are still the important figures in charge of running the company [Lievegoed, 1993/1997b, p. 92]). I see this as a more valuable way of distinguishing between a startup and a mature business, than simply relying on the age of the company to make the distinction. When I had identified a potential case based on my criteria, I contacted them and inquired whether they would act as one of my cases. A critique of this approach is that it could lead to selection bias, however, I am aware of this and have tried to avoid it. The set of cases is marked by both differences and similarities, i.e. on some variables they are homogeneous, while being heterogeneous with respect to other variables. I could have picked other cases, but then these differences and similarities would just have showed up in terms of yet other variables. For instance, the companies were not all founded in the same month of the same year, but they are all in a stage where they are bringing people into the organisation.

I have six cases in total (all based in Aarhus), where one has been used as a pilot case to test the general research idea and approach, and the empirical material from the remaining five cases is what will be the subject of analysis. The number of cases is the result of my wish to interview at least one manager and two newcomers in each case, while also getting an adequate number of interviews, in order to have material to be able to answer my research questions. Case 1, the pilot study case company, was identified through my personal network. The remaining five cases have been identified through a website where IT startups can post job openings (thehub.dk) and virk.dk, where it is possible to search out specific companies in specific regions in Denmark through industry codes (e.g. ‘computer programming’). On thehub.dk I could follow startups in the Mid-Jutland area who were hiring. On both pages, but especially on virk.dk since it is linked with the CVR-registry database, it is also possible to see when the company was first founded/registered as such. Case 2 and 6 were first identified on thehub.dk, case 4 and 5 were first identified on virk.dk (where I looked for companies registered under ’computer programming’ and like codes). Finally, case 3 is snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, n.p.) via the manager in case 4.

The newcomers were all newly employed when I first contacted the companies, or were hired during the period where I have been collecting empirical material. In terms of saturation, I see saturation as having been reached when I have enough material to make the comparisons indicated in my research agenda and am able to answer my research questions. This means that I must have enough material both intra and inter cases. As all the work for the interviews is done by me, the decision about when saturation has been reached is not made either before or after analysis has been carried out, but in the process in-between, namely by continuously being aware of new topics in the interviews, and when no more new topics seem to be introduced by the newcomers across the cases.

By September 2017 I should have 27 interviews in total (including three in the pilot case), which means that I should have 24 interviews (seven with managers and 17 with newcomers, see appendix 1) that will be my primary material and subject to final analysis.

I do not interview other organisational insiders than the managers and the newcomers. I do acknowledge that equalling the perspective of ‘the organisation’ with that of managers’ is old-fashioned, however, I am not saying that the manager is the organisation, I am interviewing managers because of their role in the startups and their personnel responsibility in terms of newcomers. Thus, I do not interview insiders or advisory board members or other stakeholders because the analytical focus here is on managers and newcomers.

3.4. Methods

In the sections here, I will outline my methods for collecting empirical material, and the method that I will rely on in order to analyse that material. In section 4, I will introduce an example of how my method helps me investigate the specific interest indicated in my research agenda, where I draw on some of my empirical material (I will discuss the example based on the excerpts in appendix 2 in greater detail at the presentation).

3.4.1. Visualisation of process of generating and analysing empirical material

In the table below, I have attempted to visualise the different stages of my collection and analysis of empirical material. I am interested in what the newcomers and managers say about the topics indicated in my research questions, namely knowledge communication in the context of socialisation, and whether there are any patterns in the accounts they give. Thus, the process looks like this:

Table 1: Visualisation - Process and elements in empirical work

Stage #	Element	
1	Managers: Semi-structured interviews	Newcomers: Narrative semi-structured interviews
2	Transcription	
3	First cycle coding: In Vivo Second cycle coding: From line codes/annotations to categories	
4	Discourse Analysis: Interpretative repertoires in manager interviews	Discourse Analysis: Interpretative repertoires in newcomer interviews
5	Total cases (short round-off of each individual case)	
6	Cross case: Managers (sub RQ 1 and 2)	Cross case: Newcomers (main RQ)
7	Cross case: Total cases across, managers vs. newcomers (interactionist, main RQ)	

3.4.2. Generating empirical material

I rely on two different interview styles to generate empirical material. I have opted for interviews as my method due to the comparative aspect in my research agenda. In order to answer the research questions, both managers/founders with personnel responsibilities and new employees are interviewed. In the following, I will present the process in more detail.

In order to familiarise myself with the case companies in more detail I visited their websites (e.g. company website, profiles on Facebook and LinkedIn, i.e., typical pages for job related information) before conducting interviews with managers and new employees in the respective startups. Thus, this is a kind of desk research/background information, with the purpose not only to familiarise myself in advance, but to prepare better (more informed) questions and to be able to better follow up in the interview situation. Being acquainted with the websites as sources of information allows me to both be more familiar with the company (or at least with how it presents itself), and also to have an idea about the resources that are available to the newcomers.

In advance of the interviews, I also asked managers whether the companies had any materials (personnel handbook, information, blogs, intranet) that they handed out to new employees or encouraged them to consult. Depending on the answers, this could then be worked into the interview guides in the form of different questions (e.g. why/ why not, what is the purpose). The purpose of asking this was to answer my two subquestions about managers'/companies' thoughts on the role of Organisational Knowledge Communication and which measures they rely on for communicating knowledge with new employees. In turn, this is also interesting for me to know in advance of the newcomer interviews, as it enables me to ask better follow up questions, if/when a newcomer talked of his/her possibilities of becoming knowledgeable.

In each case organisation, I have interviewed the manager(s) in advance of interviewing the newcomers. This has been in order to get further background information about the process the newcomers have been through (from the managers' point of view), because I could then also ask more specific questions of the newcomers and better probe them to tell about specific events. Also, importantly, although I adhere to the interactionist approach to OS, this should not be confused with mutualism. Both parties certainly play a part, but here the newcomers are the primary focus. But, an interactionist would say that we need input from both parties to get a better understanding, because they are both very much part of the process. Thus, for each case and embedded cases the process looks like this: websites → documents → manager interviews → newcomer interviews.

In line with the definition of OS that I adhere to (see section 2.2.) I have been interested in what they (newcomers and managers) could tell about their experiences with and opinions on the process.

3.4.2.1. Time aspect of newcomer interviews

I have set a criterion that new employees have to have been in the new organisation for at least two months before I interview them and for no longer than about four months, because I also have to interview them when they are still able to recall different situations. I.e., they have to have been through at least parts of the experience of being a newcomer, while also being able to remember it and give an account of it (although the account is of course retrospective sensemaking). Thus, this criterion was more pragmatically than theoretically derived. The literature is inconclusive about the length of the socialisation process and its individual parts, but Rollag (2004; 2007) suggests that the process of transitioning from newcomer to oldtimer happens faster in organisations with high growth and employee turnover. In American management literature, there is much talk of 'the first 90 days' (e.g. Krasman, 2015, p. 13).

3.4.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

The manager interviews are carried out as semi-structured interviews, with questions developed in relation to my research questions (primarily sub RQ 1 and 2), drawing on theory (in order to also discuss the theory afterwards), questions related to the specific cases (e.g. if they have a personnel handbook), and then some questions revised/adapted after the pilot interviews (this is more a question of wording and introduction to the questions).

3.4.2.3. Narrative interviews

The interviews with new employees take the form of narrative interviews (asking open questions that may elicit narratives) (cf. Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 632; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). Humle and Pedersen (2015) refer to their interviews as 'semi-structured narrative interviews' (p. 588). I have been deliberating what to 'label' mine (e.g. as 'plain' narrative interviews, semi-structured narrative interviews or narrative semi-structured interviews). I have both questions to elicit narrative that are related to the two overall theoretical fields that I combine (the two primary sections of the interview guide, which are of course also related to each other), and follow-up questions where I ask and/or try to get the participants to elaborate by probing for further narration or answers (related to each overall topic section). But, I favour labelling them 'narrative semi-structured interviews' because of the point of departure, i.e. starting each 'section' with trying to elicit and probe for narratives, coupled with other questions, rather than the other way around. Thus, the narrative interviews consist of a weaving back and forth between sections that are primarily narrative, and other sections that then follow up and probe/ask for further telling. The follow-up questions draw on some of the same inspirations as for the semi-structured manager interviews with the addition of asking about aspects that came up in the manager interviews, but the starting point is the invitation to them to tell from their point of view.

3.4.2.4. Reasoning for different types of interview

It might seem an odd choice to use two different approaches to qualitative interviewing. However, as the purposes of interviewing managers/founders and interviewing newcomers were not the exact same (they relate to different aspects of the same overall research interest), this is the reason for opting for using both the semi-structured and the narrative approach. The managers were asked about practice and their view of the process, while the newcomers were invited to tell about their experiences with the process. For the newcomer interviews I thus opted for a style that takes their experiences as a starting point, as this could mean that important topics and finer details on the experience of settling-in could be brought forward. Thus, I use the narrative as an interview technique (and not as such in terms of narrative analysis) because it can be helpful in this endeavour.

However, I also opted to use interviews because I want to compare the interpretative repertoires that the two parties draw on in relation to the overall topic. And in relation to my approach, the context is important, also from the manager perspective. If I had just done a survey of managers, I would not be able to compare the material (it would be of a too different variety).

Thus, I have two types of interviews because of the variation in types of questions and answers/accounts they permit, however the two sets of interviews are related to each other because of the interactionist approach. Therefore, in the method section on analysis (3.4.3.), I will also argue for why my process of collecting empirical material and analysing it allows for comparing how managers and newcomers talk about the topic, and answering the respective research questions, that are also very much related because of the interactionist perspective (i.e. the interactionist approach makes the comparative aspect important). The common ground for the two different kinds of interview, and the premise on which I can then compare newcomer and manager accounts, is that the interviews share the same overall topical focus, namely OS and knowledge, i.e., the starting point for the part of my analysis where I compare manager and newcomer talk is that the interviews concern the same topic, the interviewees just represent two different parties in the OS process, and the interview questions and approach need to be attuned to this. Thus, the parties can orient differently to the topical frame, but, because of the comparative aspect, that is then a part of the analysis.

3.4.2.5. Getting ready for analysis

Before the coding and specific analysis can start, the interviews have to be transcribed. Potter and Wetherell (1987) state that "The question of exactly how detailed the transcription should be is a thorny one." (p. 166), but they contend that "However, for many sorts of research questions, the fine details of timing and intonation are not crucial […]" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 166), and "So it is important to think very carefully about what information is required from the transcript, and at what level the analysis will proceed.” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 166). Thus, in relation to my research questions, I have opted for a transcription that leaves out *timing and intonation* (cf. above), as these are not part of the analysis to follow. As analysis and initial ‘ideas’ about patterns in the material begin to be formed already while doing the interviews and continues in the transcription and then coding and then actual specific analysis, I will make a point of transcribing the interviews myself.

The coding will be an In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2012, p. 91) relying on the interviewees’ own language use (as I will be analysing this and possible patterns). After the coding of lines/sentences is completed (i.e., first cycle coding, cf. Saldaña, 2013), for each interviewee I will create a table where codes that are related will be grouped in larger categories (i.e. second cycle coding in the likeness of pattern coding, cf. Saldaña, 2013, p. 210). I am not saying that I can code ‘objectively’ by not acknowledging the socially constructed reality. I am also not saying that the coding is representative of some ‘inner themes’ they have; the themes are discursive. But I am saying that when I code, I will stick with their (socially constructed) language use. And it will then be interesting to see the patterns and variations in language use related to the topic, i.e. patterns in how it is discursively constructed and characterised.

3.4.3. Analysing the empirical material

In terms of analysis I will specifically draw on the notion of interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987[5]), to elucidate how newcomers and managers talk about socialisation and knowledge. Wetherell and Potter (1988) employ a variation of discourse analysis where the *analytic unit* is interpretative repertoires (p. 169), however, they also mention interpretative repertoires as an analytical tool (p. 172), and offer the following definition: “Repertoires can be seen as the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena.” (p. 172), and: “The interpretative repertoire is basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events.” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 138).

Specifically, interpretative repertoires can be identified by investigating the variations in a piece of “text” (cf. Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172), as they state that “There is regularity in variation” (p. 172) and “Speakers give shifting, inconsistent and varied pictures of their social worlds.” (p. 171). As such, eyeing these variations is a way of becoming attuned to the different

[5] Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) coined the notion ’Interpretative repertoires’ in their study of scientists’ discourse, but Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1988 and other works) have turned the notion into a larger project.

interpretative repertoires that a person draws on. Potter and Wetherell (1987) state that “Interpretative repertoires are used to perform different sorts of accounting tasks.” (p. 156). This is related to my research agenda of comparing the way newcomers and managers address (and which resources they make use of to account for and make sense of) the topics of OS and knowledge: New employees are likely to draw on interpretative repertoires when they account for their experiences of organisational entry, and managers are likely to draw on interpretative repertoires when accounting for their thoughts and opinions related to introducing new employees and organisational knowledge communication.

Interpretative repertoires are mostly mentioned as part of a specific discursive approach, however, there are also examples (or at least mentions) of a more specific use as a method (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). But, as with most discourse analyses, as there is not a ‘mechanical procedure’ (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 168), an analytic strategy needs to be developed for the specific study and topics in question, and this also goes for how to approach or make use of the notion of interpretative repertoires. Thus, in this section, I will specify how I will do my analysis drawing on this notion, i.e. how I will go about identifying and analysing interpretative repertoires.

I will focus on how the managers and newcomers talk about and which patterns of language use make up their repertoires on socialisation and knowledge, e.g. whether there are things that they relate to each other in certain ways, whether there are certain ways of articulating the topics. Finally, I can then investigate whether there are any patterns across, e.g. in terms of repertoires that seem to be shared, and whether the different repertoires seem to be part of the same overall discourses. The ‘object of analysis’ and analytic strategy can then focus on variations, metaphors, hedging, priming, propositions or the like (and possibly in combination). I expect that the most worthwhile element to focus on would be the resources they draw on when they make propositions (i.e., things that are uttered as taken-for-granted ‘facts’) (cf. Thomsen, 2006, p. 220-221). I can discuss this across (embedded) cases by focusing on categories that seem to exist in all the interviews, and investigate whether they talk about these categories in the same way. I.e., which repertoires do the managers and newcomers draw on in talking about socialisation and knowledge.

When I have annotated an interview, I draw up a table of categories, with a list of all the lines where a topic related to that category is addressed. This allows for a more systematic way of looking for variations (or resemblances) in relation to one category, and I can also use these lists in relation to instances where interviewees are talking about the same thing within the same category. Thus, the work is still inductive/abductive because I do not in advance have an idea about which repertoires they are drawing on, but I am using an open approach and then comparing which repertoires they draw upon in their accounts and which propositions they make with respect to certain phenomena that are central in relation to my research questions. Thus, I can look into patterns in their discursive constructions, but the interview styles are different because of the primary interest in the newcomers.

Discourse analysis in relation to interviews is sometimes contested as interviews are not naturally occurring talk, however, other works on interpretative repertoires have also relied on interviews (cf. Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 72). Importantly, Phillips and Hardy (2002) state that "[…] the texts that best constitute data depend on what the researcher is studying." (p. 72). Since I am studying how managers and newcomers talk of OS and knowledge (in relation to each other), and whether there are any patterns, interviews are well suited for this endeavour.

4. Discussion and challenges

In this section I would like to sketch out and discuss some challenges, particularly in relation to research design elements.

First of all, there is the epistemological challenge of the difference between practice and people talking (retrospectively) about practice. However, the research agenda underlying my research questions means that I am interested in which repertoires they draw on in talking about OS practices, characterising them, and whether there are differences and similarities. Thus, in relation to my epistemological interests, and the way I see research from the perspective of social constructivism, the fact that it is retrospective is more a condition than a problem; it is still possible to investigate whether, in talking about OS and knowledge, their discursive constructions of the topics differ or not and what their discursive sensemaking looks like. Differences in how they talk in their retrospective sensemaking is also of significance for the meaning and understanding that they are constructing, drawing on available resources.

Second, I do individual interviews, despite viewing knowledge as something that is very much conditioned by relations. But again, because of the interactionist approach, I do interview more than one party, and can then discuss potential patterns. Also, I am more interested in practice (and comparing how people talk about it/characterise it/account for it) than singular instances of praxis, and because of this I think that interviews can serve the purpose of collecting empirical material to that end. Thus, the interviews is a kind of mediation of practice. In line with my philosophical position, the social aspects have a large place in the collection of empirical material and the analysis, e.g. asking about the social, while the 'research site' is also constructed. Interviews (are maybe thought to) have a certain bias, but it is a very broad genre, they can be used in different ways for different purposes (also even though I am a social constructivist).

Thirdly, there is the coding related problem of going from In Vivo codes to larger categories, i.e. how to group the large number of annotations into categories in a systematic way. The criterion is that the codes must have some kind of connection topic-wise, but sometimes one annotation is connected to more than one topic. One way of ensuring the systematicity will be to do the annotations, grouping them, and then checking that there is correspondence between each category and all the annotations that is contained in it.

To illustrate why I think the sketched out research design is appropriate in helping me answer my RQs, I will present a tendency that I am beginning to see in my material. This preliminary tendency has been developed during some initial coding of four interviews (including the pilot newcomer and manager interviews), and also seems to be present in a number of the other interviews, however I have not yet transcribed and looked further into these.

I have labelled the emerging tendency *the 'small organisation' proposition* (see appendix 2 for a list of manager and newcomer accounts exemplifying and related to this discussion. I will address this example in further detail in my Thesis Proposal Presentation). This is mainly related to a range of accounts that all make reference to the size of the startup. For instance, a number of the managers seem to agree that, as their organisations are small, it must necessarily be easier to settle in there than in other larger companies. But, when going further into the newcomer interviews, this proposition does not seem to hold true. Sometimes, the newcomers do say that since it is a small organisation it has not been too difficult to settle in, but at other times, when the structures for meeting one's colleagues naturally within the first few weeks are not in place, then, even though there are fewer colleagues, it is not necessarily easier, because perhaps some colleagues work out-of-office, on other locations, or are simply so busy and do not join lunch that it is difficult for the newcomer to get to *know* them. Connection building (or simply being able to meet colleagues face to face) as part of the socialisation process is talked of as positive, and lack of possibilities for connecting with colleagues is talked of as something negative, as hampering sensemaking and full understanding of the organisational context, and also one's own role. Just because an organisation is small, this does not mean that one should not focus on the potential for building relations and getting to know one's colleagues. In informal structures and flat organisations, some of these things might actually be more difficult to deal with for a newcomer. Thus, *the 'small organisation' proposition* could, in some instances, instead be *the 'small organisation' fallacy*. The implication is that we should be careful in taking-for-granted that it is necessarily easier to settle-in in a small organisation.

Based on annotation that resulted in identifying the category 'small company' as present in a number of the interviews, and then looking more into what managers and newcomers say in relation to this category (i.e. which resources are drawn on in the 'small company' repertoire), the above tendency has begun to form. Interestingly, when I ask questions I usually refer to the companies as 'new' rather than 'small'. The two do have some logical connections, but nevertheless it is interesting how they then talk about this 'size' aspect. In the context of knowledge, it might be easier to get to know a small organisation because there are less people to get to know, but if it is difficult to communicate with these people, then it is not easier to get to know a small/new organisation.

5. Closing remarks

In the previous pages, I have argued for the practical and theoretical reasons for approaching this area of study, and what my project will contribute with, through a social constructivist philosophical stance that ties in with an interactionist approach to Organisational Socialisation, which can be combined with Organisational Knowledge Communication, in the sense that communication is transaction, and knowledge is complex, contextual and relational.

It is my argument that the literature can better reflect the modern day labour market in the context of Danish IT startups, and that this could be beneficial not only for the companies, but also for newcomers, and indeed in forwarding the Organisational Socialisation literature on new ventures in a continental (specifically Danish) context, specifically through applying a nuanced view of Organisational Knowledge Communication. Thus, my project will also challenge some of the normativity in Organisational Socialisation, both theoretically, empirically and methodologically.

References

Alvesson, M. (2001). Knowledge work: Ambiguity, image and identity. *Human Relations*, *54*(7), 863-886. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726701547004

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Anderson, C., & Kirkpatrick, S. (2016). Narrative interviewing. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy, 38*(3), 631-634. DOI: 10.1007/s11096-015-0222-0

Ashford, S., & Nurmohamed, S. (2012). From past to present and into the future: A hitchhiker's guide to the socialization literature. In C. R. Wanberg (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational socialization* (pp. 8-24). New York: Oxford University Press.

Ashforth, B. E., Sluss, D. M., & Saks, A. M. (2007). Socialization tactics, proactive behavior and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *70*(3), 447-462. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.02.001

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research UPDATE*, (33), n.p. Retrieved from http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU33.pdf

Barge, J. K., & Schlueter, D. W. (2004). Memorable messages and newcomer socialization. *Western Journal of Communication*, *68*(3), 233-256. DOI: 10.1080/10570310409374800

Bargues, É. (2013). Les pratiques de socialisation des petites entreprises françaises: Une approche configurationelle. *Revue internationale P.M.E.: économie et gestion de la petite et moyenne entreprise*, *26*(3-4), 63-88. DOI: 10.7202/1024519ar

Batistič, S., & Kaše, R. (2015). The organizational socialization field fragmentation: A bibliometric review. *Scientometrics*, *104*, 121-146. DOI: 10.1007/s11192-015-1538-1

Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2011). Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology: Volume 3: Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization* (pp. 51-64). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bauer, T. N., & Green, S. G. (1998). Testing the combined effects of newcomer information seeking and manager behavior on socialization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *83*(1), 72-83. http://dx.doi.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/10.1037/0021-9010.83.1.72

Blaikie, N. W. H. (2010). Research questions and purposes. In *Designing social research: The logic of anticipation* (2nd ed.)(pp. 56-78). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Brænder, M., Kølvraa, C., & Laustsen, C. B. (2014). *Samfundsvidenskabelig tekstanalyse*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Burr, V. (1995). *Introduction to social constructionism*. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048

Cardon, M. S., & Stevens, C. E. (2004). Managing human resources in small organizations: What do we know? *Human Resource Management Review*, *14*(3), 295-323. http://dx.doi.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/10.1016/j.hrmr.2004.06.001

Chao, G. T., O'Leary-Kelly, A. M., Wolf, S., Klein, H. J., & Gardner, P. D. (1994). Organizational socialization: Its content and consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *79*(5), 730-743. http://dx.doi.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/10.1037/0021-9010.79.5.730

Cooper-Thomas, H. D., & Anderson, N. (2006). Organizational socialization: A new theoretical model and recommendations for future research and HRM practices in organizations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*(5), 492-516. DOI: 10.1108/02683940610673997

Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (2000). *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. (Original work published 1998).

Duguid, P. (2005). "The art of knowing": Social and tacit dimensions of knowledge and the limits of the community of practice. *The Information Society*, *21*(2), 109-118. DOI: 10.1080/01972240590925311

Feldman, D. C. (1981). The multiple socialization of organization members. *Academy of Management Review*, *6*(2), 309-318. Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/210942538?accountid=14468

Field, R., & Coetzer, A. (2008). The effects of organisational socialisation on individual and organisational outcomes: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Labour, Employment and Work in New Zealand 2008*, 524-533. Retrieved from https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/LEW/article/view/1667

Gergen, K. J. (2015). *An invitation to social construction* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Gilbert, G. N., & Mulkay, M. (1984). *Opening Pandora's box: A sociological analysis of scientists' discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, *12*(6), 433-448. DOI: 10.1002/smj.4250120604

Griffin, A. E. C., Colella, A., & Goparaju, S. (2000). Newcomer and organizational socialization tactics: An interactionist perspective. *Human Resource Management Review*, *10*(4), 453-474. http://dx.doi.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00036-X

Grix, J. (2002). Introducing students to the generic terminology of social research. *Politics*, *22*(3), 175-186. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9256.00173

Hart, A. W. (1993). The conceptual roots of organizational socialization. In *Principal succession: Establishing leadership in schools* (pp. 89-138). New York: State University of New York Press.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson. T. (1997). Eliciting narrative through the in-depth interview. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *3*(1), 53-70. https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1177/107780049700300103

Humle, D. M., & Pedersen, A. R. (2015). Fragmented work stories: Developing an antenarrative approach by discontinuity, tensions and editing. *Management Learning*, *46*(5), 582-597. https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1177/1350507614553547

Hvilshøj, R. (2016, November 11). It-afdelingerne får travlt … meget travlt. *Computerworld CIO*, *36*(18), 26.

Ibarra, H., & Barbulescu, R. (2010). Identity as narrative: Prevalence, effectiveness, and consequences of narrative identity work in macro work role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, *35*(1), 135-154. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2010.45577925

Juel, F. M. (2017, July 12). Tjen 10.000 på at skaffe en ny kollega. *Berlingske Business.* Retrieved from http://www.business.dk/oekonomi/tjen-10.000-paa-at-skaffe-en-ny-kollega

Kastberg, P. (2014). Organizational knowledge communication – A nascent 3rd order disciplinarity. *Journal of Organizational Knowledge Communication*, *1*(1), 83-97. Retrieved from http://www.jookc.com/article/view/19444

Katz, J. A., Aldrich, H. E., Welbourne, T. M., & Williams, P. M. (2000). Guest editor's comments special issue on human resource management and the SME: Toward a new synthesis. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, *25*(1), 7-10. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&A=3999013&site=ehost-live

Keating, M. A., & Olivares, M. (2007). Human resource management practices in Irish high-tech start-up firms. *Irish Journal of Management*, *28*(2), 171-192. Retrieved from https://search proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/207638885?accountid=14468

Kowtha, N. R. (2009). Socialization tactics, newcomer work experience and information-seeking: An interactionist study. *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, *8*(1), 1-6. DOI: 10.5465/AMBPP.2009.44270104

Krasman, M. (2015). Three must-have onboarding elements for new and relocated employees. *Employment Relations Today*, *42*(2), 9-14. DOI: 10.1002/ert.21493

Lievegoed, B. (1997a). Virksomhedslederne og fremtiden. In F. Glasl & B. Lievegoed, *Udviklingsledelse: Fra pionervirksomhed til netværksorganisation* (pp. 75-90) (B. Michelsen & B. Jensen, trans.). Hinnerup: Forlaget Ankerhus. (Original published 1993).

Lievegood, B. (1997b). Udviklingsfaser i en virksomhed. In F. Glasl & B. Lievegoed, *Udviklingsledelse: Fra pionervirksomhed til netværksorganisation* (pp. 91-155) (B. Michelsen & B. Jensen, trans.). Hinnerup: Forlaget Ankerhus. (Original published 1993).

Maaløe, E. (2002). *Casestudier: Af og om mennesker i organisationer* (2. udgave). Akademisk Forlag.

McIver, D., Lengnick-Hall, C. A., Lengnick-Hall, M. L., & Ramachandran, I. (2012). Integrating knowledge and knowing: A framework for understanding knowledge-in-practice. *Human Resource Management Review*, *22*, 86-99. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2011.11.003

Neergaard, H. (2007). *Udvælgelse af cases i kvalitative undersøgelser* (2. udgave). Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ostroff, C., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1992). Organizational socialization as a learning process: The role of information acquisition. *Personnel Psychology*, *45*(4), 849-874. DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.1992.tb00971.x

Petersen, N. B. (2016). *Knowledge communication processes for building semi-dispersed teams: Using discursive sensemaking to understand prototypical perceptions of knowledge, identity and relationships* (PhD dissertation). Aarhus University, Denmark.

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Retrieved from https://books.google.dk/books?id=-cOiCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA72&lpg=PA72&dq=discourse+analysis+of+interviews&source=bl&ots=RK1jJqGjSQ&sig=ymqBXELfbffQxpr8vrvFHwSJOc&hl=da&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjNpLOeuarQAhVGEywKHQ0uAFk4KBDoAQhTMAc#v=onepage&q=discourse%20analysis%20of%20interviews&f=false

Polanyi, M. (1967). *The tacit dimension*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: SAGE Publications.

Potter, J. (2004). Discourse analysis. In M. Hardy & A. Bryman (eds.), *Handbook of data analysis* (pp. 607-624). London: SAGE Publications.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Rasborg, K. (2013). Socialkonstruktivismer i klassisk og moderne sociologi. I L. Fuglsang, P. B. Olsen & K. Rasborg (red.), *Videnskabsteori i samfundsvidenskaberne: På tværs af fagkulturer og paradigmer* (3. udgave). Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Reichertz, J. (2009). Abduction: The logic of discovery of grounded theory. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *11*(1), n.p. http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.1.1412

Rollag, K. (2004). The impact of relative tenure on newcomer socialization dynamics. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*, 853-872. DOI: 10.1002/job.280

Rollag, K. (2007). Defining the term ‘new’ in new employee research. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 80, 63-75. DOI: 10.1348/096317906X120420

Rollag, K., & Cardon, M. S. (n.d.). How much is enough? Comparing socialization experiences in start-up versus large organizations. https://fusionmx.babson.edu/entrep/fer/BABSON2003/XVII/XVII-S1/XVII-S1.html

Rollag, K., Parise, S., & Cross, R. (2005). Getting new hires up to speed quickly. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *46*(2), 35-41. Retrieved from http://bi.galegroup.com.ez.statsbibliotek et.dk:2048/essentials/search?u=aaruniv#page=1&=advDocumentTitle^Gettngnewhiresup to speedquickly&q=startPage^35&q=pubIssue^2&q=issn^15329194&q=pubVolume^46

Ryle, G. (1949). *The concept of mind*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Saks, A. M., Gruman, J. A., & Cooper-Thomas, H. (2011). The neglected role of proactive behavior and outcomes in newcomer socialization. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *79,* 36-46. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2010.12.007

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Savolainen, R. (2009). Epistemic work and knowing in practice as conceptualizations of information use. *Information Research*, *14*(1). Retrieved from http://www.informationr.net/ir/14-1/paper392.html

Schlichter, B. (2016). Små og mellemstore virksomheder i tal: 2014. In K. Klyver, P. V. Freytag & P. R. Christensen (Eds.), *Udviklingsorienteret drift i mindre organisationer* (pp. 159-177). Retrieved from http://www.sdu.dk/da/om_sdu/institutter_centre/cesfo/publikationer/cesfo_ aarsrapporter/aarsrapport+2016 (2016 annual report from Centre for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research at University of Southern Denmark).

Shipp, A. J., & Jansen, K. J. (2011). Reinterpreting time in fit theory: Crafting and recrafting narratives of fit in medias res. *Academy of Management Review*, *36*(1), 76-101. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2011.55662565

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Stacey, R. D. (2001). *Complex responsive processes in organizations: Learning and knowledge creation*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Thomsen, J. (2006). Kritisk diskurs analyse (KDA). I S. Voxted (red.), *Valg der skaber viden – om samfundsvidenskabelige metoder* (pp. 209-223). København: Academica.

Tompkins, P. K. (1987). Translating organizational theory: Symbolism over substance. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts & L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 70-96). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1979). Toward a theory of organizational socialization. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior, Vol. 1* (pp. 209-264). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Wanberg, C. R. (2012). Facilitating organizational socialization: An introduction. In C. R. Wanberg (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational socialization* (pp. 3-7). New York: Oxford University Press.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, *16*(4), 409-421. DOI: 10.1287/orsc.1050.0133

Wetherell, M., & Potter, J. (1988). Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. In C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 168-183). London: SAGE Publications.

Young, R. A., & Collin, A. (2004). Introduction: Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *64*, 373-388. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2003.12.005

Zou, W., Tian, Q., & Liu, J. (2015). The role of work group context and information seeking in newcomer socialization: An interactionist perspective. *Journal of Management & Organization*, *21*(2), 159-175. DOI: 10.1017/jmo.2014.73

Appendices

1. List of empirical material in overview

Overview of the empirical material that I have so far.

Case #	# of manager/founder interviews	# of newcomer interviews
1 (pilot study)	1	2
2	1	2
3	1	2 (expected as of September 2017)
4	1	8
5	1	3 (expected as of September 2017)
6	3	2
TOTAL (excl. pilot study)	7	17
	24	

For all interviews I also have brief fieldnotes written before, during and immediately after the interview (on context and thoughts). In addition, I have background material such as web screenshots and material from some of the companies.

2. Table with examples of ‘small organisation’ accounts

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Excerpts from manager and newcomer interviews exemplifying accounts making reference to size, using ‘smallness’ to explain something, the ‘small organisation’ proposition, and why it is potentially the ‘small organisation’ fallacy
[…] indicates omitted text / … indicates a pause</td></tr>
<tr><td>Manager examples</td><td>Newcomer examples</td></tr>
<tr><td>Manager 1 in case 1 (pilot)
”Well as we are a small organisation often it is not very structured and we do not have like a template for exactly how we are going to do things […]” (my translation, initial transcription lines 52-53)

“[…] we had an incident some time ago where we had an intern and where the person felt that there was not enough structure ehm and of course that was something that I took to heart that they didn’t quite know where to stand, and I have also heard it before, but that is because we are a smaller company and I am not the most organised type so it makes some things sometimes things are a little more spontaneous or in my own weird fashion or how to put it, so of course that has been a bit of a challenge that we maybe can do some work on.” (my translation, initial transcription lines 79-85)

”[…] we have a very flat structure so it’s not, I am quite easily accessible if one has questions if one is insecure about something, if it is something that is more … for instance if it is a programmer well then he will often talk to the</td><td>Newcomer 1 in case 1 (pilot)
“[…] I kind of feel I am quite structured in my day to day work so um for me it is not too difficult then at times I do feel like then maybe there isn’t enough um . maybe there isn’t enough communication sometimes on what’s going on, so um but then I guess in small companies so it kinds of feel like that’s why I mean it feels like you really rely on each individual to take their responsibility more, so yeah so if that kind of communication is not there then the work still kind of getting done in the right way […]” (initial transcription lines 262-267)

“[…] I guess yeah I kind of feelm it’s so small company and I do feel it is very the environment is very quiet so um I kind of eh I guess I feel like it’s um … you know everyone is kind of has their own tasks during the day so there is not too much like talking um in that way and eh I guess you got like the department downstairs or like a larger department downstairs so there isn’t like that much communication there um it’s just like I say a little bit ad hoc so I don’t know maybe in terms</td></tr>
</table>

other programmers, and get the knowledge he needs so that he can get on, but if it is something more related to my opinion and what I think he should focus on, then it is quite easy for him to talk to me, because the organisation is not that big (me: No). So it is manageable." (my translation, initial transcription lines 150-158) "[…] I am under the impression that when the organisation has the size that it has then it seems like it is quite easy for most to be integrated in the company because we are very like open and welcoming and little things like for instance is that we hug each other you know all of us, eh some find it a little silly and others think that is a cool thing. So in that way I think we try to make it be a little like a family (me: mmh) in some way ah so my impression has been that most have had an easy time getting integrated in the company (me: yes) like naturally or what do you say right." (my translation, initial transcription lines 224-233)	of um . integration I guess like there could be something a bit more regular in how that works, obviously you know we do something like having lunch together or something like that but maybe it could be more about eh work or you know work-related area or if you like we could do something like that so there you know there is a change for people to talk about what they how they are doing or and it's not necessarily related to actual task problems, but about how they are feeling maybe […]" (initial transcription lines 295-305)
Manager 1 in case 2 "There is not really that much they need to know about the organisation (me: no) because it is very small, so so one will quickly figure that out" (my translation, initial transcription lines 224-227)	*Newcomer 2 in case 2* "So I will say one thing that I can maybe miss some times when it is such a small company that is some professional back-and-forth within my field." (my translation, initial transcription lines 128-130)

3. Overview of elements – PhD plan

Overview of activities during the first year of the PhD programme	
September 2016 – January 2017 The shown time intervals are related to half-yearly PhD evaluations through PhD Planner	*<u>PhD courses (accredited and non-accredited):</u>* 20th September: Course on information retrieval and information management, AU Library, not ECTS accredited 8th November: Seminar on Knowledge, Epistemic Fluency and Transfer, SDU (University of Southern Denmark), 1.3 ECTS 28th November to 1st December: PhD Thesis Research Design, AU - BSS, 5 ECTS 5th + 19th January: CUL course (Centre for Teaching and Learning), AU, not ECTS accredited *<u>Other activities:</u>* 26th September: Introduction meeting for new PhD students at Aarhus BSS 6th October: Information day for new employees at Aarhus University 7th November: Brown bag lunch, Nils Braad Petersen pre-PhD presentation 11th November: Morten Lundholm pre-thesis proposal and thesis proposal 14th November: Nils Braad Petersen PhD defence 15th December: PhD research day at BCOM 19th December: Vibeke Thøis Madsen PhD defence 24th January: Helle Eskesen Gode thesis proposal
February 2017 – August 2017	*<u>PhD courses (accredited and non-accredited):</u>* 14th - 15th March + 30th August:

	Planning and Controlling a PhD Project, AU, GSST transferable skills course, not ECTS accredited (for BSS PhD students) 22nd March: Introduction to Responsible Research Conduct, AU, compulsory BSS course, not ECTS accredited 1st – 4th May: Advanced Qualitative Communication Research Methods, AU - BSS, 5 ECTS 15th – 19th May: Concepts as Companions, AU – ARTS, 5 ECTS *Teaching and exam work:* Spring semester: Research Methodology re-exam, internal examiner, BA MMC 1st semester course, 7 hours Videnskabsteori og metode (Research Methodology), BA 2nd semester course, 10 ECTS, two classes, 275 hours *Other activities:* 5th May: Christiane Høvring PhD Defence 22nd – 24th June: DICOEN9 – The 9th International Conference on Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise, Aston University, Birmingham, talk on 'Manager Discourses of Knowledge and their Implications for Organisational Socialisation Practice' (see appendix 4). Institutforum (Department Council), Department of Management – Corporate Communication section PhD fellow representative BSS ph.d.-udvalg (BSS PhD committee) – observer for the PhD programme in Business Communication
Status - first year totals PhD course ECTS points: 16.3 (out of 30 required, 13.7 remaining) (10 of 15 BSS internal required completed) Teaching hours: 282 (out of 840 hours calculated as 650 required, 368 remaining)	

Overview of the remaining two years of the PhD programme	
September 2017 – January 2018 As the TP paper presents where I am currently at in terms of my research project, the category 'Project specific activities' is only shown for the overview of the remaining two years	*PhD courses (accredited and non-accredited):* 11th – 13th October Troubles and Challenges in Qualitative Research, Aalborg University, 5 ECTS *Teaching and exam work:* Fall semester: Communication Theory, BA MMC 1st semester course, 10 ECTS, two classes, 228 hours Kvalitativ metode (Qualitative Methods), HA 3rd semester course, 5 ECTS, specific number of hours not yet known Det rullende Universitet, 25 hours *Project specific activities:* Transcribing interviews *Other activities:* Institutforum (Department Council), Department of Management – Corporate Communication section PhD fellow representative BSS ph.d.-udvalg (BSS PhD committee) – observer for the PhD programme in Business Communication Environment change (January 2018 – beginning of April 2018), Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien (Vienna University of Economics and Business), Department Management, Interdisziplinäres Institut für Verhaltenswissenschaftlich Orientiertes Management (Interdisciplinary Institute for Management and Organisational Behaviour)
February 2018 – August 2018	*PhD courses (accredited and non-accredited):* Two 5 ECTS courses (of which at least one must be BSS internal), specific courses to be decided *Teaching and exam work:* To be decided

	Project specific activities: Coding + analysing interviews *Other activities:* Environment change (January – beginning of April), Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien (Vienna University of Economics and Business), Department Management, Interdisziplinäres Institut für Verhaltenswissenschaftlich Orientiertes Management (Interdisciplinary Institute for Management and Organisational Behaviour)
September 2018 – January 2019	*PhD courses (accredited and non-accredited):* Expected to be completed at this point in time *Teaching and exam work:* Expected to be completed at this point in time or at the end of this term at the latest *Project specific activities:* Finalising the analysis and writing up the dissertation *Other activities:*
February 2019 – August 2019	*Project specific activities:* Writing up, editing/revising drafts and finishing the dissertation

4. Abstract and conference paper for DICOEN9

Abstract submitted to and paper presented at the 9th International Conference on Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise at Aston University, Birmingham, June 2017.

Manager Discourses of Knowledge and Their Implications for Organisational Socialisation Practice

Mia Rasmussen

Department of Management, Corporate Communication Section, Aarhus University

Abstract: There is a lack of studies approaching Organisational Socialisation with a qualitative methodology, especially, the constructive and constitutive functions of language use and the related implications are barely considered in this realm. The central argument of the presentation is that different discourses of knowledge have differing implications for organisational socialisation, for instance, there is a marked discursive difference between, on the one hand, characterising knowledge simply as a transferable object, and on the other hand, characterising it as relational and contextual. Based on an interactionist approach to organisational socialisation, meaning that the organisational and newcomer perspectives should be considered in tandem as organisational socialisation is a social process, this presentation will focus on two related implications of language use on organisational socialisation practice. First, acknowledging that managers act as socialisation agents on behalf of organisations, investigating whether managers, in their approach to knowledge in organisational socialisation, think of newcomers as active participants or passive recipients is important, as construing newcomers as passive recipients may impede the organisational socialisation process, whereas thinking of them as active participants can entail a managerial focus on how to facilitate newcomers in their proactive information seeking. Secondly, for newcomers, manager discourses of knowledge might be taken as interpretative cues, and discourse can thus affect how newcomers make sense of the role of knowledge as well as their own role in the specific organisation. Thus, I will present an example of research focusing on these discursive practices, analysing which interpretative repertoires the managers draw on when speaking of knowledge, and how they position newcomers, as this could contribute to improving organisational socialisation communication practices.

Elucidating said practices and creating awareness of the consequences of different discursive characterisations of knowledge is a valuable heuristic guide for practitioners responsible for making decisions about organisational entry processes.

Key words: Organisational Socialisation, knowledge, discourse, managers, communication practice, newcomers

Introduction, purpose and aims

In this piece I will show that managers have different ways of talking about knowledge in the context of organisational socialisation. Understanding discourse as both constructed and constructive (cf. Potter, 2004/2009, p. 610), i.e. inherently as 'action', means that the way we use language has consequences, even though we might not pay particular attention to our language use. Within the discipline of Organisational Socialisation, very little research has been conducted on the implications of managers' language use in relation to the social practice of welcoming new employees to the workplace. The role of managers in organisational socialisation, i.e. as socialisation agents (cf. Reichers, 1987), has been researched quite extensively, often with a focus on what managers *do*, *should do* or the implications of what they *do* (e.g. Rollag, Parise & Cross, 2005; Saks & Gruman, 2012). But this focus on *doing* has seldom paid attention to a more micro/meso perspective on *what the managers do with language*, intentionally or not, in organisational socialisation practice. However, this is exactly what I aim to encourage to change with this piece.

I will present different ways managers speak of knowledge and the different knowledge positions they make available for themselves and the newcomers in the context of organisational socialisation. It is my belief that this focus on language use in relation to the practice of organisational socialisation can show how manager discourses can have implications in relation to newcomers. I suggest that both human resource practice and research could benefit from more insights in this area.

Through applying literature and theory on knowledge and Organisational Socialisation, and discourse analysis focusing on interpretative repertoires and subject positioning, to a number of interview excerpts, I aim to develop and illustrate the argument that, as language is action, it is necessary to be aware of the possible implications of the way managers speak about knowledge in the context of organisational socialisation.

I offer the quote from Leonard and Swap (2005) below, and how it can be seen in the light of the mentioned topic, in order so set the scene:

> "[…] people learn – create and recreate knowledge – through experience. "Of course," you say. But if it's so obvious, why don't we *manage* as if we believed it? Part of the answer is that the state-ment [sic] is deceptively simple." (p. 19, italics in original).

I agree with Leonard & Swap (2005) that the statement may be *deceptively simple*, and I believe that part of the reason for this is that our language use both shape and is shaped by our practices. So perhaps we do not manage as if we believe the statement because we do not *talk* as if we believe it or in a way that makes us believe it; the way we talk might oversimplify the process (in my experience, this happens sometimes).

In line with the conference theme, I aim to show why managers need to be reflexive about their language use, because language use has consequences. Relying on one discourse instead of another can potentially alter meaning radically. Thus, I will be using a discursive approach with actual empirical data. Part of this is to problematise that managers might not be aware of discursivity, and thus take both their language use and the implications thereof for granted.

Background/literature/theory

I am a social constructivist, and this is evident in the theoretical perspectives on Organisational Socialisation and knowledge communication that I situate myself within, as these are perspectives that highlight interaction and relational aspects of practice.

Organisational Knowledge Communication

Organisational Knowledge Communication (OKC) is an emerging disciplinarity that synthesizes aspects of Organisation Studies, Knowledge Management and communication theory (cf. Kastberg, 2014). Thus, OKC is the study of communication of and about knowledge in organisations.

Offering a definition of knowledge is difficult, as there is little agreement on how best to define this phenomenon. However, for the purposes here, suffice to say that I view knowledge not so much as a thing or an object as a process or co-constructed outcome, i.e. as something rather complex, and it is in light of this understanding that it is problematic when our approach to knowledge and the way we speak of it is too simplistic. There are important differences between e.g. data, information and knowledge (for more on this ‘hierarchy’ see Davenport & Prusak, 1998/2000, p. 1-2), as they signify different levels and terms of engagement that allows us to do different things. Thus, equating information and knowledge means that we either simplify one and enhance the other, or both.

My argument here is not that discourse is necessarily representative of pre-established internal ideas of knowledge, but that different ways of talking about knowledge may have advantages and disadvantages. I.e., speaking of knowledge as an individual object vs. as a relational/contextual process and/or outcome has different implications, also in what it communicates to newcomers.

Organisational Socialisation

I adhere to the interactionist approach to Organisational Socialisation (Griffin, Colella & Goparaju, 2000), which stresses that socialisation is something newcomers and organisations accomplish together, thus both parties should be considered. However, for the purposes here, I focus on one set of interactants, namely the managers as socialisation agents (cf. Reichers, 1987, p. 285). “From the perspective of newcomers, other *people* in the work setting are elements of the situation. Specifically, co-workers, supervisors, subordinates, clients, and/or customers act as agents of socialization through which newcom-ers [sic] learn their appropriate work roles, engage in sense-making activities, and establish situa-tional [sic] identity.” (p. 285, italics in original).

The Organisational Socialisation literature is itself rich in examples of how researchers write about the participants and process of ‘settling in’ in different ways. For instance, some equal onboarding and organisational socialisation (e.g. Bauer & Erdogan, 2011), but they can be quite different, as the former seems to refer to a more controlled process (cf. Benzinger, 2016), viewed from the perspective of the organisation. An example of this notion of socialisation as a controlled process is from Van Mannen’s 1978 article, where the idea of ‘People processing’ features prominently in the title. The more interactionist approaches typically give the different actors a more equal role (at least it is recognized that the parties influence one another), and have a more modern take on Human Resource Management. For this reason they might tend to use different words and articulations compared to the approaches who focus more on a single set of actors (e.g. writing 'newcomers' instead of 'new arrivals'). Thus, in academia we must acknowledge that our concepts have origins, and I wish to show how this sensitivity is also relevant for practice.

Methods

For the purposes here, I draw specifically on four excerpts from three semi-structured interviews with young IT start-up entrepreneurs, who are not very experienced when it comes to having people employed and thus having personnel responsibilities. The interviews are part of the empirical material that has been collected in connection with my PhD research on the connections between Organisational Knowledge Communication and Organisational Socialisation. Among other data, the material for the project comprises eight interviews with IT start-up managers from six different case companies. The extracts used here were selected as they are especially revealing, and also seem to be somewhat representative of the general tendency towards a continuum of manager discourses of knowledge. I could have used more extracts, but I want to delve more into the analysis of each and to also compare them.

The interviews were conducted in Danish and transcribed, and all translations here are my own. The extracts stem from interviews and not actual communicative situations between managers and employees, however, the focus here has been to show that these managers draw on different interpretative repertoires when accounting for their practices.

In the analysis, I specifically draw on the notions of interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988) and subject positioning (Edley, 2001; Davies & Harré, 1990). Interpretative repertoires are "[…] the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena." (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172). One way to identify interpretative repertoires is to look for nuances in talk, which might be a signal that a shift is made from one repertoire to another (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 156; Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172). This is partly done here by comparing how knowledge is talked about in the different excerpts.

Subject positions are defined by Edley (2001) as "[…] 'locations' within a conversation. They are the identities made relevant by specific ways of talking." (p. 210). Davies and Harré (1990) offer the notions of *interactive* and *reflexive positioning* to refer to the communicative act of positioning either others (interactive) or oneself (reflexive) (p. 48). One way of identifying these positions is to look for (personal) pronouns and how they are used (cf. Thomsen, 2006; Rasmussen, 2016), which is what I have done here.

That discourse is constructive can be explained by way of the concept of *performativity*, the fact that ”[…] we bring states of affairs into being as a result of what we say and what we do.” (Paltridge, 2006, p. 12). This performative function means that we should be mindful of the way we use our language (the constructed part of discourse), because the way we use it has constructive implications. Here, specifically, it is important to contemplate which positions (in relation to certain ways of talking about knowledge) that the managers situate their newcomers in, thus binding together interpretative repertoires and subject positioning. One might even say that a certain way of positioning newcomers is an interpretative repertoire in itself, or part of one. However, keep in mind that drawing on a certain repertoire might not be intentional, which is also why Wetherell and Potter (1988) state that “[…] we would want to make a strong distinction between the *psychological motivations* for using these discursive forms and their *social psychological consequences*. Well-intentioned talk can have reactionary consequences […]” (p. 181-182, italics in original). This again stresses the importance of being mindful of the way we use language.

Thus, in light of the above, language use in relation to knowledge in an Organisational Socialisation perspective can be constructive in the sense that communicative practices are communicative acts that influence organisational socialisation practice.

Analysis

In this section, I will be presenting a small pot-pourri of variations and similarities in manager language use based on translated interview extracts. Based on the few extracts presented here, we can see that practice in relation to knowledge is talked of in different ways. Also, the combinations of repertoires and subject positions seem to come in different forms, some giving a more individualist and simplistic account and others a more interactionist/mutualist and active account of practice in relation to communication of knowledge in organisational socialisation. The subject positioning and interpretative repertoires seem go to together, i.e. there seems to be a tendency towards the fact that when knowledge is talked of as a thing organisational members and newcomers are construed as *haves* and *have nots* in terms of knowledge (cf. Kastberg, 2011), and when knowledge is talked of as something we do together the use of pronouns also has a different function. Thus, there is not one managerial discourse on knowledge; the varying interpretative repertoires and subject positions show this.

As regards the excerpts in the following sections, on the one hand excerpt 1, 2 and partially 3 seem to be oriented towards the perspective of knowledge as (individual) object. On the other hand, excerpt 4 seems to lean towards a perspective where knowledge is more co-constructed and contextual. As mentioned, I have chosen the four excerpts for their illustrativeness. However, I see the variations more as a continuum of perspectives rather than two different poles, as I also have interviews with managers who, within one interview, seem to draw on discourses related to different points on the continuum.

Case 1/Manager 1

The first excerpt that I will discuss is noted below. It was given as part of the answer to a question about what newcomers could do if they had questions or were in doubt about something:

1) "[…] for instance if it is a programmer well then he will often talk to the other programmers, and get the *knowledge* he needs so that he can move on […]" (lines 152-154, my emphasis).

Why does he use the word 'knowledge' in this context, instead of e.g. 'information'? As mentioned above, this use might not be intentional, but it does present a quite simplistic view of knowledge as something that can easily be transferred. Maybe he used 'knowledge' because I as an interviewer sometimes used it, but I would say that the above is more a characterisation of information (and information might be input for knowledge, and be knowledge for one person, but serve as information and input for knowledge for the other). His account seems to state that it is almost as if knowledge is something that others can just transfer to you. However, in line with Newell (2005), we can ask ourselves: if knowledge is something that we are just given or have transferred from others, then what about learning?

The next excerpt was given as part of the answer to a question about why the manager thought that it would be advantageous to have information material to hand out to newcomers:

2) "[…] if they had had you know some kind of blue book about what is [company x] or what is [company z] […] then maybe they would *know* to a larger degree you know 'ok

this is what we stand for, this is what is important to us this is what we are working towards', and that is something that would be nice to have I think" (lines 185-190, my emphasis).

Taken together, these two utterings seem to characterise knowledge as something that can easily be obtained with no or only limited effort. The interpretative repertoire seems to be organised around an idea that knowledge is something that can be transferred directly from one person to another, or through being documented. In terms of positioning, the newcomers are positioned as the ones who need knowledge, and this they can obtain from the ones who have knowledge (co-workers and also noted down in documents). And, even though the newcomers might have to do some reading, it does seem to suggest that they do not really need to do a lot of work in order to become knowledgeable, they can just talk to a colleague or read some material, and then they will know and understand.

However, there is also a social element mentioned in the interview, namely that of newcomers being integrated in the company, as the manager mentions that "I think we try to make it be a little like a family" (lines 227-228) and that they "hug each other" (line 226). So it is not that the relational aspect is not part of the manager's repertoire, it just seems that there is both a relational social repertoire and a more mechanical repertoire when it comes to the work itself and becoming knowledgeable about it, and they do not seem to really mix all that often.

Case 6/Manager 2

The following excerpt is part of a sequence where the interviewee and I were talking about the logging and documentation practices in the company, and I proposed that I could imagine that some things cannot be documented, perhaps also because the environment in small start-ups is very dynamic:

3) "… and as long as we are only two-three people affiliated eh then it is also then it is all right that we talk about these things and they can't just look it up [me: mmh] it is more if you have to really scale the team then it is no good that it is one individual or two individuals who have *knowledge* [me: yearh] then we ha need to get it out somewhere" (*22:06-22:23*, my emphasis).

Thus, this statement touches on a central challenge for start-ups that experience growth: how do we involve new employees in our organisational knowledge? The manager seems to indicate that currently, because they are very few people, it is ok that the employees cannot just look answers up in some documents, but when the company grows larger, it is not expedient that one or two people have all the knowledge, and that it needs to somehow be disseminated to the others. Again, there is a danger of equating knowledge and information, as something that is written down to be read by others does not automatically become knowledge for them. So there seems to be a repertoire built around an idea of knowledge as something that needs to be shared for the benefit of the company, the problem is how to facilitate this. Implicitly, knowledge is talked of as some*thing* that we can and should detach from individuals – a (finite) ‘it’ that we can put out there that can then serve as knowledge for others.

In terms of positioning, something interesting takes place in the second line where he says that ‘we talk about these things’ but he also says ‘they can’t just look it up’, so given that ‘they’ need knowledge (referring to the newcomers), the ‘we’ who talks must include both people who have knowledge (i.e. people who are not newcomers) and people who need knowledge. However, in the last lines he returns to individuals having knowledge as something that ‘we’ need to disseminate, which is in line with the seemingly underlying idea that knowledge needs to be shared, and that sharing is not just something that individuals do but something that ‘we’, a collective, do.

Case 2/Manager 1

For this manager, I will focus on one excerpt where knowledge seems to be talked of in rather a different way from the excerpts above. Even though this manager does not specifically use the word knowledge, I think what he says comes very close to a definition of the concept that resembles the perspective that I am in line with:

4) ”sometimes not just get the answer either if it is something . I wouldn’t say banal but if it is something about a technology, then often, we have been through it we can say ‘well you do this and this and this’. If they are talking about ‘well but you could do this and this’ then you will get a deeper understanding ‘why do they do it like this’, and then you will figure it out along the way and that is always a good thing” (lines 290-295).

Here, becoming knowledgeable seems to not only require active work and involvement, but also to be something that individuals (can) accomplish by working together. In contrast with quote 1, here knowledge is not just something that others ‘give’ to you, it is something that you figure out together with others, the difference being, what the manager says, ‘deeper understanding’ (because there is learning, reflection, activity). The quote seems to acknowledge that 'yes, we can tell you, but it is better if you play an active part in figuring it out and internalising it'. Also, the relational becomes part of professional practice. In terms of positioning, there is of course a 'we' being the partners (and possibly tenured staff), however, there is also a 'they' which is positioned as being capable of, in cooperation, to figure things out.

Discussion and implications

You might think that I have been tough on some of the quotes above, but I am trying to show alternative readings, something that the managers did not intend to say, or perhaps did not even think about, but if we treat discourse as something that has a function, even if we did not deliberately mean it to (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 34), we need to be aware of this, we need to be mindful of what we say and why we say it like that.

How can these insights be applied by practitioners? First of all, this is not a '10 tips checklist', but an invitation to reflective and mindful practice. I encourage practitioners to consider discourse as constructed and constructive, and by this I mean to be mindful about the words we use and the actions we make when we speak (e.g. the act of positioning). Consider: do I use words connected with a functionalist view (e.g. to 'get' and 'give' knowledge in a simple transfer), or do I use words connected with a relational and constitutionalist view (e.g. to 'discuss' and 'create')? Also, we draw on some repertoires because they are somehow more readily available or seem more appropriate than others in a given situation (cf. Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 156), i.e., they seem to us to be more relevant, so we should also think about which repertoires are presented as appropriate in our organisation, because they will influence the language use that our newcomers might pick up. In relation to the theme here, this means that, e.g. in relation to a HR perspective, we have to consider how we talk about knowledge and how we talk about newcomers (including what we call the people who are then not newcomers). I suggest that we try to broaden our horizons to broaden our available repertoires. One way of doing that might be to attend a presentation like this.

Hence, what I am suggesting is that we might improve organisational communication practices by developing our ability to question our own language use, which both requires and facilitates reflective practice. In this way, communication practice in relation to organisational socialisation can be informed and possibly enhanced by reflecting and being aware of the implications of different discourses in relation to knowledge. Also, I advocate a contingency perspective; We should concern ourselves less with ‘best practice’ as to what is necessarily most right and wrong and likely to succeed in general terms, and concern ourselves more with ‘better practice’, i.e. the question of what is most suitable to our specific situation.

Discourse analysis is not just about how we as academics understand certain words and might problematise them, but about how certain discourses are understood and which functions they serve *in social practice*. This is for instance the reason that I take issue with speaking of knowledge as something that can be *easily transferred 1-1,* because, going back to my discussion of the Leonard and Swap (2005) quote in the beginning, if we talk about knowledge in this way, we begin to treat it in this way, i.e. it influences our practices, despite the fact that we are undermining a crucial difference between data, information and knowledge and the level of active involvement that is required at each stage.

Conclusion

The repertoires we have available influence how we talk about something, so we might need to build on/expand our repertoires. Language use is constructive, thus, from this discursive approach and the topic discussed here, it means that we need to take into account the (social) implications of how we talk in relation to knowledge and organisational socialisation practice.

In the beginning, I offered a quote by Leonard & Swap (2005) to set the scene. The idea was to problematise that perhaps we do not manage in a way that shows understanding for the ‘experience’ part of knowledge because we do not talk as if we acknowledge this element. In that respect, we should consider what would happen if we went from talking about knowledge as the examples in quote 1 – 3 to talking about it in the way that it is done in quote 4. This would mean that we talk about knowledge in a way where we draw on a repertoire that is more interactionist, relational, and constitutionalist, i.e. using words such as ‘understanding’, ‘creating’ and ‘process’ instead of knowledge as simply ‘give’ and ‘get’.

I offer the following quote by Gergen (2015) as an outro that I hope, in light of the presentation, will be empowering:

> “Transforming ourselves, our relationships, or our culture need not await the inter-vention [sic] of some expert, a set of laws, force of arms, bold leaders, public policies, or the like.

As we speak together *right now*, we participate in creating the future – for good or ill." (p. 28, italics in original).

References

Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2011). Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology: Volume 3: Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization* (pp. 51-64). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Benzinger, D. (2016). Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer information seeking in the contingent workforce. *Personnel Review*, *45*(4), 743-763. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/PR-06 2014-0131

Davenport, T. H., & Prusak, L. (1998/2000). *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *20*(1), 43-63. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x

Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. Y. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis* (pp. 189-228). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Gergen, K. J. (2015). *An invitation to social construction* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Griffin, A. E. C., Colella, A., & Goparaju, S. (2000). Newcomer and organizational socialization tactics: An interactionist perspective. *Human Resource Management Review*, *10*(4), 453-474. http://dx.doi.org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:2048/10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00036-X

Kastberg, P. (2011). Knowledge asymmetries – Beyond "to have and have not". *Fachsprache*, *34*(3-4), 137-151.

Kastberg, P. (2014). Organizational knowledge communication – A nascent 3rd order disciplinarity. *Journal of Organizational Knowledge Communication*, *1*(1), 83-97. http://www.jookc.com/article/view/19444

Leonard, D., & Swap, W. (2005). *Deep smarts: How to cultivate and transfer enduring business wisdom*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Newell, S. (2005). Knowledge transfer and learning: Problems of knowledge transfer associated with trying to short-circuit the learning cycle. *Journal of Information Systems and Technology Management*, *2*(3), 275-289. http://dx.doi.org/10.4301/S1807-17752005000300003

Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse analysis: An introduction*. London: Continuum.

Potter, J. (2004/2009). Discourse analysis. In M. Hardy & A. Bryman (Eds.), *The Handbook of Data Analysis* (pp. 607-624). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Rasmussen, M. T. (2016). *Sammenhængen mellem arbejdsrelaterede kommunikationsnetværk og organisatorisk videnskommunikation: Et casestudie af en mindre dansk NGO* (Ikke-udgivet kandidatspeciale). Aarhus Universitet, Aarhus. [*The Connection between Work-related Communication Networks and Organizational Knowledge Communication: A Case Study of a Small Danish NGO* (Unpublished master's thesis)].

Reichers, A. E. (1987). An interactionist perspective on newcomer socialization rates. *Academy of Management Review*, *12*(2), 278-287. http://www.jstor.org/stable/258535

Rollag, K., Parise, S., & Cross, R. (2005). Getting new hires up to speed quickly. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *46*(2), 35-41.

Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2012). Getting newcomers on board: A review of socialization practices and introduction to socialization resources theory. In C. R. Wanberg (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational socialization* (pp. 27-55). New York: Oxford University Press.

Thomsen, J. (2006). Kritisk diskurs analyse (KDA). I S. Voxted (red.), *Valg der skaber viden – om samfundsvidenskabelige metoder* (pp. 209-223). København: Academica. [*Choices that create knowledge – on social science methods*].

Van Maanen, J. (1978). People processing: Strategies of organizational socialization. *Organizational Dynamics*, *summer 1978*, 19-36.

Wetherell, M., & Potter, J. (1988). Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. In C. Antaki, *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 168-183). London: SAGE Publications.